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Hazel B. Green, Interviewer,
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An interview with
Clarence Granville Bearden,
Hugo, Oklahoma.

Date of birth-----March 11, 1876.

Place of birth-----Booneville, Arkansas.

Father-----John J. Bearden.

Place of birth-----Tennessee.

Mother-----Cynthia Tucker Bearden.

Place of birth-----Shelby, Tennessee.

My mother, Cynthia Tucker Bearden , was a sister to Mrs. Enoch Needham, and Mrs. Enoch Needham was the maternal grandmother of Robin (Bob) Burns, of screen and radio fame, of Van Buren, Arkansas. Cynthia Bearden was buried at Hackett, Arkansas.

My father, John J. Bearden, is buried at Spring Chapel Cemetery, immediately south of Hugo about a mile.

My father was a native of middle Tennessee but his family moved to Texas when he was quite a lad and he enlisted in the army in time of the Civil War, from Texas. I don't know how he came to be up in Arkansas, but anyway he was there, and married a Conditt, the mother of my half brothers, William and Charlie Bearden and my half sister, Mrs. Eva Manning,

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who lives now about six miles southeast of Hugo. Charlie and William are both dead.

Then he married my mother, who was Cynthia Tucker and she was a sister to Mrs. Enoch Needham, nee Mary Jane Tucker, who was the maternal grandmother of Robin (Bob) Burns of screen and radio fame, of Van Buren, Arkansas.

After my mother died, we came down through the Winding Stair mountains from Booneville, through this country where Hugo is now located, on our way to visit relatives in Hopkins County, Texas. Towns and villages were far apart. Nobody expected to stay at hotels when they started out on a journey in those days. They either camped out wherever night over took them or depended upon the hospitality of the scattered settlers along the route.

I was born in 1876, at Booneville, Arkansas, and we made this trip before a railroad was put through the Choctaw Nation; One was put through here about 1865, I believe, so I was a little fellow when we made it. Well, anyway, along down the road about three miles south of the present town of Hugo, night overtook us, and we spent the night at the home of a widow, Mary Tucker. She was the

widow of Frank Tucker, who was a machinist, and she had met him when he was installing machinery for a gin at the Rose Hill farm of Robert M. Jones, millionaire Choctaw Indian. She was housekeeper at Rose Hill when they got married. He was killed by a negro helper, while installing machinery in a gin for old Dr. Miller, and intermarried citizen who was having the gin built on his farm down on Roebuck Lake, about 8 miles south of Hugo, Oklahoma.

After we made our trip to Texas and returned to Booneville, Arkansas, father came down here and married Mary Tucker and took her to Booneville, but she didn't like to live up there, and did not live there very long. She owned her home down here, and so we all came down here to live. We traveled the old Military road from Fort Smith, Arkansas, down across Winding Stair Mountains, as far as about where Antlers is now. Thence south along about the route that the railroad came later, from Fort Smith, Arkansas, to Paris, Texas. I was raised right down there south of Hugo on my step-mother's farm.

I first attended school at Spring Chapel, a two story frame or boxed building. The upper story was used for a lodge for the Masons and below was used for school and all other kinds of social affairs and church. My first teacher was J. J. Terry, a white man, who drifted

in here from the north, somewhere and hacked railroad cross ties for a living one summer, while waiting for time for his school to open. He was a good teacher and a pretty good citizen, and got to be a United States Marshal. He lived to be about 90 years old. He just died about three years ago. A son-in-law of his was Bailey Spring, one of the leaders of the Choctaw people.

J. J. Terry married an Indian woman, and bought the place that was then called Scott Hill, later Terry Hill, and still later, Laurel Heights, in Hugo. The place was first settled by Dr. George Scott, a white man who married a Choctaw woman. He and wife are buried upon that hill. Dr. Scott's son, George, married a daughter of Green McCurtain, I've been told.

Where Hugo is now, and for miles around was a big prairie. The grass was belly-deep to hundreds of wild Indian ponies, wild cattle and droves of deer, prairie chickens, turkeys and coyotes roamed these prairies. It was like a circus late in the evening to see droves of the above mentioned animals and fowls emerging from the timber to graze in the summer time. But in the winter they came out only in the warmer part of the day.

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After I attended Spring Chapel school a few years, they sent me to Chicota, Texas, for two or three terms to a boarding school.

We farmed and raised stock. Paris, Texas, was our cotton market then. There was a ferry at Arthur City on Red River. It took us two days to make the round trip.

I don't remember what our post office was before the railroad was built through here and post offices were established at Grant and Goodland. Grant was our post office. Uncle Billy Spring had a little store at his old home place just outside what is now the city limits of Hugo. Just about three blocks, south and east of the south end of South 8th Street. We did our trading there except when we carried cotton to Paris. Uncle Billy Spring had a gin too, and we had our cotton ginned there.

Father was Worshipful Master of the Masonic Lodge at Spring Chapel, it was called Doaksville Lodge No. 2. I don't know just when that lodge was moved to Grant. In addition to being a good Mason, my father was a good Christian man and led in Sunday School. In the absence of a preacher he made talks on the Bible lots of times and sometimes conducted services over the desk because one could not always get a preacher when one was needed.

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Parson J. Gibbons, a Missionary at Goodland, came to Springs Chapel and preached for us. He would walk the four miles, but would not stay for night services. He always returned home before night. He would sometimes walk as far as Shoat Springs from Goodland, a distance of 8 miles to preach.

Everybody went to church. All, except very few, appreciated church. Occasionally some smart somebody would get drunk and gallop his horse around the church or arbor, and whoop and shoot his gun. Then an officer would take him in charge. If it was a camp meeting and his folks were camped there the officer would take him to his camp and tie or chain him to a post of the camp shed until he'd sober up, unless he got too noisy; if he did they would take him off out in the woods, far enough away that he would not disturb the worshippers, and chain him to a tree and stand guard to see that nothing harmed him until he would sleep off his drunk. There were no jails or calaboses in the country, only at District court grounds, and no officer wanted to ride horseback twenty-five or thirty miles just to jail a drunk. It was easier to tie him up and sober him. The drunks never tried to shoot anybody,

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they just fired their guns to show off how bad and drunk they were.

A funeral was pretty expensive for bereaved Choctaw Indian families. It was customary to prepare a feast and have all the friends and neighbors come in and feast and cry with the family a few months after the death of a member of the family, and the expense of the feast was all borne by the family of the deceased. They would barbecue a hog or cow or calf and have everything else good to eat in proportion to the crowd.

Another thing of interest was their Indian ball games. Those Indians would play in moccasins or some kind of soft shoes, and nothing else but a breech clout, with a tail of some sort fastened on behind. I don't know that all Choctaw Indians played so nearly naked, but all I ever saw did. It did not look much like a game to me. It looked more like a big fight. A doctor was kept pretty busy sewing up scalps and shins, and treating cracked skulls.

There were signs of Indians having lived all around here before the Choctaws ever came here. There were old fields, which appeared to have been tilled

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hundreds of years previously. Around old house places one could find hundreds of arrow heads, spear heads, spear heads, and occasional tomahawk, and sometimes an old "skull cracker" if it happened to be an old battle field. They say that the squaws followed the warriors and sought out the wounded enemies and cracked them on the head with the stones that were attached to handles with rawhide, and looked like a hammer. We've had as many as a gallon of those flint arrow heads. We never thought much about them. The children just collected them, like any other pretty rocks.