



Smithsonian
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Interview with Irene Hall

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Transcript

Preface

Tape-recorded Interview with Irene Hall in the Artist's Garden in Eufaula, Oklahoma

June 8, 1981

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.

Interview

IH: Irene Hall

WV: Willem Volkersz

[Tape 1, side A; Volkersz' No. H2-1] [45-minute tape sides]

[Because this interview is being conducted outside in Hall's garden, there is considerable wind and highway noise. Volkersz is clearly audible, but Hall's voice is often obscured as she walks away from the microphone.—Ed.]

WV: . . . at Linda's and Cleve's. We drove by here and took some photographs. But that's when you still had the gourd tree up.

IH: Yes, lightning struck it and I had to chop it and I've got the stump there, and I've got to put fresh flowers in, and I'm back a week with work and vandalism. I've got to fill in places here.

WV: Huh.

IH: So you caught it kind of ragged. It's a little bit cleaner in front, but this takes a lot of work to keep it now I'm working my dolls over.

WV: I understand.

IH: And, oh, the boy [____?—WV] has grown, of course. Come on around the front where it's a little bit cleaner. This is a slow and tedious [unintelligible] work, and you can't get no one to do much yard work anymore. They're all on relief.

WV: I understand.

IH: Now, I've got it around here pretty well straightened up besides the ____.

WV: Looks nice and clean.

IH: And it'll look quite different. I'm going to touch it up with some white and yellow [paint—WV] on the rocks here. And this all has to be trimmed and swept out here.

WV: Sure. Now where do you actually get all of these? Do you buy them at goodwills and things?

IH: Well, sometimes if I see anything, why I do, if it don't cost too much, because they pick them out just about as fast as I put things out here.

WV: Well, do you find them too, or people bring them to you, or what?

IH: Yeah, a lot of people bring me things, that's moving away, and leave them. Well, [unintelligible] it's such a mess here I don't know whether I would have recognized him.

WV: Well. . .

IH: This is all to be trimmed. And this will all be blooming in here.

WV: Oh, yes, it's beginning to bloom right there. That's beautiful.

IH: And that's what the kids call their Easter bonnet.

WV: (laughs) That's great.

IH: And [unintelligible] it's a little bit unusual, regardless of what people are telling us from all over the country.

WV: Oh, I think it's gorgeous. That's why we came back.

IH: And it's a lot of work out of nothing. They call it "the talking yard."

WV: "The talking yard"?

IH: "The talking yard."

WV: Now, why do they call it that?

IH: I don't know. They asked me if I had give it a name. I said no. Now these are oars. It's a hundred years old, the wind and all, and some of them was picking these while I was over at the city.

WV: Huh.

IH: But I'm going to straighten that up and put it back up.

WV: Now, where'd you get the oars?

IH: This is Indians' oars, a hundred years old. They used to have the little skiffs, you know.

WV: Oh. Where'd you get them?

IH: From old friends. You know, I'm the last of twelve children here. And my folks was natives, [Indians].

WV: Hah!

IH: So I didn't know this, but this is in the festival book. This doll here, she [a photographer—WV] seemed to pick that out, and they took pictures while I was gone, and I was over there—I guess Linda told you—and they came and got me. And these are the shells that the Indians danced with, you know. Put gravel in them, and pebbles, and all, and they took them all with them. It's awful bad for vandalism, and they're robbing all around here. But I'm trying to keep these oars for people to see what the Indians made. It's made out of hickory, you know.

WV: Now what of yours do they have in the folk art show? ["Folk Art in Oklahoma," Oklahoma Art Center, Oklahoma City, 1981—WV]

IH: What'd you say?

WV: What work of yours do they have in the folk art. . . Do they just have photographs, or do they have some objects too?

IH: Well, they came over and got some of my things and took some pictures, and I'll show you the book.

WV: Yeah, I have the book. Yeah, I saw it. Yeah.

IH: Have you seen it?

WV: Yeah.

IH: Well, they show a lot of them. They had them [the catalogues—WV] stacked up, you know, on the table.

WV: Ahh, that's right.

IH: And I noticed them when I was talking over in places with all the mob coming in around the [opening of the exhibition—WV]. . . Oh, what do you call it? You're psychic and when I'm close to you, why, it impairs my speech so strong. Did anyone ever tell you that I'm a reader?

WV: No.

IH: I'm a phenomenal reader. And I don't want to make no issue of nothing, but the people over in the Indians _____ I like so well _____. So we'll go on in here. Boy, I've got to put some fresh flowers there. But that tree was gorgeous. It was a hundred-foot tree. And the wind's just tore it up, you see.

WV: That's right. I have pictures of it, of when the whole tree was up. It was beautiful.

IH: You have?

WV: Yes, it was beautiful.

IH: Well, I liked it better then than I do now but I done something with the stump, you know.

WV: Yes, you did a good job with it, too.

IH: And so it'll look different when I get this all painted and freshened up, but I haven't got to it. But they stoled all my urns and old churns that's a hundred years old, on the front of the porch.

WV: You sell any?

IH: I left that when I was [gone].

WV: Did you say you sell them?

IH: Well, I am now—but I wasn't then—because it's no use to go off and leave them, because vandalism is spreading all over the country.

WV: Yeah. Yeah, I know.

IH: And sometimes they just break them up and leave them, you know.

WV: Yeah. Where do you collect all the rocks?

IH: Oh, my husband was a ball player. I don't know whether he [Cleve Warren, IH's grandson, during a previous interview—WV] told you about it down there [in Oklahoma City—WV]?

WV: Oh, yes, that's right.

IH: He was a [tramp] ball player in those days, and now they're national heroes. But he came here playing, from Abilene, Kansas, President Eisenhower. See those wasps, honey? And I sprayed around it, but they're. . .

WV: Oh yeah.

IH: Now this is all got to be freshened up here. And I want a paint job, but you can't get no one to work now.

WV: Huh.

IH: They're all on relief. We all know each other here, you know.

WV: Yes, yes. What kind of paint do you use to paint on there?

IH: Oh, just regular, common paint. Now this is a parasol and cane rack, and I happened to have a _____ and I filled it with sand, so the wind wouldn't blow it over, and then I put concrete in it.

WV: Ah.

IH: And this is a base of an old stove _____ that's a hundred years old.

WV: Yeah, you don't see those much anymore.

IH: And I remember, we was taught to save, not to waste, and they say the American people is the most wasteful there is.

WV: That's right.

IH: And I believe they are.

WV: Yeah, I think so.

IH: Well, we saved that, you know, without no [unintelligible] over here. And I had—and Linda [Cleve Warren's wife—WV] has it—the first. . . Now there is some of the oldtime water heaters, stands, you know.

WV: Um hmm.

IH: But she has one of iron; it's the three-legged. It was a gallon heater.

WV: Huh!

IH: So I gave it to her and I made a beautiful rock to go with it. And these two candy jars. . . I'll have to hunt through them later. I started painting my. . .

WV: The post and the foundation here.

IH: . . .this rock, all made of wood.

WV: Oh, I see.

IH: And [unintelligible].

WV: Yes.

IH: And so I've got this side fairly well cleaned. But I've got to. . . But, oh, that takes work. This is all got to be cleared. And while I was over there [in Oklahoma City—WV] I had three heads up there, and they [vandals—WV] took them all but one, you can see, because I told him, and then I was taking this up—that's over 35 years old, that big gourd there—and it's stood a long winter. It's peeling in places, so I started painting it up and it started to rain, and I had to quit. And then I'll paint that and fix it up. It'll look quite different, more brilliant, when I get through with it.

WV: How long ago did you actually start this?

IH: Huh?

WV: How long ago did you start this? Do you remember?

IH: Ohhh, years and years and years. We built three houses [unintelligible] over on the east side, but we never did like it out there over on the east side. [unintelligible] over a hundred-year-old _____, it's worked out [unintelligible]. And we _____ probably would they did, anyway.

WV: Well, did you build, did you arrange things over at the other houses too?

IH: No, no.

WV: Just at this house.

IH: Just this house.

WV: So you started to do these things when you moved into this house?

IH: Yes, uh huh. My husband was hurt sliding [while playing baseball-WV], and that slowed him down some in driving a car. And so the phone was there. . . And that was a hundred-foot tree; it's oak. And _____ don't go anywhere good. And I was putting hours and a few things on it—and Indian trophies on it—and so there used to be a filling station right over here, where this place is now.

WV: Uh huh, right.

IH: And when they changed the highway, why they all sold out and moved. But that tree was fixed with a few gourds on it that I had bought in California. And there was a Mexican coming through here from Mexico, driving to Kansas City, a-trucking three times a month, and he stopped over in the filling station and came over here. I was working. And he said, "You need some gourds on there."

WV: Huh!

IH: I just had one with the, like the Mexican make them, painted in bright yellow and white, you know.

WV: Right.

IH: On a beaded string about like that. And he said, "You need some more." I said, "Well, they're picking things off the tree just as fast as I put them up here." He said, "Well, I come through here and they gourds are light, and let me bring you an assortment of twenty, see what you can do with them. So that's the way I started.

WV: Ohhh.

IH: But I've had the most unusual gourds that ever was. Now that, that I've had it large enough that you could pick the top off it and make a wastepaper basket out of it. And the ones that I have in the house don't look a thing like these. They are creations. They're beautiful. But I'm all stacked up and I have an open house [unintelligible]. But I've got to do all of this over.

[Diane Volkersz (DV)]: [In response to a crying child (Jason Volkersz):] Sit down on the grass if you want.

IH: [To Jason:] Did you see the little horses, honey, huh?

WV: See the horses in there, Jas'?

IH: And the little violin and music things, all there?

WV: You can go look at all those things in there. You go see what's in there. But don't touch.

IH: But don't get close there, because the old wasps are flying, and I sprayed, but. . . They nearly kill me when they sting me; I break out.

WV: They're nesting there, huh?

IH: And so those old chairs, now, yes, the chairs and the swing, we put there when the house was built, and you know they're old. I could sell them over and over to people.

WV: Yeah, I can see that.

IH: And someone broke two of them and took one while I was away on [a trip]. But people that have seen everything money can see, said this was this was an unusual yard, and they drive down the highway and get to thinking, "Well, what did I see?" Let's get back over here in the shade.

WV: Yeah.

IH: "Hey, what did I see that's unusual?" And come back and look it over, and then go on. Of course, I didn't know that till they come back the second time.

WV: (chuckles) Yes.

IH: And they said, "Well, that's unusual. It makes me feel different when I see that." And I've had them to get out and pray out here!

WV: I'll be darned. That's beautiful.

IH: And people of a different denominations, said, "I feel something under this tree," before it was cut out,

you know.

WV: Uh huh.

IH: And so I've had all kind of experiences. Since I was over at the festival, I've had lots of calls. Cleve called me today. Have you seen him _____?

WV: No, I'm going to go see him now, when we leave here.

IH: And so he said there was some TV man called him and I wanted to know if he was my grandson, how he could get me, but he wanted to pick this, make a movie out of it. And so. . .

WV: Hah! What do you say to that?

IH: Well, I don't know. It's surprising to me _____ that's all the publicity it's getting, but I guess when I think about it, I've traveled quite a bit and seen quite a bit with the ball team. It is a little bit different, when you go to think about it.

WV: It certainly is.

IH: Well, it's a lot of hard work, and it's from the tiniest thing. . . [To Jason:] Come here, baby, and let me show you. I had those _____ Indian chiefs—and all the outlaws, a lot of them wouldn't keep them, but, you know, they [vandals—WV] know what to take. And you see there's all kind of little things here in that little doll, but let's see. I've got the Dalton gang, and here is one of the outlaws.

WV: Oh, right.

IH: I think that's the Jameses, but they're all scattered round here, but they've taken most of them, and so. . . They're riding double.

DV: Anybody Bert and Ernie?

IH: Yeah, they're riding double.

WV: Yeah, that's Ernie.

DV: Bert and Ernie.

IH: That keeps people from going around and coming around my house now, because they used to just come around the house, and at night I'm getting afraid to stay here with the things I have in my house.

WV: Oh, that's why you built this wall here.

IH: And I'm going to [be] selling some of the things in the house because I don't need them. I gave Cleve and Linda quite a few things over there.

WV: Oh, have you?

IH: Yes.

WV: Well, we're going to go have dinner with them probably tomorrow.

IH: And so I hope he's doing all right. Cleve's had quite a battle of it with his neck, you know.

WV: Oh, really? I didn't know.

IH: Oh, yes, he had another operation.

WV: Oh no.

IH: And that was bad. I was very uneasy about him, because that's pretty bad: two major operations on your spine, young as he is, you know.

WV: Boy.

IH: He can't do everything.

WV: That's terrible, yeah.

IH: But with the good Lord's help and our prayers, I guess he'll be all right. And I don't know what Linda's doing, whether she's still going along with the art course or not, _____. [Linda Warren holds a master of fine arts degree—WV]

WV: I think, yeah. She's painting, I think.

IH: Maybe she is, I don't know.

WV: Yeah, yeah.

IH: But we had quite a crowd and it was a little unusual there at the mall. And she said we got some good writers _____. And then someone sent him over here to our paper, and of course I was a reader to begin with, and I'm known from coast to coast. It's not fortune telling. Came to me as child, the great sears of the world. They can't define it. And they had predicted about the Pope several weeks before this happened, that he possibly was facing assassination. And so I don't never say very much before the girls and kids, but when I read that a time or two, and then this happened to him, I said, "Well, I saw blood on his robe two weeks before this happened."

WV: Huh.

IH: And he will get it again.

WV: Boy, really?

IH: And Reagan won't live his term out. We're in a very violent world.

WV: You feel that?

IH: And the [doers] thereafter. They just, we got that [unintelligible] And I'm visiting with them here. I had 36 states, week before last, I guess it was. I get mixed up [on the time].

WV: Sure.

IH: But they don't know me. They're just coming this way and that way, you know, up this way, and they'll see me out there talking, and they visit with me. But now, anyone phenomenal to have psychic powers, and more intelligent and stronger than I am, why they pick me up right now.

WV: Interesting.

IH: And they say, "You have a power." I say, "Yes, I have one, but I dislike it and it makes me unhappy." "Well," they said, "it will." They said, "Don't fight it. You're a natural."

WV: Yeah.

IH: And I said, "Well, I quit for thirteen years when we was playing ball on the road, because it worried my husband. I'd tell him when we got a letter from mother; in those days that was about the only communication we had. I'd say, "When we hear from Mother, so and so's going to happen, it's going to befall to certain people." When we'd get the letter, why it would happen. And he called it getting these things out of _____ and he said he's worse than Mickey Mouse; he could lose a oil well worse than he could lose a ball game. So I said, "Well, it worries me. I don't have no one to talk to. Mother don't understand it, and she gets after me if I'm in the yard a-playing and the neighbors on the porch are busy." Pioneer days we had well water, you know, we'd no plumbing. And people would come and sit on Mother's little porch. She had four or five old rockers there, sitting out there on the long porch. And they'd bring the beans over to snap across there and visit. You know, people visited more then.

WV: Sure. Yes, I know that.

IH: And they were closer with each other.

WV: Yes, they took time to do that, right.

IH: Yes, and the feeling was different. It isn't here in this trading. It's a pity, too, did you know, to even the families.

WV: Oh, I noticed that; I'm well aware of that.

IH: Yes it is. So they'd sit there and talking, and we kids would be out in the yard playing marbles or

hopscotch or something, you know, and these things would come to me, and I'd start crying. And those women was sitting there on the porch, you know, and I'd run there, and I'd say. . . But one day this happened to me in the morning, and the woman wasn't there visiting; she was home. And I come running and crying, and Mama said, "Now, what is it that's wrong with you now?" And so I said, "Well, I just saw the Lord come down, and he had a feather"—I guess it was a quill, you know—"feather in his hand," and I said, "I could see His nails and the hair on his leg." And every image I've ever saw of Christ he has long hair. And so anyway, I said, "He was writing this down and He looked at me and he said, 'I'm taking Vernita with me.'" That was this woman.

WV: Yeah.

IH: "I'm taking Vernita—she had five children—"Vernita with me in a few days." And so anyway, I said, "He just went up and I watched Him as He went up in the clouds," and so she got after me, and she got after me good when all the neighbors listened. "You can't come and say that before neighbors out there, because they don't understand it and I don't either."

WV: Oh, yeah.

IH: They said it would be terrible if she'd have been here. I was five or six years old.

WV: Yeah.

IH: Well, she was perfectly well. She lived about four houses up from us. And about four days, she dropped dead in her yard with a heart attack.

WV: Oh, that's extraordinary.

IH: And it always happens, it all happens, and the things that I would tell him when we'd get a letter, it would all happen. It's like. . .

WV: Do you ever read fortunes, or do you just get these feelings?

IH: Oh, yes, they know me from coast to coast.

WV: Oh, really.

IH: No issue of it, yes. It's not fortunes. It's. . .

WV: Well. . .

IH: When I take you, it takes me. Fortunes, they're making a racket of it, like talking and I talked to lawyers. It should be stopped, or regulated, something to it. But there is something to ____ that's contained into your body, the lines and all. I know that. And I know cards, that's images in fortunes, and these grounds and things that you get to, like they have tea readings and coffee grounds. . .

WV: Yeah. (chuckles)

IH: . . .in eating places, you know, for the public. But this is, they call it ESP now. And they're calling them all over the country now to come help them find these bodies and they are. [speaking of search for mass murder victims in Atlanta—Ed.]

WV: Oh really.

IH: And they're taking their lives in their hands. You've been reading and hearing about the little housewife in Pennsylvania—I believe it was Pennsylvania—that she called the [police—WV] officers, and she's just a working woman, don't have any means, and she said, "I could lead you to those bodies. I'm a phenomenal person, and I saw where those bodies was. I could take you to them if I had the means to come down there." So they were just stumped and twelve of them made up some money for her, and they sent for her to come. And she'd been there two days, she said, "Well, I want you to take me out," told them their directions, "where there's a river and a lot of growth, and where it runs into another stream." And so they was taking her out there—and you know they was found, what bodies had in those rivers and groves around there. Well, the FBI finally got into it, you know. Well, did you ever hear of the FBI to find anything real quick? I haven't.

WV: Not real quick. (chuckles)

IH: No, no. They want to keep their jobs, and make TV shows [working] for the paper.

WV: (laughs)

IH: Well, anyway, so the FBI stopped her. She's still down there, but she got to this river where the bodies was found, but she was still at the hotel when the last I heard of her _____ on TV.

WV: Ohh.

IH: But they stopped her. She would have found them, too. But I think they have maybe a clue now, I don't know. But that's a terrible thing, isn't it? So many, I think around 30 now, it is.

WV: Oh, it's incredible.

IH: And so that's really the trend of it over the country. They robbed all these places over here, and that's the farmers. . . It was, over here on this corner. And it gets pretty rough here on Saturday night. This is full and packed with people coming and going. And all. . .

WV: Oh, that's real sad. How long have you lived in this house?

IH: Huh?

WV: How long have you lived in this house?

IH: Ohh, you can guess that I guess about looking at it. It's been there a long time.

WV: Oh, you moved into it when it was new.

IH: We built it.

WV: You helped, you built it? About 1920s or '30s?

IH: We built four houses in this town.

WV: 1930s, maybe?

IH: Yeah, I guess it was, yes. Uh huh, it's old. And it's, I got quite a bit of money in it. It's built in all oak, and we had the first tile floors in a home in Eufaula, until they got them in the drugstores and business places.

WV: Really!

IH: But we had the first one, and. . .

WV: Well, did you start to hang these things as soon as you finished the house?

IH: This was just kind of a wilderness in here when we built. Wasn't no pavement or nothing. They just dirt roads, you know.

WV: Sure.

IH: And we had to put that in. But we had a two-story house over on the east side, and we sold to the richest Indian woman in Oklahoma—she's dead now—_____. And we walked out with our suitcase. We was on the road. We sold it, she wanted everything in there, and just walked out with it.

WV: Hah.

IH: And we used to own from this corner down here yonder where they're tearing up and building that; service station people [pulled] that back.

WV: Yeah.

IH: See they're expanding this street.

WV: Ohh.

IH: And people are raising Cain about it; they don't want it. But I'm for progress and we need it. And so. . .

WV: You mean they're going to widen it. Will they take. . .

IH: Yeah, that's what they're doing. And up here, this is new here, you see, up there on the corner, and they just moving in up here at this building?

WV: Uh huh.

IH: And they haven't finished that back over here. And can you see this ten-foot fence over here?

WV: Right.

IH: And you can see this old house is around a hundred years old, used to be a doctor's house.

WV: Uh huh.

IH: Well, she tried to stop that, and couldn't, with a lawsuit. You can't; there's no way to do that, just like they took the land around here.

WV: Yeah, so they're going to take some of the land on this side too, both sides?

IH: Yes, yes, both sides. But there will some delay. It seems to be on this side because the church is on this side, you see.

WV: Ah, right.

IH: And see, they've started on this side. But, you know, what they's saying that bunch of crooks up in Washington has done? With all these [unintelligible]. . . is the Urban Renewal. These old buildings need to be taken down. They're dangerous. We've got them here over a hundred years old, and you can see some of them yonder.

WV: Yes.

IH: And the rocks and brick will fall out of them, you know. And I'm glad that they condemned them, because people's got wealth in Eufaula, but they don't show it. And there's a house burned down. . .

WV: I saw it, yes.

IH: . . . a good friend back there. And it was strange, and to look at what was left up there. It looks like spires and things, kind of hard. But that burned up in less than fifteen minutes. And he's rich. The grandfather got it [money-Ed.] off of mercantile business, off the Indians and poor white farmers—cotton farmers, you know. They furnished them with their commodities and things, you know, and the stock and things, by the year, and put them all in these cotton fields. That's the thing of the past here, but we had four gins a- going and two cotton oil mills, at the time, and five banks.

WV: Huh! Boy! That's a thriving town.

IH: It was going. That cotton would be lined up for a mile, wagons all night long, you know.

WV: Uh huh.

IH: But that's a thing of the past, and I'm glad that went out, because it was killing people. And they had them old long sacks little children had to pull. And pick cotton all day from five o'clock in the morning till seven o'clock at night. And they never did come out of debt to these merchants. And his granddaddy was one of them; you can see that place. And they tried to kill him over there, and they almost did, but he finally died in two years from the beating they gave him. They broke in over there.

WV: Oh, boy.

IH: And he always carried four or five hundred dollars in a billfold. And his wife had been gone for four years. And they got into his south side over there. And they called him by his name, Fred [Roark]. They said, "Fred, we've come to kill you." It was a white man and a young man—black man. Said they "were wanting for to kill you." Said, "You killed my daddy. You worked him to death. And we've come to kill you." And they knew him and they said, "give us that billfold you carry so much money around." He wouldn't do it. He fought them. And one of the men went in the kitchen—he knew where it was—got a knife and hammer and come back and cut him and beat him and left him on the floor for dead. But he got to the phone, crawled to the phone after they left. And they never did do anything about it, the FBI _____.

WV: Now that's this house right here that burned.

IH: Right there.

WV: Didn't they try to burn it down, too?

IH: And that was. . . Yes. That was one of Cleve's best friends. He used to stay up to Cleve's house.

WV: Oh.

IH: And he's a lawyer now. And he's worth a half a million dollars. He's [his grandfather—WV] left him. And you can see that old house and how his property was kept. It's grown up. In that vacant lot between me and you. I happen to have a [unintelligible] if I get ____.

WV: Oh, no.

IH: And I told Cleve, I said, "I like your friend. I'm not mad at him, but he certainly isn't save his ____." [unintelligible]

WV: That's for sure.

IH: He's no better'n his granddaddy was with money. I said, "He's keeping it, but it didn't do him no good.

WV: That's too bad.

IH: And, so, but we've got [wells] almost everywhere, and you can see this road back here.

WV: Uh huh.

IH: They tried to buy that, all that, all there, and you can't buy it. You couldn't buy that lot back there for love nor money.

WV: Huh.

IH: They're just hoarders. They just keep it. And they got it off the Indians. It's the trust. You don't have to apologize for the truth. And everybody knows it.

WV: Yeah.

IH: Of course I'm an old Hall; I've lived here most of my life, since I was twelve, the youngest. And we know.

WV: Now did you say you're part Indian?

IH: Part Indian, yes. My mother and her folks made the Trail of Tears, you know, about [30] years old.

WV: My gosh.

IH: And my father was born here, and he went to the Indians' what we'd call mission.

WV: Yes.

IH: And then mother, she came with her husband or father, died on the Trail of Tears. She said he coughed bad. And, you know, it was one of the coldest winters. And they just run them with horses, so you couldn't look back if they dropped their dead or babies being born, you know. And it was an awful thing, [unintelligible]. And so he died on the Trail of Tears, [unintelligible]. His brother, he's buried up here, John Gary, was way up in the military [unintelligible] Fort Gibson. So he was coming here to the new place, and he went down there to helping his brother come, but he didn't want to _____. And he said, "You keep her." But his wife was a social lady from the south, Alabama and down there, and she didn't want my mother, you know. And she didn't want her up here in this wilderness, you know. It wasn't like it was in the city.

WV: Sure. I understand.

IH: And, but she didn't mourn. But she. . . He lived about five years, and she was around Fort Gibson. And the Indians never put their children in orphan homes like they do now in _____. They took them in homes, friends took care of them.

WV: Yeah, right.

IH: So the Indians raised mother, and she's adopted. As a Creek.

WV: Really?

IH: And she was Cherokee.

WV: Oh, I see.

IH: That's unusual in history.

WV: I see.

IH: Yeah. They have been wanting me to come to the historical society, around here, and discuss these things with them because I know all around here.

WV: Yeah, that'd be interesting to be on the record.

IH: But I haven't been able to go. There've been so many things a-happening.

WV: Yeah.

IH: And I have to kind of stay around the phone.

WV: Right.

IH: Business. But I don't hear when I'm out here in the yard. These days, you can't hardly ever get you a fine _____ yard, unless it is _____.

WV: What do you think about being in that show in Oklahoma City?

IH: Well, I thought it was unusual, and being like I was, why I guess I got more out of it, and felt and seen more than the rest of the people around there, because things hit me, and as people pass by I was picking them up and they didn't know it, you know. And it was something quite unusual. But before it was over with, I guess I stood around and visited and I've been having a time with _____, with this eye, and trying to get glasses. [unintelligible] See, there's so many things happening to me. And I got tired after four hours. But it was beautiful and my display was one of the prettiest, if I did think so. They arranged it so nice all in here. On the walls.

WV: Oh great.

IH: And so I notice the people, they didn't know I had them in there. I could see where mine was, [unintelligible], and I just kept looking all around me, like this, [unintelligible]. But I can see there was a lot of criticism and they stopped and they looked. And I think the _____ was the biggest thing they mentioned I could hear. [unintelligible] And do you know that I noticed in the stores over there, and even in the jeweler's shop, in the showcases, the unpainted skulls and things, they consider them art now! And they were in there, and ones with horns sold way over a hundred, when I was over there. But one just like these here, you couldn't buy them for less than about \$85.

WV: Sure.

IH: But that was two, three years ago. And then in the furniture stores, all the displays of rooms, you know, furniture set up in there.

WV: Right.

IH: They had skulls and they had horns. And I was surprised to see that. But it's considered art, you know. And these here [cow skulls and horns—WV], the ranchers don't know when there's [quite] to talk about them. I have all types of heads. Here's a [deer horn] and he's a little short one. But this is two of the largest heads they've ever seen, and they don't know what kind of animal it is.

WV: That's huge.

IH: Well, you see, most of them have flat, broad skulls in here but, you see, that's pointed. But them come off of these plains of Arizona, about 35 years ago and more.

WV: Oh, really. Now how did you get. . .

IH: A friend brought them to [me—Ed.], that traveled, you know. Just picked them up and brought them.

WV: That's great. Did you feel some kind of kinship with the people that were in that exhibition? Did you feel that you had something in common with them?

IH: Well, I did with some, and then I could get a question with some, "Well, why this and why that?" you know.

WV: Uh huh.

IH: They have never dealt or never sold anything like that, and it made them wonder. Before, they were just sleeping and eating. They didn't care seeing much about anything.

WV: Yeah.

IH: Humanity is gradually waking up within us now, because God's movement ____ is placing us in a category of _____. As the great Billy Graham says, "If you don't make it now, you're not going to make it. This is it!" This is not only a depression, but it's worse, a recession. We're just gradually sliding into it. We haven't hit it yet. You're going to see some more killing and violence than you ever have. And you know who's the one that's scared now?

WV: Hmm.

IH: The rich.

WV: Oh, sure.

IH: The rich. And they're talking to me. They don't know one from another, but some of them have psychic powers they don't know notice it. "What is it about you that I'm telling you this, because I don't say that to anyone, and everybody's in a hurry, moving fast, going on." And I said, "Well, I don't know what it is." And I said, "I hope the answers I give you is helpful." What I can't understand, mister, now that isn't a real [large] that moves horns, but that's [large]. How in the world they get through that timber with horns like that. I don't understand that.

WV: Yeah, that's incredible.

IH: And they can weave their way through.

WV: It's incredible.

IH: Yeah, it makes you think.

WV: Yeah.

IH: It makes you think. And I just had all kind of horns and one thing another. But this is going to look lots better when I get it freshened up and _____. You just have to take time.

WV: Well, maybe I should let you get back to work and I'll take a few photographs, if that's all right.

IH: What'd you say?

WV: Can I take some more pictures?

IH: Oh, yes, help yourself. I ____ some _____.

WV: Fine. I'll send you some prints, if you'd like to have them.

IH: Yes, yes, take them wherever you want to.

WV: Good.

IH: This is about the cleanest right now. It isn't finished, but it's cleanest.

WV: Well, it all looks interesting to me.

IH: And I had some little miniature baby heads of sheep and one thing another up there, and they took them off. But, you know, Anthony [IH's great-grandson—WV] just. . . You know Anthony?

WV: No. Oh, yes, sure, sure. I'm sorry.

IH: Anthony has one. I took Anthony one.

WV: We're going to meet him. We're going to meet him, too.

IH: And he's got horseshoe, a baby horseshoe, and a little tiny head no larger than this I'm fixing up for him in the house, planning to give it to him. He has a baby horseshoe and it came over one of those little tiny. . .

WV: A really small horseshoe.

IH: I guess a Shetland pony, a man brought it to me. And the little head's no larger than this.

WV: We'll go look at them when we. . .

IH: But I've got them in a box, and I haven't had time to paint them and fix them. And Cathy. . . Do you know Linda's sister?

WV: No.

IH: Well, she's been there visiting, and she was expecting a baby. And she has a little touch of this kinda going, and she is a little bit superstitious too. So she said, "I want for you to fix one of those tiniest gourds for my baby's bed."

WV: Well, that's nice.

IH: And I will, and I only have two left, but I have a few tiny ones left, and I'll fix those for her.

WV: Oh, that's nice.

IH: _____ things all over, protect the baby.

WV: Very nice.

IH: But I'll do it later. But I've got all this to work over, just all over.

WV: Do you do that, do you work on it all spring and summer, every year?

IH: Yes, I just keep it straightened out. Yes, yes. This is a large urn. This was a urn that they made. See they're here all day long.

WV: Yeah.

IH: You don't see them passing, but they're all day long. This was a urn, a jug, a jar, you can see.

WV: Yes.

IH: And it's broke and cracked. It's over a hundred years old.

WV: It's huge.

IH: One of the _____ was in my mother's family. And so she give it to the Indian church before they had refrigerators out in the country, you know, got wired, and one thing another.

WV: I see, sure.

IH: And they put a faucet in it, and put ice in it, you know.

WV: Sure, and you could drain it.

IH: And it had a cup and all of us would drink out of the same cup, and we didn't have us any diseases then as we do now. . .

WV: Sure. (laughs)

IH: But anyway, we did. So, after they got lines and refrigerators there, Mama was gone, and they said, "Irene, would you like to have that thing?" I said, "I sure would." So they brought it in in a wagon and give it to me about 25 years ago.

WV: Oh, wonderful.

IH: And so I filled it up, and I've got wire around here and tapes and one thing another.

WV: Yeah.

IH: But that was a jug, like that up there, with the faucet in it.

WV: I understand. But a big one.

IH: Yes. And this was a, this had a drain in the back. This is one of the first [sounds like Gracey] urns they

made, and they used them for markers at the cemetery, before we had markers.

WV: Huh, really! I see.

IH: And so, that's got to be painted and worked on. Here's all sizes of horseshoes.

WV: Right.

IH: And here's some little gourds, but I have two that's smaller than them and one I'll fix for Linda's, Cathy's baby. But, oh, I have so much ahead of me, I don't know where to start. ____ ____.

WV: (laughs) I can imagine. It's a big venture, isn't it? It's a big job.

IH: Yes.

WV: Well, it certainly is lovely. I'm going to get out my camera and take a few pictures.

IH: Well, I tell you, we're fixing for another rain and a storm.

WV: Oh, we are? One coming in?

IH: The ____ is _____. And you can tell it in the leaves. You know, the Indians lived close to the earth, the skies, and one thing another.

WV: Yes.

IH: And did you ever stop and think. I've talked to them. It's been all over the world, to the [spiritual—WV] readers and one thing another, the ESP, and _____, and they come out here to Fountainhead and Arrowhead, and they hear me—everybody knows me—and they'll ask them, "Is anything interesting around here?" And they never heard of a gourd tree. They'll come here to see the gourd tree, you know, and me, and of course I don't know them.

WV: Yes.

IH: So I go in the house. They said they don't _____ anyway. And I talk to them. And they say, "My goodness, woman, you don't need to be out there with a spade and a hoe. You need to be in a studio of your own." And the tears'll start down there, and I will tell them, and they had never been anywhere [unintelligible]

WV: Right.

IH: Now, did you ever stop? This makes me think, being dumb, and marrying about thirteen, I wasn't educated. Let's get in out of this sun.

WV: Yes.

IH: And, but, you know, those sacred men up in the mountains, just sacrificed their lives staying close to the Lord, you know.

WV: Yes.

IH: With a little pot and just a robe around them, sitting there, don't see anyone maybe for six months at a time come by. And they're bound to be closer to the hereafter and things than we are; we're busy with life. But did you ever stop to think—and I've been thinking about that, and if people are passing, and intellectual people. Well, those men don't know what a book is. Or education, never heard of it.

WV: Right.

IH: And if they [the sacred men—WV] can talk with an interpreter to Oxford graduate and men of the world, they've got something haven't they?

WV: They're doing okay.

IH: They've got something.

WV: Yeah, of course.

IH: Bound to have something.

WV: Of course.

IH: Yes. Can talk to them, yes.

WV: It's a good point.

IH: And they're studying this now, because they find out that we're not so smart even. They're going back to herbs and the old plain medicine, you know, that they put in, you know, and all that.

WV: Tell me one thing. Why do particularly use like a lot of toys?

IH: Well, no, you just go ahead and take the pictures all you want, but. . .

WV: Well, why do you particularly use those dolls rather than anything else?

IH: No, my girls made me promise them unless I was straightened up a little bit that I wouldn't let no one take my picture unless they grabbed it, and a lot of them do. They're around socially, and they just now recognized me the last two years. They'd be playing bridge someplace, social places, and of course, everybody that's maybe passed here has seen this, and maybe they'd get to discussing it, say. . .

WV: No, I. . .

IH: "Have you been through Eufaula and seen that tree and talked to that woman down there?" And, you know, they'd be sitting there playing bridge with them. Well, they would never say, "That's my mother." But now, of course, there's so much publicity about it. When they talk about it they say, "That's from my home; that's my mother." It's just recently.

WV: Huh. That's interesting.

IH: But you know, you can have too much ego pride.

WV: Oh, yeah.

IH: Don't you think so?

WV: Oh, absolutely.

IH: Yes, I think so, and most of them are people that's maybe that way.

WV: A lot of people go that way.

IH: They have it. No. It is the quality you have within yourself and what you are. Yes. And if you've got people, like has stold off these Indians and rich and got fined for it, well, the kids think they're something. And the parents kid themselves they are. I think when they get to crossing the River of Jordan, they're going to kick themselves. You know, there's going to be a little hesitation there.

WV: (laughs)

IH: And, but they do. I see them around here. And they couldn't make it on their own. Their folks giving them the best education they can get around here, and maybe they'll pass, but they can't make it on their own, but they got places to put them in the bank and the farms and ranches [of all], and they put them out there to do that, you know.

WV: Oh, yeah.

IH: But you go ahead and take your pictures.

WV: Okay. Well, thank you.

[Interruption in taping]

WV: No, actually, I was curious why you particularly used toys to work with?

IH: Uh huh.

WV: You know, why do you like using those old toys and things like that to work with?

IH: Well, you know, that's something that I can't answer. Now, I was a person that liked to, when I was a

child, play with dolls. We all liked dolls, you know. And you know that went out of a period, and it's coming back in now and men are noticing. And they brought half of them. But now, you just see them in the store and they're very highly distressed, _____ those store-bought dolls, you know. But we didn't always get a doll at Christmas time. We were poor.

WV: Yeah, right.

IH: And we made rag dolls. Well, now rag dolls is a very art now.

WV: Yeah, yeah.

IH: Coming back in that.

[Interruption in taping]

IH: . . . while he [IH's husband—WV] was sick here, you know, I had to stay around the phone because sliding's what took him out, you know.

WV: Yes.

IH: And he was watching a game over to Cleve's home and he told George his daddy's dead. Well, they're going to make change there now. They're [unintelligible] his daddy. He laughed and they _____, "Go and change, George." [unintelligible] on this way. And they called him to take this fellow's place, took him out. And he was taking him out, said, I told you he would. He just knew it, so. And he'd rather have been a ball player than president. We're a town that could match Hollywood, only we don't have as much.

WV: Right.

IH: We put up fine artists. We had outlaws. And poets. And military men. Anything you could mention. And writers! And the markers are up all over the county now. And we've always been a sports town. We always had athletes, fine athletes. And I don't know why. But, anyway, you know. . . Are you a sports fan?

WV: Yeah, I'm a fan, yeah, not much of a player.

IH: Well, this is where the black Selmon boys was borned and raised, you know.

WV: I saw a sign outside of town.

IH: Yes, and the name is. . . And over here, just right across the street over there in that two-story house—you can see it back there—is where J. C. Watts lived.

WV: Hah!

IH: His father's a preacher. But he decided that he wasn't going to follow baseball, he was so. . . He signed up for the Giants, or to go to Canada, so when people on television last night, said, "J. C. Watts had a soul-searching situation and he decided he didn't want to follow baseball." So he saved our game, you know, down in Texas. That was a remarkable thing. In the last three minutes. [unintelligible]

WV: [unintelligible]

IH: [unintelligible]

WV: Are you still a fan?

IH: Oh, yes. I watch them all. Prizefights and everything I can get.

WV: That's great.

IH: Well, you just help yourself and go ahead.

WV: Thank you. It was nice talking to you.