Pearl Woods Greebon
A Blanco Woman
February 21, 2011

Interviewer: Martha Herden
Videographer: Barney Cline

Martha Herden [MH]: We're sitting here today in the home of Pearl Wood Greebon, and my name is Martha Herden. I'm part of the Oral History interviewing project of the Blanco Library. Our goal is to find as many of the older citizens of Blanco, who have probably the best memories of Blanco, and to just sit down with them and to talk and find out what they can tell us about this special town that we live in, called Blanco. Pearl, can you tell me what year you were born and where?

Pearl Greebon [PG]: I was born October the 7, 1913, in Blanco, Texas, right almost on the city square. My father and mother had moved here from Fredericksburg. They were—all of my grandparents came from Germany. And—my father and mother settled in Fredericksburg, but then they moved to Blanco in about 1911—'10 or '11.

MH: Do you recall what part of Germany your ancestors came from?

PG: No, I don't really know. I have it in a book, but I don't know where they came from. I really don't.

MH: In the house that you were born in—I believe you were telling me that it is across from the old nursing home—right there off the square—am I correct?

PG: It's right next to the old nursing home.

MH: Yes, ma'am. And now we know that as the Art Center.

PG: Yes.

MH: So that house has gone from having babies in it to having art in it.

PG: It's changed a lot.

MH: What can you tell me about some of the changes you remember?

PG: Oh, I really don't—I don't really remember anything from the time I lived there because my mother and father moved somewhere else, I guess, because I don't—I don't remember living there. But I know I was born there.

MH: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

PG: I had—seven.

MH: Seven.

PG: Four boys and four girls.

MH: And where do you fall in that line?

PG: Well, I had—the older ones were Alfred and Edgar and Lydia and Marie, Jane, and then me; and then I had a little sister who passed away when she was about fourteen months old. And then Leroy was born in 1919. That was our four boys and four girls.

MH: Are you the remaining living person?

PG: I am the remaining one—only one living, yes.

MH: Wow. As a little girl in Blanco, what was there to do?

PG: Oh my goodness, I really—I really don't know. We played—we played a lot of dominoes. I can't remember learning to play forty-two. We were—we were big—we were home people. We stayed at home most of the time. We didn't go—we didn't go anywhere much except I went to church. I went to Sunday school when I was two years old. I have a card that I got from my Sunday school teacher when I was two years old. But we really just—we just played games like dominoes and checkers. And later we played jacks and things like that. There was nothing much to do except entertain yourself.

MH: What can you tell me about the way you can remember the town at that time looking?

PG: Oh my, it was very small. The first I remember it, it was very small. And, of course, we had no electricity. We were—everything was wells and rainwater tanks for our water supply. And everybody could own a cow and a calf and a pig and chickens. In town, you could have those; and the cows ran free all over town if they wanted to.

MH: All over town.

PG: Yes, so everybody had yard fences, and everything was fenced to keep the cows out 'cause they had to go to the river to drink. Nobody watered their animals at home. They were all—the cows went to the river.

MH: It sounds like even in your early years that water was as precious as it is right now.

PG: It was. Most—most people had—just a tin cistern on a pedestal or a windmill or something. The house that I was born in had an old windmill and a well—a good well. And that's the only water system we had—'course, no indoor plumbing at all.

MH: Just outhouses.

PG: Outhouses is right.

MH: --Can you recall any big floods in Blanco?

PG: Well yes, I remember several big floods. But really the biggest one was, I believe, in 1952 or ’57. It washed out the bridges. We had two of them: one in ’52 and, I believe, the other one in ’57. I can’t remember now.

MH: You mentioned to me the fact that there was no electricity there for a while, and so I’m gathering you did everything by lantern or coal oil lamps.

PG: Yeah, coal oil lamps.

MH: --Is there something special—can you tell me about when electricity arrived?

PG: If I remember correctly, Texas Power and Light Company—brought in electricity from some other place with—by wire—just brought it in and put it in the houses. And my dad read meters. Then later, in about 1924 or 5, or somewhere along there, they built the old power plant right on the corner of Elm and Third—next to the mill and gin. So my dad worked at the power plant. He ran it for—until LCRA [Lower Colorado River Authority] came in—‘til they built the dams when Lyndon [B] Johnson was in office—some office. I don’t know if it was president or senator or whatever he was.

MH: He was moving up.

PG: But—he would get up in the mornings early, 5:30 or 6:00, and walk up to the power plant. We just lived two blocks from it—walk to the power plant and turn the power up so—‘cause everybody’d be getting up. He’d turn the power up. He’d come home and milk the cow and feed the pigs. And then he’d have breakfast and go back to the power plant, and come home at lunch and at 6:00 in the evening. He’d come home for supper, and then he’d go back to the power plant, and he had friends that came in and played dominoes with him. There was only room for two people to—to play dominoes, so the men would come and play dominoes with Dad ‘til 10:00, and then he’d turn the power down.

MH: Was it turned completely off?

PG: [Shakes head] No, it never went off.

MH: Never went off.

PG: But it went—he would turn it down. And it made everybody in town—you could hear it all over town just put-put-put-put. And once in a while, it’d catch on fire; and then

it'd go real fast put-put-put-put [said rapidly]. And no matter what time of the night it was, everybody would wake up when that power—in our family. We'd wake up and, "Dad, the power plant's on fire. The power plants on fire." And I don't know where it burned. I don't know anything about it 'cause I didn't go. But Dad would get up, dress, and go up to the power plant and stay until it burned out, whatever it was that was burning.

MH: He had a very important job!

PG: [Laughs] Then he'd come back sometime and go back to bed. And—but he did that for many years and until the—until the LCRA came in and built the line.

MH: You must have been very proud of your father.

PG: Well, he was a pretty smart guy.

MH: Yes, ma'am.

PG: He could do lots of things. He was—he was a carpenter. He could carpenter. I know for many years, he fixed shoes—soled half-soled shoes. But they had to be a certain kind that he could sole the shoes on. I remember him sitting at night before he went to work at the power plant and fix shoes. And then he ran the gin. He was a manager of the gin for as long as there was one. People grew up raising cotton. Well, there were—the gin was torn down, and the nursing home was built there.

MH: Where did you go to school at, Pearl?

PG: Blanco, always. The first school I went to, I think—the first school building, I think must have been a two story about like it is—well, not now but had six rooms and had an upstairs. And one year, I went to school in the—what is now the Sunset Inn. We—I guess the whole school was moved 'cause they were tearin' it—it was condemned, I think, because it had burned. And it was condemned, and they couldn't have school there, so they tore it all down except the bell tower, which is the same one that's on it now.

MH: Yes, ma'am.

PG: The old, old building—And—then the third grade, I was back in school in the high school. I mean the school building that's there. The fourth year, we moved to Fredericksburg. I hated it.

MH: Why?

PG: Every minute—

MH: Why?

PG: I just hated it.

MH: Missed Blanco?

PG: I missed Blanco. I missed my friend. Although I had some good friends there too—made some good friends that one year. But they talked German, and I didn't. I never learned. My older brothers and sisters learned to talk—speak German. But—but when I was born, you didn't dare speak German.

MH: Why?

PG: Well, because a war was going on and—with Germany, and you didn't dare. You didn't even want to say you were German because you were pretty well ostracized if you were German.

MH: So that I don't miss asking this, did any of your siblings go to war?

PG: No, none of my brothers did. My two older brothers were married, and the other one was too young. Next one was too young 'cause had two sisters in there.

MH: Do you recall a time when the town—part of the town square burned?

PG: Yes, I remember when it burned. I think it burned twice. I think once in the—but I don't remember that time. But then it burned—I remember when it burned when all the west side square—all the west side of the square burned—buildings all burned. They had a water brigade—bucket brigade came from the mill and gin had a good well on it and an electric pump at that time. And—they formed two lines and tried to put it—keep it down, but it burned—several up as far as the Masonic building—the two story building. We always called it Masonic building

MH: Well, with your memories of Blanco, I would say it's pretty sure that you remember the courthouse quite a bit.

PG: I remember.

MH: Well, why don't you share some of that with us.

PG: Well, I don't—I don't—

MH: Was there any time that—I know that it's been a hospital.

PG: It was a hospital.

MH: And a school.

PG: And when I—for a long time, all of the graduation exercises and everything were upstairs in the auditorium in there. And there was also a movie—silent movie, of course, in there at one time.

MH: How much did it cost to go see the silent movie?

PG: Oh my, I don't remember. [laughs] I don't remember. I'm sure not more than ten or fifteen cents.

MH: Probably not. Money came hard, didn't it?

PG: Yeah, it did. And it had an old player piano. And we took turns playing that player piano, and when that music—when something excitin' happened, we'd really go fast and hard. When it would slow down, we'd slow down, you know. It was—but you had to read it.

MH: --You were mentioning to me earlier, when we were first meeting, that there was a museum in the courthouse at one time.

PG: Was a wonderful museum.

MH: Why don't you tell me a little bit about that.

PG: A Mr. Haas [unknown spelling (?)] was from England, and he came in here and bought the Sunset Inn. I don't remember what it was now, but he put in a café and a liquor—sold liquor. And--he built—he rented the courthouse. And he put in a museum, and you went in the front—the front door, and you could go through, and they had an old barber shop in there with wax figures. You want me to say what I—

MH: Sure.

PG: And—had an old man sitting in the bathtub, and a man cuttin' another man's hair. And as you walked up to the door, he had a ray someway that turned on a speaker. And as you walked up to the front door, well they were talking like the barber shop talk. And then you went on around, and he had it all divided into small rooms but never took out any of the real walls. I think he did tear down one staircase. And—then he had Judge Roy Bean in there. And he was talking to somebody about murdering somebody. And his voice would come on as you walked up to the door. And then when you went around to the—there was an old kitchen, and it had all kind of old utensils and churn and a wood stove and all the kinds of things that an old-fashioned kitchen had. And then there was a funeral parlor, and it had two coffins in there with wax figures lying in them.

MH: They didn't talk.

PG: No.

MH: Good.

PG: They didn't talk. They didn't say nothin'.

MH: They didn't say anything.

PG: They didn't say anything to us. And then they had—the bank—was in there and used the bank vault. At one time the Blanco National Bank was in that building. And—the vault was still in there. And they used it, and they had a banker in there. And then you came out the front door. Nothing was damaged, but Mr. Haas built a big concrete slab for a dance hall on the south corner. And had a big wood fence around it, and he hired good bands to come. But nobody could make any money out of it. And something happened, and he went broke. And he left, and most of the stuff—or a lot of the stuff that was in there was loaned to him by other people. So they came and got it out of the museum. So it was dissolved, which was a terrible thing because it would have been a money-making proposition nowadays.

MH: When you heard about the courthouse—that it was going to be torn down and moved out of Blanco, what did you think about that?

PG: Oh, we were all devastated, of course. But I didn't know what to do about it. And everybody—they started having different things. And they still do. I think have something—a barbecue or some kind of celebration every year. I think they still have fundraisers for it.

MH: Well, let me ask you, have you heard about the reason that the courthouse seat left Blanco and went to Johnson City?

PG: Well, I don't know. They had—I've heard they had four elections—four times to vote on it. And every time Blanco won until the last one. And then it was moved to Johnson City. But the reason, I think, that it was really moved was because way back in history, long years ago—two or three counties were formed out of Blanco County. Which made Blanco, the City of Blanco, not be the center of the county. And that that's the reason they were—one reason they wanted to move it because Johnson City was closer to that. But I think they went out and beat the bushes and called everybody they could possibly catch to vote.

MH: To get that done.

PG: To get that done.

MH: Right. I wanted to kind of go back a little bit when I'd asked you about any of your brothers being in the war. Did you have a brother that was in World War II?

PG: --Yes, Leroy, the brother that's just younger than me, was in World War II. Well, my husband was in World War II. He was in the infantry; J.C. Wood was in the infantry. And all of my boys were in the service. All four of my boys were in the service.

MH: Tell me a little about that, Pearl, how that was for you as a wife and as a mother.

PG: Pretty hard, I'll tell you for sure, because—when my husband went in, we had four children at the time. And—'course, I got money. They sent me money, but it was a hard time for everybody because we were worried all the time. And my husband was in the infantry, and he was in the—in the—Europe in Germany and France and was with the 95th Division. I think they were instrumental partly with the taking of Berlin. And—he had some—quite a few close calls and experiences. But one thing he—just before they were to cross the Rhine River—they were in a beautiful home. He sent me some pictures of the home that they were in. And he said it was so cold they burned the piano and the most beautiful furniture he ever saw—said they just burned it in the fireplace because they were so cold they had to have heat. And a bomb hit pretty close, and he had his shoes and his false teeth laying in the window. And he—lost his false teeth and lost one shoe. I don't know how he got another one. I don't know how. He never said how he got another one. But before he came home, they made him some new teeth.

MH: Well, so that I don't miss this, who did you marry when you got married?

PG: Which time?

MH: First time.

PG: J. C. Wood.—James Carl Wood.

MH: And you and Mr. Woods had four children.

PG: We had five children.

MH: Can you name them for me?

PG: Did we have five? Yeah, we had Mary Ann, James Eugene, Benny Lee, John—now I have to think about that because we had a lady living with my mother. She called him John Henry before he was born, and half the time we called him John Henry. But his name's John Franklin. And—Gary Len after the war. Gary Len was born after the—

MH: When your husband was in the war, did you work outside the home?

PG: No, no, I never had worked then. I didn't start until after he came back from the war.

MH: Can you tell me was there any place in Blanco that you did do some work at?

PG: Oh, I worked at the bowling alley off and on, off and on. I worked there, and then—then I'd get another job, and I'd work there. Let's see, I worked—I worked for Vista—I worked for the federal government for two years as a Vista volunteer. And—I worked that two years.

MH: What did you do?

PG: Oh, I took people to the doctors. We didn't have a doctor here at the time; and I'd take people to the doctor, take 'em shopping, take 'em wherever they needed to go. I drove 'em around mostly. I stayed—at the time I stayed—Elsie Beck had a quilt shop in town. They made homemade—they made quilts. And—she had—she owned what is now the Uptown Theater building—Uptown Café building. And she owned that, so she put up a quilting frame. She had some quilts, and she got a bunch of scraps. And she and I—we'd go to San Antonio and buy material, and we'd make quilts. And one of our favorite quilts was called Texas Star, and it—the quilt would cover one star—big colorful star.

PG: And I have a picture of that. And—then we would sell—she would sell them. And the ladies in town would come and quilt. And we had—oh um about ten, I guess, or twelve people that would come and quilt every day—women. And—Elsie paid 'em. I don't know fifteen cents or twenty-five cents an hour or something like that. But they were women that didn't have any husbands—most of 'em. Some of 'em had husbands, but most of 'em were widows. And that gave 'em a place to go, and they could sit and talk. If they wanted to quilt, they could quilt—if they could quilt. And then she would sell those quilts. And we sold a lot of that Texas Star quilt for $750. And then at lunch, she would cook—maybe she'd get a chicken, and she'd make chicken—chicken and dumplings. Or she would cook some kind of a meal, and they would all eat. And—about 5:00—4:00, they'd close shop and go. And once a month, she had a domino party for everybody. Everybody came and played 42, and the men—the ones that had husbands came. And they'd have five or six tables of dominoes and play dominoes all afternoon. And it was a wonderful thing, and it was wonderful for the women. And even though they only made ten, or fifteen, or twenty-five—I can't remember what she paid 'em 'cause I stayed there, and Mr. Jay [unknown spelling (?)] Pickle helped her out a lot with that. And—she would pay those women. Sometime they'd get three or four dollars. And they were just as tickled, but we'd get down there some mornings at 8:00, and they'd be waitin' for us—for her to come open up the doors. And it was a—it was a good thing.

MH: It was good companionship?

PG: It was good companionship. It gave the women—most of them were widows—it gave them—and the ones it didn't would come in the afternoons. If they couldn't come in the morning, they'd come in the afternoon. And she kept all their time down in a book. She had a book, and she had exactly what time they came. And Saturday, or Friday, she'd pay 'em off. And they were—it was such a nice thing to have.

MH: Uh-huh. It sounds like as I listen to you talk that people helped each other out, and that was just the way it was.

PG: Very much so. Uh-huh.

MH: --One of the things that you and I kind of share in common even though we haven't met—you used to go around to a place called the Koch place—K-O-C-H—and that's the place that my husband and I are living at now.

PG: Yes.

MH: And I would like it if you could share just a few memories of being around the Kochs with me.

PG: Well, Miz—they had cows. And we bought—when we didn't have a cow. And when my sister would come from Austin, we'd always go up to Miz Koch's and buy sweet cream. We loved cream instead of butter. We really preferred cream and jelly on our bread rather than butter and jelly. And—Mom and Dad went to church with Mr. and Miz Koch a long time. When they had to go down to the Little Blanco to go to the Lutheran church—there was none in Blanco, and they were Lutherans, and they went down to that church. But one thing, at that time, the land for the Methodist church, on down past where the park house is, was our field. And we lived in the house there on that land. Beth has the house now.

MH: Uh-huh.

PG: And—the house across the street was Mr. Liesmann's [unknown spelling (?)] house, and the Catholic church was not there. And from there on up to C. J.'s—all those places—that was all oat field. And—Mr. Liesmann had that all planted in oats. And then the Koch place that you live—where you live—that was all—that whole block was—or two, whatever it is—was in oats. And in the fall, or whenever the oats were cut—and I can't remember—I was thinking the other day I don't remember how they cut the oats—and if they cut it and tied it up or shocked it up or if they just cut it and put it in wagons. The farmers around would bring their wagon and teams, and they'd haul that oat from our field and Mr. Liesmann's field up to Mr. Koch's field where ya'll live. Just south o' the house is where the thrasher would sit. And they would thrash the oats and put it in sacks. And—all the people that owned the land—them and the horses and

teams that they brought in to haul it—the oats up there—all o' those men would eat lunch there. The women all met at Miz Koch's house. She had a big kitchen. And—the women would cook dinner, and the men would come in and eat lunch. And the kids 'd play in the yard and have a good time. That was a big time when all the kids got together, and we played hide-and-seek and everything in the yard. We always looked forward to that 'cause we knew that was gonna be a good time.

MH: Can you recall, and I'm sure you can knowing Texas, where there were periods of severe drought?

PG: Oh yes, lots of times when there was no—when we didn't have any water. One year when we lived there and had a 1500 gallon cistern tin tank out by the house—that's the only water we had—and we had to haul water from up where Darcy Smith lives. There was a spring—a good spring there on the north side o' the river. And everybody in town hauled their water from there—from that spring. There was none. I don't know how we lived.

MH: Well, you just lived. Can you tell me as you went through your married years when you began to see—what were some of the big things that changed—that first came to Blanco that you can recall? It may be a business that came to town or anything in particular like that.

PG: Oh, I don't remember. Well, I know that—we used to have a new Ford—Mr. Koch—not the Koch that lived there—but Mr. Albert Koch had a garage there where the—next to the bowling alley there. And every year, he'd get a new Ford car in there. We couldn't wait 'til Mr. Koch got his new car, so we could see the new Ford. His was a Ford dealership. And Mr. Ernest Stubbs had a Chevrolet dealership. So we always had new cars. But—

MH: So it was kept as a big surprise right until he revealed the—

PG: Yeah, until he sold the new car. But—I don't know when that stopped either. I don't remember. But—one thing that we all looked forward to was a medicine show.

MH: A medicine show.

PG: A medicine show. It came to town every summer. And—they had a truck. And they would park it between the—where the Mill Nursing Home is now and that house. They would park in it there, and they'd open up all—the back o' the truck was a stage. And they'd have—medicine that you took would cure everything from a sore toe to a—

MH: Did it?

PG: I don't know. I don't think we ever bought any of it. I don't know. But I don't ever remember seein' it. But they had that, and they had ointment they sold. And I guess the medicine was maybe fifty cents a bottle. I have no idea. I don't remember because I don't remember ever buyin' any. I mean I was too young to buy. I was still a kid. But—and then they sold candy—little boxes o' candy. And I guess they were a nickel. And every time you bought somethin' for a nickel or a dime, you got a vote—vote on the prettiest girl or the nicest girl or the best lookin' girl. And they gave away a diamond ring at the end o' the medicine show—usually last a week or ten days—something like that—every night. And—they'd play—they'd put on little skits, or they'd have somebody playin'—singin' or dancin' or something. They'd put on a pretty good show and o' course sold their medicine. And Pearl Byers nearly won the ring every year because she worked at the telephone office.

MH: Uh-huh.

PG: And—everybody knew her.

MH: So she would get it.

PG: She was the only one that everybody knew—that all the strangers that came in knew. And—so she'd get the—I think maybe Ruby won it the last time. The last medicine show they had they had down where Hollis Boatwright lives now.

MH: And where would that be?

PG: Well, it's—down 4th Street, closer to the bridge next to the Callum house. And it was there, but it didn't do very good. And that's the last one I remember that they ever had in Blanco, but that was somethin' we all looked forward to in the summer time. And swimmin'—we went swimmin', but we didn't have any place to swim. You could get out there and paddle around and be in the water. But we didn't have any place big enough to swim 'cause there were no dams.

MH: Uh-huh. Pearl, what's your fondest memory as a—let's say a young married woman of Blanco?

PG: Oh my, my fondest memory—I don't know. Times were so hard we didn't have many fond memories, I'll tell ya.

MH: Uh-huh.

PG: I can't say. My kids, I guess, as a young married woman— I was proud.

MH: Proud of your children.

PG: I was proud o' my daughter 'cause she was red headed—little red-headed girl, and she was cute as she could be. And I made all her clothes. And I made 'em just—they were the right length. And they were everything—she was just a cute little girl. My oldest brother lived with us for a while. They worked for Otis Elevator Company in Austin. They put—the first job was puttin' the lights in the university tower. That was the first job they worked on.

MH: Um.

PG: And my brother was livin' with us. And we'd rented an apartment together. And he'd come home in the evenin', and she'd say, "Gum, gum." And he says, "Oh, my goodness, I forgot to get your gum. Come on, we'd better go and get some." And he'd take her off—I don't know to the beer joint, I guess, probably. [PG and MH laugh] I don't know. Anyway, take her off to someplace where there was some guys. And everybody was crazy about Mary Ann. She was a—she was my pride and joy—always has been.

MH: If you could have a wish for the future of Blanco, what do you think you would wish for Blanco?

PG: I would wish for Blanco—well, I don't know. I do wish they could get the courthouse paid for. That's one thing I wish for that it would be secure.

MH: Uh-huh.

PG: I want it to stay here. But I really don't know. I think we've got a wonderful school system. I think it's doin'—it's good. I think we have a good—the church situation is nice. And everybody really seems to get along pretty good. There's not much—you don't hear about many things of people fussing or griping about things. I don't know, I think it's just a nice little country town. I hope it stays that way.

MH: Do you think we'll ever become something the size of Fredericksburg?

PG: Yes.

MH: You do?

PG: I sure do. I sure do. I think we are. Many years ago, Mr. Summers had—I don't know a drug store here, or he owned a building or somethin'. And he had a sign up over what is now the Rosebud, isn't it, Café.

MH: The Redbud. Yes, ma'am.

PG: Redbud.

MH: You're doin' fine.

PG: And he had a sign up over the front of it, and it said 3,960 or some—five or six numbers San Pedro Avenue—up on the front of the hardware store. And I think that's coming. That way, of course, it's not the 281 highway anymore, so it won't be San Pedro Avenue 'cause that's the other highway. But—but I think we'll be bigger. I think we'll grow. I think we'll grow too much.

MH: You do.

PG: I won't live to see it. But I think we will. I think it will grow.

MH: Well, hopefully as you described Blanco, we'll still keep that friendly, down home flavor that we had.

PG: Right, right. I think so, I think so. I think because when anyone is sick or anybody dies, it seems that people step forward and help them. You know, financially as well as otherwise.

MH: Uh-huh.

PG: So I think maybe it will, but so far as growing, I think it will grow.

MH: Well, this is something that I always ask somebody who's up in age. I'd like to hear some of what you consider are your secrets to living a long life. Anything you can tell me that you think you can share.

PG: Well, I don't know. I don't smoke. I never smoked. I don't drink. I never drank. And—I certainly have—well, I don't know. I know that one thing—when we were young, when we were kids, we played outside. We were outside all the time. We were sitting on the steps playing jacks or we were jumpin' rope or we were playin' annie-over-the-house with a ball. And we were doing something outside all the time, which—I think the worst thing that can happen is for kids to sit in the house and with their heads in the computer all the time. Its—I think that's bad.

MH: Yes, ma'am.

PG: I think that people should be more aware of what they're doin' to their children by not making them get out into the air and playin' and havin' fun instead o' sittin' there with these dumb things runnin' around on the screen or somethin'.

MH: Well, and you know, I was gonna mention to you also that you've passed on your caring of your community to—it sounds like to all of your children. I know that—which one of your children is a county commissioner?

PG: John. He was justice of the peace for twelve or fifteen years.

MH: And now he's county commissioner.

PG: Now he's county commissioner.

MH: And you're proud of him.

PG: Well, sure. And Gary is retired. He doesn't work anymore. My son in California was a—he worked for United Airlines—wasn't a pilot, but he worked for United Airlines—mechanic.

MH: Well, Pearl, I think that you are a treasure for Blanco.

PG: Well, I don't know about that. [Laughs]

MH: Yes, you are. Yes, you are. And you've shared some wonderful memories with us today. My wish for you is I'm back talking to you when you're one hundred years old.

PG: [Laughs] Well, maybe so. Maybe so.

MH: Thank you, Pearl. It's been a pleasure to interview you today and God bless. Miss Pearl, who is this picture of please? [MH shows a picture.]

PG: This is Emma Koch and Robert Jonas. She worked—when my mother and father owned the—ran the telephone office. She worked for them. This is the home of Mr. and Miz Herdman.

MH: And this is where Mr. and Mrs. Koch raised their seven children.

PG: [Looks at a new picture] Now what is that?

MH: Okay. Now this is a picture where there's a fence around the courthouse. Is this you standing in front of it? [points to someone in the picture]

PG: Yes, that's me standing there in the gate.

MH: Okay. Anything about that memory you can tell me?

PG: I guess I was about five years old. That's when we lived at the telephone office.

MH: And there was a fence that went all the way around the courthouse.

PG: All the way around the courthouse, like this, yeah 'cause the cows came to town.

MH: What do you mean?

PG: The cows were loose. In the daytime, everybody turned their cows out. They could go wherever they wanted to.

MH: Uh-huh.

PG: 'Course they didn't come up to town very often, but—

MH: Every once in a while. And did you tell me—I'm gonna move this out of the way [moves picture]—did you tell me, Miss Pearl, that your mother and father ran the telephone company for a bit?

PG: Yes—from about 1918, I guess, 'cause Leroy was born there—my youngest brother was born there.

MH: Uh-huh.

PG: They ran the telephone office. And Miss Emma Koch and—another lady came to work for Mother and Father and ran the telephone office after my two sisters moved to Austin. I guess Mama did it part of the time like at 6:00 or something and opened up—opened it up. They were not supposed to ring after 10:00.

MH: Why?

PG: Well, that was just the law. You didn't call—they didn't have to keep it open. It was available at all times, but they didn't have to sit there at it after 10:00.

MH: Can you recall when you would make a phone call when you would crank the phone? What were the rings? How was that done?

PG: Well, at first—the first building—the first machine they had, they had to ring like a long and then a little short or whatever on the number. But they had—when they'd ring, why you'd have to—a little block would fall down, and you'd have to stick your plug in there. And then talk to them, and they'd give you the number—like I want to talk to so and so. And most the time, they didn't know the ring or anything—just asked for a person. You had to know the ring. Then they got it where you just had to push a button forward or backward to ring.

MH: Uh-huh.

PG: Instead of havin' to crank it. And that was the last machine that they had. What is that of?

MH: This is a picture of the Blanco Gin. [Shows picture]

PG: And she said that a while ago, and I didn't even remember havin' that picture.

MH: Okay. Do you remember the gin?

PG: Oh yeah, I remember the gin.

MH: What can you tell me about it?

PG: Well—the front building in the front was originally a flour mill. And my dad—evidently they raised wheat here in Blanco.

MH: Uh-huh.

PG: Not that I can remember of it. But when my daddy bought the mill, it had—in the front, was the flour mill. And they made flour. And my mother—made the sacks that the flour went in on that old machine sittin' right back there in the corner [the corner of the picture]. My dad bought that machine for her. And so it's older than I am.

MH: We're gonna have to take a picture of that.

PG: And then he pasted his address on it—his brand on it, Blanco Flour Mill.

MH: Oh, the nursing home still has some of the walls of the old gin in it.

PG: They left just one, I think, is all.

MH: All right.

PG: Maybe more.

MH: And that was Dr. J. B. Price, who was the grandfather of Warren Cage. And as we go into some of the photo here, he is shown mounted on his horse.

PG: Yeah. Right out in front of there in the middle of the street was a big grove of oak trees. Right in the middle of the street in front of there.

MH: Really.

PG: Yeah. And behind there—behind this mill—immediately behind it was the most wonderful well. You just could pump forever and it would just keep—good fresh water—good water. Along this side of there [gestures toward picture] was the boiler. And they used a big—the poles were like six or eight feet long that they stuck in there to make the steam to run the gin.

MH: Uh-huh.

PG: And the gin was in back o' that. And they had 'bout—oh I don't know—they had several places where you could see the cotton goin' by and the end where they pressed it into those big bales.

MH: Right.

PG: And—then they rolled it out on a porch, and then put it on a wagon and took it across the street there where those houses are and where that beauty shop and I believe, that chiropractor office or whatever—anyway those buildings, where they are. That was the cotton gin.

MH: Uh-huh.

PG: And that's where they'd take the cotton and put it in. They'd eventually take it to wherever it was made into material.

MH: Okay. Do you have any memory as to how the tradition got started of playing dominoes at the bowling alley?

PG: How that started, I don't know. As long as I can remember, they've had—a table or two back there that they played dominoes. Generally, the men came and played in the morning.

MH: Pretty early?

PG: Be in the mornings. Yeah, usually. But, at one time—there was a group of men from Louisiana that were hunters. And at that time, most of 'em ate at the café. And they formed a club—domino club—and they would play the Blanco people. The Blanco men would play these hunters. And if—they had a trophy, and they'd stay for like two weeks or so, and they'd play every night.

MH: Wow!

PG: And—if the Louisiana bunch won, they took the trophy to Louisiana. They brought it back the next year, and they'd play. And if Blanco won, they kept it here.

MH: Kept it in Blanco. [laughs] Good, good.

PG: And that was—I was workin' at the café at the time and—

MH: I bet that were some heated games.

PG: That was some heated games. They played dominoes.

MH: I bet it was. Miss Pearl, what is this a picture of? [shows picture]

PG: This is a picture of my father, who ran the power plant for ten years. He got a pin [pen(?)] from the Texas Power and Light Company for ten years' service. And—he would get up in the mornin' and turn the power up. And then at night when he'd—come home at 10:00—he stayed 'til 10:00 every night—and he'd turn the power down after

everybody went to sleep—after supposed to've been asleep at 10:00—most everybody anyway.

MH: He kept some long hours.

PG: Yeah, and he made $50 a month.

MH: Doin' that.

PG: Workin' seven days a week and from 5:00 in the mornin' 'til 10:00 at night.

MH: Wow!

Notes:

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

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

Transcriber: Margie Dyer

Transcription editor(s): Crystal Spybuck