

HOLLIS O'BIER CHILDRRESS

interviewed by

Mrs. W. A. Schmidt

October 1975

Ruby Schmidt Bicentennial Collection

ORAL HISTORIES OF FORT WORTH, INC.

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C: Hollis O'Bier Childress  
I: Interviewer, Mrs. W.A. Schmidt

(edited)

I: Now, if you will tell me your full name and when you were born and where.

C: Hollis O. Childress.

I: What's the "O" stand for?

C: O'Bier.

I: That's unusual.

C: It was a manufactured name. There's a long story back of that, I won't take time to get into. Hollis O. Childress. I was born March 12, 1892 where SMU is now in Dallas County.

I: And who were your parents?

C: Mr. and Mrs. S.T. Childress. His name was Sanford, her's was Rebecca Maud. Her maiden name was Simmons. My grandparent's names was Samuel Childress. They were originally from Louisiana--Opelousas.

I: Opelousas? And do you know why they came to Texas?

C: George Childress came from Tennessee early in the Texas history, related to my grandfather. He kept writing such glowing stories of Texas back to my grandfather back in Bowling Green, Kentucky, that my grandfather decided that he was going to migrate

to Texas. When my grandfather and grandmother were married they were given two young Negro couples. One from both sides of the house and he decided slavery was wrong. He freed those Negroes. The old, two old couples, didn't want freedom, they didn't know anything about freedom. They came with the family to Texas. My grandfather bought land where SMU is for one dollar an acre, and left from that place, the farm they bought, left to go to the Civil War. The two old Negroes, two old families, Negroes, and my grandmother took care of three children while he was off winning the Civil War. So that's the background.

- I: I bet he was a Union Soldier.
- C: No.
- I: You said "winning."
- C: Well, he was trying to win it.
- I: I was trying to decide maybe what Company he might have been in.
- C: It was with the Texas Calvary.
- I: But the mother and the faithful black friends were the ones that took care of you?
- C: Yeah. Well, they were actually ex-slaves.
- I: What were their names, did you ever hear?
- C: Their names is on tombstones. I remember one of them was Sarah, much to the disgust of my grandmother because her name was Sarah. But, of course, they had died before I came along and they had a little plot where they were buried on the farm there in Dallas County. When they died, they were just buried on the farm.

- I: Well, a lot of times some of the Blacks have difficulty in finding out who their grandparents and so forth were and that's the reason I was asking about that. You told me an interesting story about a move that sounded like it was rather a difficult move and something that people wouldn't understand nowadays but would you share that with me again? And why you all decided to make this move?
- C: When my grandfather's farm was divided, my father had 160 acres that was given him. They got a land boom on up there and some folks offered him \$40 an acre for the land. He couldn't farm land worth \$40 an acre, he sold out. And they made a trip to Johnson County hunting another farm. After making two or three trips, they finally bought land at \$12 an acre, had trouble with the title, couldn't move for one year and moved all his livestock and belongings to an old place called Farmers Branch. And in 1900 he secured the purchase of land in Johnson County and at Christmas 1900 we started the migration to go to Johnson County. And in December of that year we loaded up seven farm wagons, machinery, household goods, belongings and gathered up 12-15 brood mares, some mule colts--one to two years old, three old cows back of that and started out, headed for Johnson County. We left Farmers Branch in the afternoon and we got to Turtle Creek that evening, that night camped out on Turtle Creek. The next morning this whole menagerie, if you want to call it that, headed out into Main Street of Dallas, took the right turn after we got to Dallas on Elm Street and drove the cattle and mules, the horses and wagons straight through the center, the heart of Dallas and as the mules run up the alleys, side streets and so forth, people helped us get them together again and headed us on out west through Oak Cliff and headed for Johnson County. I have seen, you talk about mud, winter time come and you have to go to Dallas for supplies and I have seen the time when you had to go through that road there

and there was a road down through Turtle Creek, you would either have to go horseback or I have seen the front end of a wagon, two front wheels, with two mules hitched to it and a man sit on that running-gear and go to Dallas to bring supplies back. And talking about that mud, the first paving they ever tried to do in Dallas they went out there and cut Bois d' Arc blocks and set them on end and used that as paving. And you can imagine with those old Bois d'Arc blocks set end up and wagons going across the top of them and the noise and fuss.

I: I didn't know they were that many Bois d'Arc trees around here.

C: Not here.

I: Where did they get them?

C: Well, in when they first settled Dallas County up there, they had no barbed wire or very little and barbed wire was laid in fencing. They set these Bois d'Arc hedges out and used them for fence lines. Of course they would kill 25-30 yards of land along each side. But those things would grow up in a mass and briars grow in the main row of them and with those thorns cattle just didn't go through them.

I: Let's get back to this trip. Here I've got you and you are going through Dallas. And I know it took you several days. Tell me how long and you...

C: Well, to get from Farmers Branch to nine miles west of Cleburne took us six days.

I: Long time.

C: Well, it was what, 70 miles across there? But it was just slowly get along, keep those cows up with the wagons, perhaps I can better illustrate with what happened in a day. After spending the night in the

open, we slept under the wagons, you gather all your stock up and get them started down the lane or road that you are trying to travel. Of course, it wasn't a straight road, you went a while this way and a while that ways and zig-zagging through the country. And in the afternoon, one of the riders would go ahead, find water and try to find a farm place where they would let you put your stock in their pasture at night. And after a lot of "jewling" and talking around you usually would wind up and the farmer would accept a dollar for corralling your stock. Well, the next morning after you got breakfast and so forth, then you gathered your stock up out of this pasture and got the caravan started. And with the slow... with the time it took to gather your stock up, get them bedded down at night, there wasn't too much travel time.

I: It just occurred to me that you would have to have chickens, and they would have to be kept couped up.

C: We didn't bring any chickens. They were too mean to fool with and, of course, where we were going we could buy a few hens and start our chicken stock up again.

I: I assume there was already a house on this property that your daddy bought?

C: It was a log house originally and it was about 20 foot square. And it had been covered outside with weatherboarding and then it had been three rooms built onto it and when my father got it they tried to take axes in this main room and smooth the walls up, the logs to the point that they could weather board it. But this old oak was so dry and hard they never could get them smooth and they had to get what they called, well, it was a blacksmith nail to nail this weatherboarding on because ordinary nails wouldn't go in that oak. We never did get the wall anything like level, it had lots of waves. And it was, at least, it was warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

- I: That must have been first-grown oak. They say that the first trees that were cut were so much harder than the second and third and fourth growth had.
- C: Later, when that house was torn down, I decided that I wanted a piece of that oak. I took a saw, logs were just stacked out there, and I took a saw and I had one dickens of a time ever cutting a piece of that off, it was just like iron.
- I: How many children did your parents have? I know you had a brother and there was yourself.
- C: That's all, just two of us. He was younger.
- I: So then after you all got settled there in Johnson County, that was where you stayed then until you reached manhood, right?
- C: I was there until 1911. I was nineteen. We had a little community built up and became quite a prosperous little community.
- I: Cleburne?
- C: West of Cleburne.
- I: West of Cleburne. Did it have a name or anything?
- C: Bono. A little old spot that had two general stores and an apothecary shop and the farmers got together about 1907, I guess it was. Scattered all over the community was little one and two-teacher schools. They got together and decided to build a school house and they didn't know the word "consolidated" at that time but they were going to merge them. Any my father was very much in favor of it and one Saturday afternoon under a little old tabernacle, they called it, outdoor place that they held the summer revivals in, he started a great argument with all the farmers

and their wives that they would build a school in Bono, a school building. And to do it they were each farmer was going to give half his cotton crop that year to build a school building. The idea was finally sold, the farmers donated their time during the summer and they built a two-story school building, about seven rooms and they paid for it out of their own cash crop, half of that crop.

I: I think that's fantastic.

C: Luck played into their hands. A man named H.P. Warren had gotten a degree, his B.A. came from Yale, his M.A. came from Hotchkiss. He had ruined his health in working his way through college and at that period if you were run down, T.B. and so forth, you came south. And he happened to come to that community hunting a school teaching job and got it. And where they just had one and two teacher schools, they had a school headed up with a man with a B.A. and a M.A. degree.

I: Great, very unusual.

C: And not only did he have those degrees, but he was a real teacher. Folks in that community had never thought of going to college and he took a bunch of country youngsters there and gave them a vision of what an education meant and so forth. Shortly after-- we had him two years--shortly after there was six or seven that went from that little country community to college when if something like that hadn't happened, they would have probably really gotten no education. He got me fired up to the extent that I wanted to go to college, and my graduating year there I had to pay tuition for high school.

I: Why was that?

C: Well, the community, they were so strapped with and their money for running the school was low and that was just one of the schemes they had for helping



finance the school. And that year we planted cotton four times and never did get a stand--terrible drought. So in early September I got my horse and went down the Nolan River and found a spot down west of Rio Vista and had some cotton to pick and I got a cotton picking job. I got fifty cents a hundred picking it and we picked it out of the boll, of course, and I was down there seven weeks and made \$47. I spent \$35 of it on the seven months tuition and the other \$12 bought me a suit of clothes. Well, after I graduated that year I had found out my father was a whole lot smarter than I thought he was and I begin to counsel with him and we worked a deal out that we would let the farm hand go and I would stay home there for fifteen months, and we got together \$300 and I headed out for West Texas State which was the cheapest school, college, I knew anything about. My tuition was \$30. And after I got my first year at West Texas State, then the only thing I knew to do was to start teaching school.

I: With one year?

C: You see, that's what they called a state normal college. It was only two years and I was short on money and H.P. Warren had done a whole lot, this teacher I referred to, in giving us the idea of what we had to know, to get in college. He had given me a wonderful outline and the fifteen months I was home, I did a lot of work there. So I couldn't spend all my life in College. West Texas State was small. I propositioned them that if they would let me in the senior year, if I made the senior year, I could graduate; if I didn't, I didn't get anything.

I: But you had spent that fifteen months studying though before then, on your own.

C: Well, I hugged a bear...

I: I bet.

- C: But I made it. So I left there with a life-time certificate. There's where this friendship that I mentioned here in our conversation with Mr. Hill, head of the History Department. He became a god to me. In 1918, when R.B. Cousins resigned, they couldn't think of anybody but Dr. Hill to be president of the college and he was the god of that college until he reached the age that forced retirement.
- I: Quite a man.
- C: There never was, I don't think, a man that did as much for young people. Just never was a character quite like him. And he lived to the ripe old age of 95.
- I: He contributed a lot to the world.
- C: When he started, he wrote five or six histories after he was retired. His first history was written in 1913 and after his retirement he wrote four or five books.
- I: Well, he instilled the love of history in you.
- C: Yes, and in fact, he got me so interested in it that after I got my diploma, I came back to teach. Had a little three-teacher school out in the sands east of Cleburne.
- I: What was the name of the school?
- C: Midway School. Let me describe that school. There was an old two-room gun-shot house up on a hill, never had been painted, was well-ventilated. Rats wouldn't live in it because they couldn't survive and across the road north was an old run-down house that was used as a hay storage. And they moved the hay out of the way in the wintertime and had about three grades over there. Well, you see there was

three of us that took everything that came in from a community. Two teachers took everything up to the eighth grade. I took everything from the eighth grade that showed up. There were several of them older than I. And just across the road east of that place, and this was the thing that hung in my craw the whole time, there was a farm house there, two-story painted white, the barn was painted. People named Fisher lived there, five of the Fisher children came over from that kind of surroundings to this school. Why, in the summertime it just looked like an old deserted ghost house. I got terribly upset that folks didn't think any more of their children than that. The end of the first term we had a custom that they have some little closing exercises and they had an old kind of a porch beside this two-room affair that they used as a stage, just a bunch of old planks and was a little dangerous to walk across it, and an old curtain that you would put up across it. And then the custom was you would go out and announce that Susie wanted to recite "The boy stood on the burning deck" or something, and everybody gathered around. And they had these old kerosene torches, some poles up that you put a light on. Well, they had paid me \$60 this first year. They hired me again the next year for \$90. I reached my 21st birthday while I was teaching school out there and I guess I got a little big-headed and I was still a bit upset about the way they were treating, I thought, they were mistreating these children, especially from what I saw my old community do. Just before I left, when I announced the last number and pulled the curtain, the darn old curtain split in half right in the middle and that was the straw that broke the camel's back. I don't remember everything that I told them but I do remember telling them a few sentences that were pretty much to the point. I told them I didn't quite understand this community. I said I had been down there for six months and not a single parent has ever shown up at this school, and if I had been feeding hogs for you, you'd

come down and say, well, that young kid down there don't look too smart. I wonder if he's taking care of those hogs properly and you would have come down here to see about them.

I: That's right, they would have, too.

C: And I said another thing that I don't understand, why does Mr. Fisher, and I could point right across the road, why does he paint the house his children live in, paint the house that his hogs and calves live in and send the children across to this kind of a place. And the remarks were laregly along that line. I remember concluding that I would surely hope that they would begin to think as much of their children as they did their livestock. When I got through with my tirade, things were rather quiet and finally two or three clapped their hands. My father and mother, they had sold the farm then and moved to Cleburne, and they came out from Cleburne to see how their first-born got along at the closing ceremonies of this big school he was teaching. My father was rather quiet, but at breakfast next morning he said, "Hollis, I think when you come back, you will have either been fired or there will be a new school building up." Now I was headed back to Canyon that summer, Mr. Hill had so entranced me, the kind of man he was, and gotten me so interested in this history that I decided to take some of the savings of the immense salary I had drawn and go back out there through the summer school and take a post-graduate course in history under him. When I got back to Cleburne from the summer session, my father said that Mr. Jim Head wanted me to get in touch with him when I got home and he was head of the Trustees out at Midway. I went to see him and he wanted me to get in the buggy with him and take a little trip. Never did say what about and I was kind of stepping on eggshells, I didn't know what it was, a preliminary firing or what. And when we turned and drove around the hill and climbed up on it, where the old school building used to

be there was a neat three-room school building, brand new, painted white, new desks, new blackboard; it was quite an innovation.

I: How marvelous. I guess you were thrilled to death.

C: Yeah. He told me, he said, we knew you were deeply interested in this school building and when we were taking up the subscriptions to get it built, I put you down for \$25 and I said, "Well, Mr. Head, you'll have to wait until I get my first paycheck, I don't have \$25 left but it's the most cheerful money I ever paid in my life."

I: How long did you stay there after you had a nice new building to teach in?

C: Just that one year.

I: Is that right.

C: In 1914 I took typhoid the 25th day of July, that was the time they starved you to death, and if you survived the fever and starvation, you recovered from typhoid. So I was walking some in December. After I was up and walking around, I tell you I nearly starved to death. We didn't have any scales in the house at all and nearly a block some neighbors had a pair of scales and I was 6'1", weighed 95 pounds. So I was home then, my father sold the farm, traded it for a grocery store, and so I worked in the grocery store. Then I headed for West Texas to conquer West Texas as a school teacher. Finished up my teaching career at a little old town of Rochester in Haskell County, fourteen miles south of Knox City, eight miles north of Rule. Oh, it was a rather progressive little town, for that period. It was a pretty lively town, we had somewhere over 500 students. It was primitive, as far as that was concerned. It was quite a different story out there, but still the salaries were about the same. And I was young and egotistical. I found

out that they called the head of the school the superintendent and the next one was the principal. I was elected principal, at the princely sum of \$65 per month, but I was making a change. I was modest about the application. I applied for the principal's job, and the superintendent's the next year. It seemed the superintendent didn't care. They elected teachers every year. Well, they elected me superintendent the second year. And I was there and resigned at mid-term. Everybody that was unmarried was going to World War I. I had my Naval stamp--superintendent of schools got me out of the Navy. You had to have an affidavit to get a job, on the proposition that in 1919, if I could get home by the 11th of January, I agreed to teach in the Cleburne schools for six months. They got in touch with me out in Rochester and gave me \$200 per month for the session beginning in 1919. I went back--my father died Christmas--I couldn't take my mother to West Texas due to her health, so I resigned. Came home and started caring for her and running the grocery store my father left. And there's where the grocery store got started. Of course, I had during the summer time. This grocery store fascinated me and I worked at the store all the time.

- I: Did you have credit?
- C: Oh, credit, delivery, and all that. After a few years down there I got a bit aggressive and turned about to be fairly successful from the point of view of the grocery business. This self-serving idea came along and they put a store in there, called Piggly-Wiggly. That was that franchise thing you know, somebody paid premium to use the name. Had all these continuous aisles. I just thought that they're getting some business and if they want to trade that way, well all right. So I just rented the store building next to us and put me in a self-serving. If they wanted credit and delivery, the Childress Grocery and Market would handle them. If they wanted to buy Piggly-Wiggly

style, the Childress Self-Service Store would handle them. It was doing nicely, bought some bank stock, thought I was doing nicely and then Cleburne started the thing called bank-breaking. That was before it was popular. Had four good banks there, they broke every one of them. The town went clear to the bad, savings wiped out and I had gotten prosperous and met my wife. I was a confirmed bachelor until I met Blanche. We married at the height of my prosperity and two years later I had lost both of those stores and the town had gone to bad and I borrowed \$100 to come to Fort Worth. You can't imagine what happens to a town when something like that happens.

I: Well, how could they break the banks like that? And who were they?

C: Well, they had one bank that was stolen out. The banks were not regulated very much at that time. And people found out what happened there, they started to run in these other banks and you can break any bank if you suddenly draw your deposits out of it. And those stockholders would meet secretly and these banks still open, it would levy the assessment of 15% or 20% against stockholders to keep the bank open and then the word got out and they would intensify the run, so it finally wound up that at one time there was not a single bank open in that town. What little banking was done they was coming up to the little town of Joshua, little one-horse bank trying to bank. Millions of people whose credit had been good for years couldn't pay their bills. I've been cheated by customers, I've been cheated \$17,000 or \$18,000 worth of grocery bills in Cleburne I never did collect. It was just a question of starting over.

I: What year was this?

C: It was 1927. That's when I came to Fort Worth.

- I: Then it just got worse?
- C: Well, things were fairly good until 1929. See, the trouble Cleburne had was a little bit ahead of all of these banks. Things got some better here until the crash of 1929 came along. Oh, I was quite a smart young man, if you didn't believe it at that period, just ask me and I'd give you a few hints to let you know how smart I was.
- I: What were you doing up here in Fort Worth?
- C: I got a job. First job I got was a little old grocery store at \$20 a week.
- I: Where was it in Fort Worth?
- C: They called it Batter Cakes Flat, just west of the courthouse and it was a little old concern called Piggly-Wiggly here that was opening and had opened a lot of little bitty stores and this was one of them. This was their number 26. Besides this indebtedness I brought up here with me, I brought one of these Chandler cars, a narrow-long type. It was supposed to be quite an automobile and I had a \$20 a week job. And I got a little old apartment down on Summit, one room and a screened-in porch that had been converted into a kitchenette for \$30 a month. And imagine, when one of these kind of smart guys get married to one of the best-dressed girls that Cleburne had ever seen and one of the best piano teachers, organist, and so forth and I dragged her through that.
- I: Well, I don't know, I think love had something to do with that too.
- C: She was true blue. Incidentally, her final service was a year ago yesterday.



- I: Well, this is going to be sort of like a memorial to her fortitude and her life. You never did tell me her full name, her maiden name.
- C: Una Blanche Whitenach. German. Her father was a Sante Fe engineer for thirty-seven years.
- I: And they lived there in Cleburne?
- C: Yes.
- I: Well, the two of you had set up housekeeping over there on Summit. Did she start teaching here in Fort Worth?
- C: She taught a little bit, not too much. I discouraged all this teaching business. I thought a man ought to support his wife but they did talk her into taking a job as organist out at Polytechnic Methodist Church and she was organist out there quite a number of years. And was a member of the Organist Guild here and so forth and later became quite active in the Women's Club and Euterpean Club and that kind of thing. She spent quite an active life.
- I: You have too. When did all this speaking take place that you became so well-known for?
- C: Well, I don't know that I was well known for that. But it all just came about through...when we finally got in business here, I just took my place among the business people, and in that process you were called on. Oh, you get into, for instance, I was in the Lions Club and participated in the Community Chest drives and that kind of thing. I talked too much and got terribly mixed up in Business Education Days that was initiated here in Fort Worth when all the schools turned out for one day and these teachers, you had a group of teachers all day long and you took them back to the scene, what goes on in a business.

- I: Sounds like a good idea.
- C: It was one of those things that was unbelievable. When the idea came along, it was the Chamber of Commerce idea. I thought it was wonderful. I had been in a school room and I knew how little a school teacher knew about what their children were going into, to earn a living. And I put up such an argument for it and talked too loud, and I was put in charge of it.
- I: You were just getting started here in Fort Worth and I know there is a big story there.
- C: Oh, I can brief that. Let me background what was going on in the grocery business at that time in Fort Worth. They had, as I say, there was 26 of those little bitty Piggly-Wigglies, a very small store. Then from Dallas, a man was over there that started a grocery concern and he called it Help Yourself, patterned very much after this self-serving idea. He had sold out in Dallas and came to Fort Worth and he was putting in some small stores here called Help Yourself. I worked for this Piggly-Wiggly a short time and Jack Long hired me. He was the Help Yourself man and I was trying to get a new start. Help Yourself was being backed by Waples-Platter wholesale grocery company. And they were in financial trouble. Then there was a man named Ernest Alexander who came up here from Houston, and had a store built for him down here on Camp Bowie Boulevard and he called it Alexander Bales and he opened up a larger store. He even had a coffee shop in it and so forth. Then he later opened a similar store at 526 South Henderson, Alexander Bales #2. Waples was backing both of them. I knew that the Help Yourself here was going to fall apart. I had gotten to a point in that organization so I knew the whole inside workings. Ernest Alexander was in trouble, Jack Long was in trouble, Waples was in trouble. So Waples had a so-called sale, merged

the two organizations, but Alexander bought it out and not Jack Long. And looked like I was getting left out in the cold. But I went over to see Ernest, Ernest hired me. So I was sitting there waiting for everything to fly apart to see if I couldn't grab something, to get another start. After the merger took place, that was in April, I had become quite the one man that Ernest Alexander would talk to and work with a bit, and he put his straw hat on one day and walked out and told Waples-Platter to take it over. He left Waples-Platter with 13 stores and a tremendous debt. Waples couldn't afford to let it go broke, a big accounts receivable would have to be wiped out and their statement wouldn't stand it. Lloyd propositioned a man that had just come in out there with Ernest. Ernest sold him into it without him knowing anything about it. Lloyd McKee sold Ira Kirshner, myself and Homer Covey. He wanted Homer to come out from Waples, to represent Waples, for us to run it awhile. Well, we started in, everybody knew it was going broke, everybody was trying to get some of the back money. I was trying to buy merchandise and so forth. I kept putting it off with bankruptcy. Lloyd McKee died and it came to a head and Ira, Homer and myself finally got a few folks to loan us \$30,000 and we bought the mess out of the Bankrupt Court.

I: What year was this?

C: This was in 1935. We had 13 stores and we had a total merchandising inventory of \$35,000. Fifty percent of it was practically unsaveable. It was a mistake in buys, and a bunch of run-down stores. We started in and worked it out and then in 1955, twenty years later we sold it. We then had 21 stores, we had more merchandise. Lots of the stores, one store was a total value of all the merchandise we had in the 13 and we got rid of the little old stores and got into the stores of 10,000 and above square feet. A lot of those other stores were only about 2,500 square feet.

- I: That took a lot of business knowledge and lots of work.
- C: Oh, you can't imagine what we went through the first few years. We ran those stores, especially I worked hard because I was back of the scene most of the time. We drew \$50 a week and kept on building, Finally when we did get to make a little money, we still lived as close as we could and used any profit we made in developing the store.
- I: That's the way to do business, though.
- C: Not because I was in it, but it was a highly successful grocery operation that at the time we sold out, there was a lot of people patterned after our operation.
- I: What made you decide to call it the name you did?
- C: Trying to get clear away from any of the other names and trying to take...we were advertising ourselves as a home-owned institution.
- I: So that's why you called it Worth.
- C: And we were trying to tie in with the City of Fort Worth and one of the things that first struck me about it when we were trying to figure a name, there was the Worth Theater, Worth Hotel and I was going to call it Worth Food Store. Ira Kirshnek, his background was meat; he put up a terrible argument that a market meant more than just a meat outfit and let's call them Worth Food Market. And that's the way we did it. The people who bought us out was using Food Mart. They were an El Paso concern and they changed the name to Worth Food Mart. And then the people that they sold out to went back to that Piggly-Wiggly idea.
- I: After all those years.

- C: They were operating under that trade name of Piggly Wiggly, it's a holding company that sells the right of a name.
- I: I see.
- C: That doesn't mean that it was a national Piggly Wiggly, like Safeway or something.
- I: Well, I had never really understood that. Did you see an article in the paper recently about them restoring that old building down in Waxahachie where they used to have all the public speaking and everybody came around and so forth?
- C: No, I didn't notice that.
- I: Well, they are restoring it and I was wondering if you ever went down there and had anything to do with that in your younger days.
- C: No.
- I: I would love to find someone that had had some contact with that. I think that would make a real good interview. I know you had children. What were your children's names?
- C: Well, I have a daughter. Her name is Alice Ann. She married a boy by the name of Long.
- I: That was your granddaughter that I saw in the other room.
- C: Yes. When we built this house we built it looking to the future. And the arrangement, while it doesn't appear that way, lends ideally to more than one family, as a matter of fact.
- I: It's a beautiful home.

C: I had this log cabin background. Blanche's family had a nice frame house in Cleburne and she was used to all this and she was always houseminded and I wanted something besides a log cabin. Blanche and I drew house plans before we were married. And then, as I say, everything blew up in Cleburne and it was 25 years before we ever got to build this house. And the ideas have changed a whole lot and when we built this house dreams of all that period and the house is very extravagantly built. We couldn't justify it, the construction is unbelievable. Then we wanted traditional furniture and at the time we built it we couldn't get traditional furniture, they had gone to the modern. And item by item almost Blanche accumulated it. And this house was her pride and joy. We tried to build it, as I say, looking to the future. Because we weren't going to build another one. And in here put a bathroom and an awfully big closet side by side with the idea that this would be a downstairs bedroom. She went to the hospital, she had been having quite a bit of trouble for a few years. I had to take her to the hospital the 5th of November three years ago, went for an entirely different idea. But they told me she had cancer. At one time gave her just a few hours to live and that kind of thing. We tried the new medicine... The upshot of it was that after I had her down there 100 days, the treatment became routine. Then this room came in handy. I just got Dr. Rawl and told him what I was going to do and I brought her home. We set her bed just in there, the bathroom was there and right here through the kitchen door and I had three of the most wonderful nurses that were with her. And I had her here for 19½ months.

I: That's extraordinary.

C: If I hadn't gotten her away from the hospital she'd never have lasted that long.

I: Well, I have been down that road with people I care for very much and I know exactly what you are talking

about. There's something about being in your own home with your loved ones that just gives you that extra strength.

C: When she came out of the hospital nobody had any idea that she was going to live any time. It was just those nurses and the little extra care that pulled the scales and then when we got this routine treatment. I was kind of hinting about maybe moving and he said, "Oh, Hollis, you can't possibly keep her any place but right here, for the short time she's got left." But I had already made my plans and the next night he came in there at 7:30 and I took him out in the hallway and told him -- do you know D. Neighbors? He's hard-headed, wonderful doctor but he's hard-headed. I told D., I said, "D., you sit down there and don't you open your mouth until I get through talking." I told him my whole plan and he was hard as nails and he said, "When do you want to do this?" And I said, "She's got some more tests on Saturday morning and I want to take her home Sunday morning." He said all right. We slipped her out here with the double doors there. Of course, the nurses took turns on that bed. She went to sleep and slept two or three hours. They had been force feeding her down there and the nurses kept talking to her about eating, feeding her as needed. Finally about the tenth day she was hungry. She hadn't had any tamales for a long time. And it didn't take an act of congress to get it or forty hours like it does at the hospital. They gave her two tamales and she ate all of them. The next day they talked her into something else. Within a week she was eating a pretty fair meal and D. Neighbors stood right there on the front porch after she had been out here for just a little over two weeks and said, "Hollis, you sure hit the jackpot when you brought her home, didn't we?" We went through all kinds of things together but I was able to give her everything that anybody knew anything about and could have here in this family surrounding that she had created.

- I: And your love, that's just part of it.
- C: Now when she was down at the hospital I would go down there twice a day and all that kind of thing but when I got home, I didn't know what was happening down there and you're five miles and several stories high. When I got her home if I got to wondering what was going on, I could slip a robe on and go downstairs.
- I: That's very reassuring too. Can you think of anything that you might think of that would be a suggestion to the young people in what makes the world go around and how to accomplish a happy life?
- C: It would be some question to answer.
- I: When you get the real answer, I'll be the first one to take the advice.
- C: Naturally, a happy marriage has more to do with it than anything.
- I: A great deal.
- C: I know with our men, if they had a happy marriage they had a good foundation and if they didn't they didn't have anything.

END OF INTERVIEW