

R I C H A R D J A R R E T T

Interviewed June 18, 1976

By Dr. Louis D. Silveri

S O U T H E R N H I G H L A N D S R E S E A R C H C E N T E R

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Interview with Richard Jarrett on June 18, 1976. Interviewed by Dr. Louis D. Silveri.

Side 1, Tape 1

Richard Jarrett: I was born in Madison County, down there at Marshall at the mouth of Ivy in 1908.

Dr. Louis Silveri: 1908.

Jarrett: July, 28, 1908.

Silveri: How far back can you trace your ancestors?

Jarrett: Oh, I don't know how ^{far} back. You can trace some of them. Some of them might not want to find out too much about it. They went back ^{for years} down there in Madison County. My grandmother, they said, was German-Irish, I believe it was. She was redheaded. Dutch-Irish, I believe it was.

Anyway, they used to have an old Bible that was in Dutch, but I don't know whatever become of it.

Silveri: What was your mother's maiden name?

Jarrett: She was a Rector. Cora Rector.

Silveri: That's a pretty common name in Madison County?

Jarrett: Yes.

Silveri: Jarrett is pretty common in Madison County.

Jarrett: Yes.

Silveri: Did any of your ancestors fight in the Civil War?

Jarrett: Oh, yes. Yes.

Silveri: What stories have you heard about that?

Jarrett: I've heard not too many stories about that. My daddy used to tell me some about his grandpa and some of them.

Silveri: What side did they fight on?

Jarrett: Oh, the South! I've heard them tell about that, when they went off, and then the renegades was around (the deserters that didn't fight on either side). He used to tell some about how (i guess his grandfather told him or his father) they used to come down /^{and} rob the people when there wasn't anybody but the women and children left at home.

Silveri: They called them bushwhackers, too?

Jarrett: Yes. Bushwhackers and renegades.

Silveri: Can you remember your grandfather and grandmothers?

Yes.

Jarrett: I can remember my grandfather on the Rector side. I can remember he had a big, long beard, and my grandmother on the Rector's side. My grandfather on my father's side, I don't remember him, but I remember my grandmother.

Silveri: Did the grandparents engage in farming?

Jarrett: Yes. They farmed altogether.

Silveri: How many children were in your father's family?

Jarrett: Let's see. There were seven, I think, on my father's side. There was six on my side.

Silveri: In your family.

Jarrett: Yes. There was five boys and one girl.

Silveri: How about your mother's family? Do you remember?

Jarrett: I don't remember how many there was. There must have been six or seven of them. They were all big families.

Silveri: When you were born, you were born on a farm down at the mouth of Ivy where Ivy Creek comes into the French Broad?

Jarrett: That's right. There in an old log house that used to be ^{down} where that bridge goes across now, but the old house upon the hill that's still about to fall down, that's the one my daddy built. After this one, we got the flood. (that that was 1916), washed us out down there, and he built this one up there. That two-story house up there, him and old man John Kuykendall built that house.

Silveri: Were you the youngest or the oldest in the family?

Jarrett: No. There was one older than me.

Silveri: So, you're the second born?

Jarrett: Yes.

Silveri: What do you remember early in life about--

Jarrett: Oh, I remember--

Silveri: Going to school, the chores you had to do around the house?

Jarrett: Oh, yes. I remember my old dog Boozer. Then I remember the way we used to have to walk to school, four miles to go to Grandview. We didn't get but one pair of shoes a year. We'd have to save them. A lot of times, frosty mornings, we'd wait 'til the frost got off before Mother would send us to school, so we had to go barefooted. They had a one-room school. That was

Jarrett: (continued) at Grandview, but that old school's not there now. There's a big house built up there. Some farmer bought that old school, and it's down below there on Panhandle. There's a branch that goes down there called Panhandle. The fellow bought it, and brought it down there and uses it as a tobacco barn now.

Silveri: What was your father doing for a living when you were born?

Jarrett: He was farming then. Then later there he put up that store at the mouth of Ivy.

Silveri: Put up a store on his own land?

Jarrett: Yes. On his own land there.

Silveri: Did he continue to farm when he had that store?

Jarrett: Yes. He did. He farmed.

Silveri: About how many acres did he have?

Jarrett: Oh, there he had about sixty acres. He had some on both sides of the river. He had an old ferry boat that would go across it. Take a wagon and team in it and go across on the other side to the bottom land over there.

Silveri: His own ferry boat?

Jarrett: Yes. His own ferry boat.

Silveri: Did he take other people across the river?

Jarrett: Oh yes! Anybody that wanted to go, but there wasn't no road over there. They couldn't leave from over there. It just went over to his land, but a lot of people didn't want to walk the trestle, and he would set them

Jarrett: (continued) across the river. But he usually used his little boat then. He had a little boat for that.

Silveri: Did you ever swim in the French Broad?

Jarrett: Oh, Lord, yes! And in Ivy Creek. That's where I learned to swim.

Silveri: Is the current kind of rough in the French Broad?

Jarrett: Oh, yes. It is, but some places it's not as bad as others.

Silveri: What did your father raise for crops?

Jarrett: He raised tobacco. He had new grounds. He would tear up new grounds and raise tobacco, corn, potatoes, and had garden stuff. He had hogs and chickens. He had a team, always had a team of mules.

I remember one time. It's kind of funny. I used to like to go to Marshall with him. He'd go to Marshall and get something in the team. I remember one time. I had just got to going with him then. I hadn't been out much. We were coming back up from Marshall, up through this one street there, and up by the depot. The train come down the river. Dad got out to hold the mules. They were wanting to buck; they were trying to run away. He was out holding the mules, (I was setting up in Jarrett, the wagon) and Mr. Keys come by. He said, "Mr. / you want me to help there you hold them mules?" He said, "No. Get up in the wagon and hold that boy! This is the first time he ever saw the train, too!"

I can remember that.

Silveri: How old were you when you first saw the train?

Jarrett: I don't remember.

Silveri: That train must have come not too far from the farm?

Jarrett: Yes. It did, but that's the first time I was ever that close to one. That's the first time I can remember seeing it. I probably did.

Silveri: Did the people in that area ever get much fish out of the rivers?

Jarrett: Oh, yes. Yes.

Silveri: To eat?

Jarrett: Yes. Daddy used to put trout lines in.

Silveri: You had fish quite often in the summer?

Jarrett: Oh yes. In the summertime, and sometimes he would put in fish-traps there in the creek.

Silveri: How would your mother cook the fish?

Jarrett: I don't remember: baked them, fried them, and different ways as well as I remember. I can't remember too much about how she done it.

Silveri: What did the house look like, say about when you first started to school? The house you lived in?

Jarrett: Oh, it was a big old house, log house, and it had a loft. It had two big rooms and a little kitchen off to the side with a fireplace in it.

That was all. Then when I was up ten years old, me and my brother, Sherman, slept upstairs in the loft. Then they had one big room where company come and stayed. Then this other big room where the fireplace was at, that's where Dad and Mother slept.

Silveri: Did your mother cook over the fireplace, or did she have a ^{wood}cook-

Silveri: (continued) stove?

Jarrett: She had a wood cookstove then. Well, she did some cooking on the fireplace. I can remember when she cooked some in the fireplace. It's something that a boy could remember about when they would kill hogs, how she would bake them hog feet on the fire. She would wrap them in a wet cloth, and then put them into the ashes, and put ashes all over them. Bake them like that.

Silveri: Good?

Jarrett: Oh yes. It was good. It come all apart then.

Silveri: How many hogs would your father butcher?

Jarrett: Oh, he would have about two or three big ones in the fall to kill.

Silveri: Did it last you through the--

Jarrett: The winter. Yes.

Silveri: What kind of out other buildings did you have on the property?

What kind of barns?

Jarrett: We had one or two tobacco barns, and then the stock barn was about two stalls for the mules, three for the cows. It was made, so you could walk through or drive a wagon through. They was on that side. Then on this side, maybe the cows and calves. Up above, they put hay up there.

Silveri: Incidentally, is there a farm on that property today?

Jarrett: No. I don't think they farm there any now. There is a big store down there and a ^{filling} / station. The bridge goes across through there.

Silveri: Where you're talking about is up above Alexander, isn't it?

Jarrett: Oh, no. It's down right this side of Marshall. Four miles this side of Marshall. Right this side of Hayes Run. Then you just turn up the creek there, and then Long Branch turned off to the left.

Silveri: O. K. Your father's cash crop was tobacco then?

Jarrett: Yes. Tobacco .

Silveri: That's where he got his money.

Jarrett: They would hand that up, and then they put it in these wagons in these big tobacco tiers and hauled it to Asheville.

Silveri: That's where you sold it? In Asheville?

Jarrett: Yes. Or Newport, Tennessee. I don't know whether there was
I know
a tobacco barn or sales place in Asheville then or not, but there was in
Newport. I guess Newport.

Silveri: And you had to haul it in a wagon?

Jarrett: Yes. You put two or three tiers up on it. They laid down front to front, and the tobacco was all handed-up. Had to hand it up when it was in case

Silveri: Do you remember going in to sell it with your father?

Jarrett: No. I never did. I wasn't old enough. My older brother went with him sometime, but they wouldn't let me go then. I had to stay at home with Mama.

Silveri: How about orchards? Were there any fruit orchards around?

Jarrett: Oh yes. We had a few apple trees and grapevines. Then we

Jarrett: (continued) gathered a lot of blackberries, strawberries, and all of that. My mother canned up a lot of that.

Silveri: Did you have a spring house to keep the milk and other things?

Jarrett: Oh yes. Had a spring house. Then later on my Daddy fixed, up on the mountain, a spring up there with a tank and run a water line down. Had a spigot in the yard. That something modern them days then when you had water like that!

Silveri: Did you ever get water out of the rivers to drink?

Jarrett: No. No, had plenty.

Silveri: The springs never ran dry?

Jarrett: No. Had plenty of springs! We didn't have too much, but we had plenty to eat, ever what it was. Then you didn't have to have all of this stuff. We didn't know anything about this. At night we would usually have cornbread and milk, if the cows was doing good we'd have butter. In the morning, we would have gravy and sausage. Boy, my Mama used to put up some of the finest sausage ever was with sage and all of that in it! Then take it and put it in fruit jars, pack it down there in balls, and then she would pour grease on top of it. She would turn it over, and that would seal it in there. Boy, that was fine! We raised the sage out in the garden.

Silveri: You raised just about everything ^{that} you needed?

Jarrett: Yes.

Silveri: What would you buy?

Jarrett: They'd buy salt and pepper, coffee. We bought it in grains then.

Jarrett: (continued) You had a coffee grinder to grind it with.

Silveri: Did kids start drinking coffee, ^{early,} at an early age?

Jarrett: I don't remember when I started. No. I don't think I drank any coffee back in them days.

Silveri: You mentioned you had cows. You always had a supply of milk?

Jarrett: Yes.

Silveri: There was always a fresh cow?

Jarrett: Yes. It was always arranged to have two, so you'd always have a fresh cow.

Silveri: From that you got your milk, your cream, and your butter.

Jarrett: Yes. She churned it.

Silveri: Did she make cheese also?

Jarrett: No. We never did make no cheese. She made plenty of butter.

In prints, printed out.

Silveri: What about church? Were you members of a church?

Jarrett: Oh, yes. We went to church. We always had to go to church, but I don't remember. It was just a Protestant church. I don't remember what--

Silveri: Baptist?

Jarrett: Baptist or Methodist or what they were, but I know we always went to church.

Silveri: Did the minister ever come over to the house to eat?

Jarrett: Oh yes. Yes.

Silveri: Was it every Sunday you went to church?

Jarrett: Yes. Just about every Sunday, unless it was too bad of weather, or we didn't have good shoes, or something. Mother made all of our clothes, might near everything.

Silveri: Did she weave, too?

Jarrett: No. She didn't weave. Her grandmother weaved, though.

Silveri: Did you have any sheep on the place?

Jarrett: Well, we used to have a few, but not many. He finally done away with the sheep. They were a lot of trouble. We didn't med them, except what he sold. But Grandmother and Grandfather, all, used to have sheep. I can remember their sheep.

Silveri: Did your father ever make any corn whiskey?

Jarrett: No. He never did. He was a teetotaler; he never did drink any. He didn't even smoke, but in his last few years, he got to smoking a cigar once-in-awhile.

Silveri: Why did he open a store?

Jarrett: I don't know. He just seemed to like that or something. He opened a store, and I can remember he had just about everything. He used to sell shoes, cloth on them big bolts. You would roll it out on the counter and measure it and cut it off for the women.

Silveri: About what year did he start the store?

Jarrett: It must have been about 1904 or somewhere around there.

Jarrett: (Cont'd.) The first thing I can remember is he had a store. When I can first remember that, he had a store.

Silveri: Once he got the store going, would you say he made most of his livelihood from the store rather than the farm?

Jarrett: Yes. He'd close it up. Somebody would come and he would go open the store, if he was in the field. Then usually on Saturday he stayed open. My mother was there.

Silveri: Did he build a special building for it?

Jarrett: Yes. He got lumber at the lumber mill and built the store.

Silveri: About how big was it?

Jarrett: Oh, it must have been about twenty by twenty, or something like that.

Silveri: Pretty small store.

Jarrett: And a porch on the front.

Silveri: How far away was the nearest other store, I mean, the closest store to that one?

Jarrett: Well, Marshall, I guess.

Silveri: How far was that?

Jarrett: About four miles.

Silveri: Four miles. It was really a neighborhood store. Was this right on the road that is now Route #70 that goes through?

Jarrett: Yes. Right on that road there. Right in that corner, they call it Ivy River now, but we used to call it Creek. Looking up the creek, it is on the leffhandside there.

Silveri: The building isn't there now?

Jarrett: Oh, no. Not there. Not even the old house where I was born is there any more. There used to be a bridge run across there, and then you went up the dirt road to Jupiter. But that bridge was an iron bridge with a wooden floor.

Silveri: So, he had the store opened about 1904 ?

Jarrett: I guess that's about when he opened it up.

Silveri: Did you ever tend the store yourself?

Jarrett: Oh, no.

Silveri: Too young.

Jarrett: Yes. I was too young.

Silveri: But you did write a newspaper about Christmastime? That's the fondest memory you had about the store?

Jarrett: Yes. I can remember that, when they would go to Asheville.

Dad would hire those Keys boys with their teams. He had a lot of fruits, and herbs, [^]hides, and he would load up and hire them fellows to take their wagon and go to Asheville. It would take them one day to go, and then he would trade one day, and then they would come back the next day. Then some fellows would just go along for the ride and help load. They liked to go for the ride.

Silveri: Did your father have a post office in the store, too?

Jarrett: No. Back then, I think I've heard him talk about that they had barrooms in Asheville then. When he got ready to go, he would have to go to the barrooms and round them up when they were ready to go back. Then one or two of them got left, and they come back the next day on a freight train. I've heard him tell about that. I don't remember nothing about it, but I can remember how they used to camp down there at the baru the night before, snow on the ground and everything, how they used to heat them big rocks ^{to put} /in front of the wagon to put their feet on, and then they would cover their laps with quilts. Some of them would put a lighted kerosene lantern under there and cover it up, and be warm.

Silveri: That was quite a trip into Asheville, wasn't it?

Jarrett: That was a trip. I never did get to go, but my brother got to go a time or two. He was older. He was four years older than me, and he got to go.

Silveri: What about school? Going to school?

Jarrett: Well, I can remember going to school down there. We didn't go too much. It was a one-room school. They had all the grades in there. I don't remember how many grades there were, but I was small then. They had wooden benches, just long wooden benches. Most of the time I think all the girls sat on one side, and the boys sat on the other.

Silveri: Do you remember the name of the teacher?

Jarrett: No. I don't remember the name of that teacher now. Seems like it

Jarrett: (continued) was Miss Sprinkles or something like that.

Silveri: How many years did you go to that school?

Jarrett: I don't remember that either.

Silveri: Do you remember the name of the school?

Jarrett: Yes. That was Grandview. They had a church up there that had the same name, Grandview Church.

Silveri: Was it the same building?

Jarrett: No. It wasn't the same building. It was off a little ways from the school building.

Silveri: Did you like going to school?

Jarrett: Oh, yes. I liked going to school. We had a lot of games we played. Then they had outhouses, one on this side of the hill and one on this side, the girls and the boys. They had a 'lazy gal' there that they'd draw water up to the school. Then the bigger boys would crank up the water.

Silveri: How long was the school year back then?

Jarrett: I don't remember that, but I can remember before they would get out the weather would get cool.

Silveri: Usually they went after the crops were in, or when the crops were laid by.

Jarrett: I can remember some of the bigger boys would have to drop out and help.

Silveri: It was no more than six months of the year, right?

Jarrett: No. I don't think it was.

Silveri: Probably something like three or four?

Jarrett: I don't remember. I just can't tell you that.

Silveri: What books do you remember in the house that your parents had?

Jarrett: Well, I remember the Bible very well. Then I remember an old magazine that my uncle used to take over there. It was called Hunter, Trader, and Trapper. We used to get that. I would borrow that from him and have him to read it to me. I liked that. Then the old Home Comfort Magazine, we used to get that.

Silveri: How about a Madison County newspaper?

Jarrett: They used to have a little paper down there at Marshall, but I don't remember when it come out. I don't think it come out on the route, the rural route, there.

Silveri: No other newspapers?

Jarrett: No. I don't remember any other newspapers down there. Everybody that would come by would tell some news or something.

Now, you remember in that store we used to sell all kinds: Bruton Snuff, Railroad Mills, Arbuckle coffee, apple tobacco, and Samson Twist. I can remember a lot of that. I know my aunt dipped snuff. Well, Mother did, too. Sweet Railroad Mills, that's the kind they used to dip.

Silveri: What was snuff? Just ground-up tobacco?

Jarrett: Yes. They would just put it in their lip.

Silveri: Is it kind of like chewing tobacco?

Jarrett: Just hold it in there.

Silveri: Hold it in there. Well, you mentioned before that you left Madison County in 1910?

Jarrett: 1918.

Silveri: Oh, 1918. Oh, you left it at ten years of age?

Jarrett: Yes. I was about that age then. I don't remember exactly.

Silveri: Why did your father move?

Jarrett: Well, he wanted to get up here where he thought it wouldn't be so far for us to go to school to better schools. This was the three-room school down here.

Silveri: So, he just sold the farm and bought another one here?

Jarrett: Yes. Then he come here and bought it, and we moved up here in wagons.

Silveri: What time of year would that have been? The summer?

Jarrett: It was spring, I believe it was. Or was it in the fall? I have forgotten now. But anyway, he came up here then, and hunted around and bought it. He sold the place down there to old man Candler in Marshall.

Silveri: Do you remember how much he sold it for?

Jarrett: Three thousand dollars.

Silveri: For the farm and the store?

Jarrett: Yes. Everything.

Silveri: Everything in the store?

Jarrett: Everything for three thousand dollars, and he came up here and bought this place for four thousand dollars. Then he was a long time paying

Jarrett: (continued) this off.

Silveri: Forty-five acres?

Jarrett: Yes.

Silveri: What kind of buildings were on here?

Jarrett: That old house right down there.

Silveri: Those old log cabins?

Jarrett: No. The one right down, the white house. That's where my sister and brother-in-law lives now.

Silveri: Moved here in about 1918. The war was on then, the First World War?

Jarrett: It was just over.
just

Silveri: It was ^{over} when you came.

Jarrett: Yes. For my daddy didn't have to go, but he was in a home guard down there. I can remember when he had to go to Marshall and drill. They had somebody down there drilling them.

Silveri: When you moved here in 1918, what was this area known as? What was the name of it?

Jarrett: It was Bent Creek.

Silveri: Bent Creek area. In Buncombe County?

Jarrett: Yes.

Silveri: Did your father also want to move as close as he could to Asheville?

Jarrett: Yes. He wanted to get not too far away, but he didn't want in the city.

Silveri: Was this a working farm that he had?

Jarrett: Yes. He worked there. He sold off and got a little black mule named Coally and a one-horse wagon, and he farmed this place. We raised some tobacco here and corn, and molasses. We used to make molasses right over there. They had an old boiler type, not the evaporator type that they have now, and bring it right down that hollow there. This was all fields back in here then. People who lived close around would haul their cane here, and they used to make their sorghum here. They would skim molasses and boil all night there sometimes.

Silveri: And put it up in big jars?

Jarrett: Yes. Or cans, five gallon cans.

Silveri: What did you use it for?

Jarrett: Oh, you eat it! Fine eating.

Silveri: On biscuits ?

Jarrett: On biscuits or cornbread, either one. You could put it in your plate, take some butter and mix it all up. Boy, that was fine eating.

They had barn-cured tobacco. They had to cure it by heat. There were furnaces in the barn, hanging all up in there. They used to have a bed made in there, and they would stay all night. They had to keep the fire going to cure the tobacco.

Silveri: Tobacco was hard work, wasn't it? Raising it?

Jarrett: Oh, that was hard work. I can remember when I used to do it, as old as I was. We used to have to work tobacco and hoe tobacco, and set out tobacco.

