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HAMILTON COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH
EARL KAVANAUGH

1 (INTRODUCTION)

2 MR. MCMULLEN: This is April the 12th,
3 2018. We're in Hamilton today in the Law Offices of
4 McMullen & Henkes. This is a program of the Hamilton
5 County Historic Commission to -- to memorialize oral
6 histories of citizens of Hamilton County. And so we
7 have today Mr. Earl Kavanaugh. He is steeped in the
8 history of Hamilton County and his experiences in the
9 Korean Conflict, which was actually a war, but -- and he
10 will be telling us about his recollections of Hamilton
11 and the oral history of Hamilton and his experiences in
12 Korea in that -- in that war. Thank you.

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1 (INTERVIEW)

2 MR. MCMULLEN: Good afternoon. My name is
3 Andy McMullen, and I'm going to be interviewing Earl
4 Kavanaugh today, who is a lifetime resident of Hamilton
5 County, and this is part of the Hamilton County
6 Historical Oral -- Historical Commission Oral History
7 Project. And, Earl, it's -- we thank you so very much
8 for being with us today. First, I'll ask you how old
9 you are?

10 MR. KAVANAUGH: Well, I'll be 90 on
11 December 1. Born 1928.

12 MR. MCMULLEN: Well, we thank you so much
13 for sharing with us your historical knowledge about the
14 history of Hamilton County and your life history because
15 it is -- has been and continues to be a full life. And
16 so I will start by asking you how it happened to be that
17 your family was in Hamilton County. How did they come
18 to be Hamilton -- Hamilton Countians?

19 MR. KAVANAUGH: Well, I -- I really don't
20 know.

21 MR. MCMULLEN: Okay. You were born in
22 Hamilton --

23 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah.

24 MR. MCMULLEN: -- County in the area of

1 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah. Uh-huh.

2 MR. MCMULLEN: Okay. And what did your
3 parents do?

4 MR. KAVANAUGH: Farmers and ranchers.

5 MR. MCMULLEN: Okay.

6 MR. KAVANAUGH: Cattle, hogs, pecans,
7 farming.

8 MR. MCMULLEN: Do you know where they came
9 to Hamilton from?

10 MR. KAVANAUGH: From Crawford.

11 MR. MCMULLEN: All right. And how -- do
12 you know how long they had lived in Crawford before --

13 MR. KAVANAUGH: No --

14 MR. MCMULLEN: -- before coming here?

15 MR. KAVANAUGH: -- I don't. A sheriff
16 shot my Granddaddy Kavanaugh and killed him, and they
17 come up here after that.

18 MR. MCMULLEN: It was -- who shot him?

19 MR. KAVANAUGH: The sheriff.

20 MR. MCMULLEN: The sheriff in Crawford?

21 MR. KAVANAUGH: Uh-huh.

22 MR. MCMULLEN: All right. And so that's
23 what caused them to vacate -- I guess that would be
24 McLennan County --

25 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah.

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1 MR. MCMULLEN: -- and came to Hamilton?

2 MR. KAVANAUGH: Uh-huh.

3 MR. MCMULLEN: Okay. What size family was
4 that family that you grew up in?

5 MR. KAVANAUGH: I think it's three boys
6 and one girl.

7 MR. MCMULLEN: I'd like to talk to you
8 first about a tremendous public service that you did to
9 the country when you served in Korea, and then I -- then
10 we're going to move to talk about the public percept- --
11 the public information that was knowledge of people in
12 Hamilton about the Indians and the history of the
13 Indians in Hamilton County, and then you have a wealth
14 of knowledge about the history of the Leon River and --
15 and all that went on in the Leon River in Hamilton
16 County and of the history of Hamilton County. So I
17 would like for you to tell me how it happened to be that
18 you were involved in what I think is erroneously
19 referred to as the Korean Conflict. That's probably a
20 legal term because there was not a declaration of war,
21 but it was a war, wasn't it, Earl?

22 MR. KAVANAUGH: I think so.

23 MR. MCMULLEN: Okay. And how did you
24 become a part of that, and if you would, just tell us

25 how you came to be a part of that Korean War?

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1 MR. KAVANAUGH: Well, I was out at my
2 house one Sunday evening and Cecil Kruger and Bubba
3 Wayne Fuequay and Billy Havens drove up out there. They
4 told me, "We're going to go in the Marines tomorrow.
5 You want to go with us?" And I said, "Well, I'm not
6 doing anything much. I'll just" -- "I guess I will."
7 So we went to Waco, and we was swore in at Waco the next
8 morning. Then they put us on a bus and sent us to
9 Dallas and put us on a train and sent us to San Diego,
10 California, which that all took about ten days. Then
11 that -- then we went through boot camp, which was
12 13 weeks, and after that, we got out. They gave us
13 30 days vacation. We come home and went back, and they
14 sent me and Billy Havens and Cecil Kruger to Treasure
15 Island in San Francisco, and we was on guard duty there.
16 And I don't know. About all it was -- that I could see
17 was drunken sailors coming and going. You had to
18 check -- check them on the bus to see if they bring any
19 whiskey and/or stuff like that. I can imagine what it
20 would be like now. But, anyway, after we stayed there
21 about six weeks, Billy Havens noticed on the bulletin
22 board they was wanting volunteers to go to Bremerton,
23 Washington, and I had never heard of Bremerton,
24 Washington, in my life. But, anyway, he signed us up,

25 and they sent us up there. And we stayed there at

7

1 Bremerton at the biggest dry dock in the world at that
2 time. They runs ships in there and redo them, repaint
3 them, sandblast them. There's 35,000 silver service
4 workers that were working there then.

5 MR. MCMULLEN: And what year are we
6 talking about?

7 MR. KAVANAUGH: '48.

8 MR. MCMULLEN: 1948. Okay. Well, go
9 ahead.

10 MR. KAVANAUGH: Well, anyway, we stayed
11 there a year on guard duty, and then they sent us back
12 to Pendleton, and we got back there just about the time
13 that that Korean War started. So they put us on a ship
14 in San Diego and sent us over to -- we landed in Kobe,
15 Japan, and they outfitted us to go to Korea to fight.
16 And while we were there in that harbor -- well, first of
17 all, I -- the ship -- from a deck of the ship to the
18 dock, I imagine it was about 50 foot. You can't believe
19 how high those ships were in the water. And these
20 Japanese stevedores, I guess you'd call them, they had
21 on shoes that looked like a cow's foot to me, and they'd
22 take that toe and -- and go around a rope and they'd
23 climb that rope up on that ship just like a monkey.
24 That was really something for me to see. But, anyway,

25 while he was there, it -- come a typhoon and the wind

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1 was 130 miles an hour, and they put us on deck, put our
2 Mae Wests on, get ready to -- if the ship blowed over or
3 something. But, anyway, that -- I think that thing
4 lasted four or five days. We got loaded up and went --
5 I was on an LST, landing ship tank, and they sent us
6 from there to Korea, which took about three or four
7 days. And it was raining so hard and the wind was
8 blowing so that if -- you couldn't hardly stand it then.
9 In the mess hall, the mess cans would get loose and
10 they'd slide across and hit and bulkhead on one side and
11 the slop stuff would go plumb to the ceiling. About
12 that time, it would hit the other side. But, anyway,
13 there was about four days that I'd go get a drink of
14 water and turn around and vomit it up. That's how bad
15 it was. But, anyway, we got over to -- we landed at
16 Incheon, Korea, and we -- they got us up that morning
17 about 3:30, and they fed us Navy beans and corn bread,
18 and I never did like -- I never did like Navy corn bread
19 because it's always sweet. I'd rather have the corn
20 bread not sweet. But, anyway, that's what they fed us
21 that morning, and they put us on a landing craft, and we
22 headed in for -- well, we rendezvoused out there in that
23 water for probably two or three hours just going in a
24 circle, one following the other, and getting ready to

25 get the word to go in, but I think they took that island

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1 in 59 minutes, roughly.

2 MR. MCMULLEN: Incheon? At Incheon?

3 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah. And then we went on

4 out to Gimpo airport, which was a couple of miles, and

5 then we went on -- the next day or two, we went on over

6 and took Seoul. All that time, the Navy had some heavy

7 cruisers out there in the water shelling Seoul with

8 eight-inch rifles, which I think is about 13 to 14 miles

9 that they were shooting across there. But, anyway,

10 after we took Seoul, they put -- turned that over to the

11 Army and went and loaded us back up and we went around

12 the other side of Korea, and then we -- to a place

13 called Wonsan, and Bob Hope said that's the only time

14 that he ever landed before the Marines did. We got them

15 gooks that welded railroad arms together sort of like

16 jacks that kids play with, and they had a row of them

17 around the water about 50 yards out to where you

18 couldn't get to the bank, and that held us up and we

19 couldn't get in. But we eventually went around to one

20 end and -- and got through it, got up there, and landed.

21 When we -- the water was so -- a little over hip deep.

22 By the time you got to the bank, it was froze on your

23 britches. That's how cold it was. And I remember we --

24 we all had an extra pair of britches with us to put on

25 after we got to the land -- to the bank after it --

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1 where it could be dry, and I -- the boys was all looking
2 for sticks and things to build a fire with and warm up,
3 and I just happened to be looking outside there one
4 time, and there was about a four-by-four sticking in the
5 ground about as tall as a fence post, and these boys
6 went over there and they just hit it trying to break it
7 over to get it for -- to use for a fire, and that thing
8 went off and it blowed three of them boys plumb out of
9 the side, just blowed them arms and legs and heads and
10 everything off, and it was a land mine for a tank. It
11 was about 3,000 pounds of TNT in the hole where those
12 boys set it off. But there's something like that
13 happening all the time. But, anyway, after we got
14 through that mess, we went on up to Hungnam, and that's
15 where we loaded up to go to Chosin Reservoir.

16 MR. MCMULLEN: And that's -- that is the
17 really -- the tragic and the demanding part of your
18 service --

19 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah. Uh-huh.

20 MR. MCMULLEN: -- was the Reservoir, and
21 it's a famous engagement there at the Reservoir. And
22 tell us about that Reservoir.

23 MR. KAVANAUGH: Well, the only thing I
24 remember seeing -- this dam was built in a big canyon,

25 and it had -- I think it was eight tubes -- I'd say they

11

1 was ten foot in diameter -- come from a dam. Oh,
2 they're probably a quarter of a mile below it, and
3 that's where they had the generator set up. The water
4 would come out of these tubes down through there to a
5 generator and it would generate electricity. But they
6 didn't have no generators. They said the Russians stole
7 all the generators after -- in 1946 when they were
8 occupying North Korea. But, anyway, that's -- that's
9 where the Reservoir was, if they was generating
10 electricity out of that. But, anyway, we left there and
11 we went up that valley 87 miles, and we got in there
12 that evening just about -- oh, probably an hour before
13 dark, and that's when the Chinese really let us have it.

14 MR. MCMULLEN: And how did you know it was
15 China -- it was the Chinese as opposed to the North
16 Koreans?

17 MR. KAVANAUGH: Well, west was 30 miles to
18 China when they attacked us. They were -- they were --
19 I guess they had gotten word, and they was waiting on
20 us. It was a hundred thousand Chinese soldiers, and we
21 was about 20,000. About five to one. But, anyway, we
22 stayed there that night and part of the next day, and
23 those Chinese were -- I don't know -- they -- I don't
24 know why they didn't have enough guns or what, but

25 they'd run two or three groups of people over you. They

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1 didn't have guns, and then they'd run the ones that had
2 guns in there to shoot you later. But I was sitting
3 there that evening, and it was -- I guess about 30
4 Chinese run over this hill. It probably half a mile up
5 there, but just about the time they run over that hill,
6 there's an F4U Corsair come in there and dropped the
7 napalm bomb, and it -- and that went all over them boys,
8 and you'd just see a ball of fire running. They'd maybe
9 run 50 yards or something like that and then they'd fall
10 over and go to kicking. It was bad.

11 MR. MCMULLEN: And overarching all of that
12 was the weather. If you'd describe the weather
13 conditions --

14 MR. KAVANAUGH: Oh, yeah.

15 MR. MCMULLEN: -- at the Reservoir.

16 MR. KAVANAUGH: When we went over there,
17 we was in our summer uniform, and that northern blowed
18 in, I'd call it. It was 40 below zero and the wind was
19 blowing 70 miles an hour, and we got froze up. Nearly
20 everybody got frostbit. I was one of the lucky ones
21 that didn't. They flew in some flying boxcars from
22 Japan and dropped our winter clothes, parkas and had
23 boots that was supposed to have been -- well, they was
24 supposed to have been engineered to take cold weather

25 like that, but they didn't work. You'd sweat in them

13

1 and then your feet would freeze -- freeze to the bottom
2 of the boot and you couldn't get the boot off. But it
3 was cold, cold, cold.

4 MR. MCMULLEN: And it caused your -- your
5 weapons to malfunction.

6 MR. KAVANAUGH: Oh, yeah. Yeah.
7 Everything was messed up. They didn't ever cut a tank
8 or a truck or something like that off because if they
9 did, they couldn't get it cranked it was so cold. But,
10 anyway, that was a bad experience. There was -- I think
11 there was -- 18- or 20,000 Marines went up there and
12 there was about 8- or 9- come out.

13 MR. MCMULLEN: Were you one of them?

14 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah. You know, those
15 four boys that I mentioned awhile ago from Hamilton
16 here, all four of us went in there and went through that
17 and all four of us got out.

18 MR. MCMULLEN: Well, let's tell their
19 names --

20 MR. KAVANAUGH: It was a miracle.

21 MR. MCMULLEN: Let's tell their names one
22 more time.

23 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah.

24 MR. MCMULLEN: Let's tell their names one

25 more time.

14

1 MR. KAVANAUGH: Oh. Bobby Wayne Fuquay,
2 Cecil Kruger, Billy Havens, Earl Kavanaugh. There was
3 four of us.

4 MR. MCMULLEN: And you were all Marines?

5 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah.

6 MR. MCMULLEN: And there were just a very
7 few of you, and there -- it required like an 87-mile
8 march to get back?

9 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah. We had to fight our
10 way back to Wonsan, and they loaded us on ships there,
11 and when they was loading us on ships, those Chinese
12 were dropping mortars all around us. That's how close
13 they were.

14 MR. MCMULLEN: And the one thing that was
15 unique in American military history was it was -- it was
16 in such a dire situation that you were not able to bring
17 the dead out with you, were you?

18 MR. KAVANAUGH: I don't think so.

19 MR. MCMULLEN: Yeah.

20 MR. KAVANAUGH: They always say that a
21 Marine never left a Marine behind, but I don't agree
22 with that. I know where we left, up there at Yudam-ni,
23 to start back. There was about 400 dead boys, and they
24 covered them up with a bulldozer in snow. So I know

25 just from personal experience that they didn't bring

15

1 them all back.

2 MR. MCMULLEN: Uh-huh.

3 MR. KAVANAUGH: But, anyway, we got back
4 to Wonsan and they --

5 MR. MCMULLEN: And that -- and that -- you
6 were just walking --

7 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah.

8 MR. MCMULLEN: -- from Wonsan? You didn't
9 have any mechanized travel?

10 MR. KAVANAUGH: No. We was walking.

11 MR. MCMULLEN: And what -- what distance
12 was that, according to your recollection?

13 MR. KAVANAUGH: Eighty-seven miles, I
14 think, from Wonsan to the Chinese border there where we
15 was, Yudam Ni. It took -- all that mess happened within
16 about three weeks' time. It wasn't overnight.

17 MR. MCMULLEN: Right.

18 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah. It was a long,
19 drawn-out affair. And all the time we were coming back,
20 they were on both sides of us shooting at us. So that's
21 the reason so many boys got killed. They'd holler --
22 Marines is yellow sons of a bitches and they'd blow
23 their bugle and here they'd come. Man, you'd better be
24 ready.

1 after that 87-mile march, what -- what was next?

2 MR. KAVANAUGH: Well, we loaded on a ship.
3 They -- they had a bunch of ships there from Japan.
4 They put us on -- I guess you'd call it a cruise ship
5 sort of like they take tourists on now. They run that
6 thing in about a half a mile out there in the ocean, and
7 they put -- we was on an LST, and they loaded that thing
8 up, and this old boy drove a bulldozer up on it, and
9 when he did -- the guy that was running the ship was
10 going to back it out and it wouldn't back out because he
11 had it pushed down in the mud. So he had to unload that
12 bulldozer and shove it to get it going, and all that
13 happened while the Chinese were shooting at us, you
14 know, 3- or 400 yards out.

15 MR. MCMULLEN: So you can testify
16 firsthand that -- that it was -- the Chinese were
17 definitely involved in the Korean --

18 MR. KAVANAUGH: Oh, yeah.

19 MR. MCMULLEN: -- what they call a
20 conflict, which you knew as war?

21 MR. KAVANAUGH: Well, I don't blame the
22 Chinese myself. If a man wouldn't fight for his county,
23 he ain't no -- and the Chinese were just protecting
24 their own land and so forth. MacArthur was the cause of

1 MR. MCMULLEN: Well, tell us about that.

2 MR. KAVANAUGH: All I know is what I
3 heard, you know.

4 MR. MCMULLEN: And what you experienced.
5 You saw MacArthur once.

6 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah. When we landed at
7 Incheon, well, we was over at the Gimpo airport and
8 MacArthur come over there in -- about three or four days
9 after we landed, and he was in -- there was the Jeep in
10 front of him and -- he was in a Jeep and there was two
11 or three Jeeps behind him, and they drove on over to
12 Seoul, but if -- if they had listened to MacArthur, I
13 believe all of us would have been killed. He was
14 wanting to start a war and he was wanting to use the
15 atomic bomb, you know, and that would have been a bad
16 thing.

17 MR. MCMULLEN: And you even have the
18 opinion that perhaps you might still be at war over
19 there?

20 MR. KAVANAUGH: Oh, lordly. Mercy. Those
21 Chinese are smart people. Don't ever underestimate
22 them. They can drop a mortar in a barrel at three
23 miles. Man, they -- they were good. That's all they
24 ever done all their lives is fight. And they're smart

25 people.

18

1 MR. MCMULLEN: And then you -- you give a
2 lot of credit to Harry Truman, do you not?

3 MR. KAVANAUGH: Oh, yeah, Lordy.

4 MR. MCMULLEN: Tell us about that.

5 MR. KAVANAUGH: Well, Truman -- you know,
6 MacArthur come in there and -- and he got in a plane and
7 went up and was flying around, and he was going to
8 get -- make Truman land before he did and Truman gave
9 him orders to get on the ground and do it right then,
10 and that's when Truman took all of his privileges away
11 from him, and he thought -- I imagine he thought he was
12 probably as powerful as the President was, knowing
13 little what I know about it.

14 MR. MCMULLEN: Well, you were bearing the
15 brunt of it.

16 MR. KAVANAUGH: Huh?

17 MR. MCMULLEN: There was no question you
18 were bearing the brunt of it.

19 MR. KAVANAUGH: Oh, yeah. War is bad.
20 The best friend I had -- we was up there -- well, the
21 Chinese were just whipping us all over everywhere, and
22 they told us drop back three miles and set up a line --
23 a secondary line, and then when we got it set up, they
24 dropped the first line back behind it, and I had no --

25 they told us not to carry anything except our duty bag.

19

1 That's a toothbrush and shaving equipment and stuff like
2 that. And they was putting all these personal effects
3 on the back of a truck, and I told old Francheau -- I
4 said, "Go back there with them and unload this truck and
5 come on" -- "come back up there." So that truck come
6 back up there in about 15 minutes and that driver come
7 over there and told me -- he said, "Old Francheau is
8 dead." I said, "Oh, I can't believe it." And he said,
9 "Yeah." He said, "He" -- one of the boys picked a duty
10 bag off the back of the truck and he bent over to pick
11 it up and there was a hand grenade in it and it went off
12 right in his face. And this Sergeant had picked up a
13 Chinese hand grenade and had it in his duty bag. Can
14 you believe anybody would be that dumb? But, anyway, I
15 lost a good friend.

16 MR. MCMULLEN: Yeah.

17 MR. KAVANAUGH: He was from Salt Lake
18 City, Utah. I wrote his mother and give him -- give her
19 all the details about what happened to him, and I never
20 did hear from them or nothing.

21 MR. MCMULLEN: All right.

22 MR. KAVANAUGH: So it's a bad situation.

23 MR. MCMULLEN: And then after your service
24 in -- in Korea, did you come back to Hamilton?

25 MR. KAVANAUGH: No. When we got back,

20

1 they gave us a 30-day vacation, and I come home for
2 30 days and they sent me to Camp Lejeune, North
3 Carolina, and I stayed over there the last year that I
4 was in the service. I got discharged over there and
5 come back to Hamilton.

6 MR. MCMULLEN: And what did you do when
7 you came back?

8 MR. KAVANAUGH: Well, Daddy bought -- we
9 call it the CR Houston place, and it's 202 acres, and
10 I've been living there ever since on this farm. It's on
11 the river about -- river there north of Hamilton.

12 MR. MCMULLEN: Okay. Well, now we've come
13 to the point of living in Hamilton, growing up in
14 Hamilton, and one of the things that really we haven't
15 been able to develop, and I think you're going to help
16 us a great deal today, is about the history of the
17 Indians, the public knowledge of the Indian history in
18 Hamilton County. Do you have stories about that?

19 MR. KAVANAUGH: Oh, television and all
20 that stuff. These kids nowadays think cowboys and
21 Indians and this and that. Really nobody knows for sure
22 how long the Indians had been over here. They traced
23 Clovis point back to 20,000 BC, and it's about the
24 oldest one you'll find here in Hamilton County. So

25 they've been here that long.

21

1 MR. MCMULLEN: Were they -- what tribe
2 were they?

3 MR. KAVANAUGH: Well, that's it -- I --
4 you know, you talk about Comanches and Apaches, and
5 that's modern stuff. These -- 20,000 years ago, there
6 was mastodons and all that kind of stuff here. That's
7 what the Indians were living off of, but you'll find --
8 well, I imagine me and my boys probably got 3,500
9 arrowheads that we've found there over the last 40 or
10 50 years.

11 MR. MCMULLEN: Is this primarily on the
12 Leon River?

13 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah. Uh-huh.

14 MR. MCMULLEN: Okay.

15 MR. KAVANAUGH: That's the best place in
16 the world to find an arrowhead is on the banks of the
17 river there where there's a sandbar. Those things will
18 fall out of those riverbanks where the Indians had
19 camped. Well, I think they do a lot of burials in banks
20 because the ground was soft and they could dig -- dig it
21 and so forth.

22 MR. MCMULLEN: I wanted to ask you about a
23 particular Indian event. Of course, the -- the grammar
24 school here, and all of a sudden I've lost --

25 MR. KAVANAUGH: Ann Whitney.

22

1 MR. MCMULLEN: Ann Whitney who was
2 killed --

3 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah.

4 MR. MCMULLEN: -- and we have a school
5 named after Ann Whitney who protected her students. By
6 the way, do you have an idea of where that was?

7 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah. She -- she was
8 killed down on Royce Poteet's place out here northeast
9 of Hamilton --

10 MR. MCMULLEN: All right.

11 MR. KAVANAUGH: -- on the river. That --
12 that little group of Indians that raided them and killed
13 her, there was some people taking a cattle drive up the
14 other side of Carlton and these Indians attacked them,
15 and they killed this one man that was in the group, and
16 he was -- he had long red hair, and they said that
17 Indian that killed her was redheaded. So it may have
18 been the same one. I've got an affidavit out there at
19 the house. If I had thought and brought it -- there's a
20 lawyer in Stephenville that took it from this old man
21 before he died, and he told about that. But there was
22 several of those Manning boys, and I don't know who all
23 the rest of them was out there at that place on Royce
24 Poteet's. There's a big -- I guess you'd call it a

25 peninsula like, several acres that went right down next

23

1 to the river, and they had a schoolhouse and a log house

2 or two. That's where she was killed. But these --

3 these Indians, they had been in here for thousands of

4 years before white people come in here and run them off,

5 but they date those Clovis points up to 20,000 BC.

6 MR. MCMULLEN: Is that an arrowhead?

7 MR. KAVANAUGH: Uh-huh.

8 MR. MCMULLEN: And that's how you

9 identify --

10 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah.

11 MR. MCMULLEN: -- that particular group?

12 MR. KAVANAUGH: And they were thrown with

13 a hand ladle, and it's a stick about as long as your arm

14 and it's got a hook on the end of it, and they hook that

15 hook in the back end of the spare and sling it, and it's

16 supposed to have 200 times more thrust than a bow -- a

17 bow and arrow. So they really didn't have no use to

18 invent a bow until -- well, they said they didn't start

19 using them until about 300 years after Christ over here.

20 But those points got so valuable, now a good perfect

21 Clovis would bring as much as \$20,000. They had some

22 that showed last year at Temple.

23 MR. MCMULLEN: That's amazing.

24 MR. KAVANAUGH: Sammy --

25 MR. MCMULLEN: Do you have any --

24

1 MR. KAVANAUGH: No.

2 MR. MCMULLEN: Do you have any other

3 stories about Indians that were transmitted from

4 generation to generation that you're aware of?

5 MR. KAVANAUGH: Oh, yeah. This -- Old Man

6 Fuquay out there that lives across the river from us, he

7 was one of the old pioneers that come in there. The

8 Indians got after him over here about Mesquite Creek.

9 And he was looking for some horses, and they -- he

10 thought there was some white people down there in that

11 valley, so he drove down -- he road down towards where

12 they were, and he got up pretty close to them and he

13 seen they was Indians and they got after him, and they

14 got close enough, they shot him through the calf of the

15 leg with an arrow and it stuck -- pinned him to his

16 saddle. But, anyway, he said he rode up on the first

17 hill he come to and he went to motion like that, and he

18 said he guessed the Indians thought he was motioning for

19 some more people to come join him, and they turned and

20 run off. If they hadn't of, they would have killed him.

21 But my uncle said he used to -- Old Man used to tell him

22 that tale and -- and show him the arrow that -- his wife

23 cut it out of his leg after he got back home.

24 MR. MCMULLEN: And that was Mr. Fuquay?

25 MR. KAVANAUGH: Fuquay.

25

1 MR. MCMULLEN: All right.

2 MR. KAVANAUGH: The Kirklands -- the
3 Kirklands and the Fuquays and -- they were old-timers
4 across the river from -- Old Man Kirkland had 1,800
5 acres there in that bottom.

6 MR. MCMULLEN: And that would be Leonard's
7 ancestor?

8 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah, it would be his
9 great, great, great grandpa, I guess. But that's like
10 everything else, everything a white man touches, he
11 ruins it. But they -- there's a big, nice -- river
12 bottoms burls trees, you -- three men couldn't reach
13 around one, and they deadened all them things and burned
14 them out and put that farm -- put that land and farm --
15 farms, you know. Raised corn and cotton and stuff like
16 that.

17 MR. MCMULLEN: Okay. Any other Indian
18 stories that you'd like to share with -- and these are
19 going to be students in -- in the public school here
20 that are going to be looking at these tapes for
21 generations to come hopefully. Any other stories you'd
22 like to pass along to those future generations?

23 MR. KAVANAUGH: Well, no, I -- I guess
24 not. I can't -- you can't blame the Indians for

25 fighting for what they believed was theirs.

26

1 MR. MCMULLEN: Okay. All right.

2 MR. KAVANAUGH: Like Old Jack Riley, when
3 we went in the Marines, he went in the Navy -- they run
4 the Riley Funeral Home here --

5 MR. MCMULLEN: Yes.

6 MR. KAVANAUGH: -- his daddy, Bob, one
7 time we was messing around together, and Bob asked
8 Jack -- he said, "Let me borrow your knife." And he
9 said, "I don't have one, Daddy." And he said, "Son" --
10 he said, "I never did see a man that was worth a damn if
11 he didn't carry a knife and wear a hat." So I guess
12 that's about right. But Jack became a preacher, and
13 he's in Temple now.

14 MR. MCMULLEN: Yes. Well, let's move on,
15 then, to -- then we're just doing well on our time here.
16 Let's move on to the stories of the Leon River, things
17 that -- that you can recall in the oral history of the
18 Leon River that we would like to make permanent with
19 this film today.

20 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah. Well, the way I
21 understand it, the Leon mostly was made up of old
22 Spanish water rights back yonder. When you had a place,
23 they'd -- you either went into the center of the river
24 or you owned both sides of the river. When we bought

1 burrows. This man that -- that -- well, I don't know
2 what you call him, but, anyway, that year, 1950, it was
3 dry and you could walk right down the middle of the
4 river. And Daddy RJ [sic] to pull the stakes for him,
5 the surveyor, and they surveyed it all. But I
6 understand now it -- they won't do away with those
7 Spanish water rights, and they make it so many feet up
8 on the bank, the public -- public access to that land.
9 I don't know whether they can do it legally or not.

10 MR. MCMULLEN: I'm familiar with the
11 concept of what you're talking about.

12 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah.

13 MR. MCMULLEN: Yeah.

14 MR. KAVANAUGH: Which would be bad.

15 MR. MCMULLEN: Yes.

16 MR. KAVANAUGH: Of course -- so the
17 population is increasing so much, it's -- things like
18 that have to be changed.

19 MR. MCMULLEN: I've heard you tell a story
20 about the time that you and Dr. Cleveland were out --
21 you went out with Dr. Cleveland, and there -- there had
22 been a murder I believe at the Gant place.

23 MR. KAVANAUGH: Oh, that was Charlie Gant.

24 MR. MCMULLEN: Yes.

25 MR. KAVANAUGH: It wasn't me. I told the

28

1 story. Firsthand was David Messengale. This -- Charlie
2 Gant was killed down here on the old Gant place.
3 Dr. Zschiesche owns it now. And somebody had killed
4 David -- I mean, Charlie in the back room of that old
5 house, and there was blood all over the floor and all
6 over the walls and everything, and there was an old half
7 bed over against a wall, and they said that his body was
8 on the other side of that and the gun was flung over
9 next to the door. So they -- they -- they put together
10 that he didn't think he killed himself because the gun
11 was so far away from the body. But, anyway, that
12 Thompson boy was with Charlie and he killed him -- or
13 whoever it was killed him just out in the yard close to
14 the windmill, and whoever come up to the -- and found
15 them said they heard the back door slam when they come
16 up in front. So they -- they figured whoever killed him
17 went out the back door and -- and got away. But me and
18 Dean Craig one time was talking to Jack Messengale
19 and --

20 MR. MCMULLEN: Now, which Jack -- is this
21 Big Jack or -- who -- there's several Messengales.

22 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah.

23 MR. MCMULLEN: Which one?

24 MR. KAVANAUGH: Well, that's David's boy.

25 MR. MCMULLEN: David's boy. Okay.

29

1 MR. KAVANAUGH: Uh-huh. And he -- he
2 made -- he made the comment -- he said, "Oh, Dad killed
3 him." But Ms. -- Ms. Airy, that was Charlie Gant's
4 sister -- I mean, Charlie Gant's sister was an Airy, and
5 she had \$500 in gold in a corked fruit jar and \$20 gold
6 pieces to bury herself with, and she was supposed to
7 have it buried between the house and the windmill, and
8 after she died, they never could find that money. So as
9 far as I know, it's still out there.

10 MR. MCMULLEN: So Dr. Zschiesche will have
11 to go to digging --

12 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah.

13 MR. MCMULLEN: -- huh?

14 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah.

15 MR. MCMULLEN: Okay.

16 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah.

17 MR. MCMULLEN: We've had some questions
18 asked, since you're familiar with the Leon River,
19 about -- did the -- does the river change from time --

20 MR. KAVANAUGH: Oh, Lordy, yes. I've seen
21 it --

22 MR. MCMULLEN: Let's -- let's get you
23 hooked up here. Let's go off so we can get him set up.

24 (RECESS FROM 2:17 p.m. - 2:17 p.m.)

1 a big overflow. You'll lose land and you'll gain land.
2 I lost about six acres up on the north end of ours here
3 a few years ago. There's a peninsula up there, and it
4 wasn't probably 20 foot across the -- 20 yards across
5 the -- from where the river made that big circle, and
6 it -- it washed that in two across there. So we lost
7 about six or eight acres of land there. But there's
8 another place down on my lower end now, it -- the same
9 situation. I'm going to lose probably eight or ten
10 acres when it washes off. But, Lordy, that thing gets
11 on -- a mess when it gets out. It -- it washes all the
12 fence down and washes things like that in two. But that
13 river, you'll probably lose a crop out of every three
14 crops, but you still make as much as you can make out on
15 the prairie because there's so much -- much more --
16 well, there's more nutrients and things in it and it
17 grows bigger and better crops and so forth.

18 MR. MCMULLEN: All right.

19 MR. KAVANAUGH: I had some cane last year.
20 Charlie Buttlinger raised it. He sent it to Comanche
21 and had it tested and it tested 15 protein. That man
22 that tested it for the State said that was the highest
23 any baled stuff he ever tested since he'd been testing.
24 And if they come off the prairie somewhere now, there's

25 probably 8 or 10 or 12 percent. It's sure -- sure makes

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1 a lot of difference.

2 MR. MCMULLEN: Well, to kind of wrap up
3 here, I'd -- I'd like to -- and we haven't discussed
4 this, but what kind of changes have you seen in Hamilton
5 County?

6 MR. KAVANAUGH: Oh, my Lordy. When we
7 moved to the river back in 1941, there wasn't any houses
8 at all hardly, and now every- -- everywhere you look,
9 there's three or four houses. This -- this population
10 has -- I don't know what's going to happen to the
11 country. I don't think they'll be able to feed
12 themselves in another 20, 30, 40 years. I think the
13 population is increasing so that I don't believe they'll
14 be able the feed themselves.

15 MR. MCMULLEN: And so much of the larger
16 tracks have been divided up --

17 MR. KAVANAUGH: Oh, yeah.

18 MR. MCMULLEN: -- into smaller tracks that
19 are not efficient to produce food.

20 MR. KAVANAUGH: Well, look at all the
21 production that's been took out around these big towns.

22 MR. MCMULLEN: Yes.

23 MR. KAVANAUGH: Houses built on them.

24 MR. MCMULLEN: Well, that's a good point.

1 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah. It's -- it's
2 something else.

3 MR. MCMULLEN: We did discuss a little bit
4 about how law enforcement was different back in the days
5 where -- and I think you related a story to me about
6 someone who shot someone and then came back --

7 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah.

8 MR. MCMULLEN: What was that all about?

9 MR. KAVANAUGH: Well, they said it -- now,
10 this is all hearsay, but they said that Bill Cooke shot
11 Mr. Parsons, and Mr. Parsons had made some kind of
12 comment about Bill and he had got back to him, and so he
13 just road up over there one night and told him to make a
14 light. So they said Mr. Parsons got a kerosene lamp and
15 lit it and brought it to the door, and when he was
16 standing there, somebody shot him. Well, he -- it
17 didn't kill him. He lived three or four days. And back
18 then when you had neighbors and things in a situation
19 like that, you went and sat up with them, and they said
20 it -- there two or three men sitting with Mr. Parsons.
21 And I guess the word had got out to where he was right
22 on his deathbed and he might die any minute, and they
23 said that Old Bill come over there that night and said
24 that -- and said that -- there's -- the men was sitting

25 there talking and said the old man sat up in the bed and

33

1 said, "What did you shoot me for, Bill?" He had

2 recognized his voice, and they said he just laid back

3 down and died. But...

4 MR. MCMULLEN: And then I asked you, well,

5 whatever happened? Was there any --

6 MR. KAVANAUGH: No.

7 MR. MCMULLEN: -- any kind of enforcement?

8 MR. KAVANAUGH: No. Well, how many people

9 have you knew since you've been a lawyer here that has

10 got killed and they never solved the case?

11 MR. MCMULLEN: Well, I -- I know some.

12 Yes, I do.

13 MR. KAVANAUGH: I can name seven or eight,

14 ten myself that never was solved.

15 MR. MCMULLEN: That's right. Well, it's

16 been a real pleasure to be with you today, Earl.

17 MR. KAVANAUGH: Well, thank you.

18 MR. MCMULLEN: And we thank you for -- is

19 there anything you'd like to add?

20 MR. KAVANAUGH: No. I -- of course, we've

21 done all this pretty fast. I could have talked two

22 hours on Korea. But, no, everything is --

23 MR. MCMULLEN: Well, I wanted to make sure

24 you got your thoughts in about MacArthur.

25 MR. KAVANAUGH: Oh, Lordy. I don't know

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1 of any servicemen who thought very much of him. He's a
2 hungry loving -- he loved to have his name on the news.

3 MR. MCMULLEN: Okay.

4 MR. KAVANAUGH: All the soldiers got
5 aggravated at him when he left the Philippines and went
6 back to Australia, I guess, where he stayed.

7 MR. MCMULLEN: And we have some other
8 members of the Historical Commission that are here
9 today. Do you have any questions?

10 MS. CROUCH: No. But, Mr. Kavanaugh, I'm
11 Jane Crouch, and I've heard stories about you for years.
12 You were one of Jim's favorite people --

13 MR. KAVANAUGH: Well --

14 MS. CROUCH: -- and he loved to come visit
15 with you, and I see why.

16 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah. Uh-huh.

17 MR. MCMULLEN: Yes. Sharon?

18 MRS. MILLS: I don't have any questions.

19 MR. MCMULLEN: Randy?

20 MR. MILLS: Earl, I have one question. Do
21 you remember me, Randy Mills?

22 MR. KAVANAUGH: Oh, yeah.

23 MR. MILLS: That scar on your arm is
24 partly -- partly responsible from me, isn't it?

25 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah.

35

1 MR. MILLS: Is your cabin still standing?

2 You built a log cabin out of wood that you sawed from

3 you sawmill off your property?

4 THE WITNESS: No. It's -- it's all fell

5 down --

6 MR. MILLS: Okay.

7 MR. KAVANAUGH: -- but I built another

8 one.

9 MR. MILLS: Well, we -- you fed us a meal

10 in there, me and the sheriff and somebody --

11 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah.

12 MR. MILLS: -- else, and it was the best

13 meal I ever had in my life. I think your wife did that,

14 though.

15 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah. Yeah. Dorothy is a

16 good cook.

17 MR. MILLS: Yeah. But you knew a lot

18 about milling wood.

19 MR. KAVANAUGH: Oh, yeah. It's just sort

20 of a hobby.

21 MR. MILLS: You were telling me one time

22 that a lot of the outbuildings and houses on the Leon

23 River were built with just --

24 MR. KAVANAUGH: Oh, yeah. They was all

25 made out of rawhide lumber. Somebody would come in --

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1 well, David Messengale one -- was one that set up a

2 sawmill back yonder early and then sawed that green

3 lumber and they built cabins and things out of it.

4 MR. MILLS: While it was still green?

5 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah. You just saw it --

6 saw it down and nail it up. There would be an inch

7 between the cracks on the boards.

8 MR. MILLS: Put some slabbing over that --

9 you put some slabbing over that?

10 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah. Uh-huh. They'd put

11 about a two-inch slab over that crack.

12 MR. MILLS: Yeah. Well, you --

13 MR. KAVANAUGH: I can't half hear.

14 MR. MILLS: -- you taught me a lot

15 about -- about wood. You taught me a lot. And do you

16 remember -- you probably don't remember this, but you

17 were talking about the different types of wood, and

18 there are a lot of wood that people consider trash wood,

19 these hardwoods, that's actually very good lumber.

20 MR. KAVANAUGH: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

21 Hackberry is one of them.

22 MR. MILLS: You -- you gave me a piece of

23 hackberry, and I've still got that board and I made it

24 into a bench.

25 MR. KAVANAUGH: Oh.

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1 MR. MILLS: It's beautiful wood.

2 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah.

3 MR. MILLS: But do you know anything about
4 property on -- buildings on your property that you built
5 out of raw wood?

6 MR. KAVANAUGH: No.

7 MR. MILLS: Okay.

8 MRS. MILLS: Well, you built that cabin.

9 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah, I built the cabin
10 you're talking about, but it fell in the last ten years.
11 That wood rots pretty fast. Well, I haven't seen you in
12 eight or ten years or maybe more.

13 MR. MILLS: It's been awhile.

14 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yeah.

15 MR. MILLS: Do you want to tell the story
16 on that sliver -- that big piece of wood on your arm?

17 MR. KAVANAUGH: What's that?

18 MR. MILLS: Do you want to tell the story
19 about that wood hitting your arm?

20 MR. KAVANAUGH: Oh. Well, we was -- Randy
21 had brought a mesquite log up there and we was going to
22 saw it, and it got down right to the hollow -- hollow of
23 it in the middle and it was hollow, and there was a
24 sliver about a foot long, I imagine, and -- and that saw

25 cut that sliver and hit me right there. Good thing it

38

1 hit me there. It had hit here, I would have been dead.

2 But that went up my arm about that far, and I grabbed

3 it, and I was going to pull it out, and I couldn't do

4 it, and so they grabbed me and helped me. But, you

5 know, that thing didn't bleed a spoonful. It just

6 didn't bleed. It cut that main liter, but it -- it was

7 in there where it was so tight, it never did bleed. And

8 Dr. -- who was the surgeon up here?

9 MR. MILLS: I can't remember who the --

10 MR. MCMULLEN: McCord.

11 MR. KAVANAUGH: McCord.

12 MRS. MILLS: It was McCord still.

13 MR. KAVANAUGH: Dr. McCord cut it out.

14 MR. MILLS: He was true to -- to the

15 Marine toughness, I can tell you that, because he said a

16 wood -- one piece -- no, it wasn't a foot long. It was

17 about two and a half feet long, and when it hit him, it

18 went all -- I saw it happen -- all the way up his arm,

19 and he was trying to pull it out. "Oh, it's nothing."

20 You know, Marine Corps tough, no doubt.

21 MRS. MILLS: I remember y'all threw him in

22 the car, though, and took him straight to the hospital

23 and never even told Mama what was going on, and then I

24 guess you went back and got her or told her what had

25 happened.

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1 MR. MILLS: I don't know. I was wondering
2 how much hot water I was in.

3 MRS. MILLS: None. It was just the fact
4 that it was mesquite wood and it was so poisonous that
5 they kept him in the hospital for over a week on
6 intravenous IVs. And I never thought about that at the
7 time that -- how poisonous mesquite wood was or is.

8 MR. MILLS: We were lucky -- we were lucky
9 because they were -- had a surgeon -- a surgery
10 scheduled, and they bumped that person off the table and
11 you took his spot.

12 MR. KAVANAUGH: That was -- I could have
13 told you who that was, but I -- I can't right now.

14 MR. MILLS: Well, it was me and Randy
15 Murphrey and -- I can't remember who else it was. There
16 was about four of us there cutting that wood. But,
17 anyway...

18 MR. MCMULLEN: Well, thank you very much,
19 Earl --

20 MR. KAVANAUGH: You bet.

21 MR. MCMULLEN: -- and we appreciate this
22 so much.

23 MR. KAVANAUGH: Yes.

24 MR. MCMULLEN: And we appreciate what

25 you've done for this country.

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1 MR. KAVANAUGH: You're quite welcome.

2 MR. MCMULLEN: Thank you.

3 (INTERVIEW CONCLUDED)

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1 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATION

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3 I, Jamie Cooley, Certified Shorthand

4 Reporter for the State of Texas, do hereby certify that

5 the above and foregoing interview contains a true and

6 correct transcription of all portions of the

7 proceedings, all of which were reported by me.

8 IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, witness my hand on

9 this the 31st day of January, 2019.

10

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12

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