

Kerry Russell, at his house in Cedar Hollow off Hwy 29
August 7, 2011

Ken: So I guess I'll just start by saying "what is today." It's Sunday, August 8, 2011, and I'm here at the house of Kerry Russell in Cedar Hollow off of Highway 29, correct? We're going to talk about whatever he wants to talk about.

Kerry: We're gonna talk about the Cedar Choppers in Williamson and Travis Counties.

Ken: Great

Kerry: And, very quickly, a little bit of my history to give you some relationship to the other folks because a lot of these folks came to this country in the 1850's to 1900 as part of the Scotch-Irish migration from Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, and places like that...

Ken: Right

Kerry: ...and like them folks. My great-great-grandfather was a Stubblefield. He came from Mississippi. Billy Ray, the judge, can give you a lot of history on that. I think W. O. Stubblefield came into this country in the late 1800's...something like that. His father had come earlier, right after the Mexican War, sometime around 1850...something like that. He ended up getting hooked up with my great-grandmother [my great-grandfather W. O.]. She was a Miller and her father, Jack Miller, he was a Texas Ranger and he was the first one to settle on the North Gabriel west of Georgetown and he had a rock house because they still had Indian problems then.

Ken: You bet.

Kerry: Billy Ray just found some pictures, so there's a number of that. My family has been around here for quite a while. They run the Indians out of the country - I guess...that is - the last of them. The original settlers out at Liberty Hill and west, Hopewell, that country out there. And, of course you know the last Indian fight was out on the Hopewell place, an old Ranger station on our place out there that we bought from the Proffitts, but that was the last Indian fight

Ken: I did not know that.

Kerry: In fact, Frank Dobie's mothers have Walter Prescott Webb that way and documented that the old ranger station.

Ken: Was Tony Proffitt related to the Proffitts that we...

Kerry: Yes, Tony Proffitt was the son of the elder Proffitts that we bought the place from.

Ken: I didn't know that either. I knew Tony Proffitt before he passed away.

Kerry: Right

Ken: He was very near me.

Kerry: Really?

Ken: Yes. See you know where I live now. I live within a ...he lived on a road we called Jenks Branch Road, which is on Jenks Branch Creek. If you go up to that, to Round Mountain Road, that's the main road connecting Liberty Hill to Nameless Road. I just...I'm left of there a half a mile.

Kerry: Earl Proffitt was his father or his uncle, I can't remember which, bought that place. He bought two places out there in Hopewell in 1928, according to the deeds, for about five dollars an acre. It was all cedar brakes out there then. The upper place Bob Armstrong eventually bought, and then the lower place that we bought, all under GI loans – along story goes with that but that was in the 1960's. Howard Gardner had married Earl's sister

Ken: Earl Gardner?

Kerry: Howard Gardner

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: Earl's sister Ola Proffitt . Ola and Earl had taken care of Howard in his last days out there. Howard wanted the whole place, you know, and tried to steal it from the rest of the family even though he was an in-law and that's when we got involved in buying the place on G.I. loan. So that's when I got to know the Proffitt family.

Ken: I see

Kerry: And I've known Tony ever since 'cause he was one of the kids of , he was actually the grandson of a son of one of the family members that we bought from . There were about five of them I guess. Anyway that was out in that cedar brake country. So Earl Proffitt was one of the first non-cedar chopper settlers out in that country - in the 1920's – back then there weren't many people because that was all just cedar brakes from here to Lake Travis. The cedar chopper families, I don't know for sure when they came into this country, but I'd say 1850, some-odd before the Civil War, like my folks came from Tennessee, Kentucky – and they settled back in there. James Webb's book I was telling you about, the Scotch-Irish

Ken: Yes

Kerry: I'll have to dig that out. I think I've got a copy somewhere. He was Secretary of the Navy for a while. He's in Virginia now. He wrote about the Scotch-Irish and how they came into this country and settled the hills. They were originally hillbillies in the Virginias and Tennessee, and then they just moved this way some. I'm sure that explains blood lines of all of these cedar choppers and most of our kinfolk too.

Ken: I looked up this book...tried to find this book in our library and I don't think that we had it. I suppose books about the Scotch-Irish, but this one actually talks about the Scotch-Irish in Texas?

Kerry: It talked about them coming through.

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Ken: Good

Kerry: The other good, umm, oh I've got a copy of it at the office

Ken: I thought you were retired

Kerry: Well I keep stuff scattered here and there. In the 1850's came through, the designer of Central Park in New York, what's the guy's name...anyhow, he made a trip, German through Texas, you know what I'm talking about

Ken: Yes, yes, yes...

Kerry: That's a great source for the East Texas group, which was very similar to the folks that were setting here in Central Texas.

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: And the type of people they were, the mountain people

Ken: Yes, yes

Kerry: very independent. Uh (that's the old age) anyhow, that's a great reference. I keep copies of it on hand. Now: for me growing up here – I was born in '45. My Daddy was in the Marine Corp. He was a Marine Corp. pilot in the Second World War. He met my mother towards the end of the war. She was from Liberty Hill, he was from California. He came back here - they came back here - after the War...settled in Liberty Hill. He stayed back in the Reserve because he needed the money. He went to law school and he was the Principal of the High School in Liberty Hill.

Ken: Umm

Kerry: ...in that time frame. So that was my growing up period in a very early age in Liberty Hill.

Ken: I see

Kerry: My grandparents, the Humphreys, Jess Humphreys and Cynthia Humphreys, he was a rural mail carrier.

Ken: Umm-hmm

Kerry: So, we lived around them our whole lives and that whole west end of town was all kinfolks – Stubblefields, Humphreys, Millers

Ken: Is that Mi or ue?

Kerry: Miller – not the German spelling

Ken: Umm-hum. So what time of, what year did you move away from Liberty Hill?

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Kerry: Korean War started. Daddy got recalled. They needed him. He was still on active reserve and they recalled. He was one of the first pilots [to be] recalled - Marine Corps pilots to go to Korea. He got recalled two weeks before he ended law school. Paige Keaton was the Dean of the law school then. And Dean Keaton, he and my father had become friends and Dean Keaton arranged a special bar exam for my father so he could get his license before he got shipped off to Korea.

Ken: Good

Kerry: So, sometime in that timeframe around 1950'ish we moved back to California – you know the San Diego 29 Palms area, Marine Corp. bases. And then, uh, I was in the first grade in Liberty Hill, which must have been about '50 or '51, and started the second grade and then we went to California. And then, uh, a year into the war the Marine Corp. found that that he'd gotten a law degree and they needed lawyers more than they needed pilots 'cause the whole 2nd Marine JAG division had no licensed lawyers. So they pulled him off of flight status – pulled him back from Korea, the crazy way the government does things. And that upset him immeasurably because he needed the money - the flight pay - and put him in charge of Judge Advocate General and him up to colonel or whatever the rank was. But they sent him to Rhode Island to JAG school for six months in that interim so we came back from California, stayed with my grandparents. I was about seven then. For a week or so I'm away and I didn't want to go to Rhode Island so I just took out to the woods when it was time for them to leave. I hid in the woods 'till my folks had to leave to go to Rhode Island so I could stay there with my grandparents (laughter). That's how I ended up spending part of the second grade in Liberty Hill (laughter). Yeah, I was, um, as I told you I was pretty independent...

Ken: Uh-huh (laughter)

Kerry: Even at that age, but, be that as it may, most summers my folks, wherever we lived because we moved around a lot, I'd come back again to stay with my grandparents or I'd ship out to stay with other relatives all over. So, I grew up with the kids that were the cedar choppers, as we know them back then. At my age, I mean we were all kids and sort-of the last generation of the real cedar choppers

Ken: Umm-hmm

Kerry:...back in the woods, rough...

Ken: Umm-hmm

Kerry: Not many living in tents then, just old shacks out in the woods

Ken: Umm-humm

Kerry: So, that was when I, um – they were my friends – we loved to hunt and fish, so we just head to the woods and stay out for a few days at a time. So I'd stay at their houses and they'd come into town every once in a while. They normally came to town maybe on Saturdays, but not every Saturday – for supplies or whatever. 'Cause they really just lived out in the woods, and, you know, no well, no electricity, no nothing. Back then, back in the '50's most folks around Liberty Hill didn't have electricity,

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they had no indoor plumbing, or regular water. Water, you know, was a cistern. You trapped water off your roof, and put it in, you know, a storage tank. You'd have a shallow well with a windmill that would only pump a little bit, or you'd haul water from the Gabriel, from the spring holes.

Ken: Because the '50's were the years of the drought?

Kerry: Correct, big drought, big drought.

Ken: Yeah

Kerry: Yeah, that was when we were – when I was back here – in the '50's. What we have now is nothing compared to that, in my memory.

Ken: Right

Kerry: Lake Travis just dried up basically. Everything above the narrows, it was either no water except when they let a little out of the dam, up above. And we'd ride our bicycles from Liberty Hill all the way out to Lake Travis to spend the night out and fish for carp.

Ken: Smithwick area

Kerry: Yeah, long ride

Kerry: Yeah, it is. Anyhow, the kids that I grew up with, like I say, were sort-of the last generation that lived out. They weren't true cedar choppers, I mean they didn't...they cut posts the, cedar posts, they weren't charcoal burning.

Ken: Right

Kerry: That had already passed. They cut cedar posts pretty much. They probably did whatever they could, they, you know, would steal...whatever. Lie, cheat and steal, they were lawyers, only they didn't have a license you see

Ken: (chuckle)

Kerry: They just survived, out in the...doing whatever they could, building fence, cutting post, doing sharecrop work, anything like that.

Ken: So they were...you ran around with these kids, and, umm, there were clearly respectable kids in town too. You- did you'all run around together?

Kerry: I kind-of mixed between the two groups

Ken: There was actually a group of respectable kids?

Kerry: Yeah, they were afraid of the cedar chopper kids

Ken: Uh-huh

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Kerry: Cause they're pretty rough. I mean knife fights and stuff like that, that was just commonplace. You know, you're always gettin' in fights, and that's just the way they lived, they just lived a rough life

Ken: Is that, so, I'm just thinking of some of the names of the...Gary Spivey would have been about your age

Kerry: You're right, Gary, yeah, he was younger than me. We picked on Gary. The Spiveys were real close to me. I was like a part of their family for them

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: Gary's next older brother, Jimmy, I was between Jimmy and Joe Earl. His next two older brothers. His sister Linda and I were about the same age

Ken: Right, see, I live right next to Irene

Kerry: Irene was the young one, she was the baby...

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: ...either Irene or Gary, one or the other

Ken: You know where she lives?

Kerry: Nah

Ken: Well, she lives on my road

Kerry: She was the cutest one of the bunch, the most personable one of the whole Spivey bunch. She was the best one of the bunch.

Ken: She's still pretty cute

Kerry: Well, I haven't seen her in many years. I see Gary quite a bit

Ken: let's think of some other names, uh, gosh...

Kerry: Gary was a town boy. He wasn't a country boy

Ken: Right. He's the local historian in Liberty Hill now.

Kerry: He took over for James Vaughn. Jimmy Vaughn and I were best friends growing up

Ken: uh-huh

Kerry: and uh, Jimmy kind-of mixed with both crowds, like I did

Ken: Is that V A U G H A N?

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Kerry: VAUGHN I think.

Ken: 'cause there were, maybe a H A...I was talking to a buddy in Burnet and she talked about all the Vaughan's. She's a Vaughan and, uh,

Kerry: (silence)...it might be an A N.

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: I always get that confused. They, this Vaughn bunch around here, Mr. Sherman Vaughn was their grandfather. He had Pearsall he was the milkman in Liberty Hill. They have a bunch of kin folks down around Pearsall and that country, south of San Antonio.

Ken: Vickers, did you know Vickers?

Kerry: Oh, yeah, Gilbert was my age

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: The Cox's, Clyde and Cleo, we were in the same grade in school

Ken: Umm-hum

Kerry: We knew all of each other

Ken: Did you happen to know, go to school with...he was an ag teacher, Nathan Wetzel?

Kerry: Oh yeah, Mr. Wetzel

Ken: Did you go to his funeral, here in Georgetown

Kerry: We were gone, I think we were headed down by...I don't remember. I didn't go to the funeral. Nathan and Wendell McCloud and I all went to the school board together and kicked off the Fausts, all the Fausts who had dominated for years back in the '60's.

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: Late '60's, early '70's. Nathan was a good friend. Good friend.

Ken: He uh

Kerry: He and my dad were friends

Ken: I see. Well Nathan, I don't know how I got to know him in the first place, but when I first moved...I moved out there in '75, and, uh

Kerry: You've been there a while

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Ken: Yeah, I've been there a while. We lived in...it was the Whitt house. You know the Whitts, David Whitt?

Kerry: Yeah

Ken: All the Whitts, where, and that's where we grew up, we were on the...did you ever go out there? Beautiful pecan orchards down in there

Kerry: Yeah, over in there

Ken: So, anyways, Nathan Wetzel was my partner. We kept cows. Instead of him leasing the land from me we just divided it up. Pretty much every two or three days he'd come and I'd ride with him and that's how I was in the cow business. I learned a lot more than the cow business from Nathan Wetzel in the 10-15 years that I was with him

Kerry: Yeah

Ken: And, uh, he would start out a lot of sentences with "A man..." That was him.

Kerry: (laugh)

Ken: "A man" – "A man don't throw away bob wire"

Kerry: Right. Third person

Ken: And, another thing that always got me, and next to me was the Millers, who were a black family, right

Kerry: yeah

Ken: and he'd say "I bet your cows are over at the niggers' place"

Kerry: yeah

Ken, and so, you know, I had a real hard time when I had to introduce the subject because I'd say "I think the cows' over ... (laugh)

Kerry: (laugh together) See the Faubions were the ones that took care of us when we were kids, Lee Earl and Booker Faubion from Jenk's Branch.

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: So we was always close to the black folks over there. I got in more than one fight as a kid defending some black kid or something and I was on the school board when we legally did integration in Liberty Hill

Ken: Umm

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Kerry: It had, in fact, been integrated for years before that

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: That was in the '60's you know

Ken: Was there a lot of ... There wasn't a whole lot of racism in Liberty Hill, was there?

Kerry: There were a few people who were always very racist. It was sort'a like homosexuality. Nobody cared as long as nobody made a big issue of it. But then when you had some black rabble rousers come in, you know, making a big issue of it, then some of the white folks got their hackles up. They weren't really racist because they'd always gotten along well, but blacks were not equal.

Ken: Um-hum

Kerry: I mean, they were not treated as equal citizens except by a few families

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: Our family being one of them, and a number of other families. People are people. I grew up with racists I guess as anybody but, uh, you treat...I didn't care whether they were, what color they were, you treated them like they were people.

Ken: Were the kids, the cedar chopper kids

Kerry: Very racist

Ken: More racist?

Kerry: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Ken: I wonder why that is.

Kerry: I think it's their upbringing. They're very clannish, and I've written down names for you, basically, of these clans, basically of cedar choppers. That's the Scotch-Irish. That's why I feel sure that's the DNA. Very clannish, uh, family, tribal oriented. They were racist to the extent that blacks were different, but they were also racist towards other people too, Mexicans, Hispanics, anything like that.

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: Old Bay Picket was a black fella' out in that country when that was all cedar brakes out west of town, Hopewell and everything. Bay Picket had a place out there that he bought, a thousand acres or something. The other cedar choppers, white cedar choppers, they were hard on him. They just treated him like dirt. I mean he had more than they did, he was much more industrious than they were

Ken: Um-hum

Kerry: So they were very racist. Still are.

Ken: What are some of the names you are thinking about?

Kerry: OK, what I've written down for you is the ones I knew in Austin and the ones in Liberty Hill area. The Floyds and the Johns' were the ones that I was all close friends with, and the Floyd family, they were like family to me. The Johns' not so much, although they inter-married a lot. The Cantrells, they were all, they were about two generations removed from the cedar brakes. They come to town one generation ahead I guess. World War II brought a lot of these people out. Tommy Floyd, Johnny Johns, Punk Cantrell, a lot of those guys. They got, World War II brought them out of the woods and they just never went back, is what it amounts to.

Ken: Were they soldiers?

Kerry: They were all soldiers.

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: They were all GIs. Yeah, whether they all got drafted or volunteered, they all went to war. And the Mousers, I didn't know much about the Mousers. They were a true cedar chopper family, really rough. Rough folks, I mean – you needed -- you made sure you were well armed when you were around them. And you didn't want to bring a knife to a knife fight. You always wanted to bring a gun to a knife fight with these people

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: They were tough and they were mean. They'd kill ya as soon as look at ya.

Ken: Huh. I kind-of want you to talk about this meanness, you know, I mean, it's one thing to be independent, and...

Kerry: Hell, they just plain mean, a lot of these folks were, but it's the way they were, they was just so rough. I mean, uh, they inbred, you know, it was in the families, it was...they were all inbred, uh, the fathers were...their daughters were...they would have kids with their daughters. It was almost like the Mormon situation, only they just all inbred 'cause they were so clannish and they didn't spread out. And I was the last of...where there was a lot of that going on...my generation, I think. It was only some of them. It was more with that Austin bunch than with the Liberty Hill bunch because most of the Liberty Hill and Leander folk sort of come to town, like I said. They didn't go back to the woods. They were always country people, that's why they were...why I got close to them 'cause, because I preferred to live in the country...

Ken: Um-hum

Kerry: ...rather than town. I started to tell you in Liberty Hill, Jimmy Vaughn - it turns out he was a homosexual - my best friend. You know one of the Floyds, Ralph Floyd, well he and Jimmy and I were right at the edge ... right there in town, just standing down at the swimming hole

Ken: Blue Hole?

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Kerry: Yeah, I guess they call it the Blue Hole, the one down Martha Chapman Dam.

Ken: Yes, yes

Kerry: And, uh, I can't remember all the details. Mr. Sherman had an old H&R revolver. Killed my first deer with it, and he used it for fox hunting. We were always sneaking it out, a .22 revolver, and 'ol Ralph Floyd pulled up and he was gonna' butt fuck Jimmy as we say, and jumped out and grabbed Jimmy and was pulling his pants down and I told him to stop.

Ken: You serious?

Kerry: Oh, yeah, that's the way it was back then. You can watch Deliverance and that's the way it was. And, uh, I told him, we was about ten years old, I hollered at him to stop and he didn't stop and I just shot him in the knee – I kneecapped him. He was the first person I kneecapped. I kneecapped a few others after that. I was known for that in Liberty Hill. But, you know, he was crippled the rest of his life, and I actually went to his funeral to be sure he was dead. These were rough folks

Ken: Who, which Floyd was

Kerry: Ralph

Ken: How old would he have been at that time?

Kerry: He would have been, um, we were ten and he would have been about 18 or something like that.

Ken: No kidding, was he gay or was he just the way...

Kerry: They just big bullies, that's just the way they were. That was sex to them, it had nothing to do with homosexuality. But Jimmy – you know -- would put up with that shit, some of the other of us wouldn't. It was no different in Dallas, when I was a kid in Dallas later on - the gangs up there. It's not because they were cedar choppers they were mean, they was just mean. Some of them were real good folks, some of them were just mean.

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: Some of the Vickers boy were just mean as they come. Just mean. And some of them were just good folks. Don't ask me why some are and some aren't. But that's the mentality. That's the way it was when I was growing up. It was...you were expected to take care of yourself.

Ken: You've already dispelled some notions that I had in my own mind because I was, uh, I grew up in west Austin. We were pretty much city folks.

Kerry: Sure

Ken: We were as far, about as far west as you can get, but you know, we were, by today's estimation, pretty wild kids, I mean

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Kerry: Oh, yeah

Ken: I killed my first deer at seven, was running my first trap line at before junior high school

Kerry: Sure, sure

Ken: You know we had a – you know where Taylor’s Slough is? I was listening to Emmett Shelton, you’ve heard that name?

Kerry: Mr. Westlake Hills

Ken: Yes, and he made a whole bunch of tapes, and I was listening to a tape about what he called the “Peninsula” and he said ...

Kerry: He squatted a bunch of that land out there in Westlake

Ken: Emmett did?

Kerry: Yeah

Ken: Uh, he was talking about taking the cedar over to Taylor’s Slough, which is at the end of Exposition Boulevard. We build us a house boat when we were twelve years old. We had it there at Taylor ‘s Slough and for a whole summer, there was, you know, a little five horsepower engine on it

Kerry: Sure

Ken: We’d go out, no life preservers, stay out there all day, our parents ...

Kerry: You were rich kids. Us poor kids out in the country, we didn’t have stuff like that, we just had to make paddles out of ...

Ken: Uh-huh, OK, we probably were by ...

Kerry: By our standards, by Liberty Hill and Leander standards, ya’ll were rich

Ken: Yeah, yeah. As a matter of fact, when we got motor scooters at about fourteen we were

Kerry: Oh my gosh

Ken: What?

Kerry: Motor scooters ... wow! ... Jimmy Vaughn had the only motor scooter in Liberty Hill.

Ken: There you go, there you go. I was also, I made that, I was working at fourteen

Kerry: Sure

Ken: It wasn’t that we were rich, by your standards we were, we would actually come out, we would drive as far as Llano on our motor scooters

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Kerry: Oh my Gosh, an old Cushman

Ken: I had an old Cushman

Kerry: One of those kick-starters?

Ken: Yes, a friend of mine had a Vespa that

Kerry: Oh!

Ken: He kicked my butt with that Vespa

Kerry: Oh, yeah

Ken: The Cushman had a shake, but I'll never forget we would ride out and we would, like, taunt cedar choppers. We would, we would, one time I remember, we started, uh, we (laugh) got filled up with gas somewhere in the middle of nowhere. There were some really rough looking kids and we said, we started, f__ you, whatever. And before we started them, and we were like pushing them and they were running after us

Kerry: Right, right

Ken: But anyway, what I was getting at, was uh, I wondered, uh I was wondering whether we weren't, like, just, calling them a name, like hillbilly, you know what I mean?

Kerry: sure

Ken: just, it was a local name for ...

Kerry: white trash, white trash.

Ken: Exactly, exactly. But whether they were really that. Maybe they were just poor, poor hill country farming kids

Kerry: It could be

Ken: I mean they're cedar choppers. But they weren't...you're saying they weren't ...

Kerry: some were and some weren't

Ken: ... farming kids, you're saying they were a different breed

Kerry: Those were pretty much a different breed

Ken: Yes,

Kerry: These folks

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Ken: Yes, so there were real cedar choppers. And there were also, of course, were...everybody was pretty poor in rural hill country at that time

Kerry: Oh, sure. But some of them were, I might have listed the farmers, I mean the folks that were doing the farming: the Parkers, and all those other folks that cut cedar, but they were, I know they did whatever they could, but they were generally farming. These other folks were not. They lived in the woods and made their money cutting cedar or fishing, or you know, coon hunting, selling hides

Ken: Uh-hum

Kerry: Whatever it took to live in the woods

Ken: Um-hum

Kerry: still,

Ken: why do you think they didn't, uh, come out?

Kerry: they didn't want to

Ken: why not?

Kerry: Because they liked the woods and didn't particularly like people, just like about me. I mean, I, I relate to that. You go to Africa and other places you've been and people live in tribes there, South America, wherever, Southeast Asia. And we're trying to quote "civilize" them, make them like us

Ken: Um-hum

Kerry: And they don't want to be. Well, why don't you want to be, you should be like us. Well no, they have their own civilization and they're very happy with their private civilization. And they may not have long life spans, but it's what they want to be, and they don't want to adapt to our lifestyle. We're very presumptuous to think that our lifestyle is exactly the way everybody should live

Ken: Ok, so let me just play this one on you then. You know, I've been reading all about rural Texas in the 1920's on, and, of course, cotton was king. Even Liberty Hill there were gins, as you know, Williamson County was packed with cotton.

Kerry: Oh, absolutely

Ken: Just crowded.

Kerry: The eastside

Ken: Yes, particularly the eastside, and yet, in the 1930's there were more people in Williamson County than there were, I think, 20 years later

Kerry: Yup

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Ken: And what they'd done is that most of them had left the rural areas during the Depression and come out. But the cedar choppers were a different enough that they

Kerry: they didn't come out

Ken: they didn't come out?

Kerry: they didn't need to. Now, the folks that left the rural areas and came out were generally the dry land farmers.

Ken: Yes

Kerry: And you couldn't make a living at it. You couldn't survive at it. These folks in the woods, they survived regardless, or they didn't

Ken: Right

Kerry: I mean, you know, the infant mortality rate had to of been terribly high, 'cause they didn't come to town to have kids, the kids, they had 'em there, in the woods, shack, whatever they were in, or whatever.

Ken: Do you recall, did you ever go up, you said you stayed with some

Kerry: Oh, yeah

Ken: What were they like?

Kerry: Some of them were just lean-tos, some of them were pretty good little cabins, very few of them were built out of cedar posts, most of them were built out of scrap lumber and tin.

Ken: Did they have floors

Kerry: Some of them did, but very rarely. Mostly dirt floors

Ken: How did they cook?

Kerry: Wood stoves. Coal-oil lanterns, lights. And, most of them would have, they'd generally have their houses, cabins, whatever built by water where there was a spring, because there was a lot more springs back then than there are now

Ken: right

Kerry: And they'd have a spring cellar. That was their refrigerator.

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: But that was the same in town, I mean when I was a kid, I mean

Ken: Would they have a car?

Kerry: No, none of them had cars.

Ken: How did they get their cedar posts out?

Kerry: They had, somebody's have a truck, They'd haul, they would drag them, by horse, usually a mule, drag them out and stack them up. The people, the buyers, would then come. They'd stack them up by the road, that's why you always see the roads back in the cedar brakes still. You can tell the timeframe that that cedar was cut over by the width of that trail. If it was about four foot wide that means that they hauled them out with mules. If it was about six feet wide, or eight feet wide they had a truck, and old Model-T truck or something they drug the posts out with.

Ken: Did you ever cut cedar with them?

Kerry: Oh, yeah, still do, that's how I work

Ken: (with laughter) I mean with an axe and the whole nine yards

Kerry: With a cedar axe, you better believe it. Couldn't do it now, now I use a chainsaw

Ken: Do you recall how much you could cut a day, or how much they could cut a day?

Kerry: I don't recall. They'd cut – you'd be amazed at how much they could cut. That's how I learned how to sharpen an ax – from those folks. Tommy Floyd, naturally. You know, double bit cedar ax, sharp cedar ax. A six inch post, you know, probably five shrubs on each side, they'd have it down in two or three minutes, they'd have it chopped into a post within five minutes

Ken: I heard one hundred posts a day would not be ...

Kerry: Yeah, that wouldn't surprise me at all if that was a good cedar brake

Ken: would they be working on a day like today? (*note: it was well over 100 degrees*)

Kerry: They'd work anytime

Ken: I'm wondering if they got up early and tried to get their work in

Kerry: my memory is– because as we got older we just couldn't work in the middle of the day, some of those old fellas in the heat of the sun they'd work all day long. And there's nothing hotter than in a cedar brake

Ken: Oh, I know

Kerry: It'd have to be a hundred thirty, a hundred forty degree

Ken: It itches, cedar stuff all over you

Kerry: Don't think about that. In looking at some of the old pictures and how skinny they were and everything. All folks were then. Nobody had enough to eat and nobody drank that much water. You

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were taught not to drink water, to get by without drinking much, you know, just the opposite of what you should do so everybody's always dehydrated. I don't know how they survived. But they did.

Ken: Did they do much moonshinin' – do you recall?

Kerry: I don't recall. I'm sure they did, but I don't, I was not...have no knowledge of that.

Ken: That would go along with that Appalachian East-Texas

Kerry: I've heard they had, they did around here, but I – Cactus Pryor, you know, had some moonshining friends and everything back out west of Austin

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: Because his Daddy was in the bar business and he was too before he became well known

Ken: What happened to those folks in Liberty Hill? These people you're mentioning?

Kerry: There's a few of them still there. Most of them either died or moved away. I've been trying to think of that since we first talked, you know. I mean some of the Floyds, my generation of the Floyds, and the next generation – they're all about gone – dead. Don't see many Johns' anymore. There's a few Cantrells over there still

Ken: Yes

Kerry: on the other end of town, a successful business man, they – the Cantrells, that whole clan seemed to be much more mechanically oriented. I don't know why, but a number of them became good mechanics, like (Buck?) Cantrell and the others. All these folks are hard workers, I mean they just gonna work, make a living doing something

Ken: Yeah

Kerry: Mousers, I don't know what ever happened to them. Every once in a while I'll see in the paper one of them's killed somebody or something, arrested. They were like the Farmers in Austin, Jerry Farmer and that whole bunch, sh...., mean, just kill ya as soon as look at ya. Farmer's Grass?

Ken: Yeah, So I went to school with Dewey Farmer.

Kerry: Yeah, I remember you saying that. Jerry killed three or four people, you know, by the time he was a teenager. He was just as tough as – he wasn't mean but some of them were, but he was just tough. I was a mailman for them back in 60s Got to know 'em then in Austin

Ken: Were you a rural carrier

Kerry: No, I was a city carrier but back then when you didn't have seniority you carried to far-out routes. Everything west of Balcones then, on out to Spicewood Springs wasn't a rural route anymore, it was a

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city route, but I ended up with that route, that's why I delivered mail all out in there in Bull Creek and everything, you know, Lakewood, back in through there?

Ken: Yeah,

Kerry: It was a great route. Killed a lot of few turkeys out there. Always carried two or three big mail bags so if I shot a turkey I'd put 'em in. And that's how I got to know the Starks and the Cantwells ... Floyd Cantwell and all them out there when they had the junk yard. And old man Walter Stark and all his kids on Spicewood Springs.

Ken: Where was the junkyard?

Kerry: Stark was 4707- 4709. The junkyard would have been about the 4700 block. Dr. Hughes was 4600 (the vet) 4606.

Ken: Can you relate that to Mesa or to

Kerry: just west of Mesa, just west of Mesa

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: Long Canyon and along in there

Ken: Yes

Kerry: The junkyard was on the other side. It was on the south side

Ken: I can remember it, I'm picturing it now

Kerry: Yes, 'cause I'd stop out there and eat lunch with them a lot of the times

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: When I had my own lunch

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: I'd stop out there at the junkyard

Ken: Did you know the Boatrights out there?

Kerry: Yeah, I was gonna get to them. Because they were further out. The Boatrights were across Bull Creek

Ken: Yes

Kerry: And we had friends that married into that family. They've all become respectable, I guess, you know. And Floyd, you know, after he sold all that land, came up here and made a lot of money and settled around Leander. And the Fauries, his wife was a Faurie, F A U R I E, they settled up here at

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Briggs, they bought up there at Briggs, that's why you see all that stuff up there. My deal with Floyd, when he had the junkyard and I was a mailman along there

Ken: When you said "that stuff" you mean that junkyard up there at Briggs?

Kerry: Yes, Harold Faurie. He was a son. He was Floyd Cantwell's stepson

Ken: Ok

Ken: I always mix up the Cantwells and the Cantrells

Kerry: Yes, you can. The Cantrells are Liberty Hill. The Cantwells were Austin sort of people

Ken: Oh, OK

Kerry: I'll give this to you (tearing paper) the best I can remember

Ken: The Boatrights apparently was an old Texas name

Kerry: Oh, yeah

Ken: See, I delivered the...I had a rural route myself in Leander in 1975

Kerry: Right

Ken: It was Jim Boatright's wife Ruth Boatright was the postmistress there

Kerry: Right. I mean, they were cedar choppers way back there, but I had no experience with them. They were - when I delivered out in Spicewood Springs, later, you know, further out past Bull Creek when they took that into of the city, the Boatrights were out there, you know, they were upstanding folks, they were just regular folks. Cantwells and the Starks, they never did, I never know any of them that really became civilized, as we call it, they're just rough customers. Old man Walter and his kids, you know, some of them were always in the pen, and when they get out there was always having a shooting, or a big knife fight out there or something. Way back then, you know, I'd shoot anything as soon as look at it, and they respected me and we got along fine.

Ken: There's a Johnny Stark in Liberty Hill that I think's been there a long time

Kerry: I don't remember him

Ken: well, he'd be younger than us. He's probably the son of somebody

Kerry: Sure. They was tough customers. I had a deal with Floyd that any cars that were parked out on my route, you know, that looked like people had abandoned them, you know, I'd just tell him where they were. He'd come pick them up and give me five dollars for every one of them. I think it was five dollars, that sounds about right. He'd come and get them in the middle of the night. So, when people'd park in front of the mailbox, 'cause it was all rural-type delivery, you know what I'm talking about, the assholes, they wouldn't move their cars. You know, I'd give them two or three warnings, but I didn't go

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through the regular procedure or anything – cutting off the mail. I just told Floyd where the care was. They'd find their car had disappeared.

Ken: It ended up in the junkyard

Kerry: Yes, that's damn right. The cars

Ken, laugh, uh-huh

Kerry: I never had a lot of trouble on my route

Ken: laugh. Something happened to those cars. That's funny. I wonder if there. There is another name. Does Teague ring a bell?

Kerry: No

Ken: OK I knew them. I knew the Farmers, Those were the only two I knew for sure. Now the Farmers, my understanding from back then, was, you know, where 35th street splits by Wooldridge School

Kerry: Right

Ken: There was a ... if you're coming from the east you'd come to a peninsula like – a V

Kerry: Right

Ken: That's where the Farmer's lived. You recall that place? They squatted that place

Kerry: Yeah, sure they

Ken: And got it

Kerry: sure. You know, a lot of that land out there wasn't worth anything. Nobody wanted it.

Ken: What'd you pay for your Hopewell land back then?

Kerry: We bought it for, average, one hundred thirty dollars an acre.

Ken: What year?

Kerry: What year? That would have been '67 or '68

Ken: That is amazing. That's a great price because we paid, we thought we were getting a great deal, on the Whitt place, it was two hundred and sixty acre tracks, we bought it in '73 for about seven hundred dollars an acre.

Kerry: Yeah. That was a good deal

Ken: Yes, it was

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Kerry: Now Bob Armstrong, Jerry Sadler, I guess, was land commissioner, I guess, when we started that deal. My Daddy' was county attorney in Burnet then and he was handling it, Tommy Floyd and I worked the deal out and Daddy was doing the legal part of it, and Sadler, it had to be Jerry Sadler, now wasn't it? And Bob Armstrong got elected land commissioner and my Dad got to know him because of that and found out the other half of the place was going to be for sale and that's how he ended up buying that other half of the Proffitt place, three hundred acres, 'cause it adjoined all that land his Daddy's had

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: That ultimately he swapped with Southwestern. It adjoined the Southwestern land over there next to the Sunset Ranch

Ken: I've heard about that land but never been to it

Kerry: Yeah, and they had land over next to Southwestern so they ended up doing a land trade. That's how he ended up with as much land as he's got out there.

Ken: Does Southwestern still have that land?

Kerry: No, they swapped, totally

Ken: Oh, OK

Kerry: Armstrong ended up with all of it

Ken: OK

Kerry: I used to know how much it was, but I don't remember. It dropped off the canyons there on the west side of Lake Travis drainage. Because everything we got is on the Colorado drainage. We're right at where the drains divide

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: Let's see (moving papers) if I can find it here. Like I said, when I was a kid, when we were kids, nobody lived in any of that country back there. I mean it was just cedar brakes as far as you could...from Liberty Hill to Lake Travis there wasn't much civilized (moving papers). You could just take off and go as far as you wanted to. (papers moving) Here's 1869 and here's the Burnet / Williamson / Travis County line.

Ken: Right

Kerry: And we are on this little branch here. We're on that little branch – there is our place

Ken: Oh yeah

Kerry: And Bob's at the end of the road. He ended up with all this right in here. And all this, you know, is the Sunset land. The government, the feds, bought all that now, we're

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Ken: They bought, yeah, a whole lot of stuff. We're almost backed up to them ourselves

Kerry: They got three sides of us and we ended up selling the conservation easement

Ken: Yeah, right. See, that's ___we're right there, somewhere in here

Kerry: The Spivey place is right off, right there not far

Ken: Yeah, it's right next to us

Kerry: old man Joe's place

Ken: Yes, yes, right, we're right next to it

Kerry: Is that where Irene lives now?

Ken: Yes

Kerry: I didn't know that

Ken: Yeah, we're right next to her

Kerry: I'll be darned

Ken: She married Earl Gardner. What I'm really interested in, you know, cause the Whitts when we moved out there and we bought their house from them

Kerry: This was the old Robert's branch over here, you know

Ken: Oh, uh-huh

Kerry: I don't know if that was kin or not

Ken: Not mine

Kerry: But the other Roberts, that my mother grew up and everything with, they were right over here

Ken: Hum. I don't think we're kin to any of them. We're actually kin to the Faubians through, uh, marriage, but, uh, but I was thinking about the, the difference between the respectable people and the cedar choppers, you know, I'm just trying to

Kerry: yeah

Ken: I mean I'm gonna be, I'm going to be trying to understand, how much of this is sort of rural-urban myth, if you will. Talking to some of the people in Blanco County and stuff I've already heard stories, you know, that kind-of sounded like an urban myth. Someone was out necking in a car, you know, and their legs were sticking out, and they got chopped off with an axe

Kerry: Yeah

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Ken: you know, those kinds of things. It just sounds like a story that's just made up, you know, sort of a

Kerry: Maybe, maybe not

Ken: There's uh

Kerry: Because an axe is what they used. They always carried a double bitted cedar axe.

Ken: You mean just walking around town?

Kerry: Everywhere. It's like you or I carry a pocket knife or something, or carry a 45 automatic, you know, that's what you grew up with. A double bitted cedar axe was sort of an extension of their hand

Ken: Oh my goodness, and that's a very, I mean, they're very light aren't they?

Kerry: Oh yeah

Ken: That would be a very lethal weapon then

Kerry: (chuckle) absolutely

Ken: Really, really sharp

Kerry: Woosh! Very sharp. Razor sharp

Ken: You ever heard of anyone fighting with one?

Kerry: Oh, yeah, absolutely

Ken: That's a lethal fight. I mean that ...

Kerry: Usually pretty lethal, somebody dies

Ken: Anybody ever die? Anybody you've ever heard of?

Kerry: I don't remember but I'm sure they did. Like I say, you ever get in a squabble with those folks you need to come prepared for it. That's why I always carried a pistol when I was a kid. Always.

Ken: Always. Did I ever tell you the story, my friend and I went down

Kerry: Fishing?

Ken: Yeah, fishing

Kerry: But at the same time, folks like that, if you treat them like real folks

Ken: Exactly

Kerry: It'd take a while to get to know them, but if you treat 'em with a little respect, they'd be friends forever.

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Ken: Right, we disrespected them, I mean my friend did, that's --- I looked at him and I said "whoa" I don't think you should have done that, you know.

Kerry: Right, it's like anybody

Ken: Exactly, you don't have to laugh at someone

Kerry: You treat them with a little respect

Ken: They seriously wanted to make some money off the fish they caught

Kerry: Right. And I'd say, the vast majority of them were just good people.

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: You didn't want to mess with them, but they were good people, they had hard ways, and then there were a few crazy ones just like there are in any society

Ken: Right. Did they go to church?

Kerry: I don't know. That's not in my knowledge. They were hard drinkers so they wouldn't have been primitive Baptists, which a lot of the country folks here were.

Ken: Right. If they were hard drinkers were they buying it?

Kerry: They probably were making it

Ken: probably were making it

Kerry: That's why I say

Ken: You know there's a book out called the The Shin Oak Ridge folk

Kerry: Yeah. I may even have a copy of it here

Ken: Well I read it hoping to be illuminated and I wasn't until I finished it and I went -- what he says over and over and over again -- he would say we folks here in Liberty Hill and Florence, we are respectable people. We've become doctors and lawyers and we go to church and we do this...again and again and again. I was kind-of like "why do you keep saying this?"

Kerry: Because everybody treated them like white trash

Ken: Well I'm saying I think that's it.

Kerry: Sure

Ken: Because they were being mixed up with people they didn't want to be mixed up with. They're saying "we're not those people"

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Kerry: Sure. Your folks, in Austin, when us folks from out here in the country would come to Austin we were treated like white trash.

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: I mean, it's just the sociological difference.

Ken: Yeah, even though we weren't that far away from you

Kerry: No, uh-uh

Ken: from you

Kerry: It had nothing to do with anything. That's just the way it was.

Ken: So that, you think that's true, that what Bryson was doing in that book was saying "were not those people" We're respectable people.

Kerry: They tried, those folks back then, and the Brysons especially, tried to set themselves above everybody else, my kin folks, they thought they were better than my kin folks. They were the uppity folks in Liberty Hill. Uh, they were considered uppity, uh, by everybody else in town

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: But there was, I mean, everybody in town tried to set themselves far from the people out in the country. My folks didn't like me messing around with those cedar chopper kids. They called them cedar chopper kids,

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: that's bad.

Ken: And when you said people out in the country you wouldn't be talking about the Whitt's, would you?

Kerry: Could be but not really. They were considered town people, really, that had a country place. You see they weren't country people as such. And that's the farmer types and cedar choppers

Ken: There were farmer types?

Kerry: Farmer, and that's where you would differentiate. I guess you had three separate tiers here: you had the business people in town, like the Stubblefields, my kin folks

Ken: um-hum

Kerry: Then you had the farmers. The Roberts, The Parkers, The Kaufmans, all those folks

Ken: um-hum

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Kerry: And then you had the cedar choppers, you know, the Floyds, the Cantrells, the Johns', those folks like that

Ken: Do you think people ever went down? The Whitts for instance. I just can't believe that the house that we lived in for three years - we lived in the old Whitt house

Kerry: Right

Ken: The walls that separated the rooms were single board that were kept from warping by tin cans (click, click, click) nailed

Kerry: Sure

Ken: There was no insulation of course in the ceiling

Kerry: Sure

Ken: Tin roofs

Kerry: Right

Ken: And no insulation, just This time of day it would just be an oven

Kerry: Right. When I was a kid the roofs all leaked

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: You had pots catching the water

Ken: So that was the normal way a farmer kid would live

Kerry: People in town too, that was normal

Ken: And

Kerry: Most of the town house, the older houses in Liberty Hill were single wall. They weren't double wall construction. I mean I went back in as a young fella and did the double wall. I put electricity and plumbing in a lot of those houses in Liberty Hill. So, no, that was not unusual. Double wall houses probably didn't even start until probably the 20's and 30's.

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: 'Cause that just wasn't standard construction.

Ken: Do you think that the people like the Whitts and stuff, as times got rougher and tougher, that they turned into cedar chopper?. Did people ever turn into cedar choppers?

Kerry: No

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Ken: They never did, huh?

Kerry: Well, you have the survival mentality, individualistic, get along

Ken: Right

Kerry: But you don't turn into a cedar chopper. That's something you go away from, you don't go to it as a way to make a living. It may be a sort-of way of life to be a recluse, and drop out of society, but, umm, nah, you can't make a living at it.

Ken: Um-hum. You could make a living cutting cedar.

Kerry: No. You could make a thin living, I guess. Couldn't buy much

Ken: Right

Kerry: You'd have to live off the land. Just have to buy, all you could afford to buy is staples. You know like salt, sugar

Ken: Right, right

Kerry: Tobacco, bacon, that sort of thing

Ken: Do you think that they owned the land that they were on?

Kerry: None of them owned the land, a lot of them squatted it and ultimately owned

Ken: Through the squatter's rights. You were probably the lawyer on

Kerry: Sure, sure, adverse possession

Ken: How does that work, how many years do you have to do

Kerry: It varies from seven to twenty-one depending on what you're talking about

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: Usually seven to ten years

Ken: Which was not much back then

Kerry: Because nobody wanted the land. Nobody would claim it. You had non-resident land owners that owned it on the books, and a lot of that land just nobody claimed. I mean the Roberts Ranch, not the Roberts Ranch, the Sunset Ranch, the Rogers family, they had to struggle to keep their land from being adversely possessed by cedar choppers. When the Feds bought all that land, you know, getting the titles straightened out, that was a mess. 'Cause a lot of that Sunset Ranch, they didn't have clear title to it, 'cause other people had adverse claims to it.

Ken: When the Feds bought it for Balcones Canyon Lands Preserve?

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Kerry: Sure. Cause the Sunset Ranch, the Rogers family, was the biggest block of land that they bought

Ken: Yes

Kerry: They didn't buy the whole thing. They bought all but a little bit of it off Nameless Road or somewhere over in there

Ken: Yes, Nameless Road, you can still see it right where I come in

Kerry: I used to know but I don't keep us anymore. I mean, to tell you how it was back then, Emmett Jones, he and my granddad Jess Humphreys were good friends and my granddad came from a traveling minstrel family. I mean they were con men, just traveling around, I mean the whole family, just con artists, you know. All musicians. And when Emmett squatted most of Jonestown, over there, he and my granddad had a big scam going then. They had a gate across the road or something and they'd stop people and my granddad was the policeman and Emmett Jones was the judge. And they had a little shack there and they would fine them, you know, for whatever

Ken: Laughter

Kerry: I mean, that would have been in the 20's, maybe, somewhere along in there or a little before that. I mean, people don't realize now, that whole country was just uncivilized back then.

Ken: Well, I do realize it

Kerry: People like you do, but most people don't

Ken: Most people don't

Kerry: You're on your own, I mean, it's like, it was like a third world country

Ken: Uh-huh.

Kerry: That's the best way to describe it. A third world country

Ken: There was an article written in the Austin paper in 1990 by this long article called "Sundown of the Cedar Choppers"

Kerry: uh-huh

Ken: By a guy named Mark Lisher. I was talking about my project, when I was first doing it, to some of the professors, and later on one of them, a very erudite English professor, which means, says a lot these days. That means you're

Kerry: sure

Ken: ...post modern

Kerry: right

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Ken: You can't even read the stuff they write. And she said "we were all sittin' around talking about your project the other night." And I went oh, great – my reputation is already pretty 'Texas' and

Kerry: Yeah, it's going downhill

Ken: Its going downhill fast. But she said "no, no, it wasn't that." She said "My husband, when he first came to Austin, read this article and so he told me – he said I can't believe – where have I landed?" Because this was the last – the was one of the Boatrights, was living on Spicewood Springs Road at the time, and wrote a very, very good article.

Kerry: Right

Ken: And, uh, yeah, the change is just amazing

Kerry: yeah

Ken: There's nothing that – there really isn't anything else that's been done, there's nothing as good as that, and the other few pieces here and there, maybe five or six, *Texas Highways* article in the 60's, or Gary Cartright and *Texas Monthly* in the '80's, there's just nothing, nothing done.

Kerry: Well, it would have been the late '60's I guess when I was a mail carrier out there at Spicewood Springs and Bull Creek route, and, uh, a lot of times they'd be out there shooting at each other when I'd drive up, and they'd all stop shooting at each other, out at the junkyard and everything, the Starks especially, and let me pass through to deliver the mail 'cause they were hoping they'd get a welfare check or something in the mail, you know, Social Security check. And then I'd hear them, you know, starting again, bang, bang, bang. And the police, I mean Sherriff's Department wouldn't come out there and break them up and stuff like that. They'd just let 'em have it out.

Ken: What was the Stark's parent's name

Kerry: Walter Starks was the old man. In that period of time he would have been close to 70 I guess. And he had a bunch of sons that were our age

Ken: Um-hum

Kerry: I remember. I'll tell you a story. I'll tell you a couple of stories. They were 4707-4709. Odd numbers in Austin were always on the south or east side of streets. They kept them straight that way. They lived on the south side on the edge of that canyon. I – coming back – I'd been out – go out and deliver to Bull Creek area and come back and deliver to that side of Spicewood Springs coming back into town. Pulled up to the Stark's house there and one of the boys that had just gotten out of the pen – he was chasing old man Walter across the front yard, had a big butcher knife. I don't know what they were fighting about. This old man, you know, here is this young fella' chasing him with this butcher knife, and the old man run up to the driveway, and stopped and picked up a big ol' rock and he waited for that kid was about six foot from him – to turn around, and he stood, hit him right in the center, you know, just hit him in the head (loud 'smack' sound) down he goes. I figured he'd killed him, you know, but I'm

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puttin' the mail in the box watching, that old man just goes back up on the porch and gets in his rocking chair on the porch, 'cause those were all shanty houses out there, you know. Leaves the kid laying – I didn't ask anything, I just kept on about my business, you know, but it didn't kill him.

Ken: (laughs)

Kerry: Cause they was just tough old folks

Ken: You know all these names, I would love to, is there any way you could, your best recollection, do a family tree?

Kerry: maybe

Ken: Who was the dads, and who was the sons, and who they married.

Kerry: yeah, if you start something I could probably help you with it a little bit

Ken: OK

Kerry: Because my memory's gettin' so bad, but some of the names I could bounce back and forth. I may recognize them, I may not.

Ken: This is the most information I've gotten yet. You're the most informative person that I've talked to.

Kerry: That's pretty sad (Kerry laughs)

Ken: I'm just starting, you know

Kerry: Yeah

Ken: uh,

Kerry: Some of the things I was telling you that they did pull on me out there. They were always trying to catch rattlesnakes and put them in the mailbox.

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: So in the heat of the day, a day like this you know, you open the mailbox you know that snakes gonna' try and strike at'cha. They thought that was great fun. But, you know, I grew up catching rattlesnakes, and eatin' them and everything, so I'd always bang on the mailbox and hear for the rattle in there, and usually I'd open it up a little bit, to where I could grab, you know, hook the snake – I carried a snake stick with me anyway on the route to catch snakes. They'd invariably do it on the first of the month when they get their Social Security checks, or whatever government checks they were getting. The great thing I loved to do to them, and they'd all be sittin' up there watching me, I'd tap the mailbox, I'd hear the snake rattling, and depending on how hard it was rattling you could tell whether he was heat stroke and was going to bother you or not. Quick, throw the mail in there and clip the box closed

real quick before the snake could do anything and let them figure out how to get rid of that snake to come out there and get their check.

Ken: (laugh)

Kerry: The other thing they'd do that would really scare you to death is (and I've done that to people too) is they'd kill a snake, rattlesnake or whatever kind of snake, makes no difference, and they'd tie a string around its head, put it in the box, and then you know where the lid here is, tie a string to that lid so when the mailman comes up and flips that lid he just pulls that snake out like that.

Ken (laugh)

Kerry: That scares you to death. And the other big one they'd love to do is put a cat in the mailbox 'cause there's nothing worse than a cat that's been in the mailbox a couple of hours in the heat, and you open that lid and it's just gonna' come clawing all the way out. I got scratched so many times by cats doing that. And they was just good fun.

Ken: Yeah, I do remember jokes like that.

Kerry: Nobody thought anything of it. It was just sort-of the norm.

Ken: Uh-huh. Funny how they

Kerry: And now you'd go to the penitentiary for something like that (laugh)

Ken: Do you think any of that was kind of a resentment against the way things were changing

Kerry: Could be, I just don't know

Ken: you know, I'm in your face, you're

Kerry: I don't know 'cause it was just, it was just rough. It's just still, it's sort-of like the military now, special operations, Sam gets after me about, for my background in that field too you know. It's just rough, and you always, I, I guess it's just testosterone, you're always trying to show the other guy that you're tougher than he is

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: Whether you think about it or not. And there had to be a certain amount of that going on. I just don't know.

Ken: Were you in the Special Forces?

Kerry: I was a legalized draft dodger, as they say.

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: Yeah

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Ken: (laughter) I don't know what that is.

Kerry: I was trained by the Marine Corp. and, you know, they sent me over to the other government agencies so I was, I spent some time in Southeast Asia and other places

Ken: OK

Kerry: Nothing worth telling about, I was just a messenger, that's all I did, carry messages to people.

Ken: How could I find out the name of, you know, who's left and who's dead, and, you know what I mean, uh. Like you mentioned, why don't we just, the Farmer, who was Mr. Farmer?

Kerry: Jerry Farmer

Ken: My pen has just dried up. Got it. Jerry was the father.

Kerry: He was the middle one, and I know they were older than him, because Jerry would have been a little bit older than us, and Jerry, if he's still alive, would be in his 70's now

Ken: Umm. So he was the son of some of the

Kerry: Yeah, I would talk him, and the Starks, I don't know who's around of them. There's a bunch of Boatrights

Ken: Which Stark was the dad?

Kerry: Walter

Ken: Walter, um-hum

Kerry: And Walter would like, I say, been in his 70's I would think, 60's or 70's

Ken: In the '60's

Kerry: In the '60's

Ken: Um-hum. So he's passed away probably

Kerry: I would guess. If not somebody ought to shoot him the old son ...

Ken: He's over a hundred, if not

Kerry: Cantwells, Floyd Cantwell was sort-of the patriarch of that whole clan. Floyd's still alive I think. I think he's still down here in Leander.

Ken: He may be in Leander, huh Did he have....sure...the junkyard

Kerry: the junkyard

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Ken: right there on 2243

Kerry: 'cause I'd stopped and talked to him a few times

Ken: Sure. Yeah, yeah, he was alive ten years ago, I know for a fact

Kerry: I- the boys – I can't know their names

Ken: Uh-huh, uh-huh

Kerry: And he was married to a Faurie, and I can't remember her name. I think Harold was her son. Wasn't Floyd's son, but I think Harold - Harold was just a big 'ol boy as far as I remember him. A great big huge boy.

Ken: From another marriage, huh

Kerry: Yup, but they all inbred. I mean I don't know whether they were married or not, you know, just living together, whatever. And they lived in hovels and trash. Unbelievably bad. You'd go in the house and there was just literally trash. Garbage stacked everywhere and they'd have little trails through the house.

Ken: um-hum

Kerry: They burned tires for heat. That's what they burned for heat

Ken: I know people with PhD's where I've walked tunnels through their house

Kerry: uh-huh. Other names. There were a bunch of Cantwells that lived on Farley and Victor off of Braker Lane and 35. It was called "Rat's Flats" back then

Ken: Right

Kerry: The two streets were Farley and Victor and Middle Fiskville Road, and Sherm Cantwell sort-of the patriarch out there. I delivered mail there later on.

Ken: Middle Fiskville Road?

Kerry: Yeah, you know where Braker Lane and, uh

Ken: Braker?

Kerry: Braker B R A K E R

Ken: Yeah

Kerry: You know it and 35 comes together. There, just on the southwest corner there were just two or three streets in there that were called Rat's Flats.

Ken: Rat's Flats

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Kerry: 'cause that's where a bunch of the cedar choppers lived.

Ken: So these were already "citified" cedar choppers that had moved in from the hills

Kerry: Yeah. They were just thieves

Ken: uh-huh

Kerry: They were just criminals

Ken: Uh-huh. Yeah, there was a serious criminal element

Kerry: They were the bad criminal element then

Ken: yeah

Kerry: They were bad news then. Uh, my first wife's family, on her mother's side, the Williams. They were 'bout of that ilk because there was some of them living down there in Rats Flats. Yeah, it was, it was pretty bad.

Ken: And in Liberty Hill we've got the Floyds,

Kerry: Yeah, and I can introduce you to some of them, cause'

Ken: OK

Kerry: there's still a number of them living

Ken: uh-huh. And the Johns

Kerry: Yep,

Ken: Now the Johns

Kerry: I can't keep...there's got to be some of the around because I keep

Ken: Right there by us. You ever drive along Round Mountain Road in the last twenty years. There's sort-of a church up there you know 'Come to God'? That's the Johns right there.

Kerry: They and the Floyds, a lot of intermixing there between them. The Floyds were more decent. The Johns were meaner people than the Floyds, in my estimation. The Floyds were like family to me because I, you know, grew up with so many of them, then, you know, we bought our place out there with them, and Tommy Floyd was almost like a second father to me.

Ken: um-hum. The Cantrells. I think one of them worked at Southwestern. They live over by us I believe. That whole Round Mountain Road area, that just runs

Kerry: yeah

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Ken: You know, that is the divide, the county line

Kerry: Sure

Ken: Between the watersheds. That's just a cedar brake up there. So I'm guessing anybody that lived up there almost had to be a cedar chopper

Kerry: Yeah. Pretty much. And cedar chopper, is describing a socio-economic condition, not necessarily that they cut cedar for a living, in my mind

Ken: Yes. Well, that's sort-of where I'm coming from

Kerry: Yes

Ken: I'm trying to, I'm trying to disentangle the myth from the – everybody was poor, I think, well the Germans were, for instance, I talked, I sent out a letter to all of the County Historical Chairs. I figured that's as good a place to start as any

Kerry: Sure

Ken: for places I don't know, and the one that came back from Mason said "there were no cedar choppers here".

Kerry: (long-deep laugh)

Ken: It said "my dad cut cedar, but he was a German farmer." I wrote back and I said "my mom was German Texas. Basically, I guess what you're saying is your dad never paid anyone to cut cedar." She said "Yeah, he never paid anybody to do anything!" That's the German way of doing things.

Kerry: And totally different people. Totally different

Ken: Yeah. Well that's – there's an old man that I'm going to talk to, I'm talking 95, very sharp. I've talked to some very sharp old people and that makes me feel good about, maybe, the future.

Kerry: No it doesn't. It makes me feel bad. Because I'm not even close to their age and I'm

Ken: No, shut up. You were still remember addresses

Kerry: That's a mailman thing.

Ken: I did the same thing but I don't remember! OK – my route was Leander and I went all the way from Leander to 620, to give you an idea of the population back then.

Kerry: Right

Ken: That area – I would start that route with the worst part of it, which was the street that paralleled 183. There were two streets and a couple of cross streets right

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Kerry: Yep

Ken: right there that went south of Leander. That was some rough characters

Kerry: Right

Ken: I don't know if they were cedar choppers or not. They were just poor white folks, you know.

Kerry: They just criminals.

Ken: I ...

Kerry: They just rough folks.

Ken: (laugh) uh, yeah, I need to talk to the Cantrells.

Kerry: Yeah, the German heritage is totally different. Because, by and large, you know, everything they had is neat and well kept.

Ken: Yes

Kerry: And the Scotch-Irish were, were more trashy

Ken: Yep

Kerry: And my family's a mix so I see both sides of it. I

Ken: I had the same thing. Was your parent, your mother and father different?

Kerry: Very, yeah.

Ken: Which was

Kerry: My father was more Germanic, the Russell side.

Ken: uh-huh

Kerry: But they came through Ireland, but they came from Germany. And my mother was the Humphrey side from the Tennessee Hill Country, you know, which was the Scotch-Irish part

Ken: Right

Kerry: Hill country people, further generations back. Uh, but you could really see the difference.

Ken: My father is Scotch-Irish, and, uh, he had thirteen brothers and all but four of them died violently. He was the youngest of them, he was born in 1878 and they were involved in a post-reconstruction feud

Kerry: Right

Ken: But they were tough

Kerry: Sure

Ken: Tough guys

Kerry: Right

Ken: And, you know I always wondered who they were – early Texans – fought in the Civil War. My grandfather fought in the Civil War. Early Texans, you know.

Kerry: Right

Ken: “Hey, where’s my land”, you know? I didn’t get anything from them (laughs).

Kerry: Same with me (laughs)

Ken: (laughs) Whereas my mother is German Texas and, uh, even him marrying her in Austin back in the 20’s when they got married

Kerry: Right

Ken: She was born in 1902, and, uh, was actually a, sort-of-a step down

Kerry: yeah

Ken: You know, because the Germans were still discriminated against

Kerry: Right

Ken: Particularly after WWI.

Kerry: Right

Ken: And, uh, he, they, she, she was Catholic and he was Southern Baptist to the core

Kerry: Oh, yeah

Ken: And, uh, he would leave a Bible passage out and she would leave something else out

Kerry: (laugh loudly)

Ken: And I got the Baptist standard, and I got the, you know, I think they divided me, I went to Baptist school until I was seven and then I became a Catholic after that

Kerry: My dad was Baptist and my mother was Methodist, you know

(talking over each other)

Ken: They had me so mixed up by the time I was twelve years old I just went to ...

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Kerry: I didn't pay any attention to any of it from an early age so. Then went to the Jesuit school, with the Jesuits, you know

Ken: Where did you go to school? (still laughing)

Kerry: Dallas. My only full year of high school at one school was Jesuit in Dallas. And you know the Jesuits, they don't believe in anything except the Jesuits.

Ken: Exactly right

Kerry: They're not Catholic, so to speak, they might call themselves Catholics, but they're their own type.

Ken: Yeah

Kerry: It's a good training ground for the Marine Corp. (laughs)

Ken: (laugh) (laugh together). Well, this has been fun. Do you have any more stories you want to tell?

Kerry: Sure, 'cause I can't think of any right now, but we've got to follow up with it because it will jog my memory a little bit

Ken: Good

Kerry: But I can get you in touch with some of these folks for sure that might be able to help out and line you up with some of those people

Ken: I would love to. I don't know quite where this thing is going. You don't know much about my background. I'm interested, sort of, of how they, if you will, I mean, I, one thing, it could, were they, how they became cedar choppers

Kerry: Right

Ken: or whatever. I mean one thing they could have been sharecropping, could have been farming cotton, on other folks land back in the '30's, you know and then left high-and-dry by the Depression.

Kerry: I don't think so, I think they were prior to that

Ken: OK

Kerry: I think, I think you have to follow the immigration routes from East Texas

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: Into Central Texas and they just moved through East Texas 'cause there's so much similarity in that East Texas mentality of what you have with the Cedar Choppers here

Ken: Uh-huh

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Kerry: Just a rough way of life. Uh, and it's (laugh) you go back to spend some time in West Virginia and the back woods with a friend, back, way back yonder, went visiting him and his kinfolks and everything, it's just the same thing. Those mountain people

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: They're all the same mentality

Ken: Uh-huh. So, that's another thing then, they really, they could have been the early Cedar Choppers - charcoal burners - and just kept doin' that. Uh, I've heard also of camps, I mean there was a, there was a couple of them. There was one in Camp Wood

Kerry: Yeah

Ken: And they were recruiting people. They had hundreds of people

Kerry: Uh-huh

Ken: cutting cedar. So whether those folks were cedar choppers

Kerry: They were buyers

Ken: Poor

Kerry: Yeah, they were buyers, that were recruiting cedar choppers

Ken: Yes

Kerry: It's like I was telling you the way they did it, the generation before me, you know they'd drag it out, they'd pile the cedar posts up along the road and the buyers would come by and pick 'em up and leave them money. A lot of times they'd have a tin can nailed to a tree and that's, that was the medium of exchange...

Ken: Uh-hum

Kerry: ...there was never any face-to-face

Ken: Uh-hum

Kerry: Even when I was a kid, when we'd go to the lake, ride our bicycles over there and over cedar choppers that had homesteaded that country over there, and you'd have to go through their property in Smithwick to get down to it. They'd have a can nailed out there - put a nickel in, put a quarter in, you'd just put it in and go your way

Ken: Uh-hum

Kerry: You even did it while they were watching you

Ken: Uh-hum

Kerry: You just, you couldn't see them, but they were there

Ken: Uh-hum

Kerry: And if you'd try to stiff them they'd be down lookin' for ya.

Ken: Uh-huh, yeah

Kerry: But they'd not be able to, but once again there was an honesty in that

Ken: Yes

Kerry: Uh, anyway

Ken: I guess there's also a feeling that, you know these folks could afford it,

Kerry: Right

Ken: You know. And then we're just givin' our due back

Kerry: Um-hum

Ken: I don't know how I'm going to trace back the – I think you're right about the heritage

Kerry: I've thought about it, when we talked the other morning – I've been thinking about it since then – of how you trace where they came from

Ken: You think names?

Kerry: and the best way is to go through the families

Ken: Yes

Kerry: and start looking at the families

Ken: Right

Kerry: In the cemetery over at Liberty Hill would be a good place to start looking at headstones too and get much of the names

Ken: Right

Kerry: And the Hopewell cemetery right by us, you know you ought to go out there and look at that. 'Cause that's where (talking over each other)

Ken: right there on that little road off of 1869

Kerry: Right, 284, 286 or something like that

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Ken: Yes

Kerry: Before 286

Ken: Right

Kerry: That's our place

Ken: Yes, right. Yeah, that would be a good place. Is, uh, there's a cemetery on Old Spicewood Springs Road

Kerry: Yes

Ken: too

Kerry: right. I'd forgotten about that

Ken: It says "contact Lee Boatright if you want to

Kerry: Hey, Lee

Winnie: Yes

Kerry: What's uh, the Conns, the Boatrights – the son? Son-in-law?

Lee: Lee

Kerry: Was that Lee?

Lee: Uh-huh

Kerry: And his dad was Jim, is that right?

Lee: I don't know

Kerry: I think that's right

Ken: Who's that?

Kerry: Lee Boatright. Terry Conn, he's a professor down at UT.

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: Their daughter married, uh, his daughter married one of the Boatrights, Lee Boatright. What are they, fortyish?

Lee: Umm, yeah. Probably right – upper thirties and forties _____

Kerry: Yeah, I think he's taken on some of the family stuff, 'cause I think Jim was his dad that was doing a lot of the family stuff out at Spicewood Springs

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Ken: Jim. There was a Jim at 1431 who ran heavy equipment. He did...

Kerry: It could've been the same one

Ken: A real tall, lanky ? Was Ruth Boatright's son. And, you know, that the Boatrights were who became County Commissioners. Greg – does that ring a bell?

Kerry: Yeah

Ken: Yeah

Kerry: biggest crook that's ever lived

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: Know him well

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: But at least he stayed bought when you paid it.

Ken: That was Jim and Ruth's son. Would that be the same?

Kerry: Could be, but I, I don't think so

Ken: Um

Kerry: This is a different Jim

Ken: OK

Kerry: Yeah. 'Cause they were sort-of a Leander Boatrights at 1431. The Spicewood Springs' Boatrights were these others. But you could talk to Lee, I betch'a he'd get you, give you a bunch of history on them

Ken: And Lee is uh, being, uh, the Spicewood Springs

Kerry: son

Ken: son

Kerry: right. Of that clan.

Ken: I wish I could show you this, uh, magazine article. You'd probably recognize him because it's got a big picture of Boatright

Kerry: I bet I would

Ken: back in 2000 it was written.

Kerry: Yeah

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Ken: Yeah, I'm gona' come back, um, my plan

Kerry: The Boatrights, once again, they were, they were, in my timeframe, you know, they were not the real Cedar Choppers.

Ken: No

Kerry: They were civilized, I mean, they were upstanding folks.

Ken: Absolutely, she was a postmistress

Kerry: No, I mean, just the whole family, they were much more landowner oriented back then

Ken: Yes

Kerry: back then. And at the same timeframe, when these others, the Cantwells and the Starks, and all of them, they're still rough customers. (laugh)

Ken: (laugh) Yeah. Well, you know, I'm interested in kind-of how they were perceived, you know, by other folks too, I mean this is not, not just about...I'm not trying to tell a story about weird people

Kerry: Yeah

Ken: you know. I'll probably tell a story about a, sort-of a people that really were – I'm just formulating it in my own mind

Kerry: Sure

Ken: they were, you know, are really a part of the Hill Country and, uh, that really sort-of formed, if you were from the Hill Country, or West Austin, or wherever, they were a part of your reality

Kerry: Absolutely

Ken: you know. And, uh, where did they come from? What were they like? What happened to them?

Kerry: That's right. How did they integrate into society?

Ken: Exactly. You know, and, uh, yeah, I mean, what...I just think it's a story of, if it's true, and I think it might very well be, that they are sort-of – its Terry Jordan's thesis - the Texas Appalachians, came to the Hill Country. That these folks came from Appalachia directly, they came to the Ozarks from Appalachia. Came down to here, and they settled here, and he says, and I'm not so sure that I believe in sort-of romantic stories

Kerry: Frederick Law Olmsted

Ken: Who?

Kerry: "Frederick Law Olmsted..."

Ken: Yes

Kerry: "Journey Through Texas"

Ken: Yes

Kerry: I told you it'd pop in my mind

Ken: Yes, there you are! Uh (snap fingers) He said that they just sort-of saw something that reminded them of the hills of Tennessee and they loved it and they stayed.

Kerry: I think that's right

Ken: It retraces part of the explanation of why they didn't leave. I mean the Hill Country, I, I've always loved it and I came back to it. And bought this, you know, we got this land, it's in the family, but, you know, I came, I mean I love it still

Kerry: I'm back

Ken: Yeah, it's in your bones, you know.

Kerry: What was that your Daddy used to say, dear?

Lee: What? I'm sorry, I'm trimmin' my fingernails. What, dear?

Kerry: Something about the high Hill Country. Your Daddy had an expression.

Lee: Oh, I can't remember it at all

Kerry: But it said it all. There an old Virginia family, you know

Ken: Um-hum

Kerry: he said "you just can't take

Lee: I'll have to think about that.

Kerry: Something like "you can't take the high Hill Country out of 'em" or something...

Winnie: Yeah

Kerry: ...like that

Winnie: "You can take them out of the high Hill Country, but you can't take it out of them

Kerry: oh, that's right. "You can take them out of the high Hill Country, but you can't take it out of them."

Ken: Have you, uh, read Robert Caro's first volume

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Kerry: Yeah

Ken: where he talks about a trap baited with grass

Kerry: Absolutely

Ken: that's a beautiful writing, and, uh, you know it talks about these folks coming up, and over that old East Texas, you know...

Kerry: Sure

Ken...the black land prairie, bogging down, and they'd get up here and the springs were flowing

Kerry: oh my goodness

Ken: turkeys are all around, the deer, you could imagine what it must of – it seems that way. Uh, but anyway, so, all of the, you know, if they really were those folks, you know, that's a hell of a story.

Kerry: Sure it is

Ken: Because it's a, it's a story of, I mean the Appalachian thing has been taken apart and put back together a million times

Kerry: Uh-huh

Ken: and you know, and deconstructed, and all of this, and, uh, it's a story of actually, a whole lot. These people more isolated in a sense than the people in Appalachia, to a certain extent

Kerry: Right

Ken: And then with a much more dynamic culture coming right into their face, which was Austin in the 1960's and 1970's. You could hardly find a place that changed more rapidly. And so that's just a, it's a story of change, you know. And I don't really if anybody wants to read about it, or, you know, whether I can, I'm most worried about being able to tell it well, frankly.

Kerry: Yeah

Ken: But I don't want to sugar coat it, and I don't want to romanticize it, and I don't want to, uh, to uh, whatever you would call the opposite of that.

Kerry: It's just life

Ken: Yeah

Kerry: The thing that amazed me - everywhere I've been in the world, especially Southeast Asia living some among the Montagnard tribes, in the hill country of Vietnam and Laos and everything – of how similar all those people are. When I went to Africa – same there. Uh, Central American tribes and up

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and around and everything. The country folks – the woods folks, I think their mentality is so much the same everywhere in the world. They like their lifestyle.

Ken: Uh-hum

Kerry: It's the lifestyle they like. (laugh) To me it falls back in the basic clashes of civilization between the town people and the country people, between nomads, the nomadic people, and the settling people, you know, the agrarian settlers. And you read that, the historical

Ken: Uh-hum

Kerry: ____ there is. The nomads settled country had been the, uh, the agrarian townspeople - merchant class comes in and takes it over.

Ken: Right. I'd just reread Lonesome Dove...

Kerry: Yeah

Ken... this month

Kerry: (laugh)

Kerry: We watched it again the other day.

Kerry: That's a classic

Ken: It is, and I really enjoyed reading it. I see it here and there, you know, many times, but, uh

Kerry: When Sam and I were driving around rural Montana last month, you know, on our little expedition up there...

Ken: Yeah

Kerry: ...we talked about that because Lee and I just watched Lonesome Dove a month or two before, you know, the DVD and everything. What a change it was for these guys down on the border in Texas, you know...

Ken: Yeah

Kerry:...just, just a (laugh) totally different civ ... totally different, uh, experience.

Ken: Yeah. Just to talk about it – 'pretty soon there'd just be churches and schools. Schoolteachers here'

Kerry: That's right. 'You can't turn around'

Ken: Unt-uh. I mean, some of the lines were just so classic

Kerry: (laugh)

Ken: And they're from him, you know

Kerry: Sure

Ken: uh, they're from, uh, the writer. And, uh, what was it...one time, I read it to my wife, just the other night I read it and it was – he said "Woodrow," he said "are you a happy man?" and he said "what do you mean, what do you mean 'happy'? Happy when? I mean, when I'm doing what?"

Kerry: (laughs)

Ken: and he said..."I mean, just to be a free human being alive here on this earth."

Kerry: (laughs)

Ken: I don't know - he put it better than that.

Kerry: Well, Lee and I are a prime example. She's a happy person and I'm not!

Ken: (laugh)

Kerry: It's the Irish in me. I'm just not a happy person.

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: Doesn't anything keep me happy but basic nature

Ken: What you can do is marry a happy person

Kerry: That's right

Ken: I'm married to a woman that's never bored.

Kerry: Right

Ken: And she's always busy. Unfortunately she's busy in hobbies that cost money rather than saving money, you know, like making clothes or something like that

Kerry: I've heard that said about me.

Ken: (laugh). Well I'd better go.

Kerry: Just a second. I know you've got to leave

Ken: I know you have an appointment at...

Kerry: No, I don't...

Ken... Five o'clock

Kerry: You've got the five o'clock appointment. I've got the email that shows it.

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Ken: Oh, you're right, I do

Kerry: I have no appointment at all

Ken: OK

Kerry: (whistling) Yeah, everything, you know, basically what's now Route 1. Everything back was all cedar brakes

Ken: I know

Kerry: All this out here, you couldn't give that land away. I mean, none of that out there could you give away. Nobody wanted it – it was just worthless old land. Chalk rock and cedar brakes.

Ken: Um-hum

Kerry: In our generation – that's what's amazing.

Ken: I know, it is.

Kerry: And that stretch all backed up into here and it ended right in this country here cause this is where it changed over to prairie land

Ken: Um-hum

Kerry: You came up off the divide, I mean off the, uh, the brakes of the Colorado River, and then it rolled over here and sort-of become prairie from here on.

Ken: That's right

Kerry: That's just amazing, up there, you know, how it changed (laugh) Nothing.

Ken: It is funny how Real County, Camp Wood uh, this guy's saying, our only natural resources are rock and cedar, and he started this county history, but it's written by a bunch of different folks, and he said they didn't, they didn't want me to really write this chapter. But to write a chapter about Real County and not write a chapter about cedar is...

Kerry: Sure

Ken...is nuts.

Kerry: Sure

Ken: He wrote about the cedar people. And he said "you could see, you could tell 'em when they came" he said "He didn't come from a cedar family, but he had a cedar yard. He said you could tell 'em when they came into town – you could see 'em, but they were all good people.

Kerry: Yeah. They just had a different way.

Kerry Russell, at his house in Cedar Hollow off Hwy 29
August 7, 2011

Ken: Uh-huh Now I've heard other stories, uh, a fella' named Joel Hunnicutt in Johnson City, and he says he remembers Marble Falls as being a big place of Cedar Choppers. And he said he remembers seeing people looking very strange. He thought it was some inbreeding.

Kerry: There was. There was a huge amount of inbreeding. Huge amount. And, I mean that's why the IQ of them was so low in so many. That's why there was so much retardation in them, I'm sure. I mean a lot of them, just what they called slow back then, but it was, so much inbreeding, within the clans within the family, and once the family started branching out, probably in the '30's, maybe the '40's, once again, the Second World War pulls so many of the breeding population, the male breeding population out and away, and I think that's where it's broke a lot of them inbreeding right there.

Ken: I wonder if they all could get into the service. Weren't there tests?

Kerry: Nah

Ken: Not in WWII?

Kerry: (laugh)

Ken: (laugh) OK.

Kerry: It wasn't even bothered with.

Ken: Uh-huh-yeah.

Kerry: They just needed bodies. They were all veterans, I mean I didn't know any of them that didn't end up being drafted.

Ken: Yet they came back?

Kerry: They came back, but they came back very different. They didn't go back to the woods.

Ken: Uh-hum

Kerry: None of them went back to the woods. I mean they still liked the rural lifestyle, but, very different. And a lot of them brought wives back with them, or, you know, they just, I thought about that a lot, about how the inbreeding was broken and I think in this country that's what broke it.

Ken: Um-hum. I mean inbreeding just sounds, it's such a terrible, for me, a very terrible label to put on someone because it's implying, you know, molestation of their children.

Kerry: No, it's sex. That's not molestation. That's just a way of life. I mean you've got to put, you've got to stop and think from their perspective. From our perspective it's molestation. From their perspective it's the way of life. I mean I don't agree with it, don't get me wrong

Ken: uh-huh-right

Kerry: I don't, but if you try to think of it from their perspective there's nothing wrong. I mean it's like the Mormons. We condemn the Mormons, the polygamy and everything, but from their perspective it's their choice – it's how they want to live. Now I'm not talking about the twelve year old girls that – but still, that's their mentality, that's why they're so loyal, but that's their way of life. I don't agree with it, but that doesn't, I don't know whether that makes it right or wrong or whatever, but you can't, you can't look at it from our perspective and truly understand why they're the way they are. They don't see anything wrong with it.

Ken: I sort-of thought people throughout history always thought that inbreeding, I mean they found ways in which to keep inbreeding from happening.

Kerry: They tried to but that's strictly because of the mental retardation that goes with it.

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: To keep the species invigorated, the same with animals or anything else. When you have a closed gene pool, so to speak, it's gonna' _____

Ken: Right

Kerry: I mean, I think that's just keeping, that's just in your DNA

Ken: Yeah. So you don't think they saw anything wrong with it?

Kerry: No. That's what's hard, that's why it's hard for us in our society to understand, just a generation ago, how they were

Ken: Uh-huh

Kerry: And to look down on them. We just have a different perspective. Go anywhere overseas and any Third World country. Unless you can look at it from their perspective you gonna look down on those folks.

Ken: Of course, that's what I do for a living

Kerry: Uh-huh, that's why I'm saying

Ken: Yeah, right, yeah

Kerry: I know you can understand it. A lot of people I'd say it to can't understand it.

Ken: Right

Kerry: I mean me and Lee really saw it firsthand when we were in Zimbabwe a few years ago

Ken: Uh-huh

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Kerry: I mean, it's just, that's their way of life. She should understand it, coming from Virginia, you know, where they all inbreed anyhow, intensely. (she laughs) Yeah, yeah – 'cause nobody else is good enough for those Virginia folk.

Kerry: And they don't claim their cousins from West Virginia.

Ken: (laugh)

Kerry: Well I'd better stop. I mean....

End