

## Conversation with 77 year old white male, Pettigrew, Arkansas (Transcription)

Begin M37 B(5)

F: Uh-huh.

S: When we come here in the early day, I ain't kidding you I tell you there was I tell you there was millions of flies here. And during the Civil War I used to tell and old man <gap>, and he said the flies was so bad in them days, that they'd just like a swarm of bees. Following that chuck wagon.

F: Um.

S: You ought to hear him tell that.

F: Chuck Wagon?

S: Yeah, the cook wagon - where they cooked you know. The

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chuck wagon they called it.

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F: Would you drive stock?

S: Huh?

F: Would you drive stock? <And?> have a chuck wagon?

S: You don't think

F: Or would that be in the lumber logs?

S: No, they'd have a wagon, a covered wagon, you know, a big covered wagon, they would have four head of cattle or mules or something a-pulling it. They'd pull it you know and cook and thats where the soldiers got all their food. You know from the chuck wagon.

F: Uh-huh.

S: And this old boy he was a cook on a chuck wagon, he said he was drafted into the Army when he was 14 years old. And he made a cook. And you ought to hear him tell about that Civil War. I used to love to hear old people tell about it. One old girl here by the name of <unintelligible text>, and she said that she was married and had a family when the war broke out. They had three little girls and her husband drafted in there. And if they - if they bothered them or caused them a lot of trouble the government furnished someone to guard them they wouldn't let their husbands come back. They'd be <gap>. And she said that during the war - why she had one little girl starved to death. She said you couldn't hardly get food, and when over - that they got the hungry you know

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why she couldn't get food to bring her back up, and she died. And she said after the war and this is one I used to get the biggest laugh out of in there, she said they was short of food and they short of covers and beds and everything like that you know <gap> and she said if a woman come to stay all night with them, why her husband would get over behind, and she'd get in the middle and the woman in front. All three in the same bed. I got the biggest laugh out of that. And she said if it was a man they just reversed it. <gap>. I really laughed when she told that. And she said the next spring after <hat?> war had over with, said they'd just eat anything they could get as quick, as green stuff come up they'd commence picking and salad you know and poke salad or anything else and said they'd begin to eat out but when the little green things about like that she said boy it was rough a-going. And I'll bet it was too. And if it hadn't of been for lots of wild game in them days - there was lots of deer and everything in them days, and men would go out you know and kill them. If it wadn't of been for that they'd been lots of people starved to death.

F: Yeah.

S: And I had another man say to me I kept him three years he was a blind man, and he was just a boy nine years old when the war broke out. And he said he had one

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of the sweetest step-mothers that ever walked. And he said that him and her got out and they farmed, and they had a horse and a cow, said they made three hundred bushels of corn. And they had this corn in a big crib, and they said along come a bunch of soldiers, and they took the horse, killed the cow, and skinned her cut and went down and demanded her to get dinner for them, and said she cooked everything she had on the

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place - meat and everything, and when they got one they just went outside and set the house on fire and she run in and got a featherbed and throwed it out and one of the damn soldiers throwed it back in and she run in and got it again and and he throwed it back and the next time one of the soldiers said you son of a bitch you throw that back in he said I'll kill you. And that all they say. They had a pile of lumber out there don't know why they didn't set that on fire they was gonna build some more houses and said she took it, and cut a forked pole you know like that and they dug hole and set it in the ground then turned another pole down the popler and left this lumber up like this and then put two boards like that across it and that was the house they lived in. And he said the way they slept they took and got leaves and made a big bed of leaves in there and they'd take this old feather bed that she saved for a cover. And he said that she turned them into the government

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about it, and <gap> They said one day he was at the house and them soldiers come along and shot him. Oh them was rough days, boy.

F: You mentioned something that I'm interested in too,

S: What's that?

F: A lot of people will be I know you've helped <Leon?> over here, you come in to build part of his house? There's one thing about the Ozarks, like the old settlers built their own houses, and so do the new people don't they.

S: Yeah, well I'll tell you what. When I come to this country there was <gap> of homestead land here. Say a boy and a girl get married, and they go out here and take them up a piece of land, and everybody in this world would help them build 'em a house. Part of them

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would lay up the logs, and part of the would make the homemade shingles, and part of them do one thing and then another. And then when they'd get it all done, they'd have what they called a shindig. They'd have a dance you know and have a big time, and then if he was an average boy he'd go over here and maybe some guy had a big crib of corn and say, <unintelligible text> I wanna borrow ten or fifteen bushel corn he liked and make him a crop. And that all he needed for bread, and maybe to give his horse here or two. And in the Fall he'd pay it back. See. And that's the way they started out in life

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And people had a love for one another in this country. If somebody got sick, people would go in and set up with the sick. And if somebody died, it wouldn't make any difference how busy you was or how far behind you was you laid everything down part of them went and set up with the corpse, part of them went and made coffer, part of them went and dug a grave. And everything was free, gratis. No charge whatever. The only cost there'd be would be maybe buy some cloth to line the casket and maybe a handle and thats it. The rest of its all free. And when the Spanish flu went through here, in 1918, along there. They even took the ceilings out of their houses and give them to one another to make caskets out of.

Now that's the truth. Boy I went through it. Me and my dad we're we's bachelors then, lived in that old house, right out there. And Daddy setting there one night and you'd get on these old party telephone lines, we had them all through here in them days, and you never heard such crying and begging and pleading. Oh somebody come mother's dead, daddy's dead or brother and mother's dead you know and they'd lay there for weeks.

F: Did you have doctors?

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S: Huh?

F: Were there some doctors in Pettigrew that would come out?

S: Yeah, but gee whiz, there was so many sick people then

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rode day and night old <unintelligible text> died over there at Oark, I bet that old boy slept more in the saddle than he did anywhere else. Had a good horse you know, there because he'd got it. The horse'd take him back home, he wouldn't any more get back home than be on the rode again. And by gosh when Daddy said now listen we can't set there on our cans and listen at people beg like that and knowing they're a dying and all these things, he said we've got to help them. Now he said we won't go in the house but we'll go take care of the stock, cut their wood, gather up their eggs and milk the cow, and all them things, and put it at the door where they can get it. Now what killed a lot of people they just like me, they have this stock, and when they get to feeling a little bit better, they get out and try to take care of it, and take pheumonia. And when they did, it was just death. Right down there just above where you live there's a family name of <unintelligible text>, there was nine of them, when they got done there was one. There wadn't nothing to hear four and five dying in a family. And Daddy says we just can't set here and I said well Daddy if we go we might catch it. He said it don't make no difference, we do and we die - we got to go anyway. And you know we went every day and stayed all day long, and we took asafetide you know what asafetide is

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F: What is that?

S: Stinkingest damn thing in the world. And we'd eat garlic, that's another one. Boy you know you grow a smelly breath, running around eating garlic you know, boy its got an odor. And we'd take black <gap> - and Vicks salve and stuff like that and we doctored all the time just like we had it. And we went every day and we never did take it. We helped - right here in our neighborhood, there wadn't but one died. But we saved lives because we'd go and take and milk their cows and cut wood and do everything else you know. And keep them from coming out in the cold and all that and we kept that right up for around two months.

F: How many people would live in a township then, <unintelligible text>

S: Well I don't really know because every one of these old fields you see around had a family anywhere from I'd say anywhere from four to 12 and 13 in a family.

F: And they were making a living right?

S: Huh?

F: They were making a living?

S: Oh, shoot boy when we come here everyone of these places had the most beautiful apple orchards on them, and they'd take that fruit and dry, dry their peaches, dry their

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beans, dry their pears, dry their pumpkin and everything like that. I didn't even know when I was a kid a coming up til I come out here that you could do such a thing as

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dry a pumpkin. But they'd cut them in in ring, and peel them, pour out the little funnys in the side inside them and it'd have <unintelligilbe text> sticks. It'd have a string tied on each end of it, and they'd just untie it and run them there rings down that stick and hang them- just let them hang there and dry. Tell me why people said I wadn't going to eat them, I said why - they said hell they'd be a fly rooster. I said them days people didn't pay no attention to them things like that. I guess it was alright but I said hell you grow up where you don't pay no attention to that.

F: Yeah.

S: And when they'd get dry, they'd keep shoving them together and shoving them together so they'd take up a lot less room you know and put more on the and of the stick. And then when them gets good and dried you just take them off and snap them up in <gap> pieces and cook them and they're a damned eating if they did have a little flesh on them.

F: Always plenty to eat, then.

S: Huh?

F: The Ozarks would grow food, wouldn't they?



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S: Oh, you bet your live, and I started to tell you the <Storok?> Nursery Company from Louisiana started right over there.

F: Yeah.

S: Alright, they give you all the apple trees you want