



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Transcript of interview with Jesse Howard

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Transcript

Preface

Tape-recorded Interview with Jesse Howard

at his Kemper Gallery, Kansas City Art Institute

April 12, 1977

Willem Volkersz, Interviewer

Editor's Note:

This transcript is from a series of recordings made by Willem Volkersz over a number of years. They are not formal interviews, but rather records of conversations, often taped during photo-taking tours of the artist's studios or home collections.

The naive/visionary artists in these interviews have unique verbal mannerisms, many of which are difficult or impossible to transcribe accurately into written form. Thus, for grasping certain nuances of speech, researchers will find it advantageous to listen to the original tapes.

Our intent in transcribing these interviews was nonetheless to translate as accurately as possible the spoken word into a comprehensible written form, making changes to clarify but not to interpret. Thus the speaker's grammar is unedited. For example, "them" for "those," "themselves," and "gotta" were all transcribed as heard. On the other hand, certain changes were made for clarity: "'cause," was transcribed as "because," "'fore" as "before," "'yo" as "your," etc.

Other editorial notations are as follows: Bracketed words are of two types. Those with "[—Ed.]" or "[—WV]" are inserted by the transcriber, editor, or Volkersz. Other bracketed words indicate uncertainty: Two or more words or phrases indicate possible alternatives; "[unintelligible]" and "____" indicate words that are garbled or incomprehensible on the tape, the former being a much longer phrase than the latter; "[noise]" is self-explanatory.

The original format for this document is Microsoft Word 365 version 1908. Some formatting has been lost in web presentation.

Interview

JH: Jesse Howard

WV: Willem Volkersz

SL: Sherry Lacy

DE: Dale Eldred

FW: Female Writer

FV: Female Voice

MV: Male Voice

[Tape 3, side A; Volkersz' No. H5-1] [45-minute tape sides]

[Jesse Howard was recorded at a party given for him at the Kemper Gallery on the occasion of his first solo exhibition, a retrospective. Participating in the conversation were Sherry Lacy, director of the Kemper Gallery, and Dale Eldred, chairman of the sculpture department, both of the Kansas City Art Institute (KCAI). Eldred was responsible for obtaining almost a hundred Howard works for the KCAI collection, which were on view at this exhibition. Another unidentified woman, who was writing an article on JH, is designated as FW (female writer). WV has identified some additional voices by name; unknown individuals are designated simply as FV (female

voice) MV or (male voice)—Ed.]

WV: You recognize that?

JH: Let's see. Traitors? (laughter)

DH?: That's the place! [a photo of Howard's place—WV]

JH: Ah. Oh, we've got a lot of traitors. ____ ____.

WV: Sure do.

JH: Yeah, [unintelligible] look at. This is my old barn?

WV: Did you build that barn?

JH: Yes. All those buildings I built. Every one of them. No help whatsoever. They run into a fence up there like this. It was a short time back. Tore down 30 feet out of it in one haul and had to get a wrecker to pull them out [referring to an auto accident which ruined a section of his fence—WV].

WV: He drove a little bit too fast, huh?

JH: Huh. (laughter) I don't know what would you call it. And that was the [sure] about it, anyway.

DE: Let's go on now.

SL: Yeah. I think this is. . .

JH: ____ ____.

WV: Who's the man? (laughter) [referring to a picture of Howard?—WV]

JH: [unintelligible]

WV: There you are.

JH: Oh, that's wonderful, anyway. Yes, it is.

SL: Jim, we should get the other things out of the car, too.

JH: Certainly wonderful. Yes it is.

SL: Come on in here. I took him; he's seen that, yeah.

DE: Oh, he's seen this poster.

WV: We took him a couple. Oh, good.

SL: Monica at the newspaper and we brought two. (laughter)

JH: I wish I'd worn my overalls [pronounced overhauls—Ed.] (laughter)

SL: ____ ____ his overalls, but Bob made him put on the suit.

JH: Well, I never did think I'd see anything like this. (laughter)

DE: You have to see all these pieces that you remember so well.

JH: [noise] They throw a lot of this stuff away. This shoulda had two little legs like that come out here, some of that corn with [discussing a wagon Howard made, which includes many wood specimens and ears of Indian corn—WV].

DE: Right, right. On the way to the other ____.

MV: Yeah.

DE: It turns it under. To the plant.

JH: I've got an old planter up there now that plants, cultivates and plants at the same time.

DE: Right. Here's one of the first signs that I got from you, Jesse, over there: The Man and the Glass.

JH: The Man and the Glass. I was wondering, I was wondering.

DE: Yep, that's all part of. . .

JH: I was wondering.

DE: When Richard [Rhodes—author] and I and Leland [_____—Ed.] were there, we told you we'd put it all together in one place so it never could be destroyed. And everybody would have a chance to see it. And this is the first time that it's all been put together. And now everybody [noise]

JH: For years.

DE: Yes, for years. Nothing will ever be destroyed.

JH: [unintelligible] (laughs) _____ where I'm going. I've got a little stuff out there on the road now, getting no cooperation from nobody, no cooperation from nobody.

WV: We're trying to cooperate. (laughter)

DE: We're doing our best, Jesse; we're doing our best!

JH: That's right.

SL: Well, Jesse, we brought a sign here. . . Jesse's going to work on a sign. We brought it.

WV: Oh, wonderful.

SL: He was working on it last night and he didn't finish it, so Jim [Lacy—WV] and I said we could work on it today, so we'll have a demonstration.

WV: That's great.

JH: Well, that was wonderful.

DE: Some of these go a long ways back.

JH: Huh?

DE: Some of these go a long ways back, many years ago.

JH: Yes.

DE: Some of the first ones.

WV: Jesse, what did you mean when you said, "I see no future for these children"? [referring to a work titled Family Record—WV]

JH: I don't.

WV: Why not?

JH: Well. . . Why? They've got everything so high that you can't build anything. I couldn't even build a doghouse for the price of the lumber and the nails and labor. I went down there and got a bunch of 60-penny nails [means 6-penny nails—WV], just a-purpose, the other day. A penny apiece.

WV: A penny apiece.

JH: A penny apiece. (chuckles)

WV: That's an awful lot of money.

JH: Now, how can poor man. . . Now, I own my own place up there. I couldn't build today if I hadn't worked like a dog all of my life and made this little home. I couldn't do nothing. No. You take so many people on welfare and everything else today. Now I hate to say this; I don't want to discourage anybody, but I don't see any future.

WV: Yeah, I see what you mean.

JH: Now, I have a daughter in Arizona. And I heard some people speaking in Arizona, and they said they didn't see any future.

DE: Jesse, you remember this one, of course. This is an important one. One of your important signs.

JH: Yes. Well, the graves is out there.

DE: Yes.

JH: No cooperation whatsoever. I'd like to put all that back up there, you know. (laughter) Most of it what you people moved down here. But there's no cooperation.

DE: Yeah, we just don't want to see it destroyed.

JH: Not even from my own people.

DE: Is that right?

JH: That's right.

DE: Come on and see the airplane.

JH: Well, that _____ the _____. Quite a few airplanes was stoled from me. They'd come along and steal them and bust them up. Yes sir. Take quite a little whittling there.

DE: Yeah, that one's from. . . .

JH: That's wonderful.

DE: That one's from some town. . .

JH: I read a piece in the Bible. See, most of my work's on the Bible.

WV: I know it.

JH: Can you tell them what I brought down here?

SL: What did you say?

JH: Say, can you tell them what I brought down here.

SL: Oh, yeah. That you brought today.

JH: Yeah.

SL: Right. We brought signs and The Wheel within a Wheel.

JH: Uh huh.

SL: Right? And popcorn. (laughter) Strawberry popcorn [ears of popcorn used in his work—Ed.], and then two canvases, and you brought your Bible. So we're. . .

WV: Well-prepared.

SL: . . .well-armed today, yeah.

JH: Let's go back and take a look at this back here, so Jesse has a chance to see some of the _____.

JH: Where's the corn?

SL: It's right over here. (laughter) Right here, Jesse.

JH: Oh, take that right over there by this.

SL: He's going to fix the wagon.

WV: Oh boy, that's great!

JH: _____ the wagon.

WV: Good for you.

SL: There's a little place, apparently. . .

JH: The Lord says [unintelligible] fix you people up.

WV: That's right.

JH: And don't be afraid of what I'm going to do you people. But you better be afraid of what the Lord God's going to do. [unintelligible] (laughter) The Lord God. We even got a God we'll have to, got to meet. We've got a Hell to shun. You've got a Heaven to go to, but you got a Hell to shun. (chuckles) "Hugh P. Williamson" [referring to a work—WV], wonder where Hugh P. is today.

WV: That was a long time ago, wasn't it?

JH: Yes. What was that say? Let's see.

WV: [Reading:] "Hugh P. Williamson, the assistant attorney general, maybe you can assist in finding my guns, my disc harrow, and a number of other things. You are also historian. You can tell how well you like raccoon and possum." What'd you mean by that?

JH: (laughter) Well, you know why I like sets of these? Hugh P. was a. . . He went over to Jefferson City, an assistant attorney general.

WV: Uh huh.

JH: I don't know why he left there. But anyway, we had, some people there in the neighborhood had some good coon and possum dogs, you know. What you call them. Hounds. And they'd pull some of these, they'd go out, out of season, and catch these coons and possums and pull a great big supper.

WV: I see.

JH: And Hugh P. was in on it.

WV: I see!

JH: Now he made a remark here the other day—he knows what he did—just as good as said he shouldn't do it. Confessed it, you see.

WV: Right.

JH: Well, I didn't think that my work could go like this.

WV: Are you glad to see it up?

JH: Huh?

WV: Are you glad to see it up here?

JH: I certainly am. Yes sir, certainly am.

WV: Great.

JH: There's my piece.

WV: Yeah, that's what I thought.

SL: . . .anything ever dinner.

JH: I just asked some of these people here. I asked. . . They don't like me at all in Fulton. I was even in a bank yesterday. (laughter) Cashed a check. (laughs) I asked them, I said, "Did Jonah swallow a whale, or did a whale swallow Jonah?" (laughter) Won't talk to you! _____. Put the hands over their mouth. (laughter) Put the hands over their ears—don't want to hear you. That's right. (laughs)

DE: Jesse, come on back and see some of the other things back here. _____ drawings to show you.

WV: Jesse.

DE: There's. . .

JH: [walking over to examine the wagon with wood and corn specimens—WV] [unintelligible] stock sale. _____ up there. Pret near two mile away, and they wouldn't look at it.

DE: Is that right?

JH: That's right.

DE: This is where you kept the food?

JH: Yes.

DE: Down there?

JH: Ah huh.

WV: Where did you get all these different kinds of wood, Jesse?

JH: I own pret near all of them. They growed around there in our neighborhood.

WV: You just collected them?

JH: Just go out. I brought you some wood up here today.

DE: Huh, did you?

WV: Good.

JH: That hog show. I started into some logs, but I didn't get finished. Let's see if I can find that one piece.

DE: The one on the other side? It might be on the other side.

SL: Right here. Jesse, right over here.

DE: Yep.

SL: Strawberry popcorn.

DE: Strawberry popcorn.

JH: That one, um hmm, yes.

DE: That's where the strawberry popcorn's going to go.

JH: No.

DE: That's where the corn's going to go.

JH: Uh huh.

DE: Ah. Good idea.

JH: Now, go get it and we'll see if we can. . .

SL: It's right here.

JH: [opening jar which contains corn—WV] You ever see any strawberry popcorn, any of you? [silence] Who has?

WV: No, I haven't.

SL: I haven't.

WV: Oh, there it is! Look at that.

JH: You ever see any husk corn? [general babble] Now I take those little ears now and put one in here because it's [noise].

DE: Okay, we'll find some small ears in there. Sure we will. [noise]

JH: We'll [unintelligible] have to see if we can find some. . . That isn't tied together there. See if we can find some. . .

SL: Okay, now I'll get out all of the. . . Well, there's a lot of it down on the bottom. And you'll just have to see which one'll fit.

JH: I picked them out. . .

WV: Are we going to have to glue that?

JH: No.

WV: Are you going to glue it?

SL: Probably. Be a good idea.

JH: Yeah, if we can find some small ones.

SL: Do we need smaller or larger? What do we need? Let's see. Well, you'll probably have to glue them in.

JH: Glue it in there.

SL: Yeah, if you can see, that would fit, but if they're glued, they'll stay. I'm afraid they'll fall out. [unintelligible] Here, Jesse. I'm doing your. . . ____ notice I'm doing this for you. (chuckles)

JH: Yeah.

SL: Maybe you better find the one you. . . I've got some glue.

DE: [unintelligible] I hold it in there.

SL: [unintelligible] that'll stay in.

JH: Maybe we can get some kind of a pin that we can hold it in there with while we take it [loose].

SL: [unintelligible]

DE: Yeah.

SL: Yeah, because they're going to just. . . Also the kernel. . .

JH: Ever see any cobcorn? I don't know whether I've got a cob of corn here or not.

SL: [unintelligible] Okay. At least stay in there for a while, until ____ get ____ glued in.

JH: I think ____ ____ was there with some. . .

SL: We'll put it in permanently with some glue, but for now that'll probably fit on that one. Actually, we'll have trouble getting one to stay in the other one because. . .

DE: We have some thumbtacks, Sherry.

SL: Okay.

DE: We can hold the outside with the ____, glue here.

SL: Better.

DE: Yeah, we'll put the thumbtacks in it; that'll hold it while it's drying.

JH: Well. I come pret' near bringing a bunch of that glue with me.

SL: Yeah. I think you should have. (chuckles)

JH: I hope to take up the great threshing bee show on up there in Fulton, you know, for twenty years. [referring to his participation, exhibiting his homemade wagons, in an annual steam threshing-machine show in Fulton—WV] And we gotta swap things around. Some fellows brought. . . I've never heard of it before, some

husk corn? That's corn, some of the first corn that grows, I guess. And _____. And each ear, each grain has a husk on it. Did you ever hear of it?

WV: Right.

JH: You folks?

Group: No, never.

JH: Never heard of it? Each grain has a husk on it. It's called husk corn. It just grows in all kinds of shapes.

FW: Yeah, never saw anything like that. Is there a kernel inside it? Oh, there is!

JH: Yes, each. . . Yes! Each grain has a husk on it. Now I grewed all this corn.

SL: Oh, that's interesting, isn't it? Each kernel.

DE: Bring the big squash that's hanging on the wall. I got that from Jesse, the last time I was down in Fulton. See the string on the wall. Just pick it up; that's fine.

SL: A ____ bean.

DE: A big bean.

WV: _____

DE: Right. Remember that?

JH: I have an _____ or two _____.

DE: I got that the last time I was in Fulton.

JH: You did?

DE: Yeah, we got that one off the garden.

MV: Okay, let's put another thumbtack on each side.

JH: I want to take out some of this and leave it with you people. And then I want to take this stuff, some of it back, you know. I grewed all this stuff. [pause] How many rows is around that? Can you count them? There. How many rows? I brought some, started to bring some eight-row corn, but I don't know whether I did or not. Crumb corn, I've got a bunch of that stuff. [pauses] I've never seen any of this. Never heard of it. Long as they're putting, helping you put Peacock show on, there's a fellow brought me some of this corn. . .

WV: Oh, it was for the Peacock show [name of the man who put on the threshing bee—WV]

JH: Some _____, my _____. I give them. . . All you people [unintelligible] grain or two at a time, but that's one part of there that he brought me.

DE: That look okay, Jesse? We'll take these out after the glue dries.

JH: Is the. . .

DE: After it's dry, we'll take out the pins.

JH: It'll stay there.

DE: Yeah, it'll stay there. We've got the glue on it.

SL: As soon as it dries.

WV: Jesse, did you have this wagon in the Peacock show?

JH: No, I rolled it up to the sale barn up there, and [they] wouldn't, wouldn't even look at it.

DE: That was two miles away. You had to roll it two miles to get it there.

JH: I showed you some, see, some pieces on wheels up there now, you know.

DE: Oh yeah, that's right. You have some now.

JH: They wouldn't even look at them. Those old, they. . .

DE: You know, Jesse, these pieces have been seen now by thousands of people. Down in Texas and Minnesota. They're going all over. Just like we said, everybody's going to have a chance to see it all.

JH: Now, husk corn, there's an ear of it, you see. It just grows in all kinds of shapes.

DE: That's pretty close to the original Indian corn?

JH: No.

DE: Is that close to the Indian corn?

JH: Well, no, I guess not, hardly.

DE: No?

JH: I don't know whether I've got any Indian corn here or not.

DE: No, I don't think so. Is this all from the garden?

JH: All of it grows in my garden.

DE: . . .thing out to that hole?

JH: No.

DE: You emptied out the hole?

JH: Got the seed out of it.

DE: Right from that hole. [reading from gourd:] "This looney bean grown on Hell's Acres by Jesse Howard." That was in 1974.

JH: Well, I've got several of those there now that I grewed.

WV: Are they as big as this one?

JH: How. . .

WV: Are they as big as this one?

JH: Pret near, yes.

WV: That's a good one.

JH: You can eat them, but you take them when they're about that long [_____ inches—Ed.], you know, young and tender.

DE: Right.

JH: Round like they do. . . eggplant, I believe.

DE: Right, that's a. . . Jesse, did you have a chance to see some of the photographs, way back here? This is over a long time. Maybe you can remember some of these.

WV: You're just a young man over there. (chuckles)

JH: "Peace on Earth; good will toward all men. And holiness, without which no man receives the kingdom of God. Peace on Earth." See it wrote all [over] my face, can't you? (laughter)

DE: Here's one with the airplane.

JH: Yes. Well, it's the only unbusted thing I have. [Take your old ragged stuff up here now].

DE: That's from the Fulton paper. That's from the book.

JH: Is that the _____?

DE: Right. That's from the Inland Ground book, of Richard Rhodes.

JH: Uh huh.

DE: And that was from the Fulton Daily.

JH: Uh huh. Well, I've had two or three lately, up there.

DE: Oh, you're becoming the most famous person in Fulton, now. (laughs)

JH: Well, certainly wonderful, and I thank you people. [That was wonderful.]

DE: Here's some of the, from some of, some of the drawings and signs.

WV: Do you still make the drawings like that?

JH: Some of them, not very many. I had to put some more drawing on my hog show [_____—Ed.]. But I didn't have time.

DE: Oh. But I see you did bring some boards down today.

WV: There's the Tree of Life.

JH: Um hmm. Tree of Life. I have a roll up there, on canvas. I wish I'd brought it down, just to show. I've traced the Book, the word "sheep and lamb" from Genesis to Revelations.

WV: Through the whole Bible.

JH: And got that wrote on pret near one-inch letters. Well, that, I'm still working up there. They'd try to have me put in an asylum.

WV: I heard.

JH: Said I was lazy and crazy, wouldn't work. (chuckles)

WV: I heard about that.

JH: I don't believe there's one of you people ever seen a man had a gorgeous thing out, like I have.

WV: Never seen anybody like it.

SL: Never.

WV: You're the only one. The Key to Heaven [title of a work—WV]

JH: Huh?

WV: The Key to Heaven.

JH: Yes, yes.

WV: Where'd you get that key?

JH: I whittled it out. There's the other two.

WV: There's The Key to Hell.

JH: No, they don't think anything of me in old Fulton. I can't think anything of them, some of them, either. (laughter) Let's be plain about it. Now. . .

DE: We'll just lay a table down.

SL: . . .later.

DE: Yeah, we'll go up and then we'll bring a table down so Jesse can work.

WV: This is about Russia's secret weapon, is hypnotism. You did that one a long time ago, didn't you? I think,

yeah.

JH: Yes. I never did think I'd ever see it, any of it like this. (laughter) I'll give you a five-dollar bill whoever finds the word "Impeach the President" in the Bible. (chuckles)

DE: How many times, Jesse?

JH: How many times?

DE: Yes.

JH: It isn't in there!

DE: It isn't! You got me again! (laughter)

JH: Russia. You can't find the name Russia in the Holy Bible. Isn't in there. I've got a piece wrote up there that I don't see how—I wish I had that down there—how the Russians can draw a penknife, as little thing as a penknife, against the American people. When I remember that when Hitler was murdering everybody he come to, and was right at the gates of Stalingrad, Leningrad and Stalingrad, in Russia, murdering everybody he could come to, until the Allies—of course the American people was the greatest of the Allies—went in there and stopped them. Isn't that right?

DE: That's right.

MV: (laughter) That flash ____ ____, ____.

WV: I know.

JH: How could they do that? How could the Russian people even draw a penknife? I was reading in the paper the other day where they're afraid that Russia would use this chemical warfare. I believe it was chemical, isn't it?

SL: Um hmm.

JH: Warfare. What are they building all those great big tanks for, over there? To destroy such people like we. That's what they're doing. You can't stop them. They're as shamed as ever was, ever lived.

SL: . . .this new, the new wheel.

DE: I see you have a new wheel, Jesse. I haven't seen this one.

SL: . . .pull that up.

DE: This is a new one. It's one he just brought down.

SL: Maybe you can have him hold that up.

DE: (grunts) Oh, this is. . .

SL: Isn't that wonderful?

FW: Wow!

SL: And he just took that off the wall.

WV: Oh, that's nice.

DE: That is really a nice one, Jesse. That's a very nice one.

SL: That's the Wheel within a Wheel.

JH: Yes, the Bible says, in the Book of Ezekiel—it's the Book of Ezekiel. . . Can you go get that?

SL: Yeah, you want me to get the book? Let me get it.

JH: Here it is.

SL: That's okay.

JH: I can't see.

SL: Let's get a chair.

DE: . . .just open the book in Ezekiel.

FW: Where's Ezekiel come?

JH: The Book of Ezekiel.

DE: Isaiah, Ezekiel. . .

JH: Yes. "One wheel in the midst of a wheel."

FW: [unintelligible]

JH: You'll find it in the first chapter, I think it is, first chapters of. . .

SL: Here is your Bible.

WV: Oh, he's got a new one.

SL: Yeah.

JH: Well, I just can't see it, now that it's old.

FW: We'll have to find it for you. Okay, what verse is it?

SL: Okay, find a Bible student.

MV: Ezekiel and Jeremiah.

SL: What verse you want?

JH: _____ long but I can't. . . I aim to put it on a board, just to _____ my one verse. _____ but I didn't have time.

SL: Yeah.

JH: Just didn't have time. With wheels. . . "Wheel in the midst of a wheel," I don't know just where you'd find it.

DE: Here it is.

SL: Here it is; he found it.

JH: Read it.

FW: Let's see. "The appearance of the wheel _____ was liken to the color of burl and therefore had one likeness and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of wheel."

Group: Ahh.

JH: There's wheels all through the Book of Ezekiel, pret near.

SL: Yeah, you're right.

JH: Did you find it?

SL: Yeah, sixteen. . .

JH: Where's it at?

SL: It's six. . . "Their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel."

JH: I don't know whether it speaks of that any other place or not, but then in your edition, in Ezekiel.

WV: When did you make that wheel? Did you just make it recently.

JH: Recently, yes.

WV: Did you plan to have that on a windmill, or something, or. . .

SL: We have the little. . . It was just mounted in one of the studios, on the wall.

WV: Oh, you can just sort of spin it?

Group: Yes.

JH: The way I had it, you know, I brought the stuff to put it over there.

SL: Here it is.

DE: Well, in fact, we'll put it up.

JH: Oh?

DE: We'll see if we can; we'll get it put in. See how it looks. We'll have to fasten that.

JH: I brought the bolt and all. (laughter)

SL: Did you have all the, did you give me all the. . .

JH: Yeah, the bolt goes through there. And this goes. . .

SL: Right.

JH: But you'll have to put this up first, see.

DE: Yeah, right. We'll get that up there. We'll get a bolt and put it up there. Maybe we want to go up. . .

JH: Yeah, this is pret near a new one. [an artword—WV]

SL: Um hmm. Okay, let's do. Let's go in to the. . .

DE: We have something for you up here, Jesse.

SL: We have a little party for you.

JH: Where's my _____?

SL: Let's see.

Jim Lacy: I don't think I brought them in from the car.

DE: Oh, they're not in from the car yet. We'll bring those in.

Jim Lacy: I'll bring them in.

DE: Okay. Let's go on up. We've got a special thing, Jesse. We'll have to walk on up here. [pause]

JH: Well, I told you I think there wasn't nothing like it. (laughter)

DE: I remember you told me that. We have to tighten those up. They're a little loose. This piece of timber is over a hundred and fifty years old.

JH: Yeah, I go where they tear these old buildings down, you know, and wreck them. They're burning the most of them up, up there around old Fulton.

FW: What I want to know is. . .

DE: Let's go on up to the other room, Jesse. And we'll come back. We'll come back here.

JH: All right.

DE: You want to bring Jesse's coat along?

SL: Yeah. [general movement]

JH: Well, I'm still building. They're still stealing. (laughter) Said an old man's lazy and crazy and won't work. (laughter)

DE: You go up this way, Jesse. There's a lot of people here that would like to meet you.

JH: Like to meet me?

DE: Yep.

JH: [unintelligible] [entering a reception for JH in adjacent cafeteria—WV]

DE: Come up back here. [pause] They had a cake made for you today. And we had one of your signs put on the cake. ____ Peacemaker.

JH: [unintelligible] (laughter)

DE: Well, we're enjoying all of your work. Thought we'd like to have a cake made for you, and then we'll all enjoy the cake.

JH: (chuckles) [unintelligible]

WV: Pretty big cake, huh?

FV: Mr. Howard, does this mean you'll be eating your words? (laughter)

JH: How was that?

FV: I say, does this mean you'll be eating your own words? (laughter)

JH: Well, I've worked many hours, many hours. Just brought you a piece up here; I didn't get it finished up, want you folks to finish it for me. And I've worked many hours on it.

MV: What are you working on now?

JH: We brought it all along with us. Like Wheel in the Midst of a Wheel. Yeah, some people say, ask if I know where all this stuff is, asking questions, you know. Kind of like, well, we're making the biggest mess of the presidency, of the history of the whole world! I wish I'd of brought that piece with me. (laughter) Who was the man? What was his name? The President that wrote twelve chapters in the book of the Bible.

FV: Who was it?

JH: What was his name? How many times is his name found in the Holy Bible? I do wish I'd of brought that piece with us. Had a good way bring it, wrote on a great big piece of tin. Have you answered it?

SL: Nobody can answer you, Jesse. You always know the. . .

JH: How?

SL: You always trick us. You have to tell us. Nobody knows.

JH: They're making a [blunderest] mess of the presidency, of the history of the whole world.

SL: Hey, Robin, do you want to, do they have the plates, because I'm going to cut this.

Robin: Yeah, they're going to. . .

DE: Why don't we, we can pull up some chairs and tables, and we're going to cut this cake up, and we're going to have some of this cake, Jesse.

JH: Okay.

WV: Just cut it in six pieces.

SL: Yeah, right. (laughter)

WV: It's a big cake, isn't it?

SL: Nobody's come up with the answer. This is a big piece of cake. Jesse, you get the big piece. You think I have to reduce the size of the. . . (laughter)

JH: Oh, don't cut that much for me.

SL: All right, we won't give you that much. Here, Jim.

DE: Okay, let's pull up a table here, if we can, for Jesse, and we'll join him with some chairs.

WV: Here you go, Jesse.

JH: Now, I'm going to tell all you people about this presidency deal.

Group: Sit down, Jesse.

DE: Sit down here and we'll all share some cake with you. Sherry's going to cut some cake and we want everybody to join us.

FW: Was it Gemallio? Twelve times.

JH: Daniel.

FW: Of course.

JH: Daniel. First president. And he was chosen. You know, they're buying their way today.

FW: That's true enough.

JH: Daniel didn't do anything like that. He was chosen above other people.

FW: But we've never had. . .

JH: I can tell you this, for you'll find every word of this I am speaking.

FW: Yeah. Where?

JH: The Book of Daniel.

FW: Yeah. I will put it down.

FV: Jesse, excuse me, would you like some coffee or milk?

JH: Oh, no, don't bother.

WV: We have it. What would you like to drink?

JH: Oh, might drink a cup of coffee with you. Little sugar and a little cream.

FV: Okay, a little sugar and a little cream.

FV: How did you get started making those signs?

JH: Well, one thing was the way I was treated from place to place, where I went. One thing.

FW: Yeah.

JH: I owned my own place, thank God. Don't owe anybody. (chuckles)

FW: That's great.

JH: And that's one way that I had, have—not had, but have—telling you people what I think.

FV: Yeah. Well, it's a good way.

JH: (chuckles)

WV: Here's your coffee and your cake.

JH: Thank you.

DE: I'm going to sit down and join you.

FW: Do you still have the first one you made?

JH: Oh no.

FV: Stolen, I'll bet.

JH: No, no, I don't know how many I've made. (laughter) [he probably misunderstood the question, thought she asked how many he's made—Ed.

DE: Richard Rhodes will be here.

JH: Will he?

DE: Yes, he's coming over also, and he'll be here in a short while.

JH: Well, he's [unintelligible], and I lent one of those books out to a fellow and he never did bring it home.

DE: Really. But you didn't. . . Did you get the catalogues? Sherry sent you the catalogues from the Walker, from the. . . The ones with the new color pictures in them of your things.

JH: Yes.

DE: You got those?

JH: Uh huh.

DE: Oh, good.

JH: That was one of those big ones, you know.

WV: Yes.

DE: Right. They were nice photographs of all your work.

JH: Huh?

DE: They were nice photographs of all your work. Many, many people have now had a chance to see all those things.

JH: I still say I don't know what to think about these Fultonites.

FW: What do you think about them?

JH: Huh?

FW: What do you think about them?

JH: Did you see the piece in the paper where they thought there were, where I thought they were. . . I can't word that. They thought they were nothing, or something like that. And I do the same. I don't remember just how that was worded.

DE: Everybody's getting to know your work too well, Jesse.

JH: Huh?

DE: Everybody's getting to know your work so well in Fulton. What do the Fultonites think about all this, now?

JH: How?

DE: What do the Fulton. . .

[Tape 3, side B; Volkorsz' No. H5-2]

JH: (laughter) That's a fact.

WV: Eat your cake.

JH: Well, I'm going to say thanks, anyway, a few words.

"Oh Lord, look down upon us with th' almighty twist,

And send us a potato as big as your fist."

[laughter, followed by crowd noise]

JH: Ol' crazy Jess Howard.

DE: We tried to get the biggest cake so we could have that sign put on it. Took a big cake to get the sign on. That was one of your old signs, a long time ago.

JH: Well, I don't know yet that I haven't got anywhere with the people at home. I don't know why.

DE: Well, you've given them enough words. (laughs) I see you brought the yoke. You're going to finish the sign you brought from Fulton today, the new one.

JH: The yoke.

DE: Yes.

JH: I'd like to finish that paint on it.

DE: Oh, we will. We'll put a table in there so you have a chance to work on it. That'd be nice. That'd be real nice.

JH: And you found that about the wheel in the midst of a wheel.

DE: Hmm. What part out of Ezekiel?

FW: One, sixteen [1:16—Ed.].

DE: We'll have to mark that down, 1:16 Ezekiel.

JH: Jimmy Carter said, you know, that he was the hub of a wheel. Do you ever read that?

DE: No.

JH: I wonder if he actually knows what the hub of a wheel is. (laughter)

SL: The part that doesn't move, you mean?

JH: Huh?

SL: You mean the part that doesn't move?

JH: The hub of a wheel.

SL: Yeah.

DE: Can't hear you.

SL: I say, do you mean by that, the part that doesn't move? (chuckles) Or it moves the least.

JH: (chuckles) Well, it's the part that spokes is put in, you know, like building a buggy wheel or a spring wagon wheel of wood. ____ _____. I have all them tools to do that work with.

WV: Are you still making wagons?

JH: No.

WV: You have some nice ones.

JH: I'm going to try to have a sale now in two or three weeks. (chuckles) Going to try to have the sale while

I'm living!

WV: That's a good idea.

DE: All those signs together look pretty good now.

JH: Huh?

DE: All those signs, now that they're together, they look pretty good. Look pretty good.

JH: Well, I tell everybody that comes in there—they come in there from Chicago. . . And yesterday—Saturday, it was—they bought \$75 worth, \$70 worth of stuff from me. I got a little cart-like thing up there now. A fellow come down here from Chicago, he says, "I'll roll that thing all over Chicago, if you let me have it." (laughter) He said it, you know.

DE: Well, we're going to have to get some of that from you, Jesse, for the whole thing.

JH: Well, they wouldn't let me show it at the street, at the. . .

FW: At the sale?

JH: At the Christmas parade.

DE: I thought you were in the Christmas parade.

JH: Hmm?

DE: I thought you had one in the Christmas parade.

JH: I did, and they wouldn't pay no attention to it.

DE: Well, I knew somebody that, they said they saw you there at the Christmas parade with it. But they paid attention, didn't they?

JH: No, they won't pay no attention to it. Like I said, it's like pouring water on a goose's back. (many chuckles) Wouldn't get very far, would you?

Jim Leedy (another sculpture instructor—WV): It's like children, you know; they don't appreciate you because you're too close.

JH: (chuckles) Well, I'm still with them, anyway. (chuckles)

DE: Well, you are.

FV: Excuse me. Are you-all using that ashtray. Thank you.

MV: Dale, I had a cousin in Fulton that owned a restaurant. I was just wondering if he's still there. I don't what ever become of him. Edward Estes.

DE: Do you know Edward Estes? In Fulton. Had a restaurant.

JH: Estes? Don't know ya.

MV: Well, used to have a restaurant in Fulton.

JH: Oh.

SL: No, he thinks your name's Estes.

MV: It wasn't me. A cousin of mine.

DE: His cousin.

MV: I don't know what ever become of him. I wonder if he is still there.

JH: I don't know.

DE: You don't know anybody name of Estes.

JH: Estes?

DE: Yeah, he had a restaurant in Fulton. Ever met him?

JH: Not that I remember of.

DE: Probably remembers you, though. (laughter)

JH: I hope so. I think they all know me! I used to know a man by the name of Morty Estes, but he's been dead for years. Morty Estes, goes to school.

MV: No, Edward.

DE: Edward Estes.

JH: No. This Morty, he'd taken his Bible and open it at school, with the Bible, or something like that, ____.

DE: Did you ever finish the gallows? And the bed? The last. . .

JH: I've got it all just about finished. And they won't pay no attention to it.

DE: That was a lot of work you had in that. Lots of work. And the bed, also the bed.

JH: If they, if they would furnish me the timber and the help and everything. You mean the gallows that old wicked Haman [referring to a Biblical character—Ed.] was hanged on.

DE: That's right.

JH: That's what you mean.

DE: That's it.

JH: How high was he hanged?

FW: Oh, my goodness. Wait a minute! (laughs)

DE: In cubits? You want to know in cubits? (laughs)

JH: How high was old wicked Haman hanged? That's what the Bible thinks of it. Old wicked Haman.

DE: How high was it?

JH: How high was it, and was there anybody else hanged on the gallows besides old wicked Haman?

FW: All of his sons.

JH: Huh?

FW: All of his sons.

JH: Yes, you're right. (laughter)

FW: Fifty cubits.

DE: Fifty cubits. Elby's a carpenter [referring to the collect carpenter—WV]. You should ask him how big a cubit is. You always ask me. Ask him.

Elby: ____ ____ cubit. I forgot. I've known, but I've forgotten.

JH: Well, where I get this, you know, I'll tell you, the dictionary pretty well.

DE: What is it?

JH: My old dictionary. A cubit is 18 inches.

DE: That's right. That's what it is.

JH: And Haman was hanged 50 cubits. We'd have to build a gallows 75 feet high.

DE: Right.

JH: Will you help me do it? (laughter) Put it up, up there on Hell's Eight Acres [JH's name for his property in Fulton—WV]. (laughter) Okay. I own it. [Put her up.]

Elby: Well, I'll help you do it.

JH: I don't owe no one a dime. ____ ____.

DE: Elby's a good carpenter.

JH: Well, you can come and help me build it. (laughter)

Elby: Okay. Go along without ____.

DE: . . .so far.

Elby: This summer?

JH: You can start at it tomorrow if you want to. (laughter)

WV: That's right. I'm taking him back tonight. (laughter)

DE: Now, wait.

JH: Now I don't think I'm going to say anything here today that I can't prove.

DE: Very few people can do that.

JH: I don't think I'm going to. Going to try to.

DE: That was sure a big cake. Still could feed a lot of people on it. (laughs)

JH: One man? [unintelligible] (laughter)

JH: No, I brought a lot of writing with me, and where's the lady?

SL: I'm over here, Jesse.

DE: Sherry's over there. She's way over there.

SL: Way over here.

JH: I brought some of my writing, you know, where I found it in the Bible. Was Jerusalem ever measured?

FW: Must have been.

WV: I don't know.

JH: Was Jerusalem ever measured?

Leedy: I imagine it was.

JH: Yes.

Leedy: Old Jerusalem, right?

JH: Gives you the measurement in the Bible. Damascus, same way.

Leedy: How big was Jerusalem?

JH: I forgot, there's just so much of it, you know. I can't remember all of this, but you can turn to my Bible there and see.

Leedy: It's all in there.

JH: All in there. All of this is foretold in the Holy Bible. For instance, if the earth's opened its mouth and swallowed it up, what is that? What did he swallow. "The earth opened its mouth and swallowed up." I'd say earthquakes.

FW: Yeah.

DE?: We've got a lot of earthquakes now.

JH: Yessir, that's right. And it says the earthquake will be the beginning of sorrow.

WV: Are there a lot of earthquakes described in the Bible?

JH: How?

WV: Are there a lot of earthquakes described in the Bible?

JH: Well, it only says the earthquakes will be the beginning of sorrow.

WV: I see.

JH: About the best I remember.

Leedy: Well, there are lots of earthquakes now.

JH: Lots of them, yes. And where. . .

DE: . . .started this last night. He has a new wheel piece, too, that he brought. [to JH:] This is the one you were working on last night.

JH: That's the one I worked on [until] eleven o'clock. . .

DE: Eleven o'clock last night.

JH: . . .ten o'clock last night.

DE: Up there on the hill?

WV: Probably is. [may be speaking about something else.—Ed.]

FW: Probably so. I think you should mention that. This is a very, these are really very nice.

WV: Is that the canvas I sent to you?

JH: Oh, no, that isn't. (laughs)

WV: That isn't?

DE: You're going to finish this one here today?

JH: I want to finish it.

DE: Oh, great.

SL: This is on the assassination.

WV: Oh, isn't that beautiful.

SL: Isn't that nice?

WV: What is that one on?

SL: I think it's just. . .

MV: I wouldn't [justice] it to ____.

Group: No, right. (laughter)

DE: Did you bring some paint?

SL: No, he brought, I brought a marking pen.

DE: Oh, okay.

WV: Is that what that is?

MV: Where's he going to work? Where's he working?

DE: We'll put a table down in the gallery. We'll have a demo. (laughter)

SL: Right, here it is.

DE: We'll go back down where the signs are and do that then. It's cake- eating time now.

JH: (laughs) Eating time now.

WV: Right.

JH: Eat a piece of that big potato. [referring back to earlier joke—Ed.] (laughter) You know, in nineteen hundred and five, I rode a big iron- wheel wagon through the greatest park in the world. Now, that was foretold in the Holy Bible. I've been back there twice since. What park was that? I called it the greatest park in the world. In the United States.

WV: Yellowstone?

JH: Yellowstone.

DE: What year was it that you were in Yellowstone, Jesse? Do you remember?

JH: Nineteen hundred and five.

DE: Nineteen hundred and five!

WV: Boy, that's even before I was born. (laughter)

JH: (laughs) Nineteen hundred and five.

DE: Nothing's changed.

JH: No.

DE: Nothing's changed. You think things have changed?

JH: Oh, change is. . . Even my own neighborhood, you know, out there, I don't know where I'm at. (laughter)

DE: Is that right?

JH: Well, you haven't told me where that park was, and what the Bible says about it.

DE: What does the Bible say about Yellowstone?

JH: Of course it didn't know anything, they didn't know anything about Yellowstone Park those days.

DE: Right.

JH: But it just tell you where it represented. Tell you where to find it. I forgot just the verses in the Bible, but the last chapters of the Book of Job says, "The pot boileth deep."

DE: Hmm, well, that sounds like it.

WV: Potboilers, sure.

JH: "The pot boileth deep." All that hot water boiling out of the ground and everything. And I've been through that park twice—three times. Twice since nineteen and five. There wasn't but one entrance to the park when I was in there. That was at Gardiner, Montana. Bears running loose and everything. Yeah, we seen the old bears. They put me on an old chuckwagon, as they call it, and the old bears would come up and pret near take me off the wagon. (chuckles) Yeah, they made me ride the chuckwagon. Old bear smell around there at the. . . I was sleeping there one night, you know, and _____ an old bear come up. . . We camped through, had sheet-iron ranger stove, about thirty of us. And I was flunky on the dishwashing [role]. (laughter) Six days and a half, through the park, big highway wagon. Old bear come up there, you know, and somebody left an old [wheely] bed _____—old stoves, you know—and old bear come up there and began to roll that old stove over and over. Boss got up and grabbed an [ax] and hit the old bear, you know, and the old bear ran out and down past, you know,

and hit a stream of water and chug—went on! (chuckles)

Yeah, here I left old Fulton in nineteen hundred and three, about the fourteenth day of October, fifteenth, and I was in this old [avenue], and we got back to Fulton for two years and one [half]. Worked my way through all the way.

WV: How old were you when you left Fulton?

JH: Huh?

WV: How old were you when you left Fulton?

JH: How old was I. Let's see, I was about nineteen, something like that. Worked my way all the way through. Worked for 30 cents a day. Tobacco fields.

FW: How much?

JH: Thirty. Went over there and worked for my brother-in-law for 50 cents a day, is the way I got money to get out of old Fulton. (laughter) Feeding an old cane mill. So that's part of my life. I went here and into Illinois, run through Lincoln's tomb. And I've always went to church pretty much, where I ever was. Made friends pret near everywhere. Got my board and bed pret near everywhere I was. I've always treated people with respect, and they most of them has treated me the same way. The most of them. (laughter)

WV: Not all of them.

JH: Huh?

WV: Not all of them.

JH: Not all of them, no. Oh, no.

Michael Meyers (member of KCAI faculty): When did you make your first sign, Jesse?

JH: When did I make the first sign? I don't remember. I don't remember.

Meyers: Do you remember what it was about, your first sign?

JH: No, I just don't remember.

Meyers: I'd be interested to know why you started making the signs.

JH: Why did I start?

Meyers: Yeah, why did you begin to do that?

JH: Because I got a dirty deal in old Fulton.

FW: What happened?

JH: (chuckles)

Meyers: It's a long story, _____. (laughter)

JH: Well, the first thing they did, they throwed me in an old dirty jail. Said I was down there cutting up and raising hell, and that was the biggest lie ever told. One thing.

MV: What were you doing?

JH: Getting after me.

MV: What were you doing when they _____.

JH: What was I doing?

MV: Yeah.

JH: I hired a taxi and taking Mrs. Howard to church, going home for my Bible and read this: That what God hath joined together no man put asunder. Then is when they grabbed me—three of 'em. (laughter)

MV: That'll teach you.

JH: Huh?

DE: That's just like when you went to Washington [D.C.—Ed.].

JH: How?

DE: Same thing happened when you went to Washington.

JH: Yes!

DE: Same thing.

JH: I went over to church gathering at Paris, Missouri, over there, and they kidnapped me there and threw me in the jail. And I reported this thing to the FBI, all the way around. And you know what they said about the goose, don't you?

WV: What's that?

JH: The more water you pour on a goose's back, faster it runs off. (laughter) And I've never got nowhere since. (laughter) That's right.

Leedy: Well, when you were in Paris, why did they put you in jail there?

JH: I never found out why any of this has been did.

Meyer: Do you think someone's going to come in here and ____ ____ _____. (laughter)

JH: I never found out just exactly why.

Meyer: Do you think someone's going to put you in jail now, Jesse. I mean, are you worried about being put in jail now, just because. . .

JH: What'd you say?

WV: Are you worried about being put in jail now?

JH: No?! (laughter) I've always got out. (laughter)

WV: Did you have to get a lawyer to get you out of jail?

JH: Lawyer? I don't know of a lawyer in Fulton I'd trust as far I'd throw a [balloon] by its tail. (laughter)

Leedy: Where did you get the name "Outlaw"?

JH: I don't know. That was slander, I reckon. (laughter) Kept having one robbery after another one. "Jess, did you do that?" "Oh, yes, I done that," you know. And one time the county clerk was held up. Four or five hundred dollars was robbed. "Jess, did you do that?" I said, "No, that was an inside job." And it was. I pret near always got an answer for them, some way. (laughter)

FW: Mr. Howard, you know that book you wrote about Little Joe Cooper?

JH: I don't know where that went to.

SL: It's down in the exhibit.

WV: We have it.

JH: You do?

Group: Yes.

SL: Was that about you?

JH: No, no.

SL: It seemed like it might be from some of your own experience.

JH: It's. . . No, Little Joe Cooper started to school and his little dog followed him. That's what that is all about.

FW: Yes. I was reading the part about where Joe had the fight with [Griggs] and made [Griggs] groggy.

JH: Well I just say so much that I just don't remember it all now.

DE: You put a lot of words down, Jesse. Had a lifetime of a lot of words. Probably stretched from here to Fulton. (laughter)

JH: Huh?

DE: Do a lot more people come by to see you now?

JH: Huh?

DE: A lot more people coming by to see you now?

JH: Not a great many. Hasn't been three or four there pret near all winter.

DE: Look at all the people that see all the things you make now.

JH: Huh?

DE: So many people are seeing everything you've made now. Everywhere! All around the whole United States now. Everybody's saying, "Whose this man, Jesse Howard?" (laughs)

JH: What did you think I looked like when I walked in here? (laughter) I think most of you had your eyes open.

Meyers: We just guessed you were Jesse Howard. (laughter)

JH: Well, I certainly appreciate what you people have did. It was a help. I've had my road signs up there, with wheels and different things on it. Talking about. . . I showed you that wheel built of. . .

DE: Right.

JH: I say, "Jimmy Carter, President Jimmy Carter says he's going to. . ." It was the hub of a wheel. I go out there, you know, and I get an old sulky rig and take it in there and write the thing. I save the bolts—they're hard to catch back. (chuckles) I save the bolts, and I take these rig teeth and make a wheel out of it. Hardest things yet, you know. They're steel or spring and everything else.

Leedy: Jesse. What do the bottles mean on the wheel?

JH: Well, that's really for show.

Leedy: For show?

JH: Yes.

MV: And to make sound? Noise?

JH: Yes. And this one piece, you see, there's three wheels in one.

WV: Right.

JH: One wheel in the midst of a wheel—right here in the Bible somewhere; I don't know where it's at.

FW: Ezekiel.

JH: Yes, Ezekiel. What chapter? [apparently he has forgotten the earlier exchange—Ed.]

SL: One and sixteen.

JH: Yes? That's in the first chapters of Ezekiel. Yeah, I have my gallows all ready to cut down, scale down to one inch, you know, in height. One inch represents the. . . What was I speaking of?

SL: Cubit?

JH: Cubit.

DE: Yeah, one inch is a cubit. Scale.

JH: One inch, cubit.

WV: So it's going to be. . .

SL: Fifty inches.

WV: . . .fifty inches high.

DE: Well, the last time I saw the gallows, it was. . . You had the bed and the gallows both, you were working on.

JH: I had what?

DE: You had the gallows almost constructed. You had the wood.

JH: Well, you can't buy and depend worth anything, you know, and I've had it [pinned] two or three different times.

DE: Right.

JH: Just out in the open. I have the thing all put up, so's you could put it up in an hour or two, anyway. _____ day. And who was the biggest, who was the biggest giant that the Bible speaks of.

DE: Not Goliath, is it?

WV: I don't know.

Meyers: Tell us, Jesse. Who was the biggest giant?

JH: Who was it?

FW: Leviathin?

JH: Huh?

SL: Leviathin? No? Give up.

JH: King [Aug]. His bedstead was made of iron. I'd give a hundred dollars, a thousand dollars a piece, if they'd find the original bedstead of King Aug. I'd give that today, if you could find it.

Leedy: How big was King Aug?

JH: Find that in Deuteronomy.

DE: Deuteronomy, size of the King. [spoken to someone else, probably the female who has been answering the Biblical questions—Ed.] (laughs) But Jesse uses a scale, he works with a scale. One inch equals a cubit.

JH: I think it's thirteen [chapter of Deuteronomy—WV] or something like that.

Group: Eighteen inches equals a cubit.

JH: You people going to learn a little bit about the Bible, aren't you?

WV: We sure are.

DE: We always do, every time.

WV: Jesse, what happened to your old Bible? You've got a new one now, don't you?

JH: Yeah, a lady gave me that new one that I brought up here. I wish I'd a brought the other one.

WV: Is the new one easier to read for you?

JH: Well, it's big letters.

WV: Bigger letters, yeah.

FW: I don't think that's in thirteen.

WV: [Aside]: His Bible [is, looks] so beautiful. He's got stuff written in every margin and every page.

FW: That's the laws, thirteen is.

JH: Deuteronomy, is where it is.

FW: Yeah.

JH: You know, it's pret near the first chapter of Deuteronomy.

FW: First? Okay.

JH: Pret near. I'm not exactly. . .

FW: Let's see here.

JH: Who spied out the land? Who come over there and said that the land wasn't any good and slandered the land? Slandered the land.

WV: Is that in the Bible?

JH: I forgot who it was now then. I wrote this, but. . .

DE: "Behold his bedstead was a bedstead of iron. It is not in cubits, the length therefore four cubits. . ."

SL: Nine cubits was the length. Four cubits the width.

WV: Ooh, wow!

DE: Yeah! Pretty big.

JH: Huh?

DE: Jesse's been working on the bed.

WV: That's real big.

DE: He's got one he's working on, right out of that, right out of there. That's where it is. You told me that once.

JH: Huh?

DE: A long time ago you told me that.

JH: Well, I got it all wrote all over the daggone place up there.

DE: Yeah. (laughter) Can't forget that.

JH: Who sent spies in here when they said that the land was no good? Who sent spies in here to spy out this land? And found it the greatest land there was, pret near, rich in every way.

Meyers: . . .Moses?

WV: He thinks it's Moses.

JH: I believe it was Moses. Yeah, I believe it was Moses.

MV: Well, so much for my _____. (laughter)

Meyers: I got one right. Keep asking questions. My confidence is up.

DE: Jesse, we haven't had too many visitors that know as much about the Bible as you have.

JH: Haven't had.

DE: No, we haven't had too many visitors; the last visiting artists. . . (laughter)

JH: Well, then, what did they say about this land when they went back?

DE: What'd they say, Jesse?

JH: Well, it's the greatest land, richest land, growing grapes that'd taken two people to handle one bunch.

DE: That's pretty good. It's almost. . .

WV: Scaled to cubit, isn't it? To Aug.

JH: Huh?

WV: Those are grapes for King Aug, probably.

JH: Yeah. (chuckles)

DE: Are you going to put a garden in this year, Jesse?

JH: No, I'm not going to be able to.

DE: Not going to do one this year.

JH: No.

DE: Jesse's always had real good gardens.

WV: I know.

JH: Yeah, I growed watermelons year before this last weighed forty-three pounds.

DE: Forty-three-pound watermelon.

JH: Forty-three, um hmm.

FW: Do you ever take those to the state fair?

JH: No.

FW: No.

JH: No, I've got no way of going at all, whatsoever.

FW: Oh.

JH: Growed one last year. . . I gave all of my watermelons away. Well, I didn't sell one. Growed one last year that weighed 32 pounds, or 33.

WV: Did you ever drive a car?

JH: Oh, I used to drive an old Ford. I found out nickel me out, nicked out. Then the car [gave] out and I made a wagon out of the wheels and a bunch of bolts and a washing machine. (laughter) That's right.

Leedy: What year was that?

JH: Oh, let's see. Been forty years ago. (chuckles) Maybe a little longer; I don't remember now.

FW: What are you going to write on Haman's gallows?

JH: Do you know where you can find that in the Bible, all of it?

FW: Book of Esther.

JH: Um hmm. Did you know the Book of Esther was the only book in the Bible that you couldn't find God's name?

FW: No, I didn't know that.

JH: (chuckles) (laughter)

DE: That's one on you. (laughter) Keep it up.

JH: Huh?

FW: Are you going to put the story of Esther on the gallows?

JH: Not the gallows.

SL: No.

JH: I've got this all wrote out just what old wicked Haman's name was and his wife's name and all of his sons.

FW: Don't know that.

JH: (chuckles) Well, I got it all wrote out up there.

FW: Yeah. And that'll go on it?

JH: Huh?

FW: Will that go on it? On the gallows? You'll write that on the gallows?

JH: Who's going to help me build it?

FW: Ahh.

Group: I'll help.

JH: (chuckles)

DE: We'll send some people up there to help you.

JH: Huh?

DE: We'll send some people up there to help you, get that one finished.

JH: That's going way up in the air, though.

DE: We can handle it. (laughter)

JH: There's hundreds of people don't know what a . . . Can't speak it. [means can't recall the correct word—Ed.]

FW: Yes.

DE: Are there any questions that you want to ask Jesse? He has a hard time hearing, so you have to speak up. But if you have some questions you want to ask Jesse. . .

JH: What a [Cuban]. (laughter) Hundreds of people.

FW: Yeah.

JH: And I've asked how high old wicked Haman was hanged, can't tell you.

FW: Yes.

JH: And I think that some of them. . . I don't know whether some of my writing that I brought up here today where Damascus is measured, Jerusalem, Damascus. All that's been measured, and some of this measurement that I didn't understand.

DE: Are you using a magnifying glass now, Jesse?

JH: I do some, yes. Have to.

DE: The lettering still looks pretty good.

Meyers: Jesse, when you work on the board here, do you first start by writing something out on paper and then writing it on the board, or do you just start working right on the board?

JH: What'd he say?

DE: He said do you work on the board or do you write before you work on the board? Do you make some. . .

JH: No, I take this out of my Bible.

DE: Directly right out.

JH: There's where I quit last night.

DE: Eleven o'clock last night. (laughter)

JH: No, eight or nine o'clock, I think. [Earlier he said eleven, then corrected to ten o'clock—Ed.]

DE: Everybody here was sleeping. You were still working. (laughter)

JH: That's right. It says here, everybody make excuses, you see. Read that, in the Bible.

FW: Where is it?

DE: Read this out so everybody can hear.

JH: Here it is, right here.

FW: Okay.

Leedy: Jesse, how long did you work on this particular piece?

DE: How long did you work on this sign?

JH: Oh, not too long.

DE: Just start it last night?

JH: Yes.

DE: Got started last night on it.

JH: You might say last night, yes.

DE: Nice piece of wood.

JH: Well, they was going to burn the thing up. (laughter)

DE: They were?

JH: I don't know whether they hate me so darn bad, or what; I don't know.

DE: I can't imagine it.

WV: Do you still work pretty much every day?

JH: I do a little something pret near every day, yes. Where's the Bible? Where I stopped.

SL: It's in the gallery.

DE: Jesse's Bible's in the gallery. Would somebody bring it up? It's just as you go in the entrance way.

FW: Luke 14.

JH: I aim to put how many verses, how many words in all down that you find in this. I have that all wrote, all put there. Book of Job, I put a. . .

DE: Luke, Chapter 14.

FW: Okay, here it is. "And they all with one consent began to make excuse." Is that the one?

JH: Yes, there's where I quit last night.

FW: Yes.

JH: I aimed to finish the thing up and bring it up here. Read this all down.

FW: Okay.

JH: Two or three verses, there.

FW: "The first said unto him, 'I have bought a piece of ground and I must needs go and see it. I pray thee have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen and I need to go to prove them. I pray thee to have me excused.'" And another said, 'I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come.' So that servant came and showed his Lord these things. And the master of the house being angry said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in hither the poor and the maimed and the halt and the blind.' And the servant said, 'Lord, it is done as thou has commanded and yet there is room.' And the Lord said unto the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, that my houses may be filled. For I say unto you that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.' And there went great multitudes within and he turned and said unto them, 'If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. For whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you intending to build a tower sitteth not down first and count the cost, whether he has sufficient to finish it, lest happily after he hath laid the foundation and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying this man began to build and was not able to finish? Or what king going to make war against another king sitteth not down first and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth him a message and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is neither fit for the lamb nor yet for the dunghill. But men cast it out. He hath ears to hear, let him hear.'"

JH: That's one reason why I said of quotes, you know, my work would put more people to reading their Bible.

WV: Right.

JH: More people. Now what I wanted to put on here was. . . Why don't you take this Bible?

FW: Okay. Bigger.

DE: That's the new Bible.

FW: Yeah.

JH: Yeah, a lady gave me that Bible. There's the name of her right here.

FW: Yes. Pam Gohill.

JH: Um hmm.

FW: That's nice.

DE: Well, those are good ____ ____.

JH: Now, I aim to put this on here about, in that book, "See about his oxen." Wasn't it?

SL: Yeah, right.

JH: Five yoke? He bought five yoke of oxen? What does that say?

SL: Let's see. Yeah, five yoke.

JH: Yeah, five yoke. Well, I've got one of them made and brought it up here. (chuckles)

DE: Oh, that's right. It's down in the gallery.

WV: Right.

DE: Do we have [noise]. Jesse, I think if we go down to where all the signs are, we'll bring a table down and maybe you can finish it down there. We'll go down where all the other signs are and we'll put a table down and maybe you'll get a chance to finish it all up.

JH: Well.

DE: And then they can see how you do your printing on these.

JH: Oh, it won't take very long to finish this.

DE: Okay.

JH: All I was aiming to print was where these three or four people made the excuses.

SL: Yes. Are you going to put in about the salt?

JH: The what?

SL: The salt?

JH: Salt, no, no.

SL: No.

JH: No, it's just like I said, how much space and everything would it take to print this thing what you read.

SL: Too much.

JH: (chuckles) Now I can't print it all in one-inch letters.

DE: But you've got another board down there. You have two.

JH: Yeah, I'm going to put that in about the wheel in the midst of a wheel.

WV: You come prepared.

DE: Right, right.

SL: Yeah.

JH: And where you find it. (chuckles) Why I believe I can finish this thing if you give me a big pen.

DE: Okay.

JH: Where I left off. You can help me anyway.

Leedy: Say, Jesse, how many children do you have?

JH: I have four living, one dead.

Leedy: What do they think of your work?

JH: They don't think anything of it.

MV: How about your wife? Does she like your work?

Leedy: Does your wife like your work?

JH: She never. . . She's a fine worker, you know, fine housekeeper and everything. She never printed one of these letters.

SL: Does she like your signs?

JH: She don't seem to appear to. (laughter) Now [commence]. . . [seem to be changing locations—Ed.] That's one verse here, isn't it?

SL: Yeah. Do you want me to read it out to you?

JH: Verse 18 had a quote, you see.

SL: Yeah.

[Tape 3, side A; Volkersz' No. H6-1]

DE: You really surprised me when you made this one. This was 1974, we got this sign [_____—Ed.]. And this sign [_____—Ed.] has been to many museums. Already this one has been shown all over. Thousands of people have seen this already. But this is the Kansas City Art Institute window [_____—Ed.].

JH: I know. I have a stack of them, of [art, large] _____, oh, that high [_____ feet—Ed.] over there.

DE: Yeah, I know. And we're just beginning to see some of the letters that you've received from all those people.

Photographer?: Why don't you trade places with _____ and let him stand over here?

DE: Okay. (laughter)

[Interruption in taping]

Photographer?: Tell her why you made this sign here, this particular one.

JH: Well, I have one up there on the corner of my place, you know. And they wanted to take that. That's erected up there. It is there today, you know. And all the difference is, is that I have a set of deer horns on that one.

DE: Right.

JH: And I told you, though, I wouldn't let you have that.

DE: Right. (laughter)

JH: A friend gave me those deer horns.

DE: That's right. I remember that.

JH: And I tell you I'd make you one just like it [a windmill—WV].

DE: You did, too. It's just like it. This one works just as good. It really works good.

JH: Huh?

DE: This one really works well. It really moves well.

SL: Jesse, the other one's still out at your place. We saw it. The other windmill's still at your place—with the horns.

JH: Yes, the other one is. Still up there for everybody to see. (chuckles from everyone)

SL: Jesse, do you think they'd believe this [a solo exhibition in a college art gallery—WV] in Fulton?

JH: Huh?

SL: Do you the people in Fulton would believe this?

JH: Do what?

SL: Do you [think] the people in Fulton would believe that your work is here?

JH: I don't believe they would.

SL: I don't think they would, either.

DE: We ought to send a letter to all the people in Fulton, telling them to come down and see it! (laughter) Old Man Howard has all his work down here.

JH: Oh, there's a whole lot of people know it, but then I don't know many of these people that don't know. It's going down there just one after another one, you know. They've got it in for me so hard that when they see Old Man Howard, they'll turn away. . . [he turns away to illustrate—Ed.] (laughter)

[Interruption in taping; they have moved from the cafeteria to the gallery where JH is demonstrating—Ed.]

WV: Hi, Jesse.

JH: . . .what I read in the newspapers [talking while completing a sign, working at a table in the gallery—WV].

MV: What have you read about Kansas City in the newspapers?

JH: Huh?

MV: Have you read about Kansas City in the newspapers before?

JH: Oh yes.

MV: What have they said?

JH: The Star paper put a great big piece about me and my work way back yonder. I don't know how many years back.

MV: Do they like it?

JH: Oh, it's double. I don't see like I used to. [working] I think I'll make that a little bit bigger.

MV: Probably be easier to see if you used that one.

JH: That's supposed to be one inch. One thing about these things here [marking pen—WV], if you can make a mistake you can't rub it out like. . . (chuckles)

MV: That's true. Kind of hard to erase.

JH: Oh, you just can't hardly erase them at all.

FV: Would you rather have a pencil? We've got black pencils here.

JH: Oh, this is all right, yeah. There won't be a great deal to this one.

MV: Jesse, you don't do too many pictures, do you? Mostly words.

JH: How?

MV: You don't draw too many pictures, just mostly words all the time, huh?

JH: Just the words.

MV: Not too many pictures. I noticed the fish, though. You have a few fish around, that you painted, in the gallery here. You know, one or two little fish.

JH: The little fish.

MV: Yeah. Why the fish, nothing else? See he's got some fish over there on the wall.

JH: Well, I've had one, you know, up there. I was looking at this one this morning and toward my house. About the ____? One fish swallowed another one, so forth and so on.

Group: Yeah.

JH: [Gratin]. I don't think it'd take very much of this here [noise]. I want to put that wheel up and my. . .

MV: We got the wheel up, Jesse.

JH: The wheel and the oxbow. I tried to have all this did, but as I said, I run into a little trouble about the oxbow. That'll look better, won't it?

FV: Yes, yes. Oops, Jesse, you missed.

JH: Oh, I'm ____ it.

SL: You did it on the ruler.

MV: Yeah, that looks a lot better, Jesse.

JH: Well, these boards just old things I picked up out of the scrap pile.

MV: Do you like those better than boards you buy?

JH: Huh?

MV: Do you like the ones you find better?

JH: Yes. You can't hardly go to the lumberyard today and pick up lumber what's all full of knots.

MV: And real expensive.

JH: And expensive with it, that's right. Expensive with it. Oh, I've been blacksmithing everything, you know, and [saver] old iron bars and even save the bolts. Pret near all my work. Got a bunch of old horseshoes up there. And another thing that I didn't bring down here—I just couldn't get it—that's iron of. . . Some of that's in my works here. I believe it is. Why did they put bits in horse's mouths?

MV: I don't know, I. . .

JH: I aimed to bring that down here with me. Have we got it? Um hmm. I aim to bring that down here with me. But I just couldn't do it.

FV: What's that band on ____, ____ band?

MV: Oh, a take-off on garters? Used to hold his sleeves up.

FV: I'm going to ask him. Jesse.

JH: Huh?

FV: Jesse, what's this band on your sleeve?

FV: Sleeve garters.

FV: Oh.

JH: What's this band? Sleeve [holder]. My sleeve's too long.

FV: Ohhh.

JH: Why is the bit put in the horse's mouth?

SL: To curb him.

MV: I don't know.

JH: You know that's in the Bible?

MV: Is it?

JH: Uh huh. I aim to bring a horse's bit, bridle bit, down here with that scripture on it.

MV: So you can ____ ____.

JH: Is that going now?

MV: Yep, yep. Little bit further. There we go. [Everyone speaks at once] They put a bit in the horse's mouth so he'll go where they want him to?

JH: Yes. Turn him this way and that.

MV: Yeah? And you made a sign?

JH: It all got wrote in the Bible is where you find.

MV: Oh!

JH: Turn him this way and that way.

MV: That's the same way we should control our mouth, right?

JH: Huh?

MV: It says in the Bible that's the same way we should be controlled, by our mouth.

JH: That's in the Bible.

MV: Right.

JH: Turn them this way and that way. I'm sorry to take up so much of your time.

MV: I'm enjoying it.

MV: Yeah, we're having a good time. It's nice to talk to you.

JH: Well, that's the way it's done, anyway.

[Interruption in taping]

JH: That is ____ colors up there. I don't know where it went to.

MV: Yeah, there's some on that wall.

JH: Oh.

MV: There's one board up on that wall.

JH: Yeah, I see some of it over there.

[Interruption in taping]

SL: Thank you, Mr. Howard. [apparently in response to JH—Ed.]

WV: Thank you.

JH: Now you can put that up over there by your wheel.

SL: That's wonderful. That'll be great!

MV: This is a real honor, Jesse. We have two of them now with the Kansas City Art Institute on it.

JH: How?

MV: I said there's two of them now with the Kansas City Art Institute on it.

JH: Kansas City artists?

Group: (chuckles)

JH: Forty-eight chapters. I put it down here that ____ I got to my Bible when you have read all the forty-eight chapters, you have read so many thousand verses and so many thousand words.

MV: Your Bible has all that in it?

JH: My Bible has all that in it. That's right.

FW: You know, this [version of the Bible—Ed.] has a lot in it.

JH: Huh?

FW: This has a lot. It has a summary of what's in the different books. Wait a minute.

WV: But it's not a concordance, is it?

FW: No. There's probably a concordance as to [how many] of the Gospels, probably. Usually, you know, a concordance is so big.

JH: What's the shortest verse in the Bible?

FW: Jesus wept.

JH: (chuckles) Well, what's the longest chapter—I don't remember that—in the Bible.

FW: Longest chapter?

JH: Um hmm.

FW: I don't know.

JH: I think it's in Psalms.

FW: Psalms?

JH: I think. . .

[Interruption in taping]

JH: . . .bed, I put that on there.

FW: That's what I thought.

JH: Our Family Record.

FW: Yeah. Yeah, that's pretty.

JH: That's right.

FW: How does it come to be hinged?

JH: Hmm?

FW: I noticed you've got hinges on it. Or are those barrel bolts? They're hinges, aren't they?

JH: I had that thing out in the road part of the time, and then just tear it up and leave it and go on.

FW: Ahh.

JH: I'm not getting any cooperation from my own family. Ain't nothing about the other people.

WV: Jesse, do you ever see your children?

JH: Huh?

WV: Do you ever see your children?

JH: Not very often.

WV: Where do they live?

JH: I've got one girl living over there, right near the Catholic church in Fulton. And, of course, one had two boys, one of them dead, and I didn't even, they didn't even haul him to his graveyard when he died. I don't know what's the matter with them. The other boy's in Los Angeles, California. Two girls, Phoenix, Arizona. One son-in-law way up in North Pole, Alaska.

FW: Oh, for heaven's sake.

JH: That's the way they're scattered around. I've got Bible quotes, you know, where these children go and leave and [reach] each other.

FW: Uh huh.

JH: Oughta brought something like that down here with me, but I didn't do it. (chuckles) Yeah, I want to see that little wagon I made up there. Now, of course, you people could take a pattern off any of my work as far as that goes. And while all this work, I didn't have any pattern to go by. Not a thing _____. Not one thing. Just thought it up and wrote it.

WV: How long do you think it took you to do all this?

JH: [Reading one of his signs:] "Hi, neighbor. That old geezer's in Heaven, huh? Like his tombstone said. Probably because the Devil wouldn't have him. [chuckles from group] What is truth? The word of God is truth." (chuckles)

FW: I like the one about the Fulton police.

JH: Fulton police?

FW: "If you want to see a gang of hoodlum cops, just drive through Fulton." (laughter)

JH: (laughs) They are not protecting me anyway. Go down past my road every day. Getting big pay for it. Big money. Soon's they get by there, turn their head and look the other way. Just make you sick, you know. Sit there on the porch and watch them, listen at them.

MV: They just drive right by.

JH: They drive right by.

MV: Did they read the sign?

JH: Who was it that I showed the wheel made out from old rake teeth? Showed the rake teeth?

MV: From rake teeth?

JH: Now, if you want to jump into a job, why you just take all the rake teeth out of an old sulky rake—steel springs—and put them together and make a wheel out of them.

MV: It's a lot of work.

JH: All up there on my place. I've got two of them old wheels. Now you told them about something like that, they've got to be figured, say this is a wheel, you see, right around here, and these teeth is got to go so far. . .

MV: Here you go. You can draw it on there.

JH: . . so far apart.

MV: Make your drawing on there.

JH: Huh?

MV: You can draw on the table.

JH: I don't know whether I can hardly do that or not. See, those old, they're supposed to be really bolted together but I couldn't do anything on it to stick them together.

SL: Did you straighten them?

JH: Huh?

SL: Did you straighten the rake teeth?

JH: No, you're not supposed to straighten them.

SL: Oh. I thought you meant you made spokes out of them.

JH: Spokes.

SL: Yeah.

JH: Well, in a way, they are spokes. But it's far different from the spoke of a wagon, or a wheel like that. I don't know whether I can do that or not. [probably means sketch it—Ed.]

[Interruption in taping]

JH: . . .the engine and the saw. The rest of the table _____, all the rest of the work, put them on wheels, did all of that blacksmithing, and one thing another. Never had no help. The old woodsaw that's up there now they sent out I wished it's down here. No help whatsoever. Building any of my buildings or anything. Yes, Mrs.

Howard, she'd taught one school, and kids run her out. (chuckles from group) I was [answering] questions, you folks—I'm not going to say I'm going to answer all of them, but I might be able to answer a few of them. Any questions?

MV: Jesse, what was your favorite job? You've done so many different things. Which one do you like the best?

JH: (chuckles) Well, I've done so many of them that. . . I'm a-getting as big a kick out of this deal here. [laughter] Yeah, I was aiming to come out here and finish this job before breakfast, pret near. They come in there, I take my time, and visit these people, you know. Some of them give me a little piece of money, and some don't. I let them come in here and show 'em my work. Put a ten dollar bill in my hand. Go on about it, and thank me, appreciate my time taking them around. This fellow come in here just the other day, him and his wife. He didn't do anything. He wanted to buy a little piece of sign for five dollars. I didn't have no five dollar sign for him. [laughter] He'd taken my time, all right enough, but he didn't give me any money. You know, I take my time, you know, and take these people around all through my place—take an hour, hour and a half. Take a lot of these people through what I've got up there.

MV: Show them all your work?

JH: Show them my work, yes. Well, is anybody, anything else I'll try and answer.

DE: Did Jesse see these ____ programs here?

JH: Won't say as I can answer it all. You ____ ____.

[Interruption in taping; conversation continues in the car while traveling back to Fulton with Janet Pihlblad, KCAI student.]

WV: You haven't seen too much of Kansas City, have you?

JH: Oh, no. I've never seen anything of Kansas City.

WV: Well, we'll show you a little bit.

JH: I've been through here numbers of times. Think of old Fulton: [It was on my own folks.] My wife, people, never put a paintbrush on any of my work. Any of it.

WV: Well, you must be proud; you've done it all by yourself.

JH: All by myself. Built all of my buildings by myself.

WV: That's right.

JH: There's a five-million carpenter's job, making a dollar, 30, 35 cents an hour at that time. They fired me because I wasn't getting drunk and gamble with them. [unintelligible] on the job and they got in a little old shack and began to gamble. They didn't know it was agin the law to gamble. Oh, you're talking about that unemployment, you know. I've seen this coming way back yonder, from a-working in the oil fields.

WV: Where were you working in the oil fields?

JH: In Oklahoma.

WV: In Oklahoma?

JH: Um hmm.

WV: What year was that?

JH: Let's see. Well, it's been several years back.

WV: Yeah, I'm sure. (chuckles)

JH: Yeah, ____ with a ____ oil, and the oil truck towards me. Oil railroad cars, you know.

WV: Right.

JH: And I was helping them paint big pipes that they was a-laying. [Three Sands], Oklahoma. [Ponca] City, Oklahoma. I was digging the. . .

Pihlblad: How old were you then?

JH: Oh, it's just been a number of years back, you know. All this digging that you had to do with a pick and shovel was where there was a massive pipe laid. . . They'd use these machines, you know, to go down there and dig a ditch four feet deep, built like a _____ where you could walk.

Pihlblad: Ah, uh huh.

JH: They would do that, you know. If they just hired the men to dig with pick and shovels like they used to, they'd take, oh, hundred men pret near.

Pihlblad: Hundred?

JH: It would take a hundred men with pick and shovels, you see, to do that job.

WV: Boy. Did you ever think of becoming a farmer?

JH: Do what?

WV: Did you ever think of becoming a farmer?

JH: Becoming a farmer?

WV: Yeah.

JH: Oh, I've been an old farmer all my life.

WV: You've been a farmer all your life? Oh, I see.

JH: All of my life. Never had no farm, just the old [post oak] place, sassafras and places like that to work on. And I finally moved on one farm, rented it. Were something like 75 or 80 acres of good ground. I lost, well, 75 or 80 acres of good ground. I was on that farm seven years. Moved there with a, one horse and one cow. Of course, I had to go and buy another horse, and I got another cow, and was there seven years. I growed fourteen hundred bushels of good old yellow corn, that way, with one team.

WV: Fourteen hundred bushels?

JH: Fourteen hundred bushels. Had to give half of that to the man that owned the farm.

WV: Yeah.

JH: He lost the farm. After he lost it, I moved up there to a hundred acres of ground, just 45 miles northwest of Fulton. You couldn't [buy a dollar]. I moved up there with 14 head of good cows and calves, and 37-acre [homes], ordered this corn, crossed the whole piece during the Depression. Well, these people going to lose their heads, today. Can't help it. But since that time when I bought my place, and paid for it, I don't owe, won't owe anybody at all, not a dollar.

WV: That's a good feeling. It's real expensive right now to start a farm.

JH: Oh, yes.

WV: Takes a lot of money.

JH: Ah, yes. I don't know. Hired some people, fellow from Arizona, that's what I was saying. I don't like to discourage anybody, you know. But they asked down there what they thought, you know. And they said that, "We don't see no future."

WV: Right.

JH: And I don't. Why, a poor man can't even build a doghouse, good big doghouse.

Pihlblad: Yeah, it's true.

JH: I went and got [Mr. Purvis] _____ to tell you about the nails that I bought. [traffic noise]

SL: The nails.

JH: I ordered a bunch of 60-penny nails—of course, they're great big ones. I had him figure it up, penny

apiece.

WV: That's a lot of money. (chuckles)

JH: Penny apiece.

WV: Nails used to be so cheap, you know, and they've become very expensive.

JH: How are you going to get you another stick of that Contact?

Pihlblad: Contact?

JH: That's what it's called, Contact. It really sticks.

WV: Contact paper?

JH: No.

WV: Is that what he's talking about?

JH: Contact.

Pihlblad: ____.

WV: Here's some big buildings. This is downtown here. See the big buildings?

JH: Yep.

WV: This is downtown Kansas City.

JH: That's what?

WV: Downtown. Kansas City.

JH: Downtown. Oh, some people come from Kentucky up there to my place. Bought \$170 worth of my stuff, gave me a bad check.

WV: That's terrible. Has that ever happened to you before?

JH: No, it hasn't. Fellow gave me this check the other day, \$55. I asked this fellow—it's been a good long while—just a baby, you might say. What can you do with these people that they give you a bad check? Now they've taking that off of my, what I had deposited in the bank.

WV: And then, yeah, they've just. . . That's terrible.

JH: I asked this fellow yesterday, suppose I didn't have any money in the bank?

WV: That's right.

JH: He said, "Well, I wouldn't cash your check."

Pihlblad: Huh.

WV: Do you think the people that wrote you the bad check will go to Heaven or go to Hell?

JH: Well, their word's no good; they'd just be like Lazurus and the rich man.

Pihlblad: That's right.

JH: You know what happened to them.

Pihlblad: Yeah.

JH: I tell these people that just hate me, pret near. [unintelligible] Pihlblad: The poor man went to Heaven, and the rich man went to Hell.

WV: That's right.

JH: But what do they, what about these people that's buying their way into politics?

WV: Yeah. That's bad.

Pihlblad: Yeah.

WV: This is the Sears and Roebuck store in Kansas City. See how big the Sears store is?

JH: Roman?

WV: That's Sears and Roebuck.

JH: Oh, Sears and Roebuck.

WV: Yeah. It's a big store.

JH: Yeah.

WV: Is that too windy for you?

JH: Huh?

WV: Is it too windy for you?

JH: No.

WV: Okay. Can always roll it up.

[Interruption in taping]

Pihlblad: [unintelligible] We're glad you had a good time.

WV: It's too bad you live so far from us.

JH: Huh?

WV: It's too bad you live all the way over in Fulton.

JH: No _____, what?

WV: It's too bad you live so far from Kansas City.

JH: Yes.

WV: If you lived a little closer, we could see you more.

JH: I see a good many people, and I _____ a lot of them. A million. . .

[Interruption in taping]

JH: [unintelligible] _____ over there at the bus station, just imagine what kind of a crowd there was around there. Great big fine-looking fellow selling jackets. I said to him, "How long do these people. . ." They seen that I got on the bus, you see, and started to go home. I said, "How long do these people been around here?" Says—that man selling these tickets—"Well," he says, "They're here all the time."

Pihlblad: Ah hah?

JH: I said to him, "Are you Christian?" He said, "No, I'm not." I said, "Well, you ought to be." He said, "Are you a preacher?" I never did answer.

WV: (chuckles)

JH: I think lots of people would say, "Are you a preacher?" Lots of people. [pause] Now them kind of rigs is what makes the _____ road. . .

SL: That's right.

JH: But you can't hardly get past them. Most times, you can't hardly get past them. [unintelligible]

[End of interview]