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[Begin Tape 4563. Begin Session II.]

CHELSEA ARSENEAULT: Alright. Okay, so today is Thursday February twenty-fifth, 2016 and I'm here again for our second interview with Mr. Morris Prater in his home in Iowa . . . I always think I'm saying it wrong, but I think it's Iowa, Louisiana. And for the first interview we kind of talked about your family history, and parents' names, and grandparents' names, and origins, and stuff like that. So today we kind of want to pick up there again, and kind of the first question I wanted to ask you to kind of get this started was about your neighborhood growing up. Could you just describe your home, what it looked like, where it was, and like your neighbor's homes and things like that?

MORRIS PRATER: **[00:48]** Okay. Yes I remember it was a large house. I don't know who they rented it from, but it was rented. Mom and Dad was renting it, and it was a large house, but we didn't use all the house. We just used some of it. Now the neighbors was all a distance apart. Wasn't nobody close by. It was dirt roads, and just wagon trails going from one house to the other one. And us kids would get together and play, meet up and play. A lot of times they come into the house, and we'd all play and have a good time.

But all the neighbors wasn't like it is now, close by. They was all within a quarter of a mile or half a mile. Wasn't too many houses in the neighborhood when I was growing up. A few of my uncles and aunts. Had the Braxtons. They was all up Evergreen [Road], up that way. They

called that . . . That was the nickname. I don't know where they got the name from, Saprack. It was . . . That's where my grandfather stayed up there, my mom's dad. That was approximately a mile and a half closer to my house than where we were staying where grandfather was.

[02:52] So it . . . And the neighbors was . . . My aunt and uncles was around there about. It wasn't close like it is now. This house is over here. Maybe the other house is over that way. Another one way over that way. It just had wagon trails . . . wagon trail to each house. We'd leave from our house, well if we'd had to go to my auntie's we'd go to the right. And we had to go up grandfather's that was we just going up north like you see, up that way, but it's all wagon trails. This one take here say, "Well we going to so-and-so's house you going to turn up there," or if you're going to somebody else's house.

And we stayed there until my . . . Well my aunt and uncle moved in that big house with us. That's Butch mom and dad. He wasn't born then. No, Butch wasn't. And so they moved in the house with us and stayed for a while, and then they bought a house on Old Spanish Trail what was just torn down a few weeks ago. That's where Butch and them was born over there.

[04:23] And I used to go up to my grandfather's and stay up there a lot. I liked to stay up there because my uncle . . . I had two uncles and they was teenagers. So I liked to go up there and be with them. So they'd roam the woods and all that stuff. It was . . . I had a good life, fun life and all like that. But after we . . . Neighbors . . . We moved, then we didn't have any neighbors right close. That was all just a distance apart when we moved on Prater Road. We moved there and we didn't have any lights. Cut wood. Had a wood stove, wood heater. That's what practically everybody had out in Mossville [Louisiana]. Didn't have electricity out that way. So it was . . . it's neighborly and a good place to be. It's quiet and everything back then. So it was a good life, good life.

But after we moved on Prater Road, that's where things kind of changed a little bit. Prater Road was there, but it wasn't paved, and it didn't have any [shell?] or anything on it. It was just a plain dirt road. So that's where I started doing more house work. So that's where I say I lost all of my childhood days back then because my mom was sick a lot, and I missed a lot of school. I didn't get a chance to finish school. Missed a lot of school on account of she was sick and we had babies. I had to just take care of them and start doing the house cleaning or cooking and washing and stuff like that. All of us kids is anywhere from year and a half to two years old, so it always was mostly a youngster there had to be taken care of. I was the oldest one. Had a brother under me then I had sister.

[07:20] So I got on Prater Road, and after got up to that age then my sister she was getting a little older because she's the third child. So that's my time then I started leaving the house going to work at odd jobs and stuff like that. Then she started taking care of mom. And that's when I lost my childhood times during that time because it just left me. But other than that I had a good life in Mossville. I was born in Mossville, and I was born and raised right there. Stayed right there for eighty-five years right there in Mossville. So I had a good life. Can't complain.

But as I said . . . getting back to my grandfather that he was a farmer. Not a farmer. He's what they called [truck patched like that?]. So he had vegetables, stuff like that, hog, cows. So it was . . . I liked to be up there because my uncles and all, they was teenage boys, and we roamed around like that in the woods. I'd go home on the weekends and be at home like that. So and when I left then started running around and after I started to work started running around at night a little bit. Then I got older I went in the service. Then after come back out of the service that was it then. I wasn't around home too much, but I'm still in Mossville.

And we moved . . . after I got married we moved on. Bought a place there and moved there, right in Mossville. Me and my wife, we all moved there, and we built a house there. Kids was born there. Two girls. Well my oldest one, she wasn't born there, but the other two was born right at the house we just left from. When we moved there where we moved from, we moved there it only had three . . . two families in that . . . That was where we stay and call that little place there Green Briar Subdivision. Green Briar. And it was only two houses in there when me and the wife moved in and built our house. It was the . . . What was his name? Harris. Harris was staying there and [Kellis?] stayed in there. That was the only two houses in there. But now we just moved out now and I don't know exactly how many houses is in there now. It's probably twenty or twenty-five, thirty houses in Green Briar neighborhood we stayed in. And the houses, like I say, the houses were so far apart. They had them all scattered around and about. Then they started building roads. They built Evergreen in I don't know what year. I don't remember what year they . . . Prater Road was, but it was probably in the '40s. I done forgot what year we moved on Prater Road. I can't remember what year. But we were the first house on Prater Road.

ARSENEAULT: [12:31] So you were . . . You took care of the family when your mom got sick when you were . . . How old were you?

PRATER: Oh, I don't know. I would say about thirteen, fourteen . . . in that area. Maybe a little earlier than that. I can't remember.

ARSENEAULT: What kind of things did you miss out on having to be responsible?

PRATER: Well I missed my schooling. I missed lots of schooling because I would be out of school any . . . sometimes it'd be two or three weeks at a time. And so I would just miss so much. Like I said, it was eleven of us kids and it was we all anywhere from a year or two years apart. So it was always a youngster. Mostly I'd be years there and I was the oldest so that was my job to start doing the house work, cooking. I learned how to cook. I learned how to cook, and it was always clothes to wash, especially baby clothes. [laughs]

ARSENEAULT: [14:02] Never ending.

PRATER: Yes, right. It wasn't like it is now. They got Pampers and stuff but this was cloth diapers. It's just so you had to keep them up. And cut wood. Now we had a wood stove and all that. We didn't have any electricity.

ARSENEAULT: What's this . . . So a wood stove. So you cut the wood?

PRATER: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: And what . . . How do you . . . How does that work?

PRATER: [14:31] Well we had a crosscut saw, one of these long ones. So long anyone get on this end and get on the other end. And me and my brother, he was just about a year and a half, two years, younger than me, so we'd have to cut the wood and slab it up, bust it up. And we had a wood stove. That's what we cooked on. That was our job to do. Keep that. Do that. Because my

dad, he was working in Westlake [Louisiana] at the saw mill, like that. One time they was working on the road though, and I think I told you that the last time about the WPA or something. That's where the government job like that was work during the Depression. So it's . . . We had clothes and stuff to eat but we didn't think anything about it. It ain't like now they got different things to eat and they won't . . . They don't want this and don't want that. But we ate whatever was cooked. We ate it and didn't worry about it. Didn't think about it. That was it. That was it.

ARSENEAULT: Do you ever remember waiting in line for rations or anything like that?

PRATER: [16:09] Well yes, my . . . Like I said, back during the Depression it wasn't any money for the work being done. That work was government work like that. They had a place set up at the store, and so you could there and buy at the store like that. But you didn't have any money. You didn't see the money. You just go buy what you needed. So and then after that, my dad left that and found this sawmill job where they started getting a little money then because times start changing then, you see.

But it's lots different now. Back then because when I was coming up like that then blacks only had certain place they could go. Couldn't go sit down like you can now, because . . . Well it didn't bother me because I was brought up during that time so I know how far I could go and this that and the other. So it didn't really bother me, you see. So that made a whole lot of difference. But it's changed now. It's . . . You can go anywhere you want to eat and nobody bother you. So it makes a whole lot of difference. I try to tell them all the time it's lot different than what it were back then because they have a right to do whatever they can do.

ARSENEAULT: Did you have any challenges after serving in the service to come back and see?

PRATER: [18:09] Well yes, because when I went in the service . . . Well I went in '51 and it was just start changing in the early '50s. So when I went in and I went . . . I was stationed in Virginia. When I left, because you had certain place you had to get on to ride the bus. You had to go to the back and all that. So I got there, well it had start changing. I can ride the bus sit down anywhere I want. Ride anywhere or go anywhere I wanted to go. And it made it different too when I was in the service. You had little more rights when you were in the service. But anyway, it made a change then.

And when I come back in '53, well it was . . . some better. But it . . . Like I tell them all the time, it was different when I was coming up because certain places you could go and certain places you couldn't go. It had changed some . . . a whole lot. But it's changed. So it's so much have passed and gone. Distant gone. It's left me. It just don't bother me anymore. It just gone. It just ain't there. I don't know, but it just ain't there. I know it's lots more, but it just ain't there.

ARSENEAULT: What do you remember about . . . So you missed a lot of school. But you did go to school in Mossville?

PRATER: [20:04] Yes.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember what grade you started?

PRATER: Well back then it was probably first . . . primer grade because . . . They called it primer, I think. Maybe you go primer to first grade, then second grade, third grade, like that. And well, like I said, the school I was in, it was just two rooms . . . by a partition. But it had, right through the middle, it had two big . . . I don't know what you call them. But anyway they could just raise them up and they roll up. One room here and one room there. The only two teachers. One in this one and one in that one. And the one in the . . . Had a lady in one side and a man in the other side. He was the principal and all you see.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember his name?

PRATER: [21:05] Yes. I don't remember, but I can't . . .

ARSENEAULT: You remember her name maybe?

PRATER: Well Ms. [Laws?]. Ms. Laws was my teacher that I went under. Ms. Laws.

ARSENEAULT: And you had her for primer?

PRATER: Yes, from primer on up to when I got out. She had about what? Two or three grades, all teaching one, two, three.

ARSENEAULT: Oh okay.

PRATER: About one, two, three, or four grades all . . .

ARSENEAULT: All in one room.

PRATER: In one room, yeah. And . . .

ARSENEAULT: So she would teach the youngers and she would teach the older?

PRATER: Olders.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: [21:48] Yes. I didn't get into his room. But anyway, he . . . What was his . . .
Professor . . .

ARSENEAULT: Was he a black man?

PRATER: Yeah. It was all black. What was his name? I know just as good as I know mine,
but I can't recall it.

ARSENEAULT: So do they call him Principal something or . . .?

PRATER: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: Or professor?

PRATER: He was the principal, yes.

ARSENEAULT: What'd he look like? Remember?

PRATER: He was a real tall fellow. He was tall, about maybe a little bit taller than me as I can remember. I was young then and he was strict. He was strict. And I can't call his name now. It might come . . .

ARSENEAULT: Was he from Mossville?

PRATER: [22:47] No. I don't know where he was . . . But he stayed the whole session.

ARSENEAULT: So he lived there while he was teaching?

PRATER: Yes . . . No, he lived at my dad's mom. My grandmother that . . . His property was joined the school property. My grandfather on my dad's side.

ARSENEAULT: So they put him up?

PRATER: Yes. That's where he rented a room from my grandmother for the whole school session. Now he would leave . . . I think . . . I'm not for sure. It seemed like he was from Baton

Rouge [Louisiana]. Which I'm not sure. But anyway, he would leave on the weekends and go home. But he would stay . . .

ARSENEAULT: He would drive his car home? What kind of car did he drive?

PRATER: [23:31] I don't remember. I don't remember.

ARSENEAULT: Yes.

PRATER: Old car way back then.

ARSENEAULT: Yes.

PRATER: But anyway, he was real strict. Real strict.

ARSENEAULT: How so? What do you remember?

PRATER: Well back then . . . How he punished them. He had a strap and you'd hold your hand out and he was a big tall fellow. Heavy set. He probably weighed about 200 and something. He was real dark. He'd bring that strap down, and you had to hold your hand out, and he'd hit you in that hand. When he come down he didn't take no pity. He come down his jaw would shake. Big boys. It was mostly boys, he didn't bother the girls. It was different. For the boys though I have seen some of the hands swollen after. For a day or so the hand would be blue and swollen.

Nobody . . . The parents didn't bother him because they know it was . . . he had done something that they wasn't supposed to do because he wasn't going to do that for nothing like that. Back when I was coming up though, you could get whippings and stuff like that and it wasn't nobody going to go fight and all that about it because they know that you wasn't going to get no whipping unless you did something. So everybody understood that. You did something.

[25:27] Because sometimes you'd get chastised, somebody like that, and next two or three days they might see that person, they say, "Well did Morris tell you I had to get a hold to him the other day?" Talk about it. When Dad come back he come say, "Son, what went on the other day?" "I don't know." [. . .?] He said, "Well yeah you did something. So-and-so said he had to get on you the other day." [. . .?]. It's best if you get a whipping from your aunts or your grandfather or somebody like that just when you get home to tell it because they was going to know it. And so you going to get another whipping if you didn't tell it.

So it made us better. I mean, I appreciate every bit I got. Now Mom, she was strict too and my dad. Because we wanted to go somewhere you go ask Dad he going to say, "Well what did your mom say?" "Well Mom said it's all right if you say we can go there." It's fine. We go to Mom she going to say, "Well what did your daddy say?" They was on agreement with whatever this one do or that one do. If she said no well you go to him and he going to ask you what she said and she said no, well it was no. But they didn't . . . So it was strict, but I enjoyed it. My mom, she whipped pretty good too. My dad [he hardly?] whipped. Get a whipping from him. But mom, we'd get one from her pretty often.

ARSENEAULT: What sort of things got you . . . What sort of things got you whipped?

PRATER: [27:32] Well it depends. Sometimes me and my brother used to get into it sometimes. We'd get into it.

ARSENEAULT: You mean fighting? Wrestling and stuff?

PRATER: Yes. Sometimes. We'd get on to fighting a little bit and she'd holler and ask what went on, were we hollering nothing. Something like that. Then after a while he'd keep crying or something. It was always . . . I would get it because they were younger than me and they could say I did this I did that, which a lot of times I did, because I was the oldest and I'd make them mad or angry like that and before you know it . . . hit them, something like that. So it . . . I appreciate every whipping that I got because it made a good person out of me. I never been to jail. Never went to visit anybody in there because . . . it wasn't because something I didn't do they just didn't catch me doing it, something like that. But other than that it's all right.

ARSENEAULT: Did you ever go back to school?

PRATER: No, I didn't go back. After I got up some age on me . . . I just didn't seem like it had the time. I had the time, but after you get out and you get up so . . . Get up in age it's just . . . It's something that you just don't understand and you just . . . That's the way it was with me. I just say well . . . I just give it up.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember when they built . . . So they had the two-room school house with principal and Ms. Laws.

PRATER: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: Then when did that stop being?

PRATER: [29:43] I don't remember.

ARSENEAULT: Yes.

PRATER: I don't remember. I don't remember. That's what I say, I can't remember. But anyway, when school's going on . . . Like I say now, the boys played on one side and the girls on the other side.

ARSENEAULT: Oh, so was it two sides the boys on one and girls . . .?

PRATER: Right.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: They're out to play. Now at the school . . .

ARSENEAULT: You can't play together?

PRATER: No. In the school now it was mixed. Guys and girls.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: But they might have had the girls all on desks on that side of the room.

ARSENEAULT: I see.

PRATER: And the boys over there. It wasn't like it is nowadays. Out playing, when you go out for recess like that, well all the boys is on this side and the girls is all on that side. We be playing ball, if your ball go over on that side you didn't go over to get it. Had a fence all the way around the school. All the way around the property.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember where it was? Like the general area?

PRATER: [30:53] It's right where the school is now. Where that school is in Mossville.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: Where they got the office now.

ARSENEAULT: Yeah, the Sasol office.

PRATER: Sasol office, that's the school.

ARSENEAULT: So they tore that old building down and built it.

PRATER: And built that.

ARSENEAULT: I see. Okay.

PRATER: [31:05] No, no, no it ain't. It's right there where the rec is.

ARSENEAULT: So the old school used to be where the rec is?

PRATER: Where the rec is, yes.

ARSENEAULT: And they moved the new school a little ways down.

PRATER: Yes, right. Right.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: Yes . . . No it's right where that rec is because see my grandfather lived in that property right at the woods right there from the rec. In the woods that's where my dad's . . .

ARSENEAULT: So he sold it to the school? So he sold it to the rec?

PRATER: [31:31] I don't know how they got the school . . .

ARSENEAULT: How they got the . . .

PRATER: . . . that property there. I don't know.

ARSENEAULT: Or he donated it or something.

PRATER: Could have. I don't remember. But anyway, that's where the school was. And like I say, the boys are on this side and the girls on that side. If you're off playing ball your ball went over there you didn't go across to get it. If the girls didn't throw it back across you had to go inside to the teacher the principal or else Ms. Laws and get permission to go over there and get it. And they mostly walk out and watch you go and get your ball or get the girls to throw it over back over. It was no . . . You didn't cross the line.

ARSENEAULT: [32:27] What would happen if you did?

PRATER: Well you got it.

ARSENEAULT: Get the strap.

PRATER: You got it. Yes, you got it. Like I said, the fence was all the way around and they had steps go over the fence. Had steps, wide steps from here to the wall over there. They step up

and over the fence.

ARSENEAULT: So it was safe?

PRATER: [32:56] And then go back down that side and all that width going up from the fence up to the stool, well that was . . . You didn't cross that line. That was the boundary line right there. When recess was over all the boys they line up over here. Had two lines. One line it was girls on this side. [. . .?].

ARSENEAULT: How is the school day organized? Like what time did it start and did you say a pledge or anything in the morning?

PRATER: Yes. Oh yes. Had that and a prayer. That was every morning you had that or a prayer. And then we had 10 o'clock and 12. Probably three or something like that you get out. I guess it's three. I can't remember now anyway. Had a recess in the morning you know it started about eight o'clock I think. Then recess probably 10 o'clock. Get out and two o'clock I think you get out again. I'm not sure. But it was I remember you'd have some play time during that time.

ARSENEAULT: [34:21] What do you remember about the games that you used to play?

PRATER: Two or three games. We played ball. Played marbles. Shoot marbles and play ball. That was . . .

ARSENEAULT: Like baseball or . . . ?

PRATER: Softball. That was about it. They didn't have nobody toys like they got now.

When my time coming up we only got toys during Christmas time we got a toy and an apple and orange and a peppermint stick. Yeah that was for Christmas.

ARSENEAULT: [35:17] The good old days.

PRATER: Yeah that's what I said. It's . . . We enjoyed it. We didn't know anything else, but that was it so we just enjoyed it. Now they got so much that children . . . They want so much and everything's so expensive now. When I was coming up everything was . . . You could take say a nickel and go to the store and buy a bag of candy with it. For a nickel. A penny you could go and had certain candy you could get. You could get a penny worth of candy and you get four or five pieces of candy for a penny.

Me and my brother after we got up a little age I started working or something. Doing a little work and I bought me a bicycle. Second hand bicycle from . . . Well Butch mama was working for a lady there in Maplewood and they had a bicycle and that's where I learned . . . found out about the bicycle. Fifteen dollars I gave them for the bicycle. We used to go to the picture show then ride to Westlake for the picture show on Saturday evening. We'd go down there and in . . .

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember the name of the theater?

PRATER: [37:00] No, I guess I don't.

ARSENEAULT: The [Midway?] was that one?

PRATER: No, no it's Westlake. I don't remember . . .

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: What the name of it was, no it was in Westlake. A little picture show there. [. . . ?]
Braxton and Rigmaidens and [LeDoux?] we'd ride about . . . That old bicycle we'd ride down to
Westlake on Saturday evenings and see the show. We could get in the show for . . . Well what
happened there we'd go ask . . . I hadn't started work when we first started. But anyway, we'd go
ask Dad for some money to go to the show. It took fifty cents. He would groan a while before
he'd get at fifty cents. So twenty-five cents for me and twenty-five cents for my brother. And we
could go see the show and get us a big box of popcorn for twenty-five cents and see the picture
show too. We'd go down this and see [. . . ?] Cassidy and [Ashley Road?]. And then we ride on
back to Mossville. See the show; go back to Mossville. It has changed now. I don't know how
much it cost to go to the show now.

ARSENEAULT: A good thirty dollars. I'm telling you.

PRATER: Oh boy.

ARSENEAULT: I'm telling you.

PRATER: We could go to the picture show for twenty-five cents and get a box of popcorn.

ARSENEAULT: You and your brother. What was your brother's name?

PRATER: [39:00] Clayton. Clayton, yes.

ARSENEAULT: Is he still alive today?

PRATER: No, he's dead. Yes. He was right under me. We'd ride a bicycle down there and we'd get together and go every Saturday evening.

ARSENEAULT: Was it a segregated theater?

PRATER: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: Where did y'all sit?

PRATER: [39:24] We was on the bottom first, but they got so that they started throwing stuff down on the blacks. The whites when they was upstairs we was on the bottom. They started throwing stuff down so then they switched it. Put blacks up and the white down because blacks would hardly bother them, throw nothing on them, because they understood what was going on

so they didn't bother them. But so it made a difference you see. They could do whatever they mostly wanted to, but you couldn't. You could, but you'd be in trouble. You know? So we just knowed to stay in our place.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember your first theater where you didn't have to sit in a designated area? Your first movie?

PRATER: [40:26] No, because after I left from Mossville and went in the service, well then I didn't hardly take in any shows after that.

ARSENEAULT: You were getting married and you were busy.

PRATER: Yes. I went in the service in '51 so I come out in '53. So I got married six months after I got out. Well me and the wife, we went a few times, and we still used to go after the girls got up some age. We would go to the drive-in. That was on the Old Spanish Trail . . . No, on [Highway] 90. That was on 90.

ARSENEAULT: [41:20] Oh there was one in Mossville?

PRATER: On 90, yes. Right back . . . Let's see.

ARSENEAULT: Ninety. Is that Prater [Road]?

PRATER: No, it was on 90, and see Prater leads from go across 90 and goes to Old Spanish Trail.

ARSENEAULT: Oh okay.

PRATER: See used to be that Old Spanish Trail where the school is. That was the Old Spanish Trail. I think they changed the name on it now.

ARSENEAULT: [41:50] It's Old Spanish Trail now. Then it's Burton. Then it's Old Spanish Trail.

PRATER: Yes, it's Burton. Yes, it used to be all Old Spanish Trail.

ARSENEAULT: Yes.

PRATER: So but 90 . . .

ARSENEAULT: It's parallel to Old Spanish Trail?

PRATER: [42:03] Yes.

ARSENEAULT: Okay. It's how you get on the interstate.

PRATER: Ninety is what . . . You probably come in on 90 across the I-10 Bridge.

ARSENEAULT: Yes.

PRATER: I-10, that's 90.

ARSENEAULT: Yes, I know that one.

PRATER: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: Okay. So the theater was on there somewhere?

PRATER: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: [42:18] It was right from Prater Road, right if you turn going east from Prater Road. It was about . . . I want to say about five or six hundred feet. It was about from here to when you go back out and turn right. It was about that far from Prater Road back east. That's where the drive-in theater was. So we'd go there. After that I didn't . . . We didn't really go to . . . Me and my wife didn't go to shows.

ARSENEAULT: Do you know who owned the drive-in?

PRATER: Wife would drive the kids to Lake Charles to the show. She'd take them over there. Drop them off and go back pick them up.

ARSENEAULT: [43:10] Do you remember who owned the drive-in on 90?

PRATER: No.

ARSENEAULT: Who worked there?

PRATER: Seemed like . . . Yes, it was a couple fellows working around there . . . Let me see what was his name. He was just around there working around. He probably used to cleanup or around and about. Pick up paper and stuff around right there. Seemed like he was a lead.

ARSENEAULT: Do they have food at the drive-in?

PRATER: [43:46] Yes, they had probably popcorn. About all they had, I think. I'm not sure. They had little candy. Some kind of candy or something and popcorn at the drive-in. Yeah. So it's . . . it has changed. But Mossville it was a nice quiet place until I don't know before I went in the service there where we used to stay at that house there. We used to stay. They made a club out of it. Made a club. Fellow in Lake Charles, had a club over there so I don't know whether he bought that place or what. But anyway, they went in and they took all the . . . Guttled the rooms and all. Made one big . . .

ARSENEAULT: So the house y'all rented when you were young?

PRATER: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: They turned it unto . . . What club was it?

PRATER: [45:03] After we moved another family moved in there and they had hogs and all that there. He had hogs there and all. But now the fellow that he sold it too . . . I don't know what happened. I don't remember. But anyway, they went inside and took all the rooms out. Just made one big open room and they made a club out of it. A fellow in Lake Charles had a club so he made a club out there.

ARSENEAULT: So he had two or a couple?

PRATER: Yes, he had two.

ARSENEAULT: A couple around.

PRATER: Two clubs. They used to . . . Clubs close up at a certain time. Maybe on Saturday. Maybe one or two o'clock morning they close. Well okay, a lot of them was at that club. They'd come out there at Mossville at that place and stay out there until the rest of the day. But anyway, I started going there before I went in the service. That' why I started going to that club. That was named The Wagon Wheel, I believe. Named that The Wagon Wheel. So I used to go there. In

Lake Charles I used to go to clubs over there in Lake Charles.

ARSENEAULT: Did you hear any local musicians?

PRATER: [46:42] No. They was [. . .?] when I started drinking the beer and stuff like that.
It was all good.

ARSENEAULT: You didn't know what you were listening to. It all sounded good.

PRATER: It didn't matter. [laughs] It didn't matter.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember any? Because I know they said The Paradise Club . . .

PRATER: B.B. King was one of them.

ARSENEAULT: Yes. You saw B.B. King?

PRATER: Yes. B.B. King, and I had another one I can't think of his name now. But it made
. . . They used to be at the clubs and play and sing like that. So I . . .

ARSENEAULT: He's a legend.

PRATER: [47:22] Yes. B.B. King, he was one fellow. I'm telling you. Yes, and so they

made a club out there and then after . . . One fellow got killed out there at that club in there.

ARSENEAULT: At The Wagon Wheel?

PRATER: [Agrees] In Mossville. He got killed there. A fellow shot him.

ARSENEAULT: [47:55] Do you know what happened?

PRATER: Well I wasn't going then. That was after I come back out of the service. I didn't go . . . I didn't club after I come out of the service. I did all mine while I was in the service. Get married, well I just give it all up. But anyway, they say that. I don't know. But say he slapped a man. They was good friends. They'd been drinking all day and then they were good friends. They said he slapped him and he shot him. That's what they say now.

ARSENEAULT: Crime of passion.

PRATER: I wasn't there. I wasn't there, so I don't know.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember who it was?

PRATER: [48:42] Harry [Mouton?] was the one that shot, and Clarence [LeDoux?] was the one that got shot. He was a young man. Tall, young fellow. About maybe my age, a little older. He was a young fellow when he got killed. Then later on another fellow got killed there, but he

got shot outside. Fellow went outside and shot him.

ARSENEAULT: Outside of The Wagon Wheel?

PRATER: Outside . . . He walk outside the place. But the first one got shot inside the place,
and the other one got shot outside.

ARSENEAULT: Outside.

PRATER: [49:27] So then it closed up shop after that.

ARSENEAULT: Really?

PRATER: Yes. It closed up because he went to the pen [penitentiary] the fellow did the
shooting. He went to the pen so the place . . .

ARSENEAULT: Bad press.

PRATER: They closed it up, and that ended it there.

ARSENEAULT: We heard about a murder in the 1930s. A young woman was killed by a
man who was working the plants?

PRATER: [49:57] I don't remember him. In the '30s?

ARSENEAULT: I believe so. Late '30s maybe.

PRATER: I don't remember because I was . . .

ARSENEAULT: Shot her in the street?

PRATER: I can't remember. Where was it at? What was it now?

ARSENEAULT: She was a fast . . . A loose woman I guess you could say. She would drive a corvette and I guess she had a reputation. And the man . . . She was seeing a man who came in from . . . I guess he was a seasonal worker. Something like that. And I guess he was angry that she was seeing more than just him.

PRATER: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: And I think he shot her in the street and then shot himself.

PRATER: [50:42] Oh okay. Okay, I remember that. Yes, that wasn't in . . .

ARSENEAULT: That was later?

PRATER: That was later, yes. That was . . . Yes that was another little club was out there. I remember now. There was another little club out there. Let me see. That was . . .

ARSENEAULT: Where was it?

PRATER: It was west of Evergreen.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: [51:08] Just west of Evergreen and not for . . . I don't know.

ARSENEAULT: The pub?

PRATER: I don't remember.

ARSENEAULT: Joy Hill?

PRATER: No, no. Joy Hill was way almost to Westlake.

ARSENEAULT: The Cowboy Inn?

PRATER: No . . . Cowboy Inn . . .

ARSENEAULT: The Paradise Club?

PRATER: That was Westlake. I don't remember what the name of that little place was there. But anyway, yeah. She did get killed there. Yeah that was probably in the '40s. Probably. She got killed. Her name was [Orally?]. I think her name was Orally. I'm not sure . . .

ARSENEAULT: Was she a Braxton?

PRATER: [52:00] No, she was . . . I don't know what she was. I can't remember what she was. But anyway, yeah she did. Yeah she did . . . She got shot. Shot with his shotgun, and it was concerning another man or something like that. I don't remember now because that was before I started going to the clubs and all. Well her mother stayed right across the road, and she had a big room there. She had a big [troller?] in there. And we could go in there because she sold soda waters and stuff. Her daughter had the club back across the road. So I used to go in that place. She had play records there and had a couple of slot machine in there you could dance. Had a big floor, could dance.

But her daughter didn't get killed over there. He shot her and him and another fellow . . . He shot at another fellow but he . . . The other fellow, when he shot her, well the other fellow jumped him. Tried to get him because he was going to shoot him too. So they wrestled around there with the gun and they say . . . I wasn't there. But anyway, by them wrestling some kind of way he slung him all over the ditch and all. But anyway, when he got the gun away from him he hit him over the head with it and that bent the barrel and when he shot at him by the barrel being bent he missed him. Sprinkled him a little bit. And then the fellow he went on down and shot

himself. He went down where Jim Moss . . . That was the Moss. Jim Moss. Went down there and that's where he shot himself down there with . . . Jim Moss, that's the one had the little post office. That's where the mail used to go down with him and that's where he shot himself down there.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember the post office? Did I ask you that already?

PRATER: [54:51] What's that?

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember the post office?

PRATER: Well that's what I said. They say they had a little . . . Well I mean, he had a little store and he just had a little place setup there where mail . . .

ARSENEAULT: So he had like a . . .

PRATER: Mail, yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Where you could buy things.

PRATER: Yes, he had a little . . . Wasn't much. Little candy and little cookies.

ARSENEAULT: Yes.

PRATER: And tobacco and stuff like that. I think. I don't remember the store because it's out of business when I got up in age. So they say they used to drop the mail off there once a week. But many houses out there: the Braxtons, LaDous, Garretts, Rigmaidens, and Braxton. That was . . . And Perkins. That was about everything was in Mossville way back. It's . . . Wasn't too many. Then started moving in. Moving in. So . . .

ARSENEAULT: They moved in with the industry?

PRATER: [56:10] Well, no. Some of them did I guess. I don't remember. But yeah some of them did because people came in from I don't know where, but anyway, people came in. Some people that we didn't know. Way back then, didn't know them. They came in. The first plant was put in there was Cities Service. That was the first plant put in.

ARSENEAULT: What do you remember about that?

PRATER: Well that was something big because that was the first plant come in. Otherwise it wasn't anything in Westlake and Lake Charles. Like that. Wasn't nothing but a few stores. Westlake had, you now, a few stores. And Westlake and Sulphur had a few stores. Mossville had one little store. But anyway, when the plant come in I had people come in to build a plant and that was Kellogg I believe was the company that came and built Cities Service.

ARSENEAULT: Kellogg?

PRATER: Kellogg Construction, yes. They built Cities Service, and then after Cities Service then [Continental?] . . . Conoco down there. The next plant come in. But Mossville started picking up and the plants started coming in. People started coming in. Mossville started to grow a little bit then.

ARSENEAULT: But what about the saw mills? What do you . . . Just going back a little bit because it's harder to find that.

PRATER: Sawmill. Well they had one in Westlake.

ARSENEAULT: Was there one in Mossville?

PRATER: [57:58] Well they had on in Mossville, yeah. They did have one in Mossville. It was little old fellow right there on Evergreen, I think. Had one there on Evergreen.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember his name?

PRATER: It was white had that . . .

ARSENEAULT: It was a white man?

PRATER: Yes. Ross Reeves, I believe.

ARSENEAULT: Did he live in Mossville?

PRATER: No.

ARSENEAULT: He just owned the saw mill there?

PRATER: He just brought his saw mill out there. See there was a small thing there worked three or four men. That's all.

ARSENEAULT: Did he employ people in Mossville?

PRATER: [58:30] Yes. They most all . . . And it was right up there at . . .

ARSENEAULT: By Evergreen?

PRATER: Evergreen. Now it wasn't too far. You know, Sasol building that little plant on Evergreen now? He was just a few hundred feet past there.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: Before you get to that curve there.

ARSENEAULT: Yes, I know exactly what you're talking about.

PRATER: Okay, it was right in there. Little small thing there. You cut the timber right in there.

ARSENEAULT: So he took local timber?

PRATER: It was close. Yes, close right there where my dad worked right there.

ARSENEAULT: Your dad worked at the one in Mossville?

PRATER: [59:04] My dad worked at . . . Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: Yeah and then he worked at the one in Westlake.

ARSENEAULT: Westlake.

PRATER: Well he used to ride his horse to Westlake.

ARSENEAULT: Oh wow.

PRATER: That was the only way they had to get around. Mostly horse.

ARSENEAULT: Yes.

PRATER: Wagons. Had a few of them had cars out there, but it wasn't very many.

ARSENEAULT: [59:24] Do you remember who had cars? I'm just curious. I'm sure that was a big deal.

PRATER: Had . . . Rigmaiden had a car. [Garrett?] had a car. And who else?

ARSENEAULT: All the shop owners?

PRATER: [59:41] Johnson had a car. That was about it. Yeah maybe one or two Braxtons might have had a car. It wasn't many cars out there. Wagon. My dad had a horse then after that he got him a wagon.

ARSENEAULT: For all thirteen of y'all huh? Did y'all all fit in the wagon?

PRATER: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: Was it thirteen or eleven?

PRATER: It was eleven kids.

ARSENEAULT: Sorry.

PRATER: [1:00:19] But I didn't hardly ride in the wagon. Not because . . . He didn't get the wagon until after I'd started working around like that, so I didn't go. After he got the wagon ride the horse and I used to ride the horse around and about like that. If I had to go to Westlake or something like that, I'd ride the horse. And he'd ride down there every morning and ride back every evening. Sunday . . . He worked mostly Saturday, but Sunday, that was his off day. But they would ride the horses. They'd gather up a bunch of men together from Sulphur, Westlake, Mossville. The ones had horses they'd gather up and have a lot of loose horses, wild horses, way on up in the woods up there. They'd ride running horses and catch them.

ARSENEAULT: [1:01:37] Who's . . . How did the horses get wild in the woods?

PRATER: They just . . . Horses just turn loose and horses have colts and keep . . . Loose horses. They had a lot of horses all from Mossville on up. Going up north like that way. See where Sasol is coming up through? All in there is where there used to be horses. That used to be nothing but woods. Just woods. No houses or nothing.

ARSENEAULT: The horses lived in the woods?

PRATER: Oh yes. Wild horses. They was wild. They'd ride. They'd run them all day long. Catch them. Ride.

ARSENEAULT: How would they catch them?

PRATER: [1:02:15] They'd rope them. Rope.

ARSENEAULT: And then what?

PRATER: Ride them.

ARSENEAULT: And then the horses . . .

PRATER: [1:02:21] Let them loose. They took some of them. Both white and black used to ride together like that.

ARSENEAULT: They cowboys?

PRATER: And sometimes they would take the ones that they were catching they want.

ARSENEAULT: Did you ever catch a wild horse?

PRATER: I didn't ride for that. That was . . . They'd ride . . . We . . . See I was coming up I didn't see Dad much. I saw him but it wasn't like . . .

ARSENEAULT: He was working?

PRATER: Like the lady kids coming on. He would be around with them because he would leave early in the morning. Maybe almost dark when he get back in the evening. Half a day Saturday and Sunday he was riding horses. That was every Sunday he'd ride horses.

ARSENEAULT: That's how he relaxed?

PRATER: [1:03:15] That was they sport. Ride horses. Then after Cities Service built then Firestone built down there. That's a plant too. Rubber plant. That Firestone is a rubber plant, and Cities Service was a gas plant there. But anyway, he got on then at Firestone. My dad did. Worked at Firestone. Well the he would just work horses from seven in the morning to maybe three in the evening. So he'd be home a little earlier in the evening. But I done got up through age then I didn't, you now.

ARSENEAULT: You were older?

PRATER: Yes, I was older then. So he would be off then. And then he retired then. He'd be around home then, but I was gone then so I didn't have too much time. I had time with him, but not like the last kids coming along there. They [were him around there?]. He got him a car then after . . .

ARSENEAULT: What was his first car?

PRATER: A little Ford. I don't remember what model it was now. A 40-something model

Ford, yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Did he let y'all drive it?

PRATER: [1:04:54] [Disagrees] I didn't drive it.

ARSENEAULT: Yes.

PRATER: I didn't drive it. Well his brother had bought it then his brother bought him another one, so he sold that to my dad. I bought . . . My first car was an old Oldsmobile. A '30 . . .

ARSENEAULT: [1:05:19] Oh they don't even make those anymore, do they?

PRATER: A '38 . . . Mobile.

ARSENEAULT: Wow. Did it have air conditioning?

PRATER: No. [laughs]

ARSENEAULT: Did you have to crank it?

PRATER: No, you started batteries. A battery started it. I had that when I went in the service in '51.

ARSENEAULT: What color was it?

PRATER: [1:05:39] Black. Yeah, black.

ARSENEAULT: Did it have a radio?

PRATER: Yes, I think it did. I ain't for sure. I forgot now. I don't remember. No, I don't think it did. Not that one, no. No I hadn't gotten married then. I had that when I went in the service. Well I wrecked it. I wrecked it.

ARSENEAULT: Where'd you wreck it?

PRATER: In Westlake.

ARSENEAULT: Going to the club?

PRATER: [1:06:10] No, I was coming from.

ARSENEAULT: Coming from the club?

PRATER: I was on my way home and it was around, I don't know, two o'clock in the morning. Something. I don't remember just I remember stopping for a red light there in Westlake and when I left that I don't remember no more.

ARSENEAULT: How'd they find you?

PRATER: They had a little club right down from where I turned at. Where I turned at and went down a road where there was a little club there. Well it was a white and black with the black in one back room and the white . . . Well anyway, they heard the noise. It wasn't far from there. So couple fellows they come down there. Turn it over. I turn it over. It flipped that car when they brought me home. I don't remember. But that was in December. Well I was getting ready to leave for the service then. That was my last big blowout.

ARSENEAULT: [1:07:14] You knew you were about to . . .?

PRATER: I know I was gone.

ARSENEAULT: About to go to boot camp. Not going to have for four years.

PRATER: I know I was gone. That's what I did.

ARSENEAULT: Well you pay the price I think.

PRATER: [1:07:22] I . . . Yes. I had my last big breakdown.

ARSENEAULT: Went out with a bang.

PRATER: Yes. Yes, so . . .

ARSENEAULT: Were you hurt bad?

PRATER: It didn't hurt.

ARSENEAULT: Yes, the car was just . . .

PRATER: Yes [. . .?]. Yes. Got a fellow in there with me. His arm got hurt though. Yeah. He had his arm out. It turned on that side. But then I left and it bent the old car all up. Side and the back. They sold it while I was in the service. My mom sold it. I didn't want it no more anyway. Then when I come out, like I say, I got married then. I bought another car then. We bought a car then. It was a Dodge. '41 Dodge, I believe it was. That's what my wife . . . She learned how to drive on that . . . on it because it . . .

ARSENEAULT: It was a good one to learn on?

PRATER: [1:08:36] Yes, it was . . . Well it was standard shift. If you're not used to driving a standard shift you got to know how to get off the clutch. You don't need jump. But anyway, it was . . .

ARSENEAULT: Who taught her how?

PRATER She learned by herself.

ARSENEAULT: She got in?

PRATER: [1:08:57] Well I mean I be running sometimes and she . . . But anyway, it was . . . Well they call it a [fluid?] drive because you could shift it and when you get off it didn't jump. You shift into first then second then high. When you shift it down to high, well you could put your foot on the breaks don't mess with the clutch. If it's on break it take off it's like automatic then. It would change gears long as you didn't put your foot on the clutch it would change automatic like an automatic change. First, second, high. So that's what she learned how to drive because it didn't jump when you get off the clutch. It just take on off slow.

ARSENEAULT: It was easier for her?

PRATER: She learned on there. Then after that bought a . . . From that one then was automatic transition. From then on she could drive them. Yeah. So it . . . I had several cars in my time. I bought two new cars. I remember I bought when I was younger. My first new car was a '75. Ford '75.

ARSENEAULT: What made you pick that one?

PRATER: [1:10:39] Well it was a new car then. A new car that was a '75 Model Ford. I bought it. I was working in Westlake then at a shipyard. I was working there, doing welding

there so I was making a little money. So I bought that. Getting classy then. [laughs] Yes, classy then. Bought that in '75 and I kept it until '87. I kept it. But it was still in good shape when I traded it in.

ARSENEAULT: Wow. That's the year I was born.

PRATER: [1:11:35] I trade that '75 in there and on '87 [. . .?] Ford. I kept it until about '90. Probably '90 . . . What . . . Ninety . . . I forgot when I got rid of it, but anyway I kept it in the '90s. I bought me a truck then and sold that car. I bought me a truck in 2011. A 2011 truck and I sold the car then. Well we went to Florida in the '87. I retired in '92 . . . 1992 I retired and me and the wife and two of my daughters we went to Florida. That was the first trip to Florida. We stayed up there a week in Florida, and we drove it.

ARSENEAULT: The Oldsmobile?

PRATER: No, Chevrolet. I mean, a Ford.

ARSENEAULT: Okay, yes.

PRATER: The '87. 1987 Ford. [Crown Victoria?]. We drove it and went to Florida in '92. Then we went back to Florida in . . . That one right there.

ARSENEAULT: This is Disney World?

PRATER: [1:13:31] Yes. That right there? Yes.

ARSENEAULT: Right here?

PRATER: No, that. That one.

ARSENEAULT: This one?

PRATER: [1:13:36] That and we went to Florida in '90. I believe that's '90.

ARSENEAULT: Is this 2009?

PRATER: 2009, yes. We went again.

ARSENEAULT: Y'all go a lot?

PRATER: We went to Florida . . . I done made four trips. My daughter they made about five or six.

ARSENEAULT: Oh wow.

PRATER: Seven trips there.

ARSENEAULT: Wow.

PRATER: [1:13:51] Me and the wife we went four . . .

ARSENEAULT: This is y'all's vacation spot?

PRATER: Yes, four times. We went . . . I retired in '92 and then maybe went to Florida.

Stayed a week. Then we went back again. I don't remember what year that was. Then we went back in 2009. Then we went last . . . '15. Last year.

ARSENEAULT: [1:14:19] Yes. Oh that's Minnie Mouse.

PRATER: We went there last year, '15. In May. We went in May.

ARSENEAULT: Wow. Did your family . . . Growing up did y'all go on vacation with your mom and dad anywhere?

PRATER: No. No, we didn't take no trips. Well it seemed like I remember a couple of trips we went to DeRidder [Louisiana].

ARSENEAULT: What's out there?

PRATER: [1:14:58] My great grandfather lived in DeRidder. So went up there a couple of

times. I can remember my . . . when I was young. First trip we rode the train I think. Rode the train to DeRidder. It's stopped in Mossville at the crossing. You know where Old Spanish Trail cross the railroad there? That's where we caught it there. [laughs]

ARSENEAULT: Nice.

PRATER: Old train on up.

ARSENEAULT: [1:15:29] Was there a depot in Mossville?

PRATER: [Disagrees] You could just catch . . . We just caught the train it stop at the crossing there.

ARSENEAULT: You just hopped on.

PRATER: No, had to buy a ticket and all.

ARSENEAULT: But you just bought one on the train?

PRATER: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: Yes. Bought a ticket on the train. It was an old, old thing way back then. Old.

ARSENEAULT: Could sit down?

PRATER: [1:15:51] It runs slow, but it stopped there. We caught it right at the railroad there where it crossed over right there. Went on up to DeRidder. We rode it back and put us down right back there. Then we went back and another time we went my . . . One of my mom's sister's husband had an old model eight truck that had a big bed on it. We all went up there on [the 19th?] I think one year. I remember that's the only time I remember we . . . family took . . . Anything like that.

Yeah, so it's all my going was after I got up and got married and left and then I'd go on around about then. But other than that wasn't any money to go on no vacation and just didn't think about going on a vacation. Wasn't anywhere really for them to go back then. So it wasn't nothing. Yeah. Seemed like Mom we'd go to Christmas. Go to Lake Charles for Christmas. Buy clothes or shoes or something like that for Christmas. But other than that, that was about it. Through the summer there we didn't wear any shoes. Barefooted all through the summer. So we . . . Back then we'd just run and go through the woods. Play and go on barefooted. Now I can't walk around in the house barefooted hardly. Hurts. So yeah well . . .

ARSENEAULT: [1:18:00] What about home remedies? Did y'all have any home remedies y'all would use?

PRATER: Oh yes, they had home remedies. They . . . Grandma, she'd go out there and get

some kind of roots. Make you a tea like that. We wasn't that sick much. Maybe a cold or something like that was about the only sickness we'd be. Now [they'd give you black draught?] about once a week.

ARSENEAULT: What's that?

PRATER: Castor oil. Castor oil, you know? They give you that about once a week to clean you out. Black draught well that was a . . . It was a powder then. You can buy it in a liquid form but it was a powder then.

ARSENEAULT: What's it called?

PRATER: Black draught.

ARSENEAULT: Draught?

PRATER: Draught, yeah. Black draught, yes.

ARSENEAULT: And you'd eat it?

PRATER: [1:19:05] No, it just make a ball and then give it to you and get some water and swallow it down.

ARSENEAULT: What was it made out of?

PRATER: I don't know. Nasty stuff.

ARSENEAULT: It didn't taste good? It was gross?

PRATER: No, it didn't. Had to clean you out. Make your bowels move, clean you out there.

ARSENEAULT: Cleansing.

PRATER: Yes. And lemon tea. They give you lemon tea and stuff like that. Other than that about all you had was a cold or something like that. There wasn't no disease like there is now.

ARSENEAULT: So what would they do for a cold?

PRATER: [1:19:45] They'd get some kind of . . . Well Grandma, she had something that she'd go out to get out there and come back, make you a tea. Drink that; in a few days you was all right. I remember my brother, he had what . . . malaria fever. They called it malaria fever I think they called it. But anyway, he had that one year. He was serious sick with that fever. And they had what they called them bitter weeds. Whole big weed with yellow flowers on them. They come up about so high. They made us go pull a lot of them. They had a big old wash pot on the outside. A big old pot they put water in it and throwed wood around it. Got it hot. Got them bitter weeds and put them in that tubs back then. They didn't have the tub like they got in the bathroom

then. They had this wash tub.

ARSENEAULT: Like a number three tub?

PRATER: Yes. Number three tub. They out them bitter weeds in there and poured that hot water in there on that. They put a . . . Set a chair in there and set him in that chair and covered him up with a blanket and sweated him out. In a few days he was all right. I believe it was malaria fever they said he had. I don't know.

ARSENEAULT: [1:21:31] Had to sweat the fever out.

PRATER: Yes. They did that. And that was the only real sickness I can remember. He was real sick. Hot, hot fever. Did that in a few days he was all right.

ARSENEAULT: What about for cuts or bruises or anything like that?

PRATER: [1:21:53] Yes. They would put some turpentine on it. We called it coal oil back then. Kerosene.

ARSENEAULT: They poured kerosene on it?

PRATER: Yes, kerosene on it and turpentine. Put that on there and then they go around the house and get some spider webs, put that on it and wrap it up. I . . . spot on my foot there where I

was out at the cow pen when I was smaller and see the [kin?] at around the side there and I climbed up on the . . . and slide down that. Cut my foot all open under there. Got around the house got that put on it. Wrapped it up. I was walking on my heel for a few days, but after that it got all right. Didn't go to no doctor for nothing like that. Just a cut like that. Now, I don't remember breaking no bones or nothing so they didn't have no money to waste. You cut your foot you didn't have no money to go to the doctor with that.

ARSENEAULT: You got to tough it out.

PRATER: [1:32:34] Yes. It'll be all right in a few days. Stuck a nail. I stuck a nail in my foot. They put a little piece of fat meat on that. Bacon. Fat meat and bacon. Slap piece . . . Cut a piece out, put it on there and wrap it up. For a nail stick. Pour some turpentine on it. Go on.

ARSENEAULT: What was the turpentine for?

PRATER: That would take some of the soreness out of it and make it heal too. Kerosene be the same thing. Take some of the soreness out of it, and it heal up.

ARSENEAULT: Any other injuries? Did you have any other?

PRATER: [1:24:15] Yes. After I got a pretty good age me and my brother . . . I think I told you they had two wood yards in Mossville because everybody out there mostly burned wood. A lot of the white folks would come by too. Fireplace wood and stove wood. Stuff like that. And I

went to work for one there. Me and my brother was going to go cut wood for him and I stick a crosscut saw and I stuck one of the teeth right there in my leg. When I pulled my side and he didn't pull his side back it went in. [I kind of sat on it made it bow?]. When it bowed it bowed my way and it stuck. One tooth stuck me in there. Right in the front of my leg. Hit right there. In there. Blood jumped up that high so that was the end of woodcutting there. They done the same thing with it. Poured coal oil and kerosene on it then wrapped it up. Oh that was sewed up for a couple of days. Real sore. But you didn't get no shots or nothing for nothing like that. But now you get cut you better get a shot. Lock-jaw shot or something like that.

ARSENEAULT: Get a tetanus shot.

PRATER: Yes [. . . ?]. Yes, lock-jaw shot. Yes they had names for stuff. It ain't like it is now. They got the proper name for it now. But it was back then . . . Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Survival.

PRATER: Yes. Yes, so . . . Yes, indeed.

ARSENEAULT: Did you have any healers in the area?

PRATER: No, I don't remember any. They practically all old folks . . . You know what I mean. They had the remedies they would . . . You get that, but other than that, that was about it.

ARSENEAULT: Anybody born with a special gift or anything like that?

PRATER: [1:26:35] No, not that I know of. My grandmother on my mom's side there, you get a cut she could stop blood. You bleeding or something she could stop it. I don't know what she did, but she learned one of my brothers what to do. How to stop it. I know my mom, she went and had some teeth pulled. [Up?] in the day and she spilled blood in the morning and she lost so much blood she kind of fainted out and my dad went got on the horse and went up and told her. By the time he got back it had stopped. Yeah, she had some teeth pulled. She could spit out a mouth full of them. Mostly was another on there. She bled out so much she fainted. She learnt one of my brothers what to do. I don't know what it is. She didn't learn me, so she learned him. He can do it too, yes. What they did I don't know. What she do I don't know. But it didn't take long. It just . . . Yes. I wish he would learn somebody else, because he's getting a little age on him. Have somebody in the family kind of know what to do. Something like that.

ARSENEAULT: [1:28:14] So she just passed it on to him?

PRATER: Yes. She could still do it but she passed it on to him. She learn him, but what it is I don't know. I didn't ask him, and I never asked her. When I talk to him later when I think about it I'll ask him though pass it on to somebody else. One of the younger kids . . . grandkids or something. Be good. Yeah that's . . . Good life. Good life.

ARSENEAULT: Where did y'all go to the doctor if you did need one?

PRATER: [1:28:55] Lake Charles. That'd be Lake Charles. That's where they went. Lake Charles.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember the doctor? No? There was no doctor in Mossville?

PRATER: I went to a few. Doctor Ross was I think a colored doctor. Mostly went to colored doctors. Most of the time. Not all the time. But anyway, Doctor Ross was one doctor. He was in Lake Charles. That was . . . Had another doctor, but I don't remember his name. But my . . . Two of my sisters had their tonsils taken out. Went to a white doctor had that done. [clock chimes] Both them had theirs taken out the same time. I hope the doctor hold them down and take the tonsils out. [laughs]

ARSENEAULT: He didn't numb them up?

PRATER: Yeah. He kind of put them to sleep. Put a little . . .

ARSENEAULT: You held your sisters down?

PRATER: [1:29:59] Yeah. They was cutting up. They didn't want that.

ARSENEAULT: They were scared.

PRATER: And but he gave them a little sleeping.

ARSENEAULT: Yes. Chloroform or whatever?

PRATER: Yes. Whatever it is.

ARSENEAULT: Yes.

PRATER: But anyway he gave them a little of that, and put them to sleep. I kind of helped him until he got them to sleep. And took the tonsils out. Got the other one. I done got pretty full of it then that stuff smelling.

ARSENEAULT: Like smelling a marker.

PRATER: [1:30:35] Then I drove them on back home. Drove them back home. My mom and my two sisters, yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Were they out of it the whole way home?

PRATER: Yes, kind of. Kind of out of it, but anyway, they wanted ice cream after they come to. Got them some ice cream. Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Was there an ice cream parlor in Mossville?

PRATER: Yes, we had one in Mossville. The place that it sold ice cream and soda water and

candy I believe.

ARSENEAULT: The canteen?

PRATER: Yes [. . .?]. One little room. Little long room and we'd go there and get ice cream.

I miss . . . Recall that name of that . . .

ARSENEAULT: Was it Dew Drop Inn?

PRATER: [1:31:36] No. It was . . .

ARSENEAULT: Lula Lyons?

PRATER: Sweet Dreams.

ARSENEAULT: Sweet Dreams.

PRATER: Sweet Dream Parlor I believe they call it, yeah.

ARSENEAULT: [1:31:47] Sweet Dreams.

PRATER: Yes, Sweet Dreams Parlor. That was . . . Who had that? Bradleys had that.

Bradleys, yes.

ARSENEAULT: Well we're at . . . What time is it?

PRATER: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: Well we've been talking for a while.

PRATER: Oh yeah well . . .

ARSENEAULT: [1:32:06] I'll just ask you one more because I still have a lot to talk to you about. Let's see. What was I wanting to know? Oh do you remember when y'all got water?

PRATER: [laughs] I can't remember. I don't remember when that was, but that was . . . Could be in the last part of '70s. I could be . . . I'm not sure. But anyway, it wasn't too many houses in Mossville when they got the water. But back in there where we were weren't many houses because when I built my house in '57 I believe, something like that, I had a well put down. I dug a well. It was a [bowled?] well.

ARSENEAULT: You dug it yourself?

PRATER: No, no I had a company come to come put it in.

ARSENEAULT: Company comes and do it.

PRATER: And that well right there now when Sasol brought me out there it was 420 feet deep.

ARSENEAULT: Wow.

PRATER: [1:33:14] Four hundred and twenty feet deep. I took the water because there's running water in here then. They didn't have enough houses to really . . . To get it. To put on. So I went on and took the water, and I kept my well for a while. I tried on that, you see, and frankly I lost that. I lost it then. I kept it a while. Wash my car and stuff like that. It was real good water too.

ARSENEAULT: Did it come from an aquifer? Where was it coming from?

PRATER: It was coming from ground there. It was . . .

ARSENEAULT: The Chicot Aquifer?

PRATER: It was down somewhere in there because I first wanted a shallow well. That's a hundred-foot well. Shallow well. So he [bowed?] two. He bowed one over here and he lost . . . The sand took it, and he moved . . . I told him to move over.

ARSENEAULT: Does that mean it caved in on itself?

PRATER: [1:34:13] No, no. He was small . . . Small board. There wasn't about four inches.

ARSENEAULT: Tiny well?

PRATER: Yes, four inches. It went down with it.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: And the sand caught him down at the bottom. See the sand . . .

ARSENEAULT: So he can't go any further?

PRATER: [1:34:28] No, he could go further but the sand that's took the water. In the water.
That's the sand . . . hit sand.

ARSENEAULT: Absorbing all the like . . .

PRATER: Quick sand like.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: [1:34:36] Sand, yes. You know? Could go but the sand wouldn't let the water
through. See the sand. So I told him to move over there. He moved there. He had plenty of water.

But the pump didn't pick it up. Electric pump didn't pick it up. All right, so I went . . . He stayed around a couple days. So I told him. I said, "Okay, move back over and put me down a well." I first told him a shallow well but this time no limit. I said, "Put me down a well." So okay, he bowed. He bowed around 300 something feet. He hit water, but the sand didn't look right. The dirt didn't come up. It didn't look right to him so he kept going. Four hundred twenty feet.

ARSENEAULT: Wow.

PRATER: [1:35:17] That well right there now. Sasol got it there.

ARSENEAULT: They still kept it?

PRATER: I think they pulled the pipes. They pulled that out. I think the pipe all out of it. Its 420 feet deep. He put it down. He told me, "Now if you want to pay the electric bill you take your hose throw it in the stich and turn it on and forget about it." He said, "You ain't going to run out of water."

ARSENEAULT: Wow.

PRATER: He told me that when he got that . . .

ARSENEAULT: It must be in that aquifer.

PRATER: That's where he told. He said, "Now if you want to pay the electric bill." He said, "I guarantee you won't run out of water."

ARSENEAULT: [1:35:52] Wow.

PRATER: You want to pay the electric bill throw it over in the ditch turn it on and forget about it.

ARSENEAULT: It won't run out.

PRATER: It won't run out of water.

ARSENEAULT: You just have to pay a million dollars.

PRATER: [1:36:03] That cost me about five back then. It was in the '50s. So in '57 it cost me about 600 dollars to bow it.

ARSENEAULT: Did the company have a . . . There's a special company that did that?

PRATER: Yes, there was a company it was out of Hackberry [Louisiana].

ARSENEAULT: Oh, okay.

PRATER: Yes. Company hooked it up then that was it.

ARSENEAULT: Wow.

PRATER: I got a loan. Had to pay that through the bank. I didn't have that kind of money.

[laughs]

ARSENEAULT: [1:36:32] The bank owned that well for a little while.

PRATER: Yes. Yes indeed.

ARSENEAULT: Wow.

PRATER: That's the same way that happened . . . That property I had out there, I got a loan to get that. It was 500 dollars to buy that lot there. Two lots where I was at.

ARSENEAULT: Wow.

PRATER: 250 a lot.

ARSENEAULT: That's a deal.

PRATER: [1:36:56] Yes. Sasol got them now. So in a way I come out good because my

house was getting old and I got Sasol bought my house, so I moved over here and bought my brand new house. So come out better in a way. Right now I got tax to pay.

ARSENEAULT: Yeah.

PRATER: Now I got tax to pay.

ARSENEAULT: They always get you.

PRATER: [1:37:25] Yes.

ARSENEAULT: They get you.

PRATER: But I don't mind it though.

ARSENEAULT: Yes. Death and taxes.

PRATER: Now I got this homestead not there, you see.

ARSENEAULT: [1:37:35] Once you work it it's yours.

PRATER: Yes. That's why I said homesteaded.

ARSENEAULT: Yes.

PRATER: I can homestead so much. They can only allow you so much for homesteading, you see. So I homesteaded then I got paid the remain. Yes.

ARSENEAULT: So you kept the well even when they brought the . . .?

PRATER: Yes. It was there, but I wasn't using it. I quit using it after for several years after they run the water I quit using it.

ARSENEAULT: Why . . . Did they bring the water in because the water table was getting polluted?

PRATER: [1:38:13] Yes. That was a lot of it because a lot of people had little wells some of them are twenty, thirty feet.

ARSENEAULT: They're shallow.

PRATER: Yes, shallow well.

ARSENEAULT: So it was like a puddle?

PRATER: Yes, that's what I'm saying. A lot of wells out there wasn't that deep. Way back hit

water pretty . . . Well where we stayed at though, where we first stayed at, by Old Spanish Trail. That big house over there. They dug a well over there after we moved. [Water when we moved?]. So they got together and they dug a four by four. Dug well. They dug that after we moved there. My dad and a lot of people. They just . . . Back then they'd go help each one like that. Got something going on. And us kids, we had to see if we pass by and see somebody out there doing something . . .

ARSENEAULT: Y'all would help?

PRATER: You'd help, yes. You'd go by and help them. They don't do that anymore. If they do they want some money. But then we'd do it. Think nothing about it. Go on about your business.

ARSENEAULT: Just being a good neighbor.

PRATER: [1:39:27] Right. Right, that's it.

ARSENEAULT: How did they tell y'all? How did y'all find out the water table was being polluted?

PRATER: I don't really remember.

ARSENEAULT: Was there like an announcement or a pamphlet?

PRATER: Well that's what I'm saying. I don't remember. I don't remember because it . . .

Way back then a lot of the wells were just shallow wells and a lot of them had . . . Some of them didn't have a septic tank and stuff like that.

ARSENEAULT: The proper filtration?

PRATER: Our house there. They didn't have that so now like that some of them didn't have much land and all that.

ARSENEAULT: So that's getting in the water?

PRATER: Yes, that could be contaminating a lot.

ARSENEAULT: Dangerous.

PRATER: [1:40:23] Yes, and they know . . .

ARSENEAULT: But yours was so deep.

PRATER: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: Yours went . . .

PRATER: Oh yes.

ARSENEAULT: Yours went to the aquifer.

PRATER: Yes, mine was deep.

ARSENEAULT: Which was so clean.

PRATER: Yes. Ours went deep. [phone rings] My daughter . . . My wife she'll get it.
Someone will get it for me.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: [1:40:39] Yes, so it was good water.

ARSENEAULT: Yes.

PRATER: I hate . . . I really lost it. You know what I mean. But other than that the water . . .
And the water done got bad. Mossville water. It just done got bad. Pipes got corroded and stuff
like that because they was galvanized pipes and stuff like that. It wasn't a pipe that they put down
now. So it was thing back then. Put down the wells like that.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember about . . . Do you remember when the . . . Whenever the

plants would like sound the alarms or anything like that?

PRATER: [1:41:34] Yes, they put one down there around . . . They put one of them down probably where the school is now. In that area I think they put one right down in there somewhere. They put another one around Maplewood somewhere. I think they put one like that . . . the alarm like that, but couldn't understand what it was saying. When the plants would announce something like that, you couldn't understand what was said. They didn't put that in until late.

ARSENEAULT: What would y'all have . . . Was there like an evacuation plan or . . .?

PRATER: [1:42:29] No, they just . . . In house. Stay in. Put down all the windows and stuff like that. Stay inside for so long. They'd say when it was over with. Wasn't ever nothing hardly bad that turned loose really bad. You'd hear when they say what's going on. Sometime you didn't know what was going on because you didn't understand what was going on. You stay out there . . . Other than that a few people got sick from being out like that. Other than that's another thing going on.

ARSENEAULT: Did y'all ever have to evacuate or anything like that?

PRATER: Not for plant. We didn't. I don't remember ever leaving for that.

ARSENEAULT: Did y'all have to leave for any other reason? The hurricane or anything?

Hurricane Audrey?

PRATER: [1:43:42] Well no. We went to school for Audrey. Yeah, went to the school down there.

ARSENEAULT: The whole community kind of met there?

PRATER: Yes, whole Mossville just at the school. I was working in Maplewood when Audrey come through, but I didn't go to work that day because it was bad weather. My . . . We planned to stay home. There was a little wind blowing rain and all but didn't think it was that bad because we didn't know too . . . Didn't have the weather report like you got now and all that, so we didn't think it was nothing much. We knowed about it, but we didn't know how bad it was and where it was going and nothing like that. So thankfully my brother-in-law came by and told us everybody going to go on down to the school and all that. So we got up and we went on down there and stayed. We went down there and stayed until late that evening, and we went on back home. That was it. That was the only thing we had then up until we had . . .

ARSENEAULT: The rec center?

PRATER: [1:45:05] We had [. . .?] storms like that. I said, we didn't know nothing else. Had no . . .

ARSENEAULT: Yes.

PRATER: Had nothing to worry about until Rita and all them come through. So we didn't know nothing about no storms or nothing. Just that one come through, Audrey. And then . . .

ARSENEAULT: Was there a lot of damage?

PRATER: No, it wasn't too much back then.

ARSENEAULT: Yes.

PRATER: No, wasn't much back then. But Rita come through and there was the damage then though. It really did. We left for that. Yeah, we left all the storms that been going on. We been leaving for them. We go up to Arkansas. Different parts of Arkansas. Different places.

ARSENEAULT: Kind of wait it out.

PRATER: [1:46:00] Yeah. Go up there and come back.

ARSENEAULT: Better safe than sorry.

PRATER: Right. Stay up there. My daughter stayed in Houston for Rita. We come back from Arkansas went stayed in Houston. Stayed over there with her about two weeks because we didn't have any electricity in Mossville.

ARSENEAULT: The whole community lost . . .

PRATER: All out. Yes. All of Mossville's all out. Everybody . . . Because it didn't do any damage to my house there but roof is all they had to do my house there.

ARSENEAULT: You lose some trees?

PRATER: [1:46:44] No, not on my . . . I had a pecan tree, but it didn't blow it down. Had a pecan tree back there and it didn't blow it down. It didn't blow nothing on my property. I had a peach tree over there it blowed it over but it just waved it around like that. I had to put it up, tie it off, and straighten it up. Keep pulling a little more slow and straighten it up. But my neighbor next door he had two pine trees over there. One blowed down in the yard. One blowed down across his house.

ARSENEAULT: Yes, pine trees . . . they go . . .

PRATER [1:47:30] It blowed down. Neighbor over there it blowed across his house, and he moved out. He didn't move back after Audrey. He didn't move back. It tore the back end off of it. He didn't move back. But it was dreadful looking though out that way.

ARSENEAULT: Oh, I bet.

PRATER: Trees everywhere. Trees . . . But they had trees across the front of where I stayed

at. Blowed a lot of them down in there. Come back from Houston [Texas] more and more closer you get to Mossville the more damage you see. Yeah. We left Arkansas Sunday morning and we go over into Houston. Then that Tuesday I drove from Houston to Mossville. Clean out my box. Ice box and stuff like that.

ARSENEAULT: Oh, your fridge.

PRATER: Yes. Then went back to Houston. We stayed over then with my daughter about three weeks I guess. Somewhere in there. Three weeks before we got electricity and all.

ARSENEAULT: [1:49:05] Wow. I know it was bad. Well we are at . . . Almost at two hours. Got to let you go for lunch. I know we got a meeting.

PRATER: Lunch don't bother me. I'll eat sometimes. Sometimes I don't.

ARSENEAULT: Yeah. Well if we need to come back for a follow up is that okay? Maybe in a couple weeks?

PRATER: Well we kind of . . .

[1:49:27]

[End Tape 4563. End Session II.]