

**Jasper Upshaw
Family Background
July 23, 2007**

**Interviewer: Barney Cline
Videographer: Tom Koch
Also Present: Lynn Boyd**

Jasper Upshaw (JU): Well, uh, like my first name is Alex Jasper Upshaw, you know. I was named after both of my grandfathers, and I was borned in 1923, August the third. And during this interview—in two weeks, I'll be eighty-four years old. I was borned in Travis County, which is Austin, and my parents moved back to Blanco in the bottom of—in the top of '24. And they moved in on Mr. Wesley Wier's place. He built my daddy a two-room house with a porch on it, and that's where we all grew up at.

Barney Cline (BC): Where exactly is that property?

JU: It's 10th—no, it's 11th and Mesquite—on the corner of 11th and Mesquite.

BC: So it's right in the middle of Blanco.

JU: And, well, during this time that we was, you know, very young kids, the Wiers took us little kids into their house and into their homes, and we was free to run about the house and enjoy things. And the Wiers had two sons. The first one which was a dentist in Austin. The other one was Charles Wier of Houston. And two girls, or ladies, Nettie Kellam of Robstown, and Mr. Boyd would have remembered that, you know, Robstown. And Miss Sudie Wier—she stayed home after teaching a few years. When her parents got unable to take care of themselves, she came in and took over. And in 1933, Mr. Wier died, and my daddy was at his bedside when he went. And in 1936, his wife—her name was Laura—she'd been bedridden for, oh, a couple of years. And then my youngest brother used to go and sit with her in the evening while her daughter went to town and went to club meetings. And we enjoyed her because she taught us how to crochet and how to do some needlework.

BC: You were now at this time going to school?

JU: Oh no, no, no. No, we was only like five and seven years old. Five and seven years old and, you know, on up until we was—

BC: But you did go to school in Blanco?

JU: Oh, yes. Yeah, I sure did. Yeah, I went to school in Peyton Colony. And—you've been out there though, haven't you?

BC: Yes, I have. In fact I was out there not long ago, and I went through—

JU: You see, now we've been going to restore that old school building so—

BC: That's a famous place.

JU: Yeah. We—we're going to restore it. And each time that we have talked about it, some one of the main fellers that was gonna help us do the work passed on. So we had to sit down and wait for, you know, some other help.

BC: We'll do another interview following this one on some of that history because that would be wonderful to get. I was going to ask you—because I did walk through the cemetery out at Peyton Colony, and I noticed there are quite a few Upshaws. So those are your ancestors?

JU: They're all my kinfolk. Yes. There's my parents, my daddy's parents, and their offsprings.

BC: Quite a few as I recall—quite a few Upshaw headstones out there. But that's kind of another piece of history I'd love to come back to very much.

JU: Okay. I knew we'd vary off, but I knew you'd correct me—just stay with where we're going.

BC: Were you an athlete as a young man?

JU: Oh, yes. Yeah, we was very athletic—very much.

BC: What sports did you play?

JU: Well, [clears throat] excuse me. You see at that time a lot of the sports wasn't very wide, you know, but we mostly played like softball and baseball. And we didn't get to play tennis, but we watched it. And we didn't get to play—we didn't get to *play* basketball, but we did play some basketball in school or on our own. But we was mostly baseball, softball material, you know, like that.

BC: Blacks were excluded from basketball?

JU: Not really. But, you see, Peyton, which was Board House Colony—and when I say Colony, that's where all the black people, more or less, lived at, you know. That was because, you see—maybe it's okay to bring it in—but why would it be called a colony? But, see, when the wagon train came down from Virginia after the Civil War was over, they came down as far as Bastrop. And at that time, we was in—the weather was in a rainy cycle. There was a lot of mud there. And these people didn't like all that mud, so they came farther west. And when they did, they landed up in Blanco County. And in Blanco County, they was preempted land—the slave people were—which took into both of my great grandfathers and a lot of his followers. And, you know, because of that,

they built a school out there. They built a church. I mean the black guys did. They built a church, then built a school. And then the cemetery was donated from out of the same group. And so the black—because all the black families lived in a circle out there, they went to school right there. It wasn't that we was—well, I guess you could say not integrated at that time. You know, when was the year, 1936?

BC: I understand what you're saying. I was thinking that you went to school here in Blanco. But you actually went to school—

JU: Yeah. We drove a car from where I lived out to the Colony ever morning and came in in the evening.

BC: I see. Even though you lived in Blanco, you went to school out there.

JU: Yes...Yes...Yeah. I grew up right there where I live, which if I'd have throwed a rock, I could have hit the school building.

BC: Did that go through high school? They didn't—

JU: No, we—now in Peyton Colony, the school only went to grade nine, but it was only recognized in grade eight. So after we would reach grade nine, most of us was still too young to go off to school at eight. So we stayed another year and took the ninth grade in the school out there. And that's what I finished up in was the ninth grade. And from the ninth grade, we would journey into Austin and stay with maybe some of the kin or somebody else that we had, you know, communication with and finish up high school at Anderson High School. And Anderson was like the central for Austin surrounds for the black kids. And they, you know—the black Anderson High was where we would go to school at. Also Phyllis Wheatley of San Antonio was the same deal as Anderson was in Austin. So that made Anderson and Phyllis Wheatley rivals like Blanco and Johnson City. So they—when my brothers got to Austin—

BC: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

JU: Let's see. Owen, Huffman, Adolph, Cornelius, myself, Thurman—there's six of us (boys). And one girl (Dora). But see my oldest brother (Cornelius) lived with my grandma because his mother died when he was like three months old. I think that was the age. But he played football at Anderson. And then when he left Anderson, he went to Prairie View, stayed one year at Prairie View, came back into Austin, went to Tillotson College. And he stayed at Tillotson and joined up in the military, in 194—I guess in '42 because the war broke out in 1941. In '42, he volunteered for service. And he didn't get back. He got killed at Boston. And then after that, we was all out of school—all of my brothers and myself was out of school in Peyton. So my youngest brother went into the navy, but I didn't get to go. They turned me down.

And I went to work for a fellow by the name of Wayne Smith at his garage, and I drove a gas truck for two years or three years, delivering gas to the farmers, you know. And

when I left Smith, I went to work for the Buckners, which was up on the corner. It was a service station. But my plans were—by this time the war was over, and I thought I'll just go on and go back to school. But I never got away, you know, so I continued on as I did. So I worked in gas stations—filling stations—and also was a chef cook for three and a half years in a cafeteria. And after three and a half years of cooking there, I got married. And after I got married, I wasn't making enough money—quite enough money to take care of myself and a woman—so I went into construction. And I had a real good con—instructor in construction, and he taught me quite a bit on building and how to build. So I followed the trade.

BC: You're quite a fine carpenter.

JU: Yeah...yes. So I stayed with the trade, you know, for—oh, a good long while—seven or eight years working for different men. And somewhere along the line, I decided I would go to work for myself because what I said was if I could make—if I could do what I was doing and make money for my boss man, I could do it for myself. So I did. I took off and I went to work for myself. So it's been at least fifty-five years that I have been at work for myself. So meanwhile during this period of time, my kids were just coming along as the color line broke and integration came in.

BC: I was going to ask you that question.

JU: And after integration came in, my kids went to school with the white kids.

BC: In Blanco.

JU: And immediately—my oldest boy—the first interest was—I think he was like sixteen—and from there on, you know, they took off. And they was in athletic from the time they started. First it was Little League baseball. They was in Little League. And at this time at Little League it was like—Douglas (Dwight Douglas Upshaw) were I think about maybe twelve years old—so some of the white guys, they always said, "Well, if he plays, I'm not going to let my boy play." So the manager said, "Take him home." You know, said, "He's going to play, so I'm putting him in." So he did. He put him in, and he was a catcher for the club. And within a week and a half, two weeks, the guys that said he'd take his out and wouldn't let him play decided, "I'm going to put him back in. I'm going to let him play. We're going to integrate." So the color line was broke there again. And so the guys—they had a good time together. And—

BC: How many children do you have—did you have—that went to school at Blanco?

JU: We had sixteen, eight, fourteen. [talking softly to himself] We had fourteen kids.

BC: I have to tell you something. A friend I was talking to who grew up in—well, an old timer, but he's from Johnson City—he was telling me, he said, "You know, all through the years," that he remembers, he said "Johnson City could never beat Blanco in

baseball or football because of those Upshaw kids.” [laughs] “Because there was always one of those great athlete Upshaws.”[Laughs]

JU: But, well, you know, they were. I think our school athletic department did a good job with them because they, you know, they really—but, you know, kids get out, and they mix with other kids, and they get something that you didn’t instill in them, you know. So that’s what happened. And first thing I knew they was wanting to play football. So, you know, the coach put them in. And they was all good because they could run, you know. But see now, you asked the question a while ago—now my kids, we had a full block between my house and the funeral home that we played ball on. And you would think you was at a baseball park when you come by the house. All my boys would be playing. We would just all play amongst ourselves, you know. Sometimes there would be eighteen or twenty boys out there. And the people would come by and they would just stop and look and watch us, you know. So, consequently, they got the idea of playing. So like you said when we went into competition with Johnson City, Comfort, all those places west of conference, some in San Antonio, this, that, and the other, we beat them. And like you said, it was like my boys and the Coffee boys that put them on top.

BC: Did you actively encourage the boys, or were they all sort of self-starters?

JU: Well, I played with them. I played with them.

BC: You were out there with them.

JU: Oh, yeah. I played with them. Because, you see, when I grew up, we played baseball. And we didn’t have no smooth ground. Our field that we had was as rough as any rock field that you ever want to see. But we played there, you know. And I don’t know, I guess we got the job did. But—

BC: This, of course, was before major league baseball was integrated, right?

JU: No. See when Jackie Robinson broke the color line, which was I think about ’50. No, it was before then; he broke it in ’48, I think.

BC: Oh, really. Was it that early?

JU: I tell you what year it was—1947 was the year that he broke it. Because, you see, I had gotten married, and I was living out in Peyton Colony at the time that Robinson and Campanella was playing for the Dodgers. And I was working for Fulcher, which had the drug store and appliances. And on Sunday evenings, I’d get three or four guys, we’d get in my car, we’d drive to town to Fulcher’s Drugs, and he would open up the appliance room. And we’d sit there and watch the baseball games. See, just like that. And Jackie Robinson was—he was just coming on board in 1947.

BC: That must have been a great inspiration for your family. The idea of—I mean, did that help spark some of the achievements that your family—

JU: That's right...yeah. Well, you see now, Gene (Gene Upshaw, Jasper's nephew) at this time was already—he was already in college playing big time college ball. Because I know in 1967, I bought a new truck—pickup—for my work. And it was the first new truck I ever had—new vehicle period. And we would—I would put all those kids on it when they would be playing in San Marcos and San Antonio, and we would drive down there and watch him play, you know. And my boys was—at that time, they was like twelve, thirteen years old that was watching him. And Gene went from college right into the pros. He was first round draft choice to the Oakland Raiders, and one of the—someone of the guys that was married to one of my cousins said, "Well, I don't know why he'd want to go to the Raiders." He said, "That's the worst club in the whole set up." Which it was. But what he didn't know at the time was that the bottom club always picked the highest draft, you know, because, you see, they're trying to balance it a little bit. And really he was the one that brought—and another guy, I forget his name—but those two guys were the ones that brought Oakland out of the slumps and even into Super Bowl.

BC: I remember watching Gene play back in those years. I do remember that. He was really something.

JU: And the one—the one play that did this were the sweep. They call it the sweep. I don't know why they call it the sweep. But, you see, the guy that was playing next to Gene and the other one up there—and I don't know if they went out of there with what the coach was wanting them to do—but these three guys—when they called it the sweep, then the quarterback backed up here. They swept this thing out in the front, and he zipped his ball right where he wanted it to go. [demonstrates with arms] And, you know, it was a long time before the rest of the country ever caught up with what was really going on. But they made that play for about ten or eleven years. Now I think Gene played—he played twelve years with Oakland. And Marvin, (Marvin Upshaw, Jasper's nephew) which was his brother—he was the next year's first round choice, and he went to, oh, one of the big clubs. It wasn't Cleveland—one of the other big clubs at that time up in the North.

BC: Not Kansas City, was it?

JU: That's who it was. It was. I think you're right. It was Kansas City. 'Cause he went from Kansas City to the Cleveland Browns. And that's where he ended up at. 'Cause he got his knee hurt, and he was afraid he was going to—see his daddy [Thurman Upshaw] had already had an amputation of his leg because he got hurt at his work, and he was afraid he—that might happen to him. So he quit. And, you know, took his retirement. Just had just enough time in to get it, which was good. So then he went into, you know, retirement. And he's out in California now. They're running a café/nightclub thing out there in Oakland.

BC: Gene and Marvin never got to play together, I don't think, did they?

JU: They played against each other two different times, yeah, but they wasn't on the field at the same time because Gene was offense and Marvin was defense. [laughs]

BC: What are they doing now?

JU: Well, Marvin is—he has a café out there in Oakland. And, you know, they had a bar for a while. They sold the bar, and he's running the café. And Gene, you know, he's head of the—

BC: I'll have to check that out if I get out there someday.

JU: Yeah. And Gene is—he, you know, he's head of the American National League—football organizations. He sits right on top, and he rules what they can't do over there, and he rules what they can't do over here. He has more or less the last word. And we got one coming up now with the guy that had the fighting dogs, see.

BC: So he's involved with all the negotiations—various high-level negotiations.

JU: Oh, gosh yes...yeah.

BC: I see him on TV occasionally.

JU: Yeah. And, you know, he has three guards that guards him everywhere he goes. Those guards are with him all the time.

BC: Did you have a chance to attend any of his games, or were they too far away?

JU: Let's see now. I don't believe I ever went to one of his major games. But we got them all on TV every Sunday. I mean we stayed right there—nose in, you know.

BC: Oh, you must have felt pride.

JU: Yeah. Well, you see, now we figured that he was an inspiration for my boys to go in. And what my brother (Thurman, father of Gene and Marvin) told me—my brother was younger than me—but when we was growing up, you know, it was always what he said and what I said. And what he told me was—'cause, see, he was integrated before we were 'cause he was in Robstown, which is Corpus Christi area—and what he told me was, he said, "Now listen, man, I'm going to tell you what you got to do." He said, "The first thing you got to reach back, get your pocket book, you know, 'cause you're in it. It's going to cost you. And the next thing, you got to go and be there. Be an influence for them."

I said, "Okay." So that's what I did, man. And when my boys was playing—I don't care where I was working at—when this time of the day came that they was going to leave, I came in and went with them. And when they was playing basketball, I'd ask the coach, I said, "Coach, can I go with you tonight? I haven't got a ride." "Yeah, come on." Man,

they'd put me on the bus. And I rode the bus with them. And wherever they went, you know. And when we'd come back—they'd always eat after the game—they bought my dinner just like they did the boys, you know. So, man, I had a big time. I did. I had a great time.

BC: I can imagine. Our son was a nationally ranked swimmer—was a very good athlete—so we used to go for years and years to swim meets and watch him swim.

JU: I'll bet.

BC: You know, I'm just thinking what pride I felt then. So here you had many kids all achieving remarkable things. You must have sometimes had to hold your head down a little bit to keep it on.

JU: Really. Well, see, we lost this one kid [Anthony Cornelius, called Barney] at the age of thirteen out on the highway. He got—he was riding a bicycle, and he got—man hit the wheel, knocked him off. It killed him right away, you know. And we just missed a lifetime with him.

BC: Oh, that's terrible. Now, is it Chuggy? He's the son that was with the Toronto Blue Jays?

JU: Yes, uh-huh. See, his name is Willy. But, see, at home we called him Chuggy. Because— (coughs)

BC: That's his nickname?

JU: That was just a nickname. All through school, he used it—all through school. And then when you get into the majors, you know, everything has got to be cut dried just right for the majors, you know, because they're selling product. You know what I'm saying. And so he went with his name, you know. And his name is Willy Clay Upshaw. And when he was in baseball, the announcer would always say, "Willy Upshaw," you know, as if it was one. He always used that Upshaw at the very last. And people paid a lot of attention to it. And so when he got into the majors and we started to going to, well, we went to—first year, we went to Dallas to watch him. And the second year, he was on the squad, you know, and he hadn't quite got his position that he wanted. He was still playing right field, but he wanted to play first base. So in the conversation, this one fellow—he'd already been in there for seven or eight years, and he knew what the scores were—and he said, "If you want that position, you've got to beat him out. You can't be feeling sorry for him." And that's what he was doing because he—the man had gotten hurt, and he couldn't really play. I mean he couldn't run, but he could hit. And that's what company wants, somebody that could hit the ball. So Chuggy moved him out, and he got first base position. So after that, we was on the way. So then we started to going to—well, I went into Chicago to see him play. We went to Toronto to see him play. And we went to New York to see him play—outside the state. And the rest of the time, we went into Dallas to watch him.

BC: That must have been quite a thrill.

JU: Oh, yeah. And then when he finished up in the states and they had the meeting after the season was over, he signed with Japan. And he went to Japan for three years. And he gave us the chance to ride the plane over there. But I didn't want to ride a plane like twelve hours, you know, to go over there. So I didn't go. But after the games days was over, I wished a lot of times that I had gone, you know. 'Cause they talk about, you know, the Japanese palace and how beautiful those homes, flowers, and everything else is over there, you know.

BC: You never did take them up on that?

JU: I didn't go to Japan, no. But I went to Toronto. We stayed about a week and a half up there with him.

BC: I've never been to Toronto, but it must be a very nice place.

JU: Well, you know, I—when I went to Toronto, it was like we went to the backside of the world. I never did get that out of my mind.

BC: Really?

JU: Yeah, I never did get that out of my mind. But Toronto—the city itself—is a big city. They had like Wal-Mart stores here. They had the plazas there, which was under the ground-floor level and at the top, all in the same building, you know. And something else I didn't see. I didn't see any people working there like we do here, you know. But their prices for a workman was twice as high there as it is here, you know—twice as high.

BC: Did he enjoy living there? Did he actually live there?

JU: Well, he never paid a lot attention to living, wherever he was. He was there to play the game. And that's what he did, you know. He played the game. But there was—'cause his first child was about to be born in Canada, and he didn't want that—so they got him back into the states before she delivered. So he was born in America.

BC: So he's an American citizen.

JU: Yeah. Because there's something about, you know. If you're born in Canada, then you got to go and sign the papers every year. And he already knew that because, I mean you know, conversation wise, you know, he got onto it. So he didn't want it. And he wound up with them back in the states.

BC: Did the boys get back here often? Do they have a chance to visit and kind of reconnect here?

JU: You know, yeah. I'm gonna tell you something. Chuggy, as we call him, is so busy he does not have time to come home. And people wonder—all of his playmates, schoolmates—well, why don't you ever come in? But, you know, like right now, you have to have an appointment if you want to talk to him. If I want to talk to him up there, I have to have an appointment. I had an appointment with him in Dallas and two of the agency or whatever—they was all in the same room. I was right there, and they had dinner sent up to us, and we had dinner right there in that conference room. And he went from there to the locker room, changed clothes, and he was on the field, you know, just like that. Yeah. Time moves so fast you just—Lord, you just don't even recognize it. You don't believe it.

BC: I guess the competition is so intense in the major leagues every minute counts, every—

JU: And he is—not because he's just mine, but he is *professional*. And that's all that you can make out of it. And when he does come home, you know, his classmates and people—they know when he's going to get here. And they're at the house, and, I mean, he can't even eat, but they talk—and this, that, and the other—just visiting, visiting, visiting. You just wouldn't believe it. But, you know, if I hadn't have been in the different cities—the different places where he was—I wouldn't have never known all of this stuff. He doesn't do any of his business now. His wife does all the business for him. And so, you know, he's just there as a number to do whatever the club wants.

BC: Are his kids grown up now?

JU: Yeah. Now see the oldest boy—he played college baseball one year, but he got his back hurt, so he couldn't play. So he quit. But he's an artist.

BC: Really?

JU: Yeah. He has finished college degrees, and he has a master degree. And his daughter—she finished Pennsylvania State, and she has a college degree, and she can teach, but right now, she's modeling in Atlanta, Georgia. And the other boy has just signed pro ball with the Panther Club out of—where are the Panthers from?

BC: Carolina?

JU: Carolina, yeah. He signed with the Panthers this past—when was it? It's been about four months ago in May.

BC: So he's a football player.

JU: So we may be seeing him like later on this year. And his name is Chad—Chad Upshaw.

BC: I'll have to remember to look for that name.

JU: Yeah. But he went to school in New York—upper New York. And he was with the club. Now I went to Alabama last September when the school was just opening up. They was playing against—what's that big club name down there in Alabama? It's very, very well known.

BC: Auburn?

JU: Auburn? Auburn? Yes, Auburn. That's where it was. I went there. I went to the—

BC: —The big game.

JU: Oh, yeah. It was ninety thousand people there that day that we was there—ninety thousand. And they played against Army when we was there. I went into Jacksonville, Florida—flew in there. And then my son was living there, so we drove from there up to Mobile, Alabama, and got to see him play. And then when the season was over, they played the North and the South in Houston. And he played—he chose to play with the South, which is out of Houston. So we went to Houston to see him play there, you know. And after that—by this time the baseball season was taking off, and the Giants came into Houston to play, which was May the 18th and 19th. So we went down there and spent two days with the club and Chuggy and them right there. And that's, you know, the last time we've seen him was back in May of this year.

BC: You know, it's just wonderful to listen to you talk about this and try to imagine what it would be like—the pride and the satisfaction you feel—because I have to think that you had a big hand in motivating your kids and giving them the right kind of view on life.

JU: Well, really, but you know, I really—I give the school a lot of credit, you know. Now you would think that we didn't have a church or Sunday school, things like that. But we did. Had just as big a Sunday school—just as big a church as they had uptown. But when my kids were integrated, they went in on Monday morning. And Sunday morning that same week, the bus came by my house and picked up all my kids that was in school up there, took them to First Baptist Church, and we've been there ever since. They just insisted that I come in. So I said, "Okay." After a couple of months, I left the Mount Horeb Church, and I joined First Baptist in town.

BC: Which reminds me, I remember one of your family died a few months ago?

JU: Oh, yeah, that was—

BC: Because I remember the poster up on the—

JU: The Coffee boy?

BC: The Coffee boy.

JU: Yeah...yeah. He got killed down at Little Blanco.

BC: That's right. But he was buried at the Baptist Church.

JU: Right. That's right.

BC: I'm sure you're related somehow to—

JU: Yeah. See his mom and me were cousins—the boy that died.

BC: I was thinking it was an Upshaw, but it was a Coffee boy that died. He was in an automobile accident?

JU: Yeah, that's right. He sure was. And during that time—it hadn't been fifteen minutes that I had left him—I was talking to him. And he said, well, he had to go and take this lady he had with him to work someplace. And I said, "Okay, see you later." You know. And the next thing I knew, he was out. It all happened so fast. And we talk about time, you know, how fast it's moving. It does. It moves fast, you know.

BC: You mentioned earlier before we started the interview that you were thinking about writing a book someday. Tell me about that. You're a very active guy. Your brain is working fast. What would you focus on?

JU: Well, okay. But, you know, I don't know. I kind of thought about this for a long time. But I never did put it into reality. And when I say I lost some of the valuable history—and what I'm talking about there was like my older people like my grandma and her aunt, you know. But of course, I listened to a lot of stuff that they said. But it was some of the things—and I still remember a lot of them—it was some of the things that they said and did that can go into the history book. Because it was like my grandmother was like Martha Washington. And Martha Washington was always busy. In the season, she was busy. Out of the season, she was still busy. She was making—they had to make gloves and wool shirts and blankets, you know, for the soldiers and for the people in the city that didn't have anything. That was Martha Washington. And what she did and what she said, it sifted back down. It got all the way back down to here, which communications was very slow in those days. You know, it took a week for a letter to come by, you know, or anything like. Right now, it's a flash. You know, you push a button over here, you can read what's going on in New York City, you know. So my grandma was highly associated, you know, with the—I always called it the upper class of white people in town. They was the one that kept her hired, or she could go to their homes or whatever, you know, and she'd be recognized. Now she had a son which was just older than—I mean just younger than my dad, and he went through the colleges and then was promoted to be an officer in World War I. And you didn't have many black guys that was an officer in World War I.

BC: That's right.

JU: Now the reason why I say that—we just hold it right there for a second now, you see. Now Mr. Crist was like, you know you would say, the leader of Blanco County more or less. He controlled the bank. He controlled the post office—more or less the grocery stores. And he had the hardware right here. He more or less—they didn't have as many organizations with people getting together as they have now days. But whatever Mr. Crist said, that's what kind of went. So my uncle, after he was out of the service, he went to work for the railroad—people out of Muskogee, Oklahoma. He was a mail clerk there. So, you know, he was pretty high up and well recognized. So when he was getting ready to come in to Blanco, he would write his mom, and she told Mr. Crist. So Mr. Crist informed everybody around that Shadrack Upshaw is going to be in town such and such a time. Be at your best behavior. And they did. They did. They was like—they minded him like he was their father, you know, for whatever. And, I mean, that's America, you know. That's America.

BC: Wonderful story. Are there other memories you have of overhearing as a child your grandparents talking—some of the stories they talked about late at night?

JU: You mean what they got to? Yes...yeah. Now my aunt was—she was a schoolteacher, you know.

BC: You had mentioned earlier when we were talking outside that you remembered as a very young boy staying up late listening to your grandparents.

JU: Grandfather, yeah.

BC: Was it your dad who would fall asleep, but your grandparents would be talking late into the night, and you were listening carefully?

JU: Yeah...yeah.

BC: What are some of the kinds of stories that you remember from those conversations?

JU: Well, you know, they had—just like today, they had some good, and they had some bad, you know. But most of the time, the bad wasn't as bad as the bad is today, you know, because you could—in other words, if they got bad in the community there, the head guy in the community informed Jackson or whoever it was, say, "You better get out of town because they're getting ready to pick you up." And he would leave town—stay gone three years before he ever came back—and whatever the sore spot was, by the time he come back, was kind of over, you know.

BC: So the community sort of policed itself?

JU: They more or less did. Yeah. And I know it was like this one guy in the community of Peyton, and everybody always looked up to him. If there was trouble in the group, and they would say, "Aw I'm going to go. I'm going to get the sheriff." And then he would say, "Well now, wait a minute. We don't have to have the sheriff." Said, "Now we can settle this thing." You know. And sure enough, they could settle it, and we didn't have a lot of sheriff things going on. But nevertheless, there was—that would be some things that he couldn't handle, and they got out of hand, you know. They really did. But it was a community that [coughs—] Excuse me. It was a community that didn't have a lot of trouble. But when they did, it was just as bad as it was anywhere. That wasn't just once.

BC: But typically, they would deal with it. The community would deal with the problem—not go to outside.

JU: Sometimes the bad didn't always leave the community and go out, you know, and then be gone and come back.

BC: Well, I look forward to another talk with you, and what we can—maybe really kind of focus on Peyton Colony and some of the old history. And it's a wonderful story and rich, very inspiring story about how these people somehow on their own made it against all the odds. It was amazing.

JU: Oh, yeah...yeah...really. Oh, it's so unbelievable. That's the thing that make us who we are—where we are. And I can remember that my grandfather and even my grandmother—but my grandfather always had like in the winters—winters used to be really winters here, used to get cold—and he had a big overcoat that he would wear when it would be that cold. And when I would see the pictures of historical guys in the book, you know, and things like that, reminded me of my grandfather wearing that big jacket. [inaudible] My granddaddy had a thirty-eight pistol. Oh, it was a honey, boy. It was a honey. And those guys—if they pulled that gun, that was as bad as if you shot somebody. Because you didn't pull no gun. You don't make gun play. And now days, people think that that's what they're for. That's because they are cowards, see. And if he wasn't a coward, he'd be all right. But my grandfather, man, he could stand up to whoever it was out there. And whatever it was, they knew that they had the gun on. And I don't mean anything by this, but they had white men on the streets in Blanco that backed off. And that's something you don't always see, you know. But that's the kind of force that it was. Come to find out, the black guy was still—he was still right. And whenever the rest of the city found out that he was right, this other guy turned out to be a scoundrel because he had come into this place, and he didn't grow up with the whites and the blacks that was together there. And he didn't understand a lot of the situation. You didn't. Our white people used to take care of the black guys that was in their community. They didn't care who came in from out here. You don't bother him—those people. And like my daddy's boss—and they would—maybe somebody down on the street would say something, and they would say, Unh-uh. That's Wes Wier's man. You let him alone. And who was Wes Wier? Wes Wier was Wes Wier. He was one of the guys that stood up in town and in the county and for whatever you want to say—have to

say. He stood up. And people backed him up. You know, I mean, you know, like the
Brighams, the Buckners, the Smiths, Johnsons, didn't make a difference who they were.
Oh, man, I tell you, it's just been an inspiration.

BC: Fascinating. It's a piece of history that is in a way very unique to where we are and
not something you find elsewhere. That's why it's so important, I think, to preserve it.

JU: It is. It is.

BC: Thank you so much.

JU: It's okay.

BC: Thank you so much.

Notes:

This interview was conducted and produced by the Oral History Committee of the
Blanco County South Library District.

In spite of the best efforts of the Oral History Committee, some errors may be present in
this transcription. Please refer to accompanying video for original source.

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