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An Interview with George Harper Breshears
1115 Fite Street, Muskogee, Oklahoma
Carl R. Sherwood, Interviewer.
June 14, 1937.

I was born October 14th, 1865, near Warsaw, Missouri. My father died when I was ten years old and I helped my mother farm the place until I was grown. At the age of nineteen years. I met Miss Polly North and we were united in marriage on November 25th, 1884, and to this union were born five children.

With my family I moved to the Indian Territory in 1890 and located at Chelsea and rented a farm from Frank Parris. I lived on this place one year then leased a farm of about forty acres from a Cherokee by the name of Wash Dick. I farmed here for two years and then moved down on the Canadian River near Okemah and rented a farm from L. H. McDermott, who owned the inland town. The town of McDermott later was moved to the Fort Smith and Western Railroad and was named Okemah. This town of Okemah at the time I came to the neighborhood was situated in the McDermott cattle pasture.

I farmed twenty-five acres of good cotton land which produced about one and one half bales* of cotton per acre

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and the corn on this land would average fifty-four bushels per acre.

This same year my landlord, T. H. McDermott, was driving a wild span of horses to a buggy; the horses ran away and the accident resulted in the death of Mr. McDermott.

In the fall, after my crops were gathered I made good money trading horses with negroes and whites. I never could make a horse trade with an Indian. I farmed and traded horses here on the Canadian River for about three years and had seven good teams of mules, new wagons and new harness.

When the Frisco railroad started to build their road from Sapulpa to Oklahoma City, I worked on the grade by the day with my teams.

In 1901, I moved to Muskogee and met Tom Miller. He and I were raised together in Missouri and since Tom was a good race horse man he took me in as a partner. At this time he had one race horse named "Bryant" and we matched a race with Jim Evans' horse, "Old Tim" at Oktaha. This race was matched for two hundred dollars which Tom Miller and I won. We took our horse to the little fair ground race track at Checotah where they had a free-for-all race. Any one could enter his horse and the one that entered first always got

BRESHEARS, GEORGE HARPER. INTERVIEW. 6256.

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the inside track. We stayed here for one week and won three races.

After this race we sold "Old Bryant" and bought a big short horse from Ed Culver. This horse was a good three hundred yard horse and was named "Old Taylor". Then we bought a race-mare called "Bee Spear". We matched "Old Taylor" against a bay mare that was owned by a Mr. Powers of Muskogee. This race was run on a straight track near where the Midland Valley Railroad shops now stand.

At this race a young woman rode up riding astride a prancing cow pony like a man. She was the first woman I ever saw ride that way; she asked who the horses belonged to and looked them over and then asked me how much I wanted to bet, I said "Just make it light on yourself" and she pulled out a roll of greenbacks and the betting started; soon her whole bank roll was up on Mr. Powers' bay mare and this race was matched for three hundred yards.

"Old Taylor" beat the bay mare by ten feet; after the race the lady on the horse went back to town well satisfied with the race. Then we matched "Old Taylor" with a gray horse which belonged to Mr. Pannell here in Muskogee and on this race I bet forty-four dollars against fourteen dollars and our horse won the race.

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Tom and I took "Old Taylor" to Checotah and matched a race with a horse by the name of "Little Jim" which belonged to Herman Van. This race we won and we bought a four year old colt from a man from Arizona. This colt's name was "Squirrel" and we matched this colt with Herman Van's saddle horse for a three hundred yard race, and the colt won this race with ease.

After the races were over at Checotah, we came back to Muskogee and matched "Bee Spear" with a sorrel mare that belonged to a man whose name I have forgotten but any way we lost this race and half of our bank roll. We matched "Squirrel" with a horse by the name of "Old Lucky" which belonged to George Lair but this race was matched with Henry Starr who had borrowed this horse. This race was run on a straight track southeast of Muskogee and we were beaten by twenty feet; after this, we went to Hyde Park to a race meeting and matched "Bee Spear" with a sorrel mare that belonged to Tom Martin. Clifford Hester rode in this race. We lost but not because of any fault of the rider, Clifford Hester was the first one killed in the Davis battle at Forum in 1912. I traded for a bay pony which I called "Bear Cat". I matched him against a horse that belonged to Luther Brad-

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ford which he called "White Man". This race I easily won, as my horse daylighted his horse, but Bradford was not satisfied and wanted to match the race again which we did with men riders.

He hired a boy by the name of Andy Robinson to ride his horse and I gave him twenty feet daylight to get them to bet. My son, Roy, weighed one hundred sixty pounds and he rode my horse. Several small bets were made at this race and I won by thirty feet.

The next race I matched with Bud Hendricks. Bud had a sorrel horse he called "Lonesome Billy"; we ran three hundred yards on a straight track and Bud won the money.

The last of my horse racing was in 1926. I matched "Bear Cat" with a horse that belonged to John Humphry and lost, which ended my racing career.