

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewees: **Berry Fritz Krause (BF)**
Garrett Charles Krause (GC)

Interview Date: Sometime between 1992 and 1995

Interviewer: Self Directed. They were asked to talk about their childhood in Beasley, Texas

Transcriber: Marsha Smith

Location: University Place on Beechnut Ave., Houston, Texas 46 Pages

Comments: Also present were Leora Stern Krause (born in Beasley in 1914) and married B.F. Krause at Beasley's Hope Lutheran Church in 1938, and Merle Engle Krause (also from Beasley), who married G.C. Krause in 1944.



This oral history is copyrighted 2014, by the Fort Bend County Historical Commission. All Rights Reserved. For information contact: Fort Bend County Historical Commission, Attn: Chairman-Oral History Committee, 301 Jackson St., Richmond, TX, 77469.

Terms and Conditions

This file may not be modified or changed in any way without contacting the Fort Bend County Historical Commission.

This file may not be redistributed for profit.

Please do not 'hot link' to this file.

Please do not repost this file.



Transcript

B.F.: Well, we're supposed to be talking! Maybe I should talk about the time that, uh, uh, when you were real young, and our store burned down. We were at Uncle Ernst's place, if you know where that is, right down that road, that Uncle Herman owned that land now. And we saw this big fire. And finally decided, MAN, that's the store! It (indistinguishable) rained lot, and we rushed back, and it was all in flames. People were out with buckets and, uh, threw the water—mainly on the safe. That's what, uh, they wanted to save. But the entire store burned down. So after that, we moved to the farm. Several years later. And, I guess, at that time, it was 1919, so you were only about, what—

G.C.: Depends on what time in 1919

B.F.: --One year old or so? Pretty young. But anyhow, we moved to the farm, I believe it was in '21. 1921. And, uh, after several years, I don't remember just how much went on—I know I started in West End Beasley, a two teacher school. I spent half of the time sitting on Glen Walker's desk, because I couldn't speak English.

G.C.: (chuckles)

B.F.: I was, uh, getting in trouble all the time and to control me, he had me sitting on his desk.

G.C.: Well, uh, do you remember when you pulled that—

B.F.: metal trap

G.C.: metal trap from under the barn?

B.F.: Oh yes!

G.C.: And you had the skunk by the leg and she covered you! (laughs)

B.F.: (laughing) Well, you know that was because we had all this stuff going on out there. We knew there were some animals around, and I set these steel traps. But I didn't realize that it was a skunk. I thought I was going for RATS. And, one morning, why, Daddy says, 'You better go check your traps. It smells awful bad around the barn'. I went over there and the trap was underneath the barn in that hole, just a chain out. And I had the chain tied. So I pulled on the chain. And when I pulled the chain, and the skunk came out from under the barn, why, he sprayed me. He went to school right on my head. I said that's the reason I'm bald now. (general chuckling)

B.F.: And, then I went to school that day and the sent me home (laughs).

G.C.: Yeah. Then I watered and clipped your hair, just bald-headed as he could be, and then sent him to school. And every time it'd get wet, it'd smell worse! (laughing)

AUNT MERLE: Oh my goodness!

B.F.: And I tried everything—tried coal oil, and then, oh well—tomato juice would get that out. I had tomato juice on my head. Tried everything! But it stayed about two or three weeks, bad enough.

G.C.: I remember that!

B.F.: Yep. Well, then, of course, you remember the times that we had Emory and Luther come over and we went horseback riding.

G.C.: Yeah.

B.F.: Now YOU can tell that story.

G.C.: Well, I—I was the brat all the time, and I demanded that I have that horse that was kind of skittish. Not the gentle one. We was loping along the pasture and come to a ditch, and instead of the horse jumping over, he stopped. And Emory, (chuckles) he went on. I don't know whether he's hanging on to part of it—and I drug him for a while—that old horse started running (still chuckling). I just couldn't handle the horse. Berry should've had that horse. But I insisted.

B.F.: Well, I probably couldn't do any better.

G.C.: You talked about going to West End Beasley school. The thing I remember—when did you start Beasley school?

B.F.: Well, I was seven years old, so '21.

G.C.: BEASLEY

B.F.: OH, in Beasley. After seven grades, took the 8th grade in Beasley, which was about 1930.

G.C.: Well, I don't know. The reason I mentioned that, I can remember when Mabel started school. First grade. I was in the third grade. But you wasn't going to West End any more, then.

B.F.: Oh no, you see West End only had the first seven grades. They had two rooms and they had, uh, two or three grades, depending on the size, in one room, and uh—

G.C.: The water used to run over the road, just past—

B.F.: Going to school.

G.C.: Yeah. Past Otto Richter's gate. One cold night it froze over. Mabel and I are walking to school. And she got to that water, and she wasn't going through that! Had a thin layer of ice over it. And, I said, 'Well, we GOT to walk through that'. And she said—she just started crying, and I said, 'Well'. Took her piggy-back and I walked—sloshed through that—you step on that ice, you know, and it just crunches, and you go through to the ground. Well, when I got to school, the teacher had that old pot-bellied coal stove in the center of the room—

B.F.: Right.

G.C.: Glowing. She made me take my shoes and socks off, and hang them up there, and I got to sit by the fire!

B.F.: (chuckles)

G.C.: The first hour of school, drying out (chuckles).

B.F.: What I always remember about that water, was the snakes that were in it during the warmer days.

G.C.: Yeah.

B.F.: And we called all those snakes 'moccasins'.

G.C.: Yeah. They were water snakes.

B.F.: And, uh, we would take poles and, in those days, why, uh, razor blades were first coming out. And we'd get some razor blades and we'd tie them on the pole to use to cut the snakes down with.

G.C.: I remember that!

B.F.: And then, later, when I went to Beasley School, and got into playing in the band, a fellow named Carl Blile--

G.C.: I don't remember Carl.

B.F.: He came from Rice Institute, not Rice University in those days, Rice Institute. And was teaching all the different instruments.

G.C.: He was a snake charmer.

B.F.: He was a guy who was working on anti-toxins and he MILKED snakes. And he milked all the snakes at the zoo here. And we were telling stories about all the moccasins. Well, he wanted some moccasins. Oh well, we got plenty of 'em! So we were going to catch the moccasins. He said, 'I'll give you fifty cents for every moccasin you bring in'.

G.C.: That was money in those days!

B.F.: Boy, yeah – lotta money! Boy, we caught as many snakes as we could and the next time he came to have band practice, why, we brought the snakes in. And he looked at them, and he grabbed them, and said, 'Well, this is such-and-such harmless snake' (laughter). We didn't have a SINGLE moccasin! (general laughter). All those snakes we called moccasins were nothing but harmless water snakes. (laughing). So you learned a lesson.

G.C.: You talk about snakes, reminds me of Della. She wasn't afraid of a snake. But she see a spider from ten feet, little bitty spider, she wouldn't go close to it! So when you pick cotton, she would pick within maybe three or four feet of a spider sitting on a boll, and then she'd skip, and I'd have to pick that!

B.F.: (Laughs)

G.C.: But, one day, I was off to work, so I--I was just out of high school, and I come home and she said 'Come here, I want to show you what I got!'. And she walked out to the pasture and killed a coachwhip. Uh, according to her, it was about six foot long, and she killed it with a stick "this long" and finished by stepping on its head. But she's scared of a spider "this big".

B.F.: (laughs)

G.C.: And, uh, she said come—

AUNT MERLE: Do you think this is loud enough?

G.C.: I don't know.

B.F.: We hope it's loud enough.

G.C.: She said, 'Come here, I want to show you'. She said, 'I KNOW you won't believe me'. And she had carried that snake home on a stick, and put it in a wooden keg in the old cistern house—you know the cistern house where we used to have to take a shower?

B.F.: Yeah.

G.C.: And, I went in and that snake was GONE, so she just stunned it!

B.F.: (laughing)

G.C.: And I teased her for DAYS after that. "Snake's gonna come back and GET you."
(both laughing)

B.F.: Yeah, those were the days. Well, I see someone reminded me about Bill Stribling. Do you remember Bill Stribling?

G.C.: Oh yeah, you played hookey from school, didn't you, to go down there and help him carry his airplane—

B.F.: Well, I guess I'll have to tell that story. Well, Bill Stribling was going to fight Max Schmeling for the world's heavyweight champion of the world, in that summer. And, uh, he had come to the United States, and since he was a pilot, he had a little bitty old Cessna plane. And he ran into a rainstorm one evening late, and might be during the night. Anyhow, he went down and crashed his plane on the Bernard River. Which was about seven miles from Beasley. And the next morning at school, why the story was out that Bill Stribling was coming to get his plane. And of course he needed help to get the plane to the highway, and it was muddy and we had to get it across fences. And so there were about fifty guys that cut school, and there were others that weren't even IN school, going.

Well, I had to go. I wanted to see Bill Stribling. Well, we got there, and Stribling was funny. He—he told jokes while we were over there. We took the wings off of the plane and he'd go over there, and he'd uh, have these wrenches, and told us what to do, and then we carried this whole plane, after we took the wings off. And then we took the main body and pulled it and carried it—took fences down, or if we couldn't get over—and got it to the highway.

But Stribling was funny. You know, he—he talked about how STRONG he was, see. He said, ‘Oh well’, he said, ‘you know’, and he was pulling on his wrenches as he was loosening the screws. He says, ‘Well, when I crank my plane’ he says, ‘I grab the old propeller to spin it and if it backfires, I just hold the propeller and the plane flips over.’ (everyone laughs)

And all kind of stuff like that. He was a real fun fellow to be with. Well, he had a Model A Ford that he drove, brand-spanking new out of Houston, to come and pick up this plane. And they tied it—the tail end—he had a—I don’t know just what he had—a little trailer or something. Anyhow, the tail section is what was put on there. The wheels were okay, and with no wings on, we could get on the road and he could take it on into Houston. ‘Course, the WHOLE day passed. Gee whiz. Well, he was so nice, and when I got off, it was over at the road that goes to our house, before you get back to Beasley. And, he thanked me and, uh, he took our address down, and he told me he was going to send me a picture. And I have the picture TODAY, that he autographed (laughs).

And, uh, now I’m walking home. Of course it’s after school and the closer I get to home, I see finally Dad coming out of the house. And he’s walking to the water trough. And he’s been having that rope soaking in that water trough. So he started in. He says, ‘Well’, he says, ‘I don’t send you to school to play hooky, so you can just as well come and get your medicine.’ He had that wet rope and that’s when I started talking fast. And maybe that’s why I talk fast today. I told him how important it was for, here, a country boy, to see the next world’s heavyweight champion of the world. Who could do that?! I said this was educational. That one day in school I can make up. And I made my argument strong enough, and finally he says, ‘Well, just don’t let it happen again’. And he put the rope away and I got by (laughing). Boy, that was the BEST talking job I ever did, to get out of a darned good beating!

G.C.: You talk about that rope. You remember the time you and Dennis was going on a Sunday morning to get the newspaper from Beasley post office?

B.F.: No, I don’t remember that.

G.C.: And, uh, I was going to tag along because I was too little. And y’all didn’t WANT me along, but you know how little brothers are. And, uh, we started out, and we got all right until we got off our place. And then Dennis wanted to walk by Olie’s house.

B.F.: Oh yeah, he wanted to do that.

G.C.: And you wanted to walk down the railroad track to get rocks for your niggershooter.

B.F.: (laughs) Don't say niggershooter. That's now a bean shooter. (laughs)

G.C.: A black bean shooter. Anyway, it ended up going this way for 100 yards and going that way for 100 yards and never did make it to get the paper. About an hour or two later, they come back, and Dad says, 'Where's the paper!'. Well, they didn't get it. So there comes that rope again.

B.F.: (laughs)

G.C.: That's what reminded me. And he gave Berry about two licks and he was screaming at the top of his voice. And Dennis was stoic, you know. 'Can't hurt me'. And he took a pretty good whopping. And afterwards Berry said, 'Boy, aren't you EVER going to LEARN?' He said, 'You've got to scream and holler and then he'll quit.' (everyone laughs)

B.F.: EXACTLY!

G.C.: You remember that?

B.F.: Exactly. I don't remember that but I always know that that's the best way—just scream like you're being killed, and by golly, they'll ease up! (laughs) Oh boy—what days.

Of course, I know someone asked me about, you know, uh, I just learned from Mab el, the other day—I didn't remember it. Said, the first time they had French fried potatoes—see if you'll remember it—When I went to A&M and came back home, I made French fried potatoes. And Mabel said that's the first time they ever had French fried potatoes. She mentioned that the other day, when she was here. I didn't remember it either, but I remember we doing a little cooking. But that gets us back to the candy making.

G.C.: (snort)

AUNT MERLE: Yeah.

B.F.: When, uh, every time, uh Momma and Dad would leave, why we had other things to do. And one thing, we had so much molasses—that good old molasses—and we'd make molasses candy. And boil it to a hard drop in the water, you know, and then we'd put it in the pans and set it in the window so it could cool. Well, here I had this molten candy poured in this pan, and I'm carrying it, and somehow or another, I spilled it and the candy got all over my hands. Both of them. And, MY, it was hot.

And the only way it would not burn to where I would feel it was having it in cold water. So the well—we pumped the water out of the well so it would be fresh, COLD from way down the bottom. And as soon as that water got a little warm, why you had to go get another bucketful of cold water. And I'd take it out of here and put it in THIS cold water. (laughing). Do you remember that?

G.C.: Oh boy, DO I remember that! And you see, he could NOT take his hands out of that water. The minute he'd get his hands out of that—the pain was too bad. And so we dreamed up a scheme. I was going to go to the mailbox. And he was going to go to sleep. And then when I get back, I'm going take hands out of there. (chuckling) Now that's KIDS talking. So I went to the mailbox but I was so anxious to go, I RAN all the way. And I got back, and he was just as wide awake as when I left. (laughs)

B.F.: (laughing)

G.C.: But you know, all the skin came off of your hands.

B.F.: Oh, I mean to tell you, I had NO skin. It was raw, in between especially. My hands were in bad shape for, I guess, a month. It was terrible (laughs). But, uh—

G.C.: Remember that time you chased—talking about that skin on your hands—you remember that time you chased that bird into Zeeshank's yard in Beasley—

B.F.: See this scar?!

G.C.: Ripped that open! (chuckling)

B.F.: And it ripped open and Ralph was there.

G.C.: Yeah, him and Ralph.

B.F.: We were at Uncle Herman's and had the (pause) bean shooters (laughs) and hit this field lark and he flew into Zeeshank's yard. Well, they had this gate that was metal and rusted out. So you had these rusted edges. So I'm going to get the field lark and Ralph—and they had a dog yapping—and Ralph says, 'Well', says, 'I'll close the gate on the dog'. Says, 'You rush out and I'll close the gate on the dog if he chases you'. So I went in and got the field lark and here I'm coming through the gate and that dog's right behind me. Ralph swings this gate through but my ARM hadn't gotten out yet. And that jagged rusty edge cut my thumb and it cut it SO deep it was bleeding, and I grabbed it. And there was water in the ditch and I put it in the ditch—

G.C.: Nice, sterile water.

B.F.: And the blood was just shooting out. So, I thought, 'Boy, hit an artery'. It was just shooting out. So I grabbed it and we went to Uncle Herman. And they got some coal oil, wasn't it coal oil?

G.C.: Yeah, that was the remedy for EVERYTHING. (chuckles)

B.F.: And wrapped it and I stuck my hand in that coal oil, and that's ALL the help it got. That's the reason you have the big scar and that little bump where it cut part of the cartilage up in my knuckle(chuckling). Oh yeah.

G.C.: Do you remember that [must be showing B.F. something].

B.F.: I can't quite recall. Let's see, uh—Dad was the one that tripped over the mowing machine.

G.C.: I tripped over some pipe laying in the yard and fell on broken glass, and it ripped that thing open. But you NEVER went to the doctor.

B.F.: Naw, naw, doctors are unheard of.

G.C.: Carbolic acid—do you remember that?

B.F.: Yeah.

G.C.: Put a few drops of carbolic acid in a basin of water and then you just clean it up.

B.F.: Oh yeah. You had all the home remedies. You didn't go to a DOCTOR—gee whiz.

G.C.: That's really [indistinguishable]

B.F.: I remember when we were taking the bed off of the wagon. And Dennis and I—I had one end, and I was kind of small—Dennis could handle his end pretty good. And as we took it off to set it over here, there was a board there that had a rusted nail sticking out—and I didn't see it. And I set it down right on that rusty nail that went into my fingernail. In my ring finger. And it went in there where I had to yank it off. And it bled. Finally healed up and a year or so later, I got a bump on the other side of my finger, on the inside. I wondered what it was. Just couldn't figure out—it was kinda dark under there.

Then we were playing ball one day and, of course, I always left that finger off. But I was batting, and somehow or another I put too much pressure—more than I used to with that finger—on the baseball bat, as I swung.

And this thing broke open. And it had some bloody mess coming out of it but there was a little deal in there that seemed to be solid! And I flicked it and flicked it and couldn't figure out what it was. Finally got a pair of pliers and I caught ahold of it and pulled it out, and it was a fingernail. A piece of a curled fingernail. And I said, I guess that nail pushed it all the way through the bone (laughs).

G.C.: When you talk about a rusty nail, it reminds me. You remember when the Lutheran church was built in Beasley?

B.F.: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

G.C.: Dad helped them with the carpentry in there, and I was—

B.F.: We gave—Dad gave the land for it.

G.C.: I must have been about five years old—I'm just guessing. Anyway, I'd go down there and we'd slide down boards while they're hammering. And the church was just beginning to go up. And I slid down a board and it had a nail in it! I ripped my rear end up (laughs). And then you know what the remedy for that was? Iodine on it, every day.

B.F.: (chuckling)

G.C.: And you remember how iodine stung? And I would scream and scream, and Mama would get me on her lap. You'd hang on one leg and Dennis on the other (laughing) with my bare behind sticking up, and she'd daub it with iodine. (everyone is laughing)

B.F.: Iodine!

G.C.: I'll never forget that! When you said 'rusty nail' that—that—

B.F.: Well, I'll tell you—the things that can happen on a farm. I'll tell you. Yeah. Well, one thing you know, we had a good dog at the farm.

G.C.: Prince.

B.F.: Prince.

G.C.: Yeah.

B.F.: I'm going to tell you, that was the BEST dog—he was SO smart. If he'd of had a trainer that knew how to train dogs, 'cause we didn't know ANYTHING. Yet he was SUCH a smart dog.

Sometimes if we wanted to go early somewhere in the evening—had to go somewhere—since we were milking SO many cows—we wanted to get the cows home early. He'd be out there in the pasture and you just point to the pasture and tell Prince to get the cows. He was smart enough that he ONLY brought the milk cows home.

G.C.: (laughs) I remember him getting the cows, but I don't remember he—

B.F.: He didn't bring the whole herd home, he brought the milk cows home. Any of them that weren't supposed to come there, why—Oh, there might be a few—but he could cut 'em out. And he'd see to it that you could get milking early. He was so smart.

G.C.: What happened to him?

B.F.: Well, he disappeared.

G.C.: Disappeared. (chuckles)

B.F.: We had that road through the farm. That was a bad thing. And somebody found out how smart he was, because, if you had a snake—snake be curled up—Prince would go around yapping—and yap at him—yap, yap—until that snake straightened out. He'd grab him there and shook and there was nothing but pieces flying. He'd kill anything. Now, the sad part was, that he had a skunk up in a chinaberry tree one night—he had tree'd. And Dad went out there with his six shooter. And finally saw the old skunk up there and he SHOT him. And the old skunk hit the ground. By the time that skunk hit the ground, Prince had him and he shook him the same way, and there were pieces flying everywhere. We were picking up pieces, digging holes and burying them.

G.C.: (chuckling)

B.F.: By dang, and Prince smelled so cockeyed bad (laughing) for a long time. But he was a dog that could REALLY shake things around. The smartest dog out. But he disappeared. Then we got another dog and named him Prince and he turned mad.

G.C.: He was bad one.

B.F.: Yeah, he never was as good. And then one day he was acting funny and foaming at the mouth. And the story was that if you throw water on them, why, that'll paralyze them. So got a bucket of water, tossed it on Prince. He froze. Just like that. So we KNEW—

G.C.: Just got to shaking around like that (maybe).

B.F.: And so we knew then that he's got rabies. So we shot him—killed him. Said, well, he wasn't as good—he was named Prince but he sure wasn't like the old Prince. What other stories can you remember?

G.C.: Well, my memory don't work like it used to.

AUNT MERLE: Well, I know one your mama told me, when you were born. You're ALWAYS in a hurry. When he was born, his daddy went to get the doctor, but he was born before the doctor got there. Said he was born in a hurry and has been in a hurry ever since.

B.F.: (laughs)

AUNT MERLE: That's what she told me!

G.C.: I didn't know—

AUNT MERLE: About Garrett.

G.C.: I didn't know she told you that!

B.F.: (chuckles)

AUNT MERLE: Yeah.

G.C.: Every time I have my angioplasty, the doctor says, 'You under any stress?'. I say NO, I'm not under stress. Merle just busts out laughing and she says 'You been under stress all your LIFE'. (laughs)

B.F.: (laughs)

AUNT MERLE: Well—

G.C.: I was under stress this morning. I wanted to get here by ten o'clock, like I told you, but we didn't make it!

AUNT MERLE: And she said he cried—

B.F.: You made it close enough!

AUNT MERLE: --he cried so much when he was a baby.

B.F.: Well, I tell you. Garrett had a disease.

AUNT MERLE: Did he?

B.F.: When he—

G.C.: Crybaby's disease?

B.F.: No.

AUNT MERLE: (chuckles)

B.F.: Uh—

G.C.: (chuckling) Colic?

B.F.: You—you had diarrhea, constantly. We went to Dr. Weeks. They gave him medicine.

AUNT MERLE: [somebody] had that too.

B.F.: And nothing EVER worked. And then finally, a black family moved on the farm and the guy's mother, who had a HUGE growth on her neck—GOSH it was huge.

G.C.: I remember that.

B.F.: Big, like this.

G.C.: It was hanging on one side.

B.F.: But she—yeah—

G.C.: About as big as her head.

B.F.: That's right. But she had all these home remedies. And she says, 'Aw, Mrs. Krause, you know what's wrong with that child?' Says, 'I can fix THAT'. And she went out in the yard and she picked what I call 'mouse-eared grass'. It's that grass—or—or—

G.C.: Did Mama used to make tea out of it?

B.F.: That's right! And that's why—

G.C.: Must be why I don't drink iced tea (laughing).

B.F.: --we had that tea. It grows flat you know.

G.C.: Yeah.

B.F.: It has milk in it. It still grows. I see it.

G.C.: Yep.

B.F.: And she got that and she made a tea, and you drank tea instead of water. Inside of two weeks you were cured! And you had been going for a year to the doctor and couldn't get cured.

G.C.: I haven't drank another cup of tea since! (laughs)

AUNT MERLE: She said to keep him quiet, so she would hold—said when they'd go somewhere, she would put him on her lap and hold him real tight so he couldn't wiggle or nothin' and you would soon go to sleep.

G.C.: Well, you see—

B.F.: (laughing)

G.C.: --that's what I want YOU to do now. And you won't do it. I want YOU to hold me tight! (laughing)

B.F.: (laughing) Well this is hugs week, you know!

G.C.: No, not in our house (laughing).

LEORA: Ours either! (everyone laughs)

B.F.: Well—

G.C.: Well, that—that's a two-way street! (everyone still laughing). It takes two to do it.

LEORA: Well, he had somebody else in the dining room, but he didn't hug ME!

B.F.: (laughs more) You know I got in trouble. That was yesterday. 'Cause that lady ALWAYS comes by and she always has something to say. And I said, 'Boy, I'm in trouble now'. It's hug week, so I hugged her and she says, 'Huh, I don't get one of those'.

G.C.: Well, I wish SHE'D ask for one once in a while (laughing). When I can—

B.F.: I haven't been asked either!

AUNT MERLE: Are you sure you want to record all of that?

G.C.: I don't mind!

B.F.: (laughing louder) Oh well, it might give somebody a laugh. But (pause)--

AUNT MERLE: Are we out of subjects? Let's see—

G.C.: I'm out.

B.F.: You're not out yet.

G.C.: I can't think of anything.

AUNT MERLE: I know there's—what about the time, uh, Lillie Allison was telling about Dennis and Berry in the store. Getting into EVERYTHING. Your mama was there, buying groceries. And they were just little. Three and five or whatever. I don't think they were even in school yet.

B.F.: Oh no, we were in Beasley then. I remember going across that empty space to go to the store—

AUNT MERLE: Yeah.

B.F.: We were both white-headed kids.

AUNT MERLE: Yeah—

G.C.: Between your house and Quinn's house. Miz Allison said she would be fussing at y'all in German, and she used German words to tell what she said and everything. And she—and y'all just wouldn't behave. So she started taking after y'all. Y'all started heading for home, cutting across that lot. And she said you could see those little white heads just a-goin'. And she stuck her head out the window when she saw your Mama leaving the store. She said, 'You must run fast, she's coming after you!'. (everybody laughs)

B.F.: Well, I had people tell me how they used to watch Dennis and me going to the store, when the grass was high enough, just our white heads—

AUNT MERLE: Yeah.

B.F.: --were sticking about the grass as we were going to the store, across that vacant lot.

G.C.: Talking about going to the store reminds me when we was kids. We always had to stay home on Saturday. Mama and Daddy would go to town and we'd get a little bag of candy when they'd get back. That was our reward. We always had corn to shuck or something to chop in the yard—

B.F.: Or some chore to do! Or corn to haul—

G.C.: And, of course, we seldom DID it. But, uh, we were supposed to do it. But I remember, about once a month we would get to go along. And when we'd get there, we'd get a nickel or a dime. Nickel mostly.

B.F.: Aw, you NEVER got a dime.

AUNT MERLE: (laughs)

G.C.: Uh, to spend for—ANY way we way we want to. And, BOY, the minute Della and I would get ours, candy counter, here we'd come. Mabel would pinch hers and she'd walk UP and DOWN that candy counter, and HALF of the time she'd come home with that nickel in her hand. She wouldn't spend it. But Della and I, we got rid of ours in the first ten seconds. (all laugh) But one thing we learned. That when we buy candy, don't buy it from Uncle Adolph.

B.F.: That's right! (laughs)

LEORA: I can believe that.

G.C.: If Uncle Adolph was behind the candy counter, don't buy your candy. Wait a while. Wait until Uncle Charlie gets there, 'cause he would just put candy in that bag and you'd end up with a bag "that" big, full for a nickel.

B.F.: (laughs)

G.C.: And Uncle Adolph, you'd get two or three pieces, and that's IT. (everyone laughs) You learned that in a hurry!

B.F.: Yeah.

G.C.: I didn't know whether you'd remember that.

B.F.: Yeah, I remember. Always deal with Uncle Charlie. Boy, he was generous. I remember then, too, we had Schafers Drug Store. And he had bananas! That the banana peddler would come by and leave. And you could buy a banana for a penny. And sometimes I would buy a banana. MAN, they SURE tasted good. (laughs)

G.C.: I don't remember that.

B.F.: Yeah.

AUNT MERLE: Well, that time too when your dad had typhoid fever, wasn't it?

B.F.: Yeah, he had typhoid.

AUNT MERLE: He was sick for a long time, and the crops needed taking care of, and ALL the neighbors came in and worked—

B.F.: EVER ONE. They came in and plowed the fields—

G.C.: No, that wasn't when Dad was sick. That was—

AUNT MERLE: Oh, when Dennis—

G.C.: Dennis, when he had typhoid fever, and he spent about two weeks in the hospital in Rosenberg. And at that time you had to be dead—

AUNT MERLE: Oh, and your dad stayed with him.

G.C.: Dad stayed with him. We came home on Saturday and there must have been ten teams in the field, plowing.

B.F.: Yeah, that's the way neighbors were. They helped you out.

AUNT MERLE: Right.

G.C.: And now they don't even know you.

AUNT MERLE: That is really nice.

B.F.: Yeah, when Dad had typhoid, you know, one thing that Dr. Weeks said, he says, 'Well, dad got over that typhoid so good because his heart was so strong'. And then of course he died of—

AUNT MERLE: Yeah.

B.F.: --heart failure. However, being—what you know now—

G.C.: It wasn't--

B.F.: You don't know whether it was heart failure. It could have been an aneurysm, that just exploded, you know.

G.C.: Well, when I started having my heart problem, the doctor asked me 'did anybody in the family die of heart failure'. I said, 'My dad did'. He asked me the circumstances and I told him, because we's in that corn patch together.

B.F.: Yeah, you and I and Dad.

G.C.: And he kind of did like "this" and backed up and we thought he was fighting a wasp. And he fell over and that was it. Doctor said, 'That wasn't a heart attack'. He said that was either a stroke or just like you say, an aneurysm. Something just busted. But you know, Dad—

B.F.: We didn't have an autopsy run so you don't know, because he was immediately dead.

G.C.: Yeah. That's right! And he said heart attack that-away, you'd usually last for an hour or so. But he didn't last at all. He was gone.

B.F.: He was completely dead. Fact of the matter is, his pants were completely wet. See, he just—everything was gone.

AUNT MERLE: Yeah.

G.C.: I don't remember that. I remember that you running up Ferdy Frederick??

B.F.: And I thought YOU did the running up.

G.C.: No. Well maybe I did the running. But we got him and you drove in the field with the car and we loaded him in the car and you started out for Rosenberg.

B.F.: Well, we got to Rosenberg, to the hospital and Dr. Balkey came out. Dr. Weeks wasn't available and then we went right to the funeral home, because they said he was dead. Well, we knew that. It was eight miles, you know, coming from the farm.

G. C.: Yeah.

B.F.: Yeah, that was 1932 and it was really a tough blow, because I felt that the next day I'd wake up and everything would be same.

AUNT MERLE: Yeah.

B.F.: It took me a month to realize that it just wasn't going to be the same. Now, I might tell you, getting back to that Bill Stribling situation, where I missed ONE day of school. I got humiliated again by Mr. Boone.

G.C.: He sure didn't appreciate you (laughing).

B.F.: Well, what he said on—when we had the commencement day, see. And then he said —talked about all the people who came every day, had perfect attendance. He said we had a FAMILY that had ALMOST perfect attendance. Five children in school and four NEVER were tardy or missed a day. And one of them missed ONE day only, by playing hooky.

And I'm sliding down in my seat (laughing). (everyone laughing) I said, 'BOY'. I told old Boone about that at the reunion (laughing). Boy, he really humiliated me.

AUNT MERLE: What about the day you shot your fingers off (talking to G.C.)?

G.C.: Well, I forgot—I forgot about that.

B.F.: Yeah, you might tell that! I'll tell you, since he forgot about it. Here is what I know, and he can correct me.

AUNT MERLE: Yeah.

B.F.: It was icy. There were a lot of sparrows sitting around on the fence—on the fence line. And had this single-barreled shotgun. He got out there and he lined up, and said, 'Boy, if I can step over here, I can line up MORE sparrows to shoot'. And as he stepped down on that icy, he slipped. Now that's the story that I know. I wasn't there. How correct is that? He slipped and fell and his arm—hand went in front of the gun. It went off, and shot those three fingers off.

G.C.: I—uh—

B.F.: And then he went to the neighbor's house and what helped save him, I think, was Mama always bought flour in 48 pound sacks. And we had a flour bin and she would empty it.

LEORA: Y'all were in Beasley then?

B.F.: Yeah, living in Beasley. And, uh, so, she had this flour sack laying there. She had just emptied the flour in the bin and Garrett wrapped the flour sack around his hand and went over to the Muehlbrads. And Erna Mae took him to the doctor. Now, this flour in this sack probably helped coagulate the blood so he didn't bleed too much while he was going to Rosenberg, to the hospital.

G.C.: I don't remember the flour. I remember wrapping something around it.

B.F.: It was a flour sack, as I was told. But then, I wasn't there.

G.C.: It was all trash. And I remember the doctor come in—Weeks was out—and had his guy just out of medical school, Gus Yelderman. And I ain't never liked him since.

B.F.: (laughs)

G.C.: He talked there and he picked up my arm and looked at it, and he said, 'You got enough money to pay for this?'

LEORA: Oh, you're kidding!

B.F.: (laughing)

G.C.: No! And I said, 'Yep. Take care of it. It'll be paid for'. Well, I lied to him because I didn't have no money. And I think Uncle Willie paid for it. And I paid him back afterwhile. But, I—

B.F.: They want their money up front!

G.C.: Yeah. And then you see, he messed it up. You see how these knots are here?

B.F.: Yeah.

G.C.: They put seven stitches in here. Nowadays they'd put about ten in there.

B.F.: They'd probably put twenty or thirty.

G. C.: And, one week later, he goes and pulls them out. And that thing just gapped open. And you could look in there and see the ends of the bones. (moaning noise in the background)

And so I went back to the doctor—well, Dr. Weeks was there then. He said, ‘Well, I ought to re-sew that’, but he said, ‘I believe this’ll take care of it’. And he got a piece of adhesive tape “this” wide and put across here. And see this knot there? It just didn’t do too well and that’s the reason it’s messed up. And, the reason it’s STILL messed up, Gus Yelderman didn’t have sense enough to pull the nerve endings back. So I can just thump this thing like this, and it just kills you for about 30 seconds, and then you don’t know it happened. Many a time I’ve reached for something and straddled it, and OH MY—30 seconds.

B.F.: Yeah, the nerve endings are still right there.

G.C.: Yeah. Because I’ve known guys that had their arm cut off, and boy, they could club you with that and it’s never bother them. But me—I could—I could thump this right now and it just kills you.

B.F.: Yeah, it’s all in knowing how to treat it.

AUNT MERLE: Erna Mae says that was the wildest day of her life. I bet it was too.

G.C.: Well, there was nobody home at home. And she was the only one home there. Lucky the car was there.

B.F.: Yeah, those were some days. ‘Course I also remember that you were trying to learn to drive the car when it was parked in front of the house. (women laughing)

G.C.: And you was the—what should I say—

B.F.: The instigator?

G.C.: No, I wouldn’t say instigator. You and I got in an argument. You know how it used to— (doorbell rings – discussion about continuing)

--You know you had it parked there, and I’d always argue. You know, I was way smaller than you was, but I always had to have on equal footing. And I’d always argue. We were sitting at home with that old ’26 Chevrolet, and I said I could drive it. You LAUGHED at me and said I couldn’t drive that thing. And, I said, ‘Aw, I CAN too’. And he said, ‘Let’s see you DO it’.

B.F.: (laughs)

G.C.: I cranked it up—it DID have a starter on it—

B.F.: Right.

G.C.: And I pushed that clutch in, and I put that thing in LOW gear and I just OOZED that clutch up. And that car started moving, and I was so concentrating on it, I forgot to turn the steering wheel.

B.F.: (laughs)

G. C.: (chuckles) And I knocked the yard fence down. So we—(stopped – dead air)

B.F.: Well, I thought I might tell you some of the stories that the farm boys always got into, in order to keep themselves occupied. You know, we used to go down to Turkey Creek. Turkey Creek ran through our pasture. And it had one fairly deep hole where we could swim. Otherwise the creek dried up during the dry season. But we had a lot of little animals, like possums and skunks, and a few raccoons but I don't think we ever killed one (meaning raccoons). And in those days, why, you could sell these pelts.

G.C.: Fifteen and twenty cents, sometimes!

B.F.: Oh, yeah! We sent them off – had to dry them. So we had all these racks made. So we'd spend the night and—it's amazing how young we were—yet, we had .22 rifles and we would buy .22 bullets, the shorts. Five hundred at a time. We bought a box of 500. Uncle Herman was in the store and he gave them to us at cost. It was pretty cheap. And my goodness, how we would shoot up 500 (laughing) shots. But we'd go down and spend the whole night on little old Turkey Creek.

LEORA: (talking in background) – [can't understand]

B.F.: We'd go out and start a big fire and 'course we'd take along some eggs since we had plenty of chicken eggs. And had sausage done out—hanging in the smokehouse or it was cooked in lard. Anyhow, we'd take this sausage and go down there with some sweet potatoes. We always raised our own sweet potatoes. And build this big fire, and rake the coals out, and in the coals we'd put the sweet potatoes. And MAN, we could eat up a storm. And all during the night we'd go see what we could find in the way of little animals. And we'd kill these possums and skin 'em out, and dry the pelt. And then after they dried, we'd send them off to some factory and get twenty or twenty-five cents each for them.

But we did the skunks the same way. But we had to really be careful when we skinned them because they were kind of smelly. But we would spend the entire night over there, around the fire. Took blankets along. We'd sleep and just have a BUSHEL of fun. It was always fun to go out there on the creek and go fishing. We had some fish in there that we called gunnels as I recall. They were—

G.C.: Grinnel

B.F.: GRINNELS – that's it! Grinnels. And they were a sporty fish but we never did eat those. But we'd catch grasshoppers and bait our hook and the grinnels would grab it. And so, we had a lot of fun fishing out there. I said, 'Well, that's the way the farm boys kept themselves entertained'.

G.C.: I remember one time when Ralph came over and you wasn't home. I don't know where you were—you was going to be home later than evening. And WE went down to the creek. And we got out there—and you remember that we'd have about four or five trees that had hollows up in them. And every time we'd go there, we climb up in that tree and look in that hollow, see if there was a possum in there. Well, Ralph and I go to our old swimming hole and there—we had a tree up there that had a hollow in it—and a possum is laying up there, sunning himself with one leg sticking over. We could see that leg sticking over that limb.

BOY, we gonna go get that possum! And, 'course that possum woke up when we're climbing that tree. And we crawl in the hollow and there was knot hole about—see the hollow went into the limb like this and there was a knot hole about right here. And I climbed up that tree—NO, Ralph climbed up that tree and he was going to knock him down and I was going to kill the possum when he hit the ground. Well, Ralph got up there and he lost his nerve. When that old possum started moving into that knot hole, he couldn't—didn't have enough nerve to poke him out of there. So, I said, 'Aw, come on down and I'll do it'. And Ralph was about a couple of years older than I was. He was a little younger than you were.

B.F.: Yeah.

G.C.: And so, I climbed up that tree, and BOY, I got me a stick, and JUST as I got ready, that old possum started crawling—I could see him in that knot hole. And boy, I lost MY nerve.

LEORA: (whoop)

G.C.: And about that time, Berry come home and he came down to the creek looking for us. And we told him about it, and he said ‘AW, let ME get up there’. He climbed up that tree and had a stick about that long in his hand and he stuck it in that knot hole behind that possum and just punched him out (laughing). That possum hit the ground and we grabbed it. But Ralph and I neither one had enough guts to do it (laughing).

B.F.: Well, I don’t remember that. I don’t think I was that brave. (laughs)

G.C.: Yeah, you knocked that possum out of there.

B.F.: Maybe I was thinking of that twenty cents we were gonna get for that hide! (all chuckling)

AUNT MERLE: Maybe y’all [indistinguishable]

B.F.: Well, it was a lot of fun all right because there was always something to do. If we didn’t get into any mischief, why, we’d be doing fun things.

G.C.: Any time we wasn’t forced to work, we’d be down at the creek, running up and down, shooting birds, or hunting possum.

B.F.: Man, five hundred shots of .22 bullets didn’t last long when you’ve got two guns firing them.

AUNT MERLE: (laughing)

B.F.: But it was a lot of fun.

LEORA: It’s surprising that anybody didn’t get shot!

AUNT MERLE: Yeah!

B.F.: Do you remember, we had these two horses, Dutch—Pat and Dutch. Pat was kind of —

G.C.: Skittish.

B.F.: Yeah, and Dutch was the old slow poke.

G.C.: Yep.

B.F.: Remember in those days, when the sun started beating down and the ground starting cracking in the corn patch, how we kept the corn growing with less rain? You would sweep the middles. So you had a middle stop. So all you were doing was raking the sand to fill the cracks up, so you'd keep it from evaporating. So here you are, the corn's up about, oh, four or five feet, and you're running up and down middles with one horse, there's a wood stop. Or a sweep stop. And Pat now, was the type of horse, at our age, you did NOT control when he got to the end, if it got to be about eleven o'clock. He's going HOME for lunch! There was no two ways about it. So you finally had to learn that if it got close, that you ALWAYS turned away from the house. When you got to the end with Pat, you started pulling on the rein to turn him away from the house so he never had his head toward home. Because once he had his head to the right, then he's going home.

G.C.: You'd never get him back in the field.

B.F.: NEVER – he went home!

G.C.: But I didn't remember that was a horse. That was a pair of mules we had that did that.

B.F.: No, Pat was the worst one.

G.C.: But I remember that y'all—you and Dennis always got to plow, because I was a kid. I'd have to chop. Dennis would get to cultivate and you'd get to cultivate. So I was talking about, I wanted to plow.

So Dad finally said, 'Well, I'll let you use the sweep stop on that. So I got there—Now, he had one mule—I don't—I forgot which mule it was, but, I was doing pretty good there. You remember the pond we used to have down there?

B.F.: Yep.

G.C.: And, well, when I got close to that, that old mule decided to go there and eat some grass (laughing) and I didn't have enough know-how to keep him from—

AUNT MERLE & LEORA: (laughing)

B.F. He'd go—he knew EXACTLY how to handle kids.

G.C.: Yeah.

B.F.: He'd do what he wanted to do. They'd go eat the grass if they wanted to.

G.C.: There I sat, there, with the [didn't get] that old mule, just cropping around in the grass. [can't get]

B.F.: Doing what he'd wanted to.

LEORA: Oh, man.

B.F.: Oh, I'll tell you. I remember, though, once, when we had a couple of mules that were kind of new, and, uh, Dad had just bought them. And we had this cultivator that, I think you called it an Avery—

G.C.: Yeah.

B.F.: --and it had the—

G.C.: Wiggle tail--

B.F.: Wiggle tail deal. And here, I had the traces unhooked, and only the neck yoke was hooked up now, and we were at the barn trying to just park for lunch. And all of a sudden those mules started—decided to go and leave. Now, with the traces unhooked, all they were doing was pulling it with the tongue and the breast yoke. Aah dog, and I grabbed the reins, but they were short and I tried to strip 'em over a post, but I didn't quite make it. So they went right across that corn field (laughing) and 'course with that wiggle tail, the—both beams that had the plow on the sweeps on it, they unhooked and they were in.

But when they finally unhooked, that stopped them. But before they unhooked, it went across and just plowed crossways and killed all that corn (everyone laughs). Aah dog, what a mess we had!

G.C.: Now, you know what happened to those mules?

B.F.: No, I don't.

G.C.: They got struck by lightning and killed.

B.F.: Is that right?!

G.C.: You remember that?

B.F.: No, I don't.

G.C.: I was at the rent house and we were sitting on the porch because it was raining and thundering and lightning. And every time that old thunder would clap and lightning would strike, those mules—they'd just run. And this was a pair we had, and they was running side by side. And that lightning hit 'em and they just tumbled and killed both of them.

LEORA: Why ??

G.C.: Slim and Shorty. Remember that?

B.F.: Yeah, well, I don't remember lightning killing them. But you know, the two mules I remember best was Ladd and Blue.

G.C.: Yeah, they was white mules.

B.F.: Yeah.

G.C.: That bluish—now Ladd was the weaker one. Blue was the one that—

B.F.: Was most sturdy. However, both of them suffered from too many bumblebee bites when we'd mow for hay—our hay patch.

G.C.: Now the thing I remember about that team of mules, Ladd and Blue, is when the bank closed in Beasley, and Uncle Herman bought the safe and was going to transport it over to the post office. And back then you didn't have tractors. Dad come over there with a slide and the two mules, and Ernie, that's the same old Negro that was there when Dad died—that was just before my Dad died, I guess.

Anyway, he was making bets with his friends. They said that them two mules couldn't pull that big safe, because it was a HEAVY safe. And Ernie just bet like everything, and do you know—those mules just squatted down and they just walked off, whoosh.

B.F.: Well, those two mules were BIG mules. Now, a lot of people had those small mules—

G.C.: Yeah, Warnard was one of them.

B.F.: Yeah, Paul Warnard—

G.C.: Called them 'cat mules' (laughing).

B.F.: But Blue and Ladd, they each weighed, oh, they were running 1500—1200-1500 pound mules. They weren't small mules – they were BIG.

G.C.: Do you remember every time it rained, Dad would take the wagon bed off and put 2x6s on it? And we'd go down to the pasture and get these sand hills, and shovel it full, and bring it back. And then we'd just take a board off at a time so we didn't have to unload the dirt.

B.F.: That's what I was doing when I got my fingernail done, see, taking the bed off so we could put boards on.

G.C.: And, and, we was filling in the yard, you know. Just building it up. Now we did that many a time, and I always wanted to drive the mules. And Dennis was always driving. Heck, Dennis was seven years older than I was. And so, one day he said, 'All right, you go ahead and drive'. Well I got up there and I whopped them mules across the rear end, and we took off. And hit a mud hole and that wagon wheel sunk down, and them mules stopped. And—do YOU think I could make them mules pull that wagon out of that mud hole? Dennis said, 'You wanted to drive – go on and do it!'. And I was up there, and one would go and then the other one'd go.

B.F.: (chuckling)

G.C.: And he was just laughing at me. And finally, he said, 'Well, all right'. He got up there and pulled both reins back, set them mules back on their haunches. (chuckling) Hauled off and hit 'em across the butt and that wagon just JUMPED out. (everyone laughs)

B.F.: It was in knowing how!

G.C.: Yep. But, see I didn't—

B.F.: You have to learn the hard way.

G.C.: I didn't get them started at the same time. You see, one of them would start, and, with that double tree, he would go ahead and this other one would come back. And that's way it was going.

B.F.: Yeah, you can remember the plowing. You know, you had the two furrows.

G.C.: Uh huh.

B.F.: So by the time you did one row, you made three trips.

G.C.: Absolutely.

B.F.: One half side you plowed with the two furrows; come back on the other side. Then you put—

G.C.: Middle buster—

B.F.: A middle buster, and we had a three mule or three horse evener, that sometimes you used three.

G.C.: Yeah.

B.F.: So, because it was a little heavier pulling. And you'd bust out the middle. So there was three trips to make one row, and now, why they do eight-ten rows at a time. (women talking in the background)

B.F.: But—

G.C.: What you laughing at?

LEORA: Nothing.

G.C.: Here they go, laughing at us!

B.F.: (laughing)

AUNT MERLE: Aw, we're just laughing at the story.

G.C.: I remember working for Leora's daddy one summer. Do you remember that?

LEORA: I knew you did, but I wasn't—I wasn't there.

G.C.: No you weren't home.

B.F.: Well, Leora's daddy was our savior, because Mother had bought that place in Beasley, see. And now, on the farm, well, let's see—may be before that. Anyhow she owed the money and there wasn't any money to come. Now, Leora's dad rented the pasture and had some cattle in there. And I think it was during that time that you worked for him, wasn't it?

G.C.: Uh, it was—must have been the year I graduated from high school. Or—

B.F.: About '30uh—

G.C.: 6—7.

B.F.: '36 or 7, yep.

G.C.: Anyway, he got me over there and, Mr. Stern was a wonderful fellow but he also could get mad pretty easy.

LEORA: Oh, yeah—he had a short fuse!

G.C.: And, and he wouldn't give me a team that was gentle. And see, I wasn't very well versed in handling a team. He gave me Hotshot and Ada. That was two little old mules he had that was fiery mules. And I was—I don't remember WHAT I was doing. WAAAY back at the creek, you know where that old horseshoe lake is? I was out there, back in the field, and somehow something spooked those mules and they run off and busted the doubletree.

B.F.: (chuckles)

LEORA: Oh no!

G.C.: And there I was. And them mules ran until they got up against the fence and stopped. So I went by the house. "Mr. Stern," I says. "Something happened and the mules got scared and run off." "Well, didn't you HOLD 'em?" I said, "No sir." I said, "They busted the doubletree." He said, "Well, you go on and get it fixed". And so I had to go through this pile of stuff (chuckling) and get this stuff and go put it together and take it them old WILD mules up there and hook on to it. I DID it! (still chuckling) But he didn't come help me.

LEORA and AUNT MERLE: (laughing in the background)

AUNT MERLE: That's the way you learn!

B.F.: That's right. That's the way you learn.

G.C.: Oh, he was good to me though.

LEORA: Oh Lord!

B.F.: Yeah. Well, those were all those tales. You know, you say. However you know, we can think about all the nice things, and you say you'd like to see the old days back.

G.C.: No!

B.F.: I'm going to tell you one and see if you remember. 'Course, you know, during the time Leora was learning to cook, we'd just gotten married—and here I was—I told her that I liked biscuits, and her biscuits always were kinda flat.

LEORA: No, I couldn't bake biscuits! They were a flop.

AUNT MERLE: (laughing)

B.F.: Well, I KNOW how to make biscuits because I always did it at home. But it'd been too LONG, you know. I'd been gone a long time.

LEORA: Oh, HE could DO it [lightly sarcastic]. He knew how.

B.F.: And it was buttermilk biscuits. And so, I got all the ingredients I thought. And I made the biscuits. And I'll be darned, you could have killed somebody with them! (everybody cracks up laughing)

LEORA: And did I laugh!!

B.F.: And she laughed and laughed. So that was my biscuit story. But now, you know, we were in a beef club—

G.C.: Yeah, I remember that.

B.F.: And every Saturday during the summer we had fresh meat. We ALWAYS have a nice soup bone. And Mama would make this GOOD soup, we thought. It'd have raisins in it and eggs that she fixed together instead of noodles—

G.C.: Rice

B.F.: and rice, and everything. It was full meal in itself. And always tasted SO good. Do you remember once, later years, when Mama stayed with you and we mentioned—YOU mentioned that soup to her, and she said, 'Get all the ingredients and I'll make the soup'. And you DID.

G.C.: And I COULDN'T eat it!

B.F.: And you couldn't eat it (laughing). That's right!

AUNT MERLE and LEORA: (laughing a lot)

G.C.: It was NASTY!

B.F.: You had to throw it out! I said, you know, that's what you remember! You have ALL these good things when you're young, and you're looking for those good old days. But times have changed. (laughs)

G.C.: Well, I used to—when Merle and I first moved out to the farm, Mr. Heckman was elderly then and he was kind of crippled up. And I'd go over there and talk to him a lot of the time. He'd always talk about the good old days. He talked about 1918 when he made a good cotton crop. And he stored forty-something bales in the barn, waiting for the price to go up. And he said, 'I could've got forty-eight cents for it!'. And he said, 'I wanted fifty'. And he says, 'I held on to it and'—

B.F.: Got five, huh!

G.C.: 'Two years later I sold it for eleven'. (chuckles)

B.F.: (laughing) Uncle Emil did the SAME thing in Washington County.

G.C.: And Mr. Heckman would ALWAYS talk about the good old days. And one day I told him, I said, 'Now wait a minute, Mr. Heckman. You're talking about the good old days. About how much you could buy for a dollar. You haven't told me yet how hard it was to catch ahold of a dollar!' Because I work for seventy-five cents a day, and tickled to get it! And I'd get mad 'cause I was too little to hire out by the day. Berry and Dennis could go, occasionally.

B.F.: Didn't make but a dollar and a quarter. If that much.

G.C.: DOLLAR! Six bits!

B.F.: Dollar a day. I remember, once working—Dollar and a quarter I think is the MOST I ever got in a day.

G.C.: Well, I'd—

B.F.: And I mean that was A DAY!

G.C.: That was from sun to sun.

B.F.: That's right! It wasn't no eight hours.

G.C.: Except you DID get to take an hour or two off in the middle of the day, usually. But, I tell you what – I went to work after I shot my fingers off, for Behrens, driving his tractor. Ten cents an hour. And I WORKED—I'd start out at three o'clock in the morning and get over there, and grease everything up. By daylight I was ready to go. And MAN, I remember asking him for a raise, and, Ben just give me a HARD time. But Barney finally gave me twelve and a half cents an hour. And I thought I was MAKING money!

LEORA: (chuckling)

G.C.: Now THAT'S the good old days (chuckles). I tell you—

B.F.: Well, you see, the thing about it is, a dollar then was worth a dollar. It's amazing what you could buy for a dollar. I remember at A&M—I was making thirty cents an hour. And you did HARD manual labor—I worked in the park, I worked in the nursery, and I janitored in the Chem building. Held three different jobs to try to make enough money to stay in school. However, when I was working out there, in the nursery, say, where they had sandwiches available—a lot of places you didn't have sandwiches available so you couldn't buy 'em. I ate a sandwich for ten cents and bought a quart of buttermilk for eight cents. My lunch cost me only eighteen cents. Boy, now—and that was a MEAL. And I made out with that. I said, today, well, you can probably get a quart of buttermilk today and what do you pay for it? Sixty-nine--seventy-nine cents? I haven't bought one in a long time so I don't know.

AUNT MERLE: I believe it's more than that.

B.F.: But I bought a quart of buttermilk and one ten cent sandwich and that made a meal.

G.C.: And do you know I worked for that dollar and a quarter a day for THREE years! And then, until I went—I got the job at the Houston Lighting and Power Company in 1940. And I got forty cents an hour then, and BOY, I thought I was on top of the world!

B.F.: And you WERE!

G.C.: Yeah!

B.F.: (chuckles) Well, that's the good old days. 'Course they—

G.C.: And now you try to hire somebody, if you don't pay 'em five dollars an hour, you can't even hire them!

B.F.: Fact of the matter is, they're trying even to raise that now.

G.C.: Well, that's a mistake!

B.F.: Well, they'll lose jobs.

G.C.: Well, actually, you don't gain anything. You make more and everything else goes up with it. You're still on an even keel.

B.F.: Yeah, those GOOD old days. 'Course—

AUNT MERLE: What about—you always used to like to eat at Aunt Lona's because you liked the way she fixed the rice.

G.C.: (chuckle)

B.F.: Rice?

AUNT MERLE: Yeah.

G.C.: She had the BEST rice all the time. She had all that cinnamon over the top.

B.F.: Well, we used to have that. Mama quit really cooking after Daddy died. You maybe don't recall. You were a little young yet. But we used to have rice with cinnamon on it. It had plenty of sugar and it was like candy. It's that GOOD old rice. But Mama didn't do such good cooking after—

G.C.: Well, I learned at Uncle Herman's, when we went there, don't take a big helping when the rice comes by. Take a little helping. And eat it up fast and then get your seconds and THEN pile it up. If you pile the first one up, by the time you get through eating it, it's all gone!

B.F.: (chuckles)

G.C.: Boy, I'll tell you what, I worked both ends! (laughs) But Aunt Helen was always good. You know, she didn't have but one child, and a lot of times, we'd have Boy Scout meetings in town when I was going to school. She'd say, 'Come over and spend the night'. So I would, rather than walk home that 3-1/2—4 miles. And I'd spend the night. And, BOY, she would serve me whatever I wanted. She was GOOD to me.

And so, one time, she asked whether I ate fried eggs. I said, 'Sure, I like fried eggs'. Well, I didn't know, 'cause when Mama fried them, they was like bricks. Aunt Helen fried them, the yellow would RUN all over all over the plate. And I cut into that egg, and that yellow spread over my plate, and I sat up there and looked at that, and I said, 'I told her I would eat it. I'm gonna eat it'.

LEORA: (chuckling)

G.C.: And you know, after that, I kind of liked it. (everyone laughs)

AUNT MERLE: That's why you always liked those hard eggs.

G.C.: Yeah, yeah – at home we NEVER got—

LEORA: You'd have to cook the eggs and then turn 'em over so they were like, I don't know—

G.C.: Bricks!

B.F.: Yeah!

AUNT MERLE: (laughs)

B.F.: Well, it's like—of course you know old whatchacallit told about Kay's husband—

AUNT MERLE: Byron?

B.F.: No, Michael. He said, when he was here he said, 'He went to this café and he said—

G.C.: That's Della's—that's Mabel's kid.

B.F.: Yeah, Kay.

G.C.: Kathy.

B.F.: Kathy! Kathy's husband said, well, he ordered –told the waitress, said I want a couple of eggs, rubbery; I want my toast half-wet on one side, and my coffee cup half full of grounds. And the girl said, 'Well, we don't serve food like that'. Said, 'You did the last time I was here'. (everyone laughs.) That has nothing to do with old times (still laughing).

G.C.: Yeah, but you know, you get used to one thing, and it's hard to change.

B.F.: Yeah, you know, we used to have ham. Would always cure hams and you packed them in salt to really cure them. Have them hanging in the smokehouse and we'd always built the smoke. And they'd get the skippers in them, and they'd get green, and we'd just cut the skippers out and wipe the green off and eat the rest of it. You wouldn't eat that today!

G.C.: I told Byron, and Kay was at the house the other day, and was telling them about that—about cutting the skippers out—

B.F.: Yeah.

G.C.: And going and eating the rest of it. And Byron just almost threw up.

B.F.: (laughs)

G.C.: (laughing) He just couldn't—couldn't TAKE it!

B.F.: Well, gee whiz, I don't know—I imagine sometimes we even ate skippers. But you know the sausage ALWAYS turned green—

G.C.: Oh yeah.

B.F.: --hanging up there. And you'd take a rag with vinegar and you'd just wipe the green off and it tasted just as good as anytime.

LEORA: People [indistinguishable]

B.F.: Nowadays they'd through it out.

G.C.: Sure.

AUNT MERLE: And probably kill them!

G.C.: And that's what used to make me mad about my kids—our kids. You get an apple. You get ONE little bad spot in it—

B.F.: Throw it away.

G.C.: Throw the apple away. MAN, we used to bite that old bad spot out, spit it out, and eat the rest, down to the core. I remember as kids, we used to carry a chicken bone around, for an hour or two after a meal, sucking on it.

B.F.: (laughs)

G.C.: And boy, nowadays they leave half the meat on—

B.F.: On the chicken.

LEORA: [couldn't quite hear her "they're just so mealy" I think she said at the end]

B.F.: Yeah.

AUNT MERLE: Byron eats the core and all. But he had a school teacher the day before--

G.C.: Well, taking after Grandpa. Remember Grandpa eating watermelon? He would NEVER spit the seed out. He said that's too much trouble. He would just—

B.F.: (chuckles)

G.C.: --eat the seeds and all. You don't remember that?

B.F.: Naw, I don't. But, I can believe it!

AUNT MERLE: (chuckles)

G.C.: I can't ever remember him getting mad about anything.

B.F.: Naw, I can't either, frankly.

AUNT MERLE: Tell about the time y'all went to Aunt Lona's wedding, was it? NO, y'all just went to see 'em and she had a letter from Uncle Willie.

G.C.: Yeah. I don't know that Berry went along that time.

AUNT MERLE: Probably didn't. I don't know.

G.C.: We went to see Aunt Lona before she got married.

B.F.: Was she still living in Burton?

G.C.: Yeah. At, I don't know where the house is.

AUNT MERLE: She was still at home.

G.C.: She was still at home, and so we stopped at the mailbox. I remember going there. We had that old Overland, or Oakland, whichever it—

B.F.: Oakland.

G.C.: Oakland. And we was trying to climb that one hill, and the car stalled, and we started rolling back. And Daddy had Mama step on the brake, what little it would hold, and it was STILL rolling back. And he jumped up and pulled up a fence post and blocked it behind the wheel, til he could get that car started again. (everyone chuckling)

G.C.: Now THAT'S the way you traveled in those days. Anyway, we stopped at the mailbox and picked up the mail before we drove to the house. Well we drove to the house —and where's Aunt Lona? She's in the corn crib, shucking corn. So Mama says, 'Well, I want to go see her', and she took that letter along. And it was a letter from Uncle Willie. Before she got married. And BOY, Aunt Lona said, 'GIVE ME THAT LETTER!', and Mama said, 'No, I'm going to read it'. And they went back and forth for a LONG time before Mama finally give it to her (chuckles).

B.F.: I remember going over there and helping put the roof on that house. So we were several days out there. And we had a problem. A chicken had fallen into the well, so they had the—

G.C.: (chuckling) Open well?

B.F.: Open well, with the bucket. And had just a cover on it. And the chicken had fallen in there and died. So we couldn't drink the water out of that well, for a time, until all that got out of the way. So we had to get the water from some other place, for the hog water, when we—over there, putting the roof on. I said, BOY, I learned about those open wells! 'Course he had a windmill on it, in addition. So they pumped the water constantly until they finally—

G.C.: They'd pump 'em dry. They'd pump those wells dry.

B.F.: If it doesn't come in fast enough, it'll pump 'em dry. But at least he finally got all the fresh water back, but it took a long time to get the well back in shape.

G.C.: But, see, I didn't know how to handle those open wells, and when I spent one summer with Harry Muehlbrad—we went out in the pasture and the Krauses next door, that was kin to Mama's side of the family.

B.F.: Yeah.

G. C.: They had—yeah, the Herbert Krause’s parents. They had a well WAY back in the pasture and Harry said, ‘Let’s get us a drink of water’. Well, I just went & ran that bucket and threw it down. Well, you know what happens when you—you got to LET that bucket —

B.F.: (laughs)

G.C.: I threw that bucket down and fell off the dang rope and boy, we just cut and run! Let it go! (laughing) And then they had come out there and fish the bucket out before they —

LEORA: My word!

B.F. & AUNT MERLE: (laughing)

B.F.: See what kids can get into, trouble! Well, one thing I always liked about Uncle Emil’s place-- they had this nice tank, because—

G.C.: Oh yeah!

B.F.: And they had a GREAT big flat rock and you could sit on that rock, or dive off, and that water was pretty deep, and it was COLD down on the bottom.

G.C.: There was a spring in there, it’d never go dry.

B.F.: Yeah. And it was wonderful. And had a little stream of water running from it. But it was a good place to fish, good place to swim. Every evening, why, after all the hard work, we’d go down there and skinny-dip. Nobody had a bathing suit. (laughs). And it was wonderful to get that cold water and especially on the warm days.

G.C.: Well, at Uncle Emil’s there were ALWAYS people coming or going. When you stayed there, you NEVER knew who was going to be there for a meal. Just like I say, they had that table that would seat about, at least 30 people. And—

B.F.: Well, one thing I always liked—to see him when he worked with his bees. You know, he had an apiary there and if it was a dry year and there weren’t any flowers, why he would put out sugar water for the bees. But he had a--sort of a tank deal that he cranked by hand, and all his bee hives had ready-made cones, and all the bee had to do was put the honey in and seal it.

G.C.: Yeah, and then he’d swing it out.

B.F.: Yeah. He had Delco plant and so he had an electric knife and he would just go over and help the top off, and he would put these in there, and then he'd swing 'em. He had a BUNCH of them set in there, and then he'd just swing the honey out. And then he put those back in to be bee hive and the bees would clean it up. It was fun to just watch him. He NEVER wore a mask.

G.C.: Well, he had that old BIG beard—they couldn't get to his face! But he still had bare hands.

B.F.: Well, but, you remember the bees that got to my head?! In the hair? They stung me. I had fifty-two stings that my mother picked out. When you double-clutched on the limb when we wanted to drive in a swarm of bees? You know, we had stopped them. We got the old dish pans out and stopped the bees from going. They were swarming up above our peach orchard.

G.C.: I don't know—I remember that but I remember it the other way around! I remember you wasn't there!

B.F.: How did I get stung fifty-six times [now it's 56 – a minute ago, it was 52!] and Mama had to come and take all the stingers out with a little tweezers. When I held that box and you—

LEORA: I've heard that story MANY times!

AUNT MERLE: I've never heard that one!

G.C.: Well, I'll tell you the way I remember it—

B.F.: All right, let's see how YOU heard it.

G.C.: You wasn't there.

B.F.: That was a different time, then, because I was the one that got the bees stopped.

AUNT MERLE: You wouldn't forget that, would you!

G.C.: Well, I went out there and there was a swarm of bees on that pear tree, behind our old garage.

B.F.: Oh, it wasn't a pear tree. It was a peach tree.

G.C.: Well, you see—

B.F.: It was a different time—a different episode.

G.C.: All right. So, I was going to drive them in. See, Dad wasn't alive then any more.

B.F.: Oh well, this—

G.C.: And I got me a fifty—you know we had the bee hives a couple of years after Dad died. I got me a fifty-five gallon drum put under there.

B.F.: I don't know a THING about that (laughs).

G.C.: And I put the box under there, and you know, you had that old cap to put on the box if you dump them in there.

B.F.: Yeah.

G. C.: Well, then I had to hold the cap and I couldn't nothing about the limb. And we had a black man chopping cotton there. And I went and got him. And I said, 'Now, what I want you to do is take your hoe and HIT that limb'. And the jolt will knock the swarm down, and I'm standing up there, NO—just shirt sleeves on, you know—And that Negro was SCARED. And instead of hitting the limb, he hooked his hoe over it and dumped that whole swarm on top of my head. And I always heard, 'if you hold your breath, they don't sting you'. Well that's a LIE!

LEORA: (whoop, and then chuckles)

G.C.: Because I FR—O—ZE and those suckers started popping me and I cut for that big water trough. And I dived in under the water. Well the bees stayed on the top. And I'd come up for air and go back under. And Della counted 37 stings in my neck, and don't know how many I got in my hair. And my neck swole up like "that" but we never went to the DOCTOR.

AUNT MERLE: [under her breath like, slightly sarcastic] Of course not.

B.F.: No, you see, that evidently happened later.

G.C.: I—I said—

B.F.: We had the peach orchard--

AUNT MERLE & LEORA: [making remarks but I can't get them- think it's disparaging remarks about how they never went to the Dr if they could help it]

B.F.: --and up—

G.C.: And a couple of pear trees, just at the side of it. And that's where this was.

B.F.: That's right. But, the swarm that I stopped on the peach tree was LOW. I mean, standing right here on the ground.

G.C.: Uh huh.

B.F.: Dunk 'em in. And YOU double-clutched. (everyone laughs)

B.F.: The second clutch put them right in me!

G.C.: I don't remember that!

AUNT MERLE: That was easy to forget!

G.C.: Yeah. There are some things you feel guilty about, you don't remember. (all but B.F. are laughing).

B.F.: But you know, one thing about the bees, if we wanted to move the hive and wait til dark, and late at night. We had a little block we put in the front of the entrance where they went in. Then we could pick the whole hive and put them away next morning, where we wanted them. What did we have? At one time we had around 10—12—15—

G.C.: Oh yeah.

B.F.: of those.

G.C.: We had enough honey to eat on, all year, and boy—and chewing that old wax.

B.F.: Chew the wax – yeah!

G.C.: Chew that old bees wax until all the honey's out, spit it out and get you another mouthful (chuckles). Good old days!

I think it's the ladies time to say something.

B.F.: How 'bout it. Y'all been in on the discussion.

AUNT MERLE: We didn't want to be in on it!

B.F.: What do y'all have?

LEORA: I think y'all've done good.

B.F.: (laughs)

AUNT MERLE: They don't want to hear about OUR childhood, they want to hear about yours.

LEORA: That's right. [didn't get last bit]

B.F.: Oooh boy! Remember when y'all had the sheep—

AUNT MERLE: I think y'all good.

LEORA: I do too.

G.C.: Remember how we used to butcher them?

B.F.: Well, I don't know about the butchering. I know about shearing them. I never did care for mutton.

G.C.: Well, we used to eat a sheep or two every year.

B.F.: I know, but I didn't like them.

G.C.: Dad would hang them up by the hind legs and then cut their throat. Because you couldn't shoot a sheep, like you'd shoot a hog.

LEORA: How come?

G.C.: Their head was so hard or something—it wouldn't—I guess you COULD but—

B.F.: Yeah.

G.C.: But back then they would bleed them good.

B.F.: I don't know. I just never did like the taste of mutton. I decided that what the problem was, they probably let the wool touch the—

G.C.: The oiliness—greasiness—

B.F.: And it gave it that bad flavor.

G.C.: Well, I ate goat meat when I was in the Army. And OH, I tell you what—that is HORRIBLE. The Army just didn't know how to fix it. Now I know people that like goat meat.

B.F.: Well, you can have goat meat, like we had at the hunting place, if it's fixed right. A young goat, and then fixed on the fire. But their problem was they were drinking too much while they were fixing it, so they never really cooked it right.

AUNT MERLE: (laughs)

G.C.: Well, I tell you what. When I was in the Army and we'd have goat meat, it didn't TASTE that bad. But if you take a drink of water as you ate the meat, the tallow would just form on your lips.

LEORA: Oh good night!

G.C.: Or just the scum. It was HORRIBLE.

B.F.: So you had to learn not to drink while you were eating goat (laughing).

G.C.: I just learned not to eat the goat meat.

LEORA: (laughing)

B.F.: I can't eat lamb today. You know they had lamb today, and it looked awful good, but I just never—and like Mike now, he just LOVES a rack of lamb. And gosh, you go over to the place in Richmond, out there—the rack of lamb is 24 bucks. Ah dang, I wouldn't give you a DIME for it. Boy I don't like lamb.

LEORA: [something I couldn't get and she & Aunt Merle chuckle]

B.F.: But we used to just have a shearing deal. You know, we had the gizmo and you stand there and crank the shears—the clippers. Boy that was the fast way when you used to have to do it “this” way, that was HARD work. But how easy you could cut that sheep's skin.

G.C.: You had to know what you was doing. And I remember, I cranked that thing a many a time.

B.F.: Yeah. We kids had to do the cranking. Papa was doing it.

G.C.: Shearing.

B.F.: Because we were always cutting too much meat—too much skin.

AUNT MERLE: (laughs)

LEORA: Why don't y'all just wind it up. I think you've done enough.

AUNT MERLE: I think so.

G.C.: I think so too.

AUNT MERLE: I think you've done a GOOD job.

B.F.: Well, this is the end of the story---(laughs)

G.C.: Now it's THEIR turn to talk.

LEORA: No, none of our family wanted it, did they?

AUNT MERLE: No.



Photo from 1994 on the occasion of Garrett and Merle's 50th Wedding Anniversary.

From left to right: Mabel Krause Cole, Della Krause Behrens, Leora Stern Krause, Berry Fritz Krause, Merle Engel Krause, Garrett Charles Krause

The end.