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Lareatha Clay: LC
Trogie Shankle: TS

TRANSCRIPT BEGIN

LC: Okay. So y'all grew up together. When did you know that you wanted to marry her?

TS: We picked one another out.

LC: How did you pick each other out?

TS: Guess about like you.

LC: Weren't there a lot of other girls in there—how did you know she was the one?

TS: Well time will talk. Just like you—you go buy a car—you look at the car and when you find one that suits you, you try it out. If it work—that's well and fine [laughter]. Time will talk. If we could get along and we could fuss and go right on back—that's what we need. You know teeth and gums fall out. But if you can't settle it when you have a misunderstanding then ain't no need to start. Because you going to have that. I lived with my wife 71 years. And we differed. And less time five minutes to get like we never had a difference [inaudible]. That's what you've got to do—find somebody you can get along with. Yeah. But when you go to bossing—I'm boss or you got to do what I said do—you first go ahead and not pay no attention because ain't nothing there. Ain't nothing going. You can't accomplish nothing. Together you stand divided you fall.

LC: Okay. Oh I know what I've been meaning to ask you—you knew what Harriet Odom looked like? What did she look like?

TS: Yes. She a beautiful woman about that tall. I figure she weigh a little over a hundred pounds.

LC: Really. Was she brown skinned?

TS: Yes. She was light brown skinned. You know most all of them—Uncle Joe was a little lighter than she was. But all of Old Man Jim Shankle's children were brighter than I am.

LC: Your grandfather was too?

TS: Yes. Grandpa Houston was brighter than I am. He died after I got married—Grandpa Houston.

LC: Was he little too?

TS: No. He was an average man. But I heard she was the littlest one in the whole bunch. She was the baby girl. They had one girl in the family. And she was so little—you know at that time you know they made chairs. Well Uncle Joe made a chair special for her to sit on. So little—short [laughs].

LC: So what kind of person was she?

TS: Well Uncle Joe was a carpenter.

LC: Oh he was?

TS: Yes.

LC: That must be where A.T. Odom learned it from.

TS: It's in the blood! He could beat hammer hammers and axe hammers. [Inaudible] Uncle Joe made that.

LC: So was Joe Shankle a carpenter too? Because if Joseph Odom was a carpenter and A. T. Odom and Pate Shankle and Willie Shankle—all of them were carpenters—

TS: Yes. They worked with lots of wood back then.

LC: Okay. So all of them were carpenters—was Jim Shankle a carpenter?

TS: No. You take—Alvin Odom—for a long time he was the only carpenter around here.

LC: But I thought Pate Shankle and Willie Pate Shankle—

TS: Yep. Pate Shankle and Willie Pate Shankle—they worked in carpentry. You see when they build Wiergate—it's Pate's daddy hoped to keep them out of the thing at Wiergate. He was a carpenter. He hoped to keep them out of there—put one of the gentlemen [inaudible] messing around—they all done that kind of work.

LC: Who was that?

TS: Willie Pate's daddy.

LC: Oh Pate Shankle. And he did that where?

TS: At Wiergate [inaudible].

LC: So what did Houston Shankle look like—your grandfather?

TS: Well he was a kind of light brown skinned man. He weighed less than 200 pounds.

LC: And what was his personality like?

TS: He had a little farm—grew him some cotton every year to sell and give him enough money. And grewed what he need to eat mostly. We always—somehow kind of independent and didn't have to pick on everybody else.

LC: And you're talking about all of the Shankles? What other—of Jim and Winnie's children do you remember? Besides Harriet and Houston. Do you remember George?

TS: Oh yeah. George Shankle. Yeah everybody remember that young man.

LC: Why?

TS: Well he was kind of getting around.

LC: What do you mean?

[Laughter]

TS: He'd go everywhere and was into something, everything.

LC: He was kind of a wild one?

TS: Yeah. He was a smart fella. He was one of the first Black boys went to a case in court in Newton

LC: And what was the case?

TS: He was a lawyer!

LC: Oh he was?

TS: Yeah. He was the first lawyer in the Shankle family. George Shankle was.

LC: And what was the case about?

TS: I don't know what the case was but he was one of the first ones—Black person to have a case in Newton. You know they used to not allow Colored folks to go to Newton. He got in there somehow. I called him smart aleck [laughs].

LC: We got George, Houston, Henry—

TS: Henry Shankle and John Shankle. You know I don't know what happened to them but you know they went to the South. To Rusk. That's where they died at. Henry and John. They died in Rusk.

LC: Did they have any kids?

TS: Well sure!

LC: I thought so but I wasn't sure.

[Laughter]

TS: You know Henry Shankle?

LC: I've heard the name, yes. Do I know a—the Henry Shankle? I've not known a Henry Shankle.

TS: Well he dead now. And that was one of Henry Shankle's boys—Curley Shankle's boy—you know Curley Shankle was Henry Shankle's boy. And then Henry come from Curley and Henry was a concrete mixer. This dam up here? He was one of the main men up there tell them what to do and where to do.

LC: And the Toledo Bend Dam?

TS: Toledo Bend Dam. Yes.

LC: Is there anything else you'd like to just talk about—one of the best memories you had when you were growing up around here?

TS: Well you know back—the old folks looked like they would enjoy two things—deer hunting and log rolling. Cleaning up the field some of them have a log rolling. And then you give them dinner and they all go there—all the men around go there and help stack, burn brush that day. Clean up a new ground. And when it get to deer hunting—all of them sit down and tell about the deer the dogs run off. Tell them deer tales!

[Laughter]

LC: So log rolling—what is log rolling?

TS: Well at that time the wood was thick. And they would get in there—so many of them would come together—and they'd cut and stack them logs up and burn them. You know how—clean up. Like Bambi(?) just moved in there—clean up a field. Some where they stay and go get something to eat. All of them around—that was where they lived at—go there and help them clean the log rolling up. Last log rolling my daddy went to he come back to the house and likely died that night. They had cooked some beans and they likely killed him [laughter].

LC: So log rolling was work?

TS: That was work!

LC: So why did you say it was fun?

TS: Well they had fun out there. One of them see who could pick up the most. That was fun to men [inaudible].

[Laughter]

LC: Oh my goodness. So that's your best memory—log rolling?

TS: When the old folk would get together. Help the young ones out. You know how young folks was. Didn't have nowhere to start. Some of them would go out there and help them build a log house. You know there used to be a lot of log houses way back when they didn't have no saw mill. Yes yeah. I seen—I used to go to the woods and see lots of log cabins. But that's over with now.

LC: So again—back to your best memories when you were growing up around here.

TS: Yes.

LC: So the best one is out working and log rolling? [Laughter]

TS: They had us [inaudible] then.

LC: How about as a little boy. What were your favorite things that you did when you were a little boy?

TS: I stayed around with mama most of the time. I was always—as a kid I had to do some of everything.

LC: So growing up you didn't have a lot of fun.

TS: I didn't have no fun at times. I had to go get them calves in—cows and calves—cattle. I'd have to put them in the pen before night. Because if them cows and calves got together that was my back.

LC: Ok. Any thing else? I guess we'll let you go—I know as soon as I turn this off he's going to start talking!

[Laughter]

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Now that you've been coming to all the homecomings—what's the best part of the homecoming?

TS: Well when it started off I hated for that time to come.

LC: Why?

TS: Because I'd rather play dominoes every weekend! [Laughter]. And I had to come out here and help get things together you know. And some mornings I'd have to go get that ice and I couldn't play no dominoes. All the boys make fun of me. I didn't like it! No. [Inaudible]. See when it started off it was just the Shankles meeting. And Cousin Eddie was up there and Cousin Alvin was down here to the Baptist Church. And Cousin Willie was over there at Magnolia Springs. And Cousin Eddie said he was going to offer up [inaudible] and get another president. Just him—

LC: Cousin Eddie said that—Eddie Shankle?

TS: Yes. And all of us—so we can bring the whole community together. And that's why everybody come to it. Now its everybody's homecoming. See it started off with the Shankles only you understand? And now everything meets you understand? And it's so many people buried up there in that graveyard and their parents ain't been back there since they was buried. They related. Ain't been back there. And we decided to take the money they take up at the homecoming—and keep the secretary—and that's the way we supporting the secretary today. And now everybody looking to that there—

LC: Sir?

TS: Everybody's looking to come to the homecoming. And if they ain't coming to the homecoming they send some money.

LC: Yes. That's true.

TS: It's got to be a good project—you understand me? Because it's lots of graveyards I pass by. I'm ashamed to look at them—dead people can't do nothing—but the living could do better and they ought. Yeah. I think they could keep a trail of the people who gone by and see where their loved ones is buried. That's what this homecoming is about.

LC: Okay. Thank you very much.

TS: What bank I'm going to put that in?

LC: Sir? What bank?

TS: What bank I'm going to put that in. Now tell me that and I'll feel fancy fine.

[Laughter]

LC: The bank of good works!