

3-20-1984

Interview with Guy Huffaker (FA 23)

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Interviewer's tape no.: 1

WKU FL, FL & OHA Accession no.:

Interviewer: David Heighway

Address: 655 Valley Veiw Dr.
Zionsville, IN 46077

Interviewee: Guy Huffaker

Address:

Place of interview: Mr. Huffaker's Home

Date: Mar. 20, 1984

Other people present: Tom Arnold, Tracey Brittián, Mr. Huffaker's Wife-

Equipment used:

Reel-to-reel tape: Brand:

Size reel:

Tape Mil:

Speed:

Cassette: Brand: Scotch AVX60

C-30/C-60/C-90/C-120 (circle size)

Amount of tape used: (Side 1) All

(Side 2): All

Brief description of interview context and tape contents: The interview was held in Mr. Huffaker's antique-filled home. He is the recognized oil field historian in the area. However, he is in his 70's and speaks very softly and very slowly and occasionally his concentration wavers.

First 15 min., side 1, Tape 1

Arnold: Oral history interview with Mr. Guy Huffaker, March 20, 1984

Heighway: Okay, we'll just start out then by asking you, you know, about why you're studying it and things like that.

Huffaker: Well, I was raised in the oil fields-- my father, my grandfather and one of my brothers, they were in the oil field. I mean that-that was their occupation. Now as a child, why, when-I-I was born in the eastern end of the county here, in Griffin, which is one of the little oil fields and-and we-my father was transferred to Wolfe county and [Boone(?)] county, up in there, and we, we were there until, oh, in the late 20's before we came back to Wayne county. My dad was a-well, my grandfather was a gauger-oil driller [worked with oil and a pipeline(?)] and a gauger, the job was the responsibility of lettin the oil out into the line and putting the seal on the tank to guarantee-that-that was-that he was the one that was responsible for that-for buying the oil for the company. So, my grandfather did that; my father did that. And it was in eastern Kentucky there while we were-we were in the field that is still producing-actually in the [Bable(?)] and Lee county and Fixx and Zacharia, all that area in there. Of course, there have been a lot of changes in the-in the-between the mud roads that as a child I walked in the wintertime and, oh, you'd see the teams and the loads of material

Huffaker (continued): trying to get from the railroad on up to the top of the plateau, down and back into the mountains. That was something else.

Heighway: Okay, talking about-now did you ever work in the oil fields yourself?

Huffaker: No, now personally, now I never did. Now like I say, all-my brother, my dad and my grandpap. But personally, I never did. I was-I saw a lot of it and of course, I've always had a bit of interest in nostalgia-[back to it(?)]-and to see something slip away that-that someone else doesn't know about.

Heighway: Okay, let's find out something about it. For instance, what was some of the stuff you did see? what were some of the things that you saw?

Huffaker: Well, of course, the old rigs-I saw those drilling various sizes. Now then, they had smaller rigs and ^{then} they had, I believe it was a big rig, it was a National-great big thing. And I presume that some of them could get down and drill faster and deeper ~~and~~ with a big outfit. But it was in the field where I was, which was very similar to this area here.

Heighway: Uh-huh [yes]

Huffaker: And even in pictures, ~~and~~ I have some pictures out of this area and I have some pictures out of eastern Kentucky, but still the cliffs and all are the same.

Mrs. Huffaker [enters]: Hello.

Huffaker: This- this is my wife...

Mrs. Huffaker: Hello there.

Huffaker: ...each one will have to introduce themselves.

Heighway: I'm David Heighway.

Mrs. Huffaker: Hi, David.

Heighway: And this is...

Brittain: Tracy Brittain.

Mrs. Huffaker: Hi, Trace.

Arnold: And I'm Tom Arnold.

Mrs. Huffaker: Tom?

Arnold: Arnold.

Mrs. Huffaker: Arnold.

Arnold: yes ma'am.

Mrs. Huffaker: Your making research.

Heighway: Uh-huh[yes], on the oil fields here. We have a lot-just asking him some things, I was going to go on to ask you about-what kind of lives did the drillers lead? I mean like off the field and on, did they-did they, like, live up there a long time?

Huffaker: Well, now...

Mrs. Huffaker: Why don't you sit around here where it's a little more comfortable? The chair is so hard.

Huffaker: Now, in some of the pictures that I have [shifting of chairs] why the company where that they were concentrating on a field so-- why, they had tents. And they had tent-tent mess halls and my mother worked part of the time in one of the mess halls at [Fixert(?)] Kentucky. Well, I'm sure about the same thing happened here. And they would-they would-of-course, in the oil fields, they would usually migrate to an area and rather than taking their families, [haul them along(?)] as far as I remember. Now, Mr. Abbott out here...

Heighway: Uh-huh[yes]

Huffaker: that you talked to yesterday...

Heighway }
Brittain } [General agreement]
Arnold }

Huffaker: I don't know whether he could tell you the same stories that he told us a few years ago. But, oh, it was really something and it was a shame that ~~it~~ couldn't have been recorded as he told it then. He-he was working here on the farm and-as a young fellow-first-first job-[now then(?)]-eighteen years old or something like that. And he was getting, as I recall, about a dollar a day-and he was making about a dollar a day, and-in the oil field at Irvin-around that- in Estill county field there, why he-one of his-one of his uncles went up their and was drilling and visiting and coming back on weekends or for a few days. Why, his-this uncle told him-he said, "Why, you go back up there with us, why, we can get you a good job up there." He says-says, "You can get two dollars-two dollars and a half a day, with a pick and shovel and digging ditches and roads." So he thought it over a few days and decided that he would go. So he and another boy went. So they got-they got to Ravenna-Irvin and they got situated sort of at the hotel, and they asked them where the oil field was that they could get out there and apply for work. Well, they gave them-someone gave them directions. So, the next morning they got up and started through the field. Well, they walked practically all day and they made a complete loop, came back and they were right inside of town again. [Laughs] So... [garbled]...yeah. Well, they got their directions-redirections and started out again. Well, they were able to find the field and- and

Huffaker (continued): they found an employer that would take them if they be ready the next-I believe it was the next Monday when they would be there. Probably this was ^a weekend. And so, Mr. Abbott said, he remembered it, that he got a-got some new clothes, new pair of shoes and was all ready to go to work. Well, the next morning he got up and put this new outfit on and was ready to go down for breakfast. And he looked out the window and there was about seven or eight inches of snow.

Mrs. Huffaker: What time of year was that in?

Huffaker: Well, it was ~~Enallin(?)~~ ^{along} in the winter whenever they were... But it had been-the weather had been pretty before. And it looked like they could go right on and go to work. But there was about seven or eight inches of snow and well, they couldn't go to work that day. And at the boarding house there-why, they put in about a week and never did get to go out in the field. And of course, their expenses were going right on, but there wasn't any revenue at all. And he was getting terribly blue and he was almost crying on the lady's shoulder that ran the boarding house. And long about Friday, why, he was just so blue. And the lady came and sat down and talked to him and she told him, "Sometimes it is better to leave well enough alone and let do better go." And he had always remembered that. [Laughs] But he was typical I think, they would-I mean in this area. Of course, they would go out in the country and board with someone. Now there was a Mr. Brown...

Mrs. Huffaker: Mr. ^{m?} Em Brown...Em Brown.

Huffaker: Mr. Em Brown.

Mrs. Huffaker: Em Brown...uh-huh.

Huffaker: In the Slickford area, they were laying pipeline in the wintertime and they were wading two or three inches of water and ice and everything. And they would have to have a boarding place and they would work from that base until they got farther along and then they would have to find another place to stay. So it came time for them to move on and they had-he and his buddy had-they had heard of this place on down the way that they were going to...

Mrs. Huffaker: Why don't we move your chair around? Excuse me...

[Garbled] [Mr. Huffaker protests the interruption and points to the tape recorder.]

Heighway: It's okay. We'll turn this off.

Mrs. Huffaker: He's twisted. Oh, you've got something on...

[Tape recorder is turned off long enough to turn the chair around.]

Heighway: Allright.

Huffaker: But they were-it was time for them to move, so he and his

Huffaker (continued): buddy went on alone after work totalk to the lady. And they walked down there and they asked her if she could possibly take care of them for a few days as they were working that way. She said yes, she kept people sometimes and she could keep ' them then. And they wanted to know what the-what her rates were. And Mr. Brown was real conservative in later years and I presume was conservative then. And she told them, she said, well, she said she usually got 25 cents a day and-but she wasn't going to keep them for that. She said it would take an extra nickle's worth of soap to keep the bedclothes clean. [Laughs] So Mr. Brown, he thought about it a few minutes and he decided that he would stay. And the other gentleman, after considering it, he was very much upset and told Mr. Brown, he says, "I'm not going to stay.", he says, "I'm not going to have anyone putting prices up on me." So he left. [Laughs] But they just-oh, there's so many of these little things that should have been put down a long time ago.

END FIRST 15 MIN.