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Transcript of DARE Interview (1966): Broken Bow, Oklahoma; Primary Informant OK023 (Tape 1292-S1)

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INTRODUCTION: The following was recorded from Dictionary of American Regional English, tape one two nine two, side one.

5 FIELDWORKER: This is a recording of Rex [beep] made at Broken Bow, Oklahoma, by [beep]. The first part of the tape through the reading of "Arthur the Rat" was made on January uh, twenty-fourth, nineteen sixty-six. The remainder was made on January twenty-fifth.

10 INFORMANT: Well, it might be interesting to you, to hear about the story of the time when we first moved to this country in nineteen ten by wagon. We'd been, uh, a week on the road coming from Arkansas, and I'd been told these Indian stories till I thought we were leaving the world. So, uh, it quite scared a kid ten years old, come to wild Indian country, you know. So, we
15 drove up to this, uh, little community of Lukfata out here and, uh, first thing I saw when we drove up there at the old store uh, close to where we were going to move into a house, (well), the Indian came running out of the store and back into the store drunk, and jumped on his horse, and run around the end of the store shooting his pistol. I thought lord, lord, this is it [laugh]. Uh, I might tell you about the the time that the, uh, old boy had a gambling game going
20 on down the river bottom here by an old place called Cold Springs, and, uh, they'd had a big game there that evening, and had a falling out. He knocked one of these men in the head and shot the other and then run off in the river bottom. So, we (on) hearing of it, why, Mam and Dad went down to, through curiosity, to see what uh, happened, and there were these two men, uh, just bloody as a stuck hog around there, and brains laying around. We upload these
25 men into the wagon and carry them up to the house about a quarter of a mile, and so, uh, went to load them in the, hou-, uh, load them off the wagon into the house, I got a hold of one of them's head, and somebody else his feet and we picked him up, and when we did that the blood trickled or gurgled down his throat, sounded like he's struggling for breath. And, boy, I felt like laying that fellow down and running off, I was a kid about fifteen years old.

Uh, when we first came to this country, why, used to be a great, uh, pastime of people digging snakeroot and selling it. You get a pretty good price for it, and so, we didn't have much to do, mother and us three kids, we went out in the woods digging snakeroot, and, uh, this old Indian

come up to us, an old Snake Indian, people in this country call them Snake Indians, because they were very adverse to having anything to do with white people, didn't talk much English. He
30 came up on his horse, said, "Ah-hah, looks like you digging my snakeroot," said "balilee!" which means 'run' in the English, Indian language, and we took off. Talking about them old Henry [beep] days, one time a old man had a bunch of hogs running in front of his house down here and somebody run through them in a car and killed about half of them. And boy, that old man was rough. He got out there with his shotgun, he stopped every durn car that come along,
35 cussed them out trying to find out who killed those hogs. And, uh, I, uh, I got word that he was doing that, and I had to go by his place going home. I stayed here in town about midnight, finally decided maybe it'd be safe to go home. I drove to the top of the hill, right at the side of his house looked down there to see if there's anything going on. I saw there wasn't any light on, boy, I give it the gun, I went by, [laugh]. Uh, there's a time back in nineteen nineteen was pretty
40 wild days. This old Henry [beep] we's talking about had a habit of making people dance when he took a notion sometimes. He run across a nigger down here in town, said, "Boy, let's see you dance." He shot around his feet a little bit and he put on a dance. He got through, he said, uh, "I'll be back he went home, got his gun, come back about an hour later, says, "Mister [beep], let's see you dance," and they both pulled a gun and went to shooting, and both of them fell,
45 shot them both dead. Carried the Indian, er, the nigger—he wasn't quite dead—they carried him to the jail, and he lived two or three days and died, and Henry died, I think probably that night. I think, old Henry [beep]'s, graveyard, the grave is out at, uh, Holly Creek Graveyard got his picture on it. I was out there one day, and me and mister J. W. [beep] walked up there and looked at his picture, and just got through relating the story about [beep] and Henry there,
50 while ago, after [beep] walked up there and looked at him says, "Hello, there, Henry, you old devil." One of the funniest things I can remember, one time they had a, an old country dance out here about five miles, old man Bob [beep], big crowd there, and it was awful hot. I finally got, decided I'd go out on the porch and cool off a little, I got out on the porch, and the biggest entertainment was out on the porch, old man Bob was out there drunk telling stories. He told
55 about one time they had a big Indian ballgame over here, couple of big trees over here at the edge of town, he said, "You know," he said, "I've seen them Indians have them ballgame fights," said, "the last one I saw," said, "they piled them down damn near sixteen feet deep in that post oak tree." Uh, I remember quite an interesting incident back in about nineteen eighteen. Old, uh, Henry [beep] came up to a nigger nineteenth of July picnic, and those niggers were really
60 having a time. Uh, I'd been hauling a bunch of them around in my jitney and, uh, had a pretty good day, Got to thinking about going home about ten, eleven o'clock. About that time them niggers begin to pop their pistols around there like the war was on, and, uh, I sure enough was getting ready to leave there about that time old Henry come up and, uh, lady just took his pistol out and laid it up across that serving table there and told them he wanted some barbecue, and
65 that was the last pistol popped that night, it was all over. I'd like to relate the incident good many years back when I had a, uh, tomato festival here in Broken Bow, and, uh, picked up this old character, uh, John [beep], an old Indian out here about a hundred and fifteen years old, to take along and put on a television, thought it'd make it real interesting. So, I got through

70 putting on the show and started back home. I had to pass a cotton uh, station out here at the
state line coming into Arkansas where they uh, search you to see if you're hauling any cotton
into the state. So, they told this old Indian, uh, to tell the, uh, station man there, uh, "We ain't
got none," when they asked him what we had, if we had any cotton, in Choctaw, so I got up
there and the old Indian, uh, told them in Choctaw, says, "We ain't got none," and they uh,
related to the man what, [noise] what he meant, he had no cotton. So, the old Indian got to
75 thinking about what they was talking about, he didn't even know what it all meant. We got up
the road about a quarter and he looked at these folks in the car with him, says, "What them
talking about, whiskey?" Yeah, there was the time old John [beep] bought him a car back in
early days long about nineteen fifteen, bought it from a car dealer by the name of Joe [beep],
uh, Bill [beep] rather. He got out on the road and run into a stump or something, broke it down,
80 couldn't get it any further, and he hunted up a telephone, called up Bill [beep], said, "Bill
[beep], I want you to come get this car." "Well, what's the matter, John?" "Well," said, um,
"Broken down," said, "run him into a tree," said uh, "knock one eye out," said, "knock one ear
down," said, "busted bladder too, and, uh uh, so, uh, I got two flat tires on the bottom, and, uh,
broke his belt collar too." Said, "I think too, he got them spark plugs." Used to, when an Indian
85 would die they would, uh, set aside a certain day for grieving they'd call it, uh, let's see, what
was it, for crying, they, they'd—are you taping that now?

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: Um, when an Indian would die they didn't do much grieving then, they just
buried him and built a little, uh, shack over him about like a chicken coop, and they had all their
90 graves in a, in the whole cemetery covered with a little, little house but when they died, they
didn't cry at that time, they set aside a certain day and then they'd all go back, probably three
weeks or a month later, and have a big cry, and when they, over the dead Indian. The story of
"Arthur the Rat." Once upon a time there was a young rat who couldn't make up his mind
whenever the other rats asked him if he would like to come out hunting with them he would
95 answer in a hoarse voice, "I don't know." And when they said, "Would you rather stay inside?"
he wouldn't say "yes," or, "no," either, he'd always shirk making a voi- a choice. One fine day his
aunt Josephine said to him, "Now look here, no one will ever care for you if you carry on like
this. You have no more mind of your own than a greasy old blade of grass." The young rat
coughed and looked wise as usual, but said nothing "Don't you think so," said his aunt stamping
100 with her foot, for she couldn't hear, bear to see the young rat so cold-blooded. "I don't know,"
was all he ever answered, and then he'd walk off to think for an hour or more whether he
should stay in his hole in the ground or go out into the loft. One night the rats heard a loud
noise in the loft it was a very dreary old place, the roof let the rain come washing in the beams
and rafters had all rotten through, so that the whole thing was quite unsafe. At last one of the
105 joists gave way and the beams fell with one edge on the floor. The walls shook, the cupola fell
off and all the rats' hair stood on end with fear and horror. "This won't do," said their leader.
"We can't stay cooped up in here any longer." So, they sent out scouts to search for a new
home. A little later on that evening, the scouts came back and said they had found an old-

fashioned horse barn where there would be room and board for all them. The leader gave the
110 order at once: "Company, fall in!" and the rats crawled out to their holes right away and stood
on the floor in a long line. Just then the old rat caught sight of young Arthur— that was the
name of the skipper, shipper—he wasn't in the line and he wasn't exactly outside it. He stood
just by it. "Come on, get in line," growled the old rat coarsely. "Of course, you're coming too." "I
115 don't know," said Arthur calmly. "Why the idea of it! You don't think it's safe here anymore, do
you?" "I'm not certain," said Arthur, undaunted. "The roof may not fall down yet." "Well," said
the old rat, "we can't wait for you to join us." Then he turned to the others and shouted, "Right
about face, march!" and the long line marched out of the barn while the young rat watched
them. "I think I'll go tomorrow," he said to himself, "but then again, perhaps I won't. It's so nice
120 and snug here. I guess I'll go back to my hole under the log for a while, just to make up my
mind." But during the night there was a big crash, down came beams, rafters, joists—the whole
business. Next morning, it was a foggy day, some men came to look over the damage. It
seemed odd to them that the old building was not haunted by rats. But, at last, one of them
happened to move a board and he caught sight of a young rat, quite dead, half in, and half out
of his hole. Thus the shirker got his due and there was no mourning for him. I missed one word
125 there, but it was, the word I used was just as good, don't know what it was now. I wouldn't go
back and correct it because it's hmmm, right along here somewhere. I just used a substitute
word, I was reading a little too fast, and then, it's the same meaning, it's— didn't mess it up. I
remember one, uh, thing was awful funny to me now. We, uh, had a old shale mill down the
river bottom there, or rather they did, and, uh, and dad took us two boys down there one day
130 and made arrangements to furnish him with vegetables, eggs, butter, and things from the farm,
about four miles down there, I imagine. It was wagon roads and trails all over that bottom, easy
to get lost. He carried us down there and showed us the way and next, uh, day or two we
gathered up a batch of stuff, me and my younger brother got on this old lazy pony and rode her
down there to sell these vegetables. We got off on the wrong road down there somewhere and
135 got lost and got scared, rode all over that bottom. Finally we got our way beat back to the main
road and recognized the route, it was beginning to get dark. Started towards home and the
hoot owls begin to holler and the screech owl begin to screech and it was scary for a couple of
kids. I was only ten, my brother was eight, and we got so scared we wanted to get out of that
bottom before dark, getting dark. I got down and got me a long limb, whipped the old pony into
140 high trot and let him ride the horse, and we got up pretty close to edge of the bottom, we's
really getting scared, we's crying. Along come an old man who we knew real well, two of them
and horses, they had pretty good horses, and they suh, rode up to us and asked us what was
the matter, and we explained the situation. So, they got one of them on the horse behind them,
and, uh, I got on the old lazy pony we were riding. They tied the rope around the saddle horn,
145 and they drug, uh, drug us out of that bottom, boy we were glad to get a hold that ride, rode up
on top of the hill out of the bottom and come pretty light. They let us off the horse and we
made it on home, but [?] that was a scary deal for a couple a little kids, you imagine that.

FIELDWORKER: Yeah, I can.

150 INFORMANT: I might relate the time that, uh, the kids all playing around home there, on the farm and, uh, bunch of old guineas and donkeys ranged around the house there, and every evening they'd come up and lick salt, we had a salt log out there for the stock, and these stray donkeys licked salt there, get like we got playing with them, and, uh, uh, we got to catching them. And finally we decided they was riding, uh, gentle enough to ride and, of course the larger boys were afraid to get on first, we put the little boy on, my brother let him ride first, if
155 he could ride, we could all ride. [laugh] That old donkey throw that kid off like to kill him, we got a pretty good tearing up about that. I guess funniest thing though too, along about that time, eh, that was after Broken Bow had been established, and there's, uh, the circus came through the country. They traveled on foot those days, and they showed at Idabel, and then they would come to Broken Bow. So, we had heard about it, and, uh, we were out waiting for them to pass. So, eventually, here they come, and they had three big, uh, elephants all on foot. So, uh, they caught, caught us away from the house and we couldn't get back to the house, and we was scared, we didn't know what to do. We run, climbed up on the barn, keep away from those elephants, you know, course they just walked on by, course they could've torn the barn down if they'd have wanted to, they wasn't any danger in them, but we, we thought probably
160 get eat up right there [laugh]. That's it. Uh, this occurred, uh, when the first, uh, automobiles come to this country. My older brother and I were hauling wood, our lot, fence came right up to the road and, uh, we drove in to unload a load of wood, and come out that gate to go get another load, and here come an old Ford by. And, uh, these mules, they were young mules, they hadn't ever seen a car and they right up to, right up to the road fixing to cross it, and this
170 cor-, Ford dashed by, and it scared them real good. And when, uh, the Ford went by these mules ran away, and I was in the wagon and I didn't have sense enough to be scared of them, I took the whip, and I just put it to them, boy we went out through the woods there, they circled around through the woods, and the woods were pretty open, you could guide them through it, and [?] my brother was older than I was, and he was scared for my life, he thought he was
175 responsible for me, you know, and he chased us when we run off from him. I circled back through the woods come back up the barn and hollering at me, says, "Rex," he says, "get out of that wagon," he said. "You haven't got a bit of sense." [laugh] I laughed about that many a time. Old man lived up here north of Woodstown about, oh, eight or ten miles, way back in the rough sticks up there, that was back about nineteen twelve, we lived on a little farm out here, and old
180 man named [beep], he used to come by our house, uh, about, uh, two or three times a year in a wagon and, and course Idabel was the only town of any consequence, it was the county seat. And he'd make a three day trip of it, he'd come spend the night with us, he'd go on to Idabel tend to his business and come back and spend the night, and go on home with us. And he had a couple of big dogs with us, he called them bear dogs. I don't know whether they ever saw a
185 bear or not, but he made it stand up for those kids, you know. We'd sit up there till midnight, one or two o'clock, listening to him (xx) talk about the old times, you know and, uh, he, uh, he did that for several years there, and, uh, all of a sudden, he disappeared, never saw him anymore. Then finally, news traveled slow then, you know, finally we heard of it. He'd, uh, somebody had murdered him and burnt the house down on him, and houses are pretty scarce

190 up in there, some, several days, I think, before people knew that he was in the house when it
burned down. They finally dug him out, and and some way or other, got his son, off
somewhere, notified, and he came back and buried him. They never did know who killed him,
but they did know he was murdered. Ready now? A right funny thing occurred one time I was a
195 kid about fifteen, we lived about two miles and a half from the old Lukfada schoolhouse, church
house, and having a revival meeting going on, bunch of us kids conceived of the idea of going to
this meeting as an excuse to get away from home, come back by watermelon patch have a little
watermelon festival. So, uh, after attending the church so we could prove we'd been there we
came by this watermelon patch, and, uh, it was about a quarter mile off the road, we had to
200 climb a fence go through a corn patch to get to it, it was sort of cloudy, but it was moonlight
nights, and you could see pretty well, so we conceived the idea that only three or four of us
would go in there and get some melons and hand the melons over the fence to the other boys,
but about the time we got to picking the melons, why the whole gang flocked over and came in
there. I'd got a melon under arms, some of the others had (fell), (one) this old boy that owned
the watermelons had been laying for somebody to catch them stealing watermelons, they
205 raised up right behind us, said, "Melons ain't ripe, are they?" [laugh] We took off like a shot out
of a gun and about that time he began a-shooting. Course, evidently, he wasn't trying to hit us,
but we ran about a quarter of a mile to our horses, getting ready to go, and found out we was
a man short, one of the brothers with us had gone out on the opposite side of the field and went
through the cornfield home, and we's afraid he'd got shot. We spent, must have been the
210 better part of an hour hunting him and hollering, hollering for him couldn't get a rise, we were
scared to death about that boy. About that time an old boy came along on a horse, we sent him
to my house on a horse, see if my brother had showed up, and sure enough, he had, he'd gone
home and got into bed. He sneaked out (xx) the old boy, uh, what happened, and how he came
to get away from us. So, then after he went home, uh, had a lot of fun out of that over the
215 years since then, some fellow'd come home, we'd tell him that story and he really enjoyed it.
Well, we're now passing the old home place that we moved on to in the fall of nineteen ten,
consisted of a hundred and eighty acres, and it was strictly a wilderness when we moved in
here, and we cleared it up and fenced it and farmed it. All of, uh, nineteen, uh, er spring, rather
of nineteen fifteen we built a new house up on the upper end, we're now fixing to pass. I lived
220 there through the year nineteen twenty-two when my father died. The old house down on the
lower end I just mentioned was where my baby sister was born. Uh, following my father's death
in the fall of nineteen twenty-two— uh, rather it was nine- spring of twenty-three when he
died—I, uh, went to work for a couple of men in the store that I'm now in, the Broken Bow
Hardware Company, and, uh, worked there for a number of years, saved my money and
225 brother and I bought an interest in the store, and later on in, uh, nineteen, uh, thirty-nine we
bought the full interest in the (Ullerdemine) estate, and we've owned and operated the store
ever since, which is, be twenty six-years. Uh, we're now coming to Lukfada creek, which is the
uh, creek from which the little community of Lukfada got his name back in, uh, before the
nineteen hundred period, and, uh which at the time my family moved here in nineteen four
230 was, uh, a pretty good thriving little western community, consisted of, uh, three grocery stores,

a saw mill, a blacksmith shop, a doctor, uh, a post office I don't believe I mentioned, and, uh, a cotton gin, and, uh, possibly a hundred citizens lived around, and also, it's the home of the, what you've become to think of as the famous Henry Ellis [beep], they live right up this road about a quarter above the little community building, it's also the home of the, the original
235 banker of Broken Bow, J. W. [beep], who uh, possibly had a lot to do with the originating of the little town, the community. We're now passing the home of, uh, J. W. [beep] and right by the side of his home in the year nineteen eight they had a great flood, and, uh, five bales of cotton was washed out from under his gin from the nearby creek, which indicates that it was quite a flood. Also, passing the old original, uh, location of the Lukfada school where I put in my first
240 day in nineteen five. I recall a right funny incident, eh, I'd been taught how to spell 'cat' at home before I started school and that day during the day, why, the teacher asked me, says, "What, Rex, what does 'p-i-g' spell?" I said, "I don't know, but if it's 'c-a-t' it spell 'cat'." Now, we're passing the new schoolhouse, which is only about two hundred yards from the old which has been made into a modern, up-to-date school, teaching about seventy-five children. Might be of
245 interest to you to know that at the age of fifteen years, I fabricated a little story about my age and qualified to carry mail on horseback from Broken Bow to the old Holly Creek community, which was just beyond Lukfada from Broken Bow, carried that mail from, my father and I carried that mail for several years. Uh, really carried it until the post office was done away with and rural mail came into effect. We're now passing the home of the famous, uh, H. L. Henry L.
250 [beep]. Uh, you're interested in how, uh, Broken Bow got its name. I'm quite sure it was, uh, named, or at least they originated the idea of naming it Broken Bow by the, uh, Dierks Lumber and Coal Company, that's what they were known as then. They had a town in Broken Bow, Nebraska, that they had, uh, built up, and, uh, they named this town after it. (Right) up the road there, across that field about a quarter mile's where the niggers had their big, uh, picnic at, uh,
255 nineteen nineteen when the famous, uh, Henry Ellis [beep] came along with a gun and stopped the pistol popping.