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Interviewee: Trogie Shankle
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Speaker Identification:
Lareatha Clay: LC
Trogie Shankle: TS

TRANSCRIPT BEGIN

LC: Today is Saturday, August the second. Sir?

TS: It's the first.

LC: It's the second, isn't it? It's the second. You're a day off!

[Laughter]

But I did hear you. Today is August the second and we are in the Methodist Church of the Shankleville Community. This is an interview between Lareatha Clay and Trogie Shankle as part of the Shankleville Oral History Project.

Okay. First, Cousin Trogie—tell us again how you are related to Jim and Winnie Shankle?

TS: Houston Shankle was my grandfather. And Houston Shankle was Jim and Winnie's son. Same thing that Aunt Harriet was. Aunt Harriet was their daughter.

LC: And Aunt Harriet is my great-great-great-grandmother. Okay. So how did you end up living in the Liberty Community as opposed to the Shankleville Community?

TS: Well—

LC: And speak up a little bit.

TS: My granddaddy had two places that when my daddy got married they didn't have a place on Quicksand—

LC: Quicksand is a creek—

TS: Yes. And that's where he went and raised his family. And we walked back and forth there up here to church all the time.

LC: So you went to Mount Zion?

TS: Yes. That's right.

LC: So Houston Shankle had a place in Shankleville and in Liberty?

TS: That's right.

LC: Who ended up in the Shankleville Community—living on the land there?

TS: Well you take Willie Pate—he still live here in Shankleville. And Houston, John, and Henry all had a place in Shankleville. Yeah.

LC: Okay. So when you were growing up—you were living in Liberty but you spent a lot of time—

TS: But I come down here. Yeah.

LC: Okay. So how did it feel to be in a community that had the same name as you had?

TS: Well it's something you can't hardly help. I don't know people with it got their family name after a community.

LC: Did people treat you any differently?

TS: Well they don't treat me no different—but some of them do and some of them don't. You hide and some start and some wont.

LC: So tell me about how it was growing up here?

TS: Well it was [inaudible]—we rode horses and mules to church on Sunday. Come in wagon. And we have dinner after service. And they'd then have evening service then go back home in wagons. And folk would walk. It was a whole lot different than it is now. Where it take us an hour or two—now is a minute or two.

LC: Oh. To go from here to where you lived would be an hour?

TS: That's right. You take where I live now—it's about a 10-minute drive. Well when I was coming up it was from hour to two hours. We didn't have no good road—didn't have no bridges—wasn't no convenient(??) at all.

LC: But y'all still made it over here—

TS: We still come here.

LC: So why did y'all decide to come to church over here as opposed to in Liberty?

TS: Well at that time it wasn't nobody hardly down there. And wasn't enough people to have no church. You see, Old Man Jim—this church and that cemetery over there—he deed it to the Shankle family—you understand? And that's why this was set aside for the church.

LC: Okay. So the whole Shankle family was basically a part of this church because of Jim Shankle.

TS: Yes. And after so long a time they pull off and went up there to the Holdings(??) Church.

LC: Who pulled off?

TS: Oh. Ed Shank—Avie(??)—and let's see who all else—Frank Brown—he married into the Shankle family. And they went up there to the Holdings(??) Church. Yeah.

LC: Other than church—what did you do when you were growing up in this community?

TS: Well that's all because I went to school down there at Liberty.

LC: What was the name of that school?

TS: Liberty.

LC: Who was the teacher?

TS: When I first went to school it was Doris(??) McGuire was the teacher. That was in 1916-1917.

LC: Okay. Did y'all farm or do carpentry?

TS: Well Papa worked out on the trail—along there they had railroad tracks all through here picking up the load and carrying them to somewhere.

LC: And he worked on the—

TS: On the railroad track.

LC: As kids—how many children were in your family?

TS: Four.

LC: What were their names?

TS: Let's see—Trogie, Chaney Terece and Collier and Percy.

LC: Are you the only one who's still alive?

TS: I'm the only one left.

LC: Were you the baby?

TS: I'm the oldest.

LC: You're the oldest. Okay.

TS: I outlived the whole family.

LC: When you were growing up with your brothers and sisters—what kinds of responsibilities did y'all have?

TS: Well I had to help mother see to the other children—that was my job.

[Laughter]

You know old folk—it's different now from what was when I come up. That first kid was responsible for what that family does. You have to see to them. Help them out there. You

understand? But now they don't care nothing about—you get out and go play! You go to such-a-such-a-place! Don't want to be worried about their children. When I was a kid people wanted to know where their children was. I know people—if their children were out there getting into a fight they were out there looking for them. It ain't that way no more. “Where you baby at?” “I don't know he left here this morning” —you know how you are. Yeah it's a whole lot—another world.

LC: That's true. Okay. How about this—I'm just trying to get a feel for how it was growing up.

TS: Well you see around then people's cash crop was cotton.

LC: Oh I didn't know they grew cotton in Shankleville—in this area.

TS: Oh yeah! They used to grow cotton in here.

LC: Really?

TS: Oh yes. Since I've been a married man I've grown cotton—eight, nine bales myself—down at Liberty. Yes. And have corn patches. In other words, when I was a kid people didn't hardly buy nothing. They had rice, syrup, peas and beans of all kinds—they grewed such as that. But now [laughs] it ain't no more.

LC: Why did you decide when you grew up to stay in this area—as opposed to move away?

TS: Well. I fool around and take the notion to marry. And it was a county girl and I was a country boy. And we just see what we could make a living easiest. In other words—when I was a young man—Wiergate was a popular saw mill it was in Texas—let's see—yeah Wiergate it turned out in 1916 when it started—yes 1916. And that was the biggest saw mill there was in Texas.

LC: What year did you get married?

TS: I got married in 1931.

LC: Okay. So then you went to work in the saw mill?

TS: Well that's where I worked—at the saw mill. I worked truck patch around—

LC: What's truck patch?

TS: You know—like people have patches and I go help them work they patch.

LC: How does that work?

TS: Well I call it truck patching. You know it was very few people to this era had a farm. See—forty, fifty acres was about as much as they had—them was the truck patches. Grow stuff for the house and everything.

LC: So when you say that you would truck patch—that means you had your own forty acres and you would just grow for your—

TS: Yes.

LC: So what did you do at the saw mill when you were working there?

TS: Well I worked all thought the saw mill. I was in the send in crew—

LC: What's the send in crew?

TS: Well out on the yard—and the send in crew send the lumber to the mill for the dressing(??) you know—make all different kinds of lumber. And they send that in that there and they have machines in the planter mill to run all kinds of cuts of lumber and everything. And they had a railroad track come up on Wiergate and take it on across the country. They put in railroad track just special for that mill up there. And some days there they'd pull out twenty to thirty car loads of lumber at a time. That was a big saw mill when it was running. And people come from every which way to settle that saw mill. Yeah.

LC: So you worked send in crew—what else did you do?

TS: I worked on the green chain.

LC: What's the green chain?

TS: Well its all kinds of lumber come down the chain. And I had a pile to put it off in.

LC: Why is it called green chain?

TS: Well the lumber was green—it had just fallen from the saw!

[Laughter]

LC: Okay.

TS: And it had a table it was run on. And I had a hole to put it in. And I'd pull it and stack it.

LC: Okay so you did that—what other jobs did you do?

TS: I cut logs. And when Temple East Texas come in here I haul wood for them for a long time.

LC: That means out on the trucks?

TS: Yes.

LC: Temple East Texas—

TS: That's down here close to Silsbee —you know where it is.

LC: Yes. But some of the people listening to this tape might not [laughter] —that's why I've got to ask every little thing! Okay. So Temple East Texas—they came into Wiergate—

TS: Nope—they come in after Wiergate. I don't know where Temple East Texas come from. But I know this—Houston Oil Company in Kirby did them a contract to punch some wood for them to build. And I was one of the first men for the load on the yard. That was in 1952 I believe—or 1953.

LC: So Wiergate was closed by the 1950s?

TS: Yeah. Wiergate went down in 1940-something. Wiergate went down. Then it come back but when it come back I was out of there.

LC: What were you doing then?

TS: I think I was cutting logs then. You know during WWII I was cutting logs for Kirby.

LC: And Kirby was another log company?

TS: Yes. Kirby was down there at Silsbee. And we were cutting timber that they needed to build stuff in the Army. And they give me a deferment.

LC: Weren't you too old to go to WWII?

TS: No I didn't go. I worked with a 1A card in my pocket just waiting to be called. And I got a defer on account of they need me to cut logs.

LC: So you worked in logging from the time you got married in 1931—

TS: On up, child. I got a place I wasn't no count [laughter]. And then I got my neck broke in 1969. Eighteenth day of December.

LC: You got what broke?

TS: My neck.

LC: Your neck? How did that happen?

TS: I had a collision with a tree [laughter].

LC: Were you in a truck?

TS: No I was just out there cutting logs.

LC: And a tree fell on you?

TS: Yeah part of it. That's the reason why I said I had a collision with a tree [laughter]. Y'all think that's funny but that's true! I tell you what—look there and you can see where they cut my neck open and put it back together.

LC: I sure can. Oh my goodness.

TS: They couldn't put it back. Had to split it open and put it back.

LC: So how long were you out—had to lay up for that?

TS: Oh well. I'm told not to be working now but I'm going. I was 69 years old—that been 30 years ago.

LC: You were 69 when you had the collision with the tree? I thought people retired at 69!

[Laughter]

TS: What is it girl?

LC: Just—you were out there cutting trees when you were 69 years old!

TS: Yeah I was operating two trucks.

LC: So did any of your kids work with you?

TS: Well sometimes. [Inaudible] after the children grew up and got off on they own—well I didn't have nobody to help me that I could depend on. And I went back to cutting log. I've always tried to do something to get a dollar without stealing it.

LC: And where do you think you got that from—that idea to always work?

TS: Well—I will say this. Nearly every job that I worked on—that anybody know anything about a Shankle—I didn't have no problem getting a job.

LC: Anybody know anything about a Shankle—

TS: They'd hire.

LC: Really? Because Shankles had a good name?

TS: The Shankles were pretty smart people.

LC: So that's where you think you got it from?

TS: Well it just come up here. You know some people are just—you know—skipped.

LC: They skip you?

TS: I call them skipped—it's natural to catch on and do things. You take a Cousin Alvin and Willie Pate—and I think Steve McBride was working with him. They turned this church around and didn't have no machinery to do it.

LC: When they first built this church?

TS: It was already built. But they turned this church around since it was built. This church was set like that. And they turned it around just like it is after they put this road in.

LC: Oh okay. I didn't know that. You're talking about the new road?

TS: When they put that road in they turned this church around!

LC: That's right this church used to face—

TS: This church used to set just like there.

LC: That's right I forgot about that!

TS: And the road come right by there.

LC: Sure did.

TS: And when they put the new road in here—some of them wanted to tear it down—some of them wanted to keep the old church as a landmark. And Cousin Alvin and Uncle Pate figured out a way and they turned that church around without tearing it down.

LC: I had forgotten that. That's true.

[Laughter]

TS: That's right.

LC: And they were old men when they did it too!

TS: Well Willie Pate was pretty young. He was about 70-something years old. I was a grown man when they done it, I remember real good when they turned the church around. Because when we started the Homecoming the church was pointed that-a-way.

LC: Oh okay. So you're not talking about this new paved road—you're talking about the new road when it was still a dirt road?

TS: It was a dirt road back there—

LC: Right.

TS: When they come down here with this road—that's when they changed this church. Yeah, it was a dirt road there then. But they changed the church to where it would be at the roadway. You understand? And when they come through here with paved—they cut a lot of corners off because it be straight.

LC: I know. And they cut some people's houses out too.

TS: Yeah. And they cut a bridge out.

LC: Sure did. They had a bridge—that bridge over there that went to Willie Pate's house.

TS: Yeah. And they let that bridge go down and put it all on 87. See, used to be a bridge on 87 and used to be a bridge up there. They come through here.

LC: I remember that.

TS: That's too much to keep up there. Speaking in other words, every time a rain come the bank would get wider.

LC: So when you were growing up—and you worked in the saw mill and you did your little patch—what did your wife do?

TS: She stayed at the house and tend to the kids.

LC: How many kids do you have?

TS: Eleven.

LC: Eleven. Can you name them?

TS: No. You got ahead of me now.

[Laughter]

LC: Okay. I'll leave that alone!

TS: You'd have to wait a while [laughter]. She done gone on!

LC: That's Elray—

TS: Elray is the oldest. Azzie is next. Trogie next—nope—Franklin D. Roosevelt next. Trogie next. And then Valree, David, Mary Lee, Eugene, Harold, Zerline. I can remember them many.

[Laughter]

LC: Okay. I'm not going to let them hear you say that!

[Laughter]

TS: Lord have mercy!

LC: When you were growing up here—about how many people lived in this community? In Liberty and here?

TS: I couldn't tell you, baby. Because you see—at that time this was the closest church at Newton. Jamestown. At that time this was the closest church—it was people outside Liberty and all through Liberty come back in to the church.

LC: How many members were in the church then?

TS: I couldn't tell you that.

LC: Not even a guess?

TS: I ain't going to guess that. Or I might tell a big lie [laughter]. Let's see there—McGuire, Pierces, the Morrisises, and the Hawthornes. And Uncle Leroy Odom—his wife there had twenty-some children—they was all in that community down that-a-way.

LC: In Liberty?

TS: Yeah.

LC: And they would come here for church?

TS: The Bennets. Uncle Tony Bennet he had a big family—they come back this way. And that's the reason why they got a school over there.

LC: Over where?

TS: In Liberty.

LC: Oh okay. So what was the relationship when you were growing up between the Methodist Church and Mount Hope and the Church of God?

TS: I don't know.

LC: Did they ever get together and do things?

TS: Sometimes. That's what the Homecoming sprung from.

LC: Sprung from?

TS: Cousin Alvin Odom, Cousin Willie Shankle and Cousin Eddie Shankle. Cousin Alvin was the secretary and Ed was the president and Willie was the speaker.

LC: What did the speaker do?

TS: He carried the history.

LC: Oh, okay. That Willie Shankle. That's the Willie Shankle that used to get under the tree at the Homecoming—

TS: He'd come right here—

LC: And tell the history of Shankleville.

TS: Yes that's right.

LC: Did you sit there and listen to him?

TS: Well I had a job to do. I'd get the ice, lemons, lemonade—and Curley would get the water. And everybody would bring a covered dish and we'd sit out here that day and have a time. We'd be here on a Sunday. Everybody would come here.

LC: And it would only be on Sunday?

TS: Once a year. They said they do that to keep from having—you know—all the time people meeting one another is at a funeral when they're back. And that would give all the relations a chance to come back.

LC: And that started in—what year was that?

TS: I'm trying to see what year it was. That was in the 1940s somewhere—because 1950 I bought my first truck. And while I was driving a wagon [inaudible] I went to Wiergate and bought it in 1950. I'd haul it on my truck and Cousin Curley—he would get the water on his wagon and he'd get two barrels—one for fresh water and one for lemonade. And he'd set out there under the shade tree—there was a shade tree out there—

LC: I remember. I remember the water barrel—

TS: Yes.

LC: So even in the 1960s they still had the water barrel and the lemonade barrel.

TS: That's right. Yes. You remember a whole lot that you want to know.

[Laughter]

LC: But we're talking about you today! And I still want you to go into more about how it was growing up here and how it was having all of your relatives around. Did you ever feel like, I've got to get out of here?

TS: Well it was a whole lot different than it is today. You see, we would—on the weekend when we had our work caught up we'd meet at different houses and [inaudible], play goosey goosey gander, fox and the mountain—

LC: What—who is goosey, goosey, gander?

TS: Oh! We'd have a race.

LC: A race?

TS: Yes. Old fox run the geese down.

[Laughter]

LC: So how does this game go?

TS: We were having fun! Running base—

LC: Oh okay. So it's like a baseball game?

TS: Yes. And we'd have baseball sometimes. We had a baseball club. We'd make us a rag ball and have a little fun. We—children always find something to play with—

LC: Oh this is when you were a little kid?

TS: Yes.

LC: Oh so when you were a little kid and playing foxes that means you were running after women?

[Laughter]

TS: No, no. I hadn't found the women yet. Mama kept up with me.

LC: She kept up with you and she wouldn't let you?

TS: I was fourteen years old when I got behind a girl. She sent all the rest of the children go to the theatre. She said, Now you done got it.

LC: Got it?

TS: Got found.

LC: That's what she said to you? What does that mean?

TS: Yes. She said, "I've got a lesson to teach you!" that's what that means. She said, "Now listen. If you can't be with a girl in the daytime, you better not be with her at night."

[Laughter]

LC: That's what she told you? And so what does that mean?

TS: I better stay in the light!

[Laughter]

TS: I was fourteen years old.

LC: And did you listen?

TS: When I could. I ain't going to lie! You know one thing—that's one thing where people make a mistake. When they say their child don't tell them a lie. I ain't never seen a child wouldn't—it might not be no lie but they use the truth curious. You understand?

LC: Yes sir.

TS: And when you find it out—it's a lie. People will do that. Children will do that.

LC: So if you're in Liberty and Shankleville and almost everybody is related to you—how do you find somebody to marry?

TS: Well I—the girl I married wasn't no kin to me.

LC: Where did you find her?

TS: Well we went to school. She started when she was six years old and I started when I was six years old.

TRANSCRIPT END