

Interview With

**Bud Hamer, Bobbie Hamer, & Harrison Hamer**

**Texas Ranger Descendants**

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Project: Texas Rangers

The Hamer Brothers

Interview Conducted At

The Texas Ranger Hall of Fame & Museum

Waco, Texas

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Interviewed By: Robert Nieman, Longview, Texas

**E-Book Project Staff:** Robert Nieman, Volunteer; Byron A. Johnson, and Christina Stopka Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum staff.

Present At Interview: Flavus “Bud” Hamer, Bobbie Merle Hamer Smith, Harrison Hamer III, and Robert Nieman



## Introduction

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## The Hamers

Bud Hamer, Harrison Hamer III, & Bobbie Hamer Smith

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** We're here to interview descendants of the Hamer family. I'll let each one introduce themselves in a second. We're in the office of Byron Johnson, Director of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum in Waco, Texas, and this is Saturday, September 23, 2000. And we'll start to my left and please introduce yourself, your name and what you go by if you have a nickname and your descendant.

**BUD HAMER:** All right, my name is Flavus L. Hamer, Jr. I'm called Bud, for obvious reasons. My dad was Flavus L. Hamer.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** I'm Bobbie Merle Hamer Smith, my grandfather was Harrison Hamer and my dad was Clint Hamer.

**HARRISON HAMER:** My name is Harrison F. Hamer. My dad was F. A. Hamer, another Frank Hamer he was, and my grandfather was Harrison L. Hamer, also a Texas Ranger.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And for the record, Bud we'll start with you again, where do you live currently?

**BUD HAMER:** I live in Dolan Springs, Arizona.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** I live in San Antonio, Texas.

**HARRISON HAMER:** I live in Fort Worth.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Unless it's raining and then you go to .....?

**HARRISON HAMER:** San Saba [Texas].

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** All right.

**HARRISON HAMER:** To visit the mob.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay. Only because Flavus was the youngest, we'll start with Harrison, cause he's the oldest and just let you take off Harrison.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Well.....

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And Harrison, you go by Sonny, right?

**HARRISON HAMER:** Yes.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Sonny is a family nickname that I go by, which to keep the confusion down between my grandfather and me, within the family. I go by Sonny.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well here we'll refer to you as Sonny and Bud.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Okay, all right. Boy, I can remember my grandfather. They tell the story one time in Senora. I was a little kid.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Senora?

**HARRISON HAMER:** Texas.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay.

**HARRISON HAMER:** I was a little kid, my grandfather was working I guess for the Cattlemen's Association then, or Sheep and Goat Raisers Association. He came home one day and he always was carrying his pistol. He slapped a newspaper in his fist and they said I went running back up there hollering for my grandmother, "Mama Ham, Daddy Ham shot me. Daddy Ham shot me".

Well my grandfather was an honest person. Like my aunt read this morning, his word was his bond. What he said he meant to say and you better listen. And he was kind of stern. I've heard stories about how he raised some of his children. He was very stern. He wouldn't let my aunt wear a bathing suit, it exposed too much. So you can understand how I would think that he shot me

whenever he banged his thing up there.

But he was an interesting man, a very interesting man. But like all Texas Rangers, you couldn't get him to talk about his accomplishments. He would not talk, and I asked him, "Tell me about your experiences."

"Nothing to tell."

And I wished I would of known then what I know now, because Mike Cox has an interview technique, he don't interview direct, he does it indirect. If I wanted to find out about my grandfather I would ask his brother Flavus, and he would tell me about my grandfather. If I wanted to find out about Flavus, I would ask my grandfather, they would spill their guts about them, but they won't talk about themselves. And that's what we should of done when we were kids.

He was a tall man, and had a gruff voice, but oh was he a fine grandpa. He was a real fine person. Growing up in his shadow was a pleasurable experience. As we go along I'll probably think of more.

Bobbie Merle was a little bit closer to him than what I was.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well let me ask you, before we go there, when did he die?

**HARRISON HAMER:** 1977 I believe, August of 1977.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And he's buried?

**HARRISON HAMER:** He's buried in Del Rio with my grandmother. He had two sons that died when they were teenagers. They're buried there. His mother is buried there and .....

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Aunt Pat, his sister.

**HARRISON HAMER:** His sister is buried there.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** He had two sons die as teenagers. What happened to them?

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** One had measles and got out in the rain without completely recovering and had a relapse and died from that. His name was Daniel. They called him Sonny. The other one had a ruptured appendicitis. Of course at that time they had no penicillin or any type of thing like that, so he died from the aftermath of that.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And how many children did Harrison have?

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Seven.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Seven all total.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** While we're on the children. Let me just kind of go around, the oldest of the Hamer boys was....?

**HARRISON HAMER:** Clint.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And did he have any chil.....

**HARRISON HAMER:** Now, but he wasn't the oldest. Bullah was the oldest.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** A girl?

**HARRISON HAMER:** That was a girl.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Then there was Clint.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay, now how many children did Clint have?

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Three.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Three?

**HARRISON HAMER:** This is one of them.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay. And then....

**HARRISON HAMER:** Then there was one they called F. A. Who was also a Frank Augustus

Hamer, that was my father.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay.

**HARRISON HAMER:** And then after him, H. L.?

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** H. L. and then Sonny.

**HARRISON HAMER:** H. L., then Sonny, then our Aunt Wynona, then Robert?

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Robert.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Then Robert, which was the youngest of the group.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** H. L. was Harrison Lester, Jr.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay. And now Clint had how many children?

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Three.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And their names?

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Bobbie Merle Hamer Smith, that's me. Paula Joan Hamer Ramsey and Linda Kay Hamer Stall .... S T A L L.....

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Are you and your sisters still living?

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Yes. I live in San Antonio, one sister lives in Liberty, and the other one lives in Katy.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** All Texas. And then the next brother would of been....

**HARRISON HAMER:** My dad.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** His daddy.

**HARRISON HAMER:** My father.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Harrison, and then .....

**HARRISON HAMER:** No, it would of been F. A.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** And then....

**HARRISON HAMER:** After....

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** .....then H. L. after F. A.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Yeah.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay, after Clint then Frank.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Right.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Yeah.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Frank....

**HARRISON HAMER:** They called him F. A.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay, well for this tape, everybody knows well F.A. Is that what they called him?

**HARRISON HAMER:** That's what they called him. And better to stick with that because you start talking about Frank Hamer's, you have five Frank Hamer's to worry about.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay.

**HARRISON HAMER:** And if we can distinguish between one, we better do it.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay, F. A. had how many kids?

**HARRISON HAMER:** Two .... three. He had three. My mother, who was his first wife he had two, myself and my sister. And then after they got a divorce, he remarried another woman and he had another boy from that, Rodney Paul.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Rodney Paul died in January 1998. He had cerebral palsy. It was sort of a tragedy in a way because I'd searched for him for a long time, found him in about January 1999, a

year after he died.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Oh my.

**HARRISON HAMER:** And I had not seen the boy since 1942.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Hum.

**HARRISON HAMER:** It's a tragedy. I've lived with that all the time. I wished I'd done more. Maybe I could of helped him with his handicap. I understand his life. He'd hired people—caretakers who kind of abused him, you know. I think maybe I could of helped him.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well he had a handicap....

**HARRISON HAMER:** I would like to think I had.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** What was his handicap?

**HARRISON HAMER:** Cerebral palsy. He was in a wheelchair his last several years. I've talked to the people up there in Woodward, Oklahoma where he lived. They say he was an honest fella, interesting fella. Typical Hamer. Had his fun in the bars. He was in this electric wheelchair and he'd be going up and down the streets, police chief read him the riot act and the next night he'd be back on the streets. They finally got him to retire from the wheelchair and not make those rounds.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Let's go back to the four brothers that this reunion is kind of based on. Now the oldest one of those was?

**BUD HAMER:** That was Uncle Estill.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay, did he have any children?

**BUD HAMER:** He was married for about six months. She died and no children.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay.

**BUD HAMER:** That was....

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Her name would of been Grace.

**BUD HAMER:** That's right.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** He married her in March 1911....or what date did I have there?

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** You don't. You just have that she died on November the 4<sup>th</sup>, 1918.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** '18 okay. He married her in March of 1918 and she died in November of 1918.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And he never remarried?

**BUD HAMER:** Never remarried.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Any stories ya'll want to relate about him.

**BUD HAMER:** Stories about him. You've heard some of those.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Uncle Estill was an interesting man. To me of all the brothers, he was the most interesting person to look at historically. He was in the Madeira Revolution.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Where was he at with the Madeira Revolutionists. Do you know what part of Mexico he was in?

**HARRISON HAMER:** You do.

**BUD HAMER:** I don't know exactly what part of Mexico he was in when they were fighting it.

**HARRISON HAMER:** It's in that newspaper clipping.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well that's the reason I'm asking. If it was in the north, in the Senora area up around El Paso, there's a pretty good chance he was with Villa—Pancho Villa.

**HARRISON HAMER:** He wasn't with Villa, I know that, I'm reasonably sure of that.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay.

**HARRISON HAMER:** For another reason, Frank Hamer became friends with Villa's daughter and Frank Hamer and Uncle Estill were not exactly the best of the friends—putting it mildly. I don't think he was there. Historically we see Estill in and out of Mexico a lot. He would stay over here for a while. He was a Texas Ranger. He was a guard with some freight company. He ran silver mines in Mexico, gold mines in Mexico. He apparently was quite wealthy at one time down there. He'd show up down here and then he'd be back in Mexico.

And I could show you date wise where he was in the United States around 1908. He wrote a letter to my great grandmother that Uncle (?) was going to die from mercury. He was mining mercury in the Telingo area. They wanted to get him out of those mines. It was going to kill him. It did kill him, He did die of mercury poisoning in Arizona not very long after that. And they couldn't get him out of the mines. We have a letter to that affect. That was 1908, 1915, '20, somewhere in there. He was back in Mexico and then he was back in the United States.

Frank Jr. or Frank III and I are looking at the man's history. Had he been living today, doing what he did, they'd call him a soldier of fortune. Man he was everywhere and he has the most interesting, colorful stories to tell of any of the Hamer brothers. Some of it's in writing, some of it's stories, but I believe the stories. We got a letter he wrote in 1960 in his own....

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** 19 and when?

**HARRISON HAMER:** '60. Written in his own handwriting. Now I visited the man in 1957. I knew him then. He wrote this letter in 1960 to my Aunt Pat and one of the things in there that he wrote was he had hiked up into the Sierra Madre mountains in Mexico. Now he was born in 1882, that would make him 78 years old. He hikes up in there and he writes in there he was at the 7,000 foot level. The jaguars, that's what he called 'em, killed his mules and his dogs. At eleven o'clock at

night he started hiking out of there and he didn't run across a house until three o'clock in the afternoon, before he could get transportation on into civilization, as he put it. Seventy-eight-years old doing this. That's something to be said.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Was there anything in particular or is it just a general dislike that Frank and Estill had one another?

**HARRISON HAMER:** I think....

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** It was probably more of a personality conflict. The oldest son and the next oldest son and apparently he was quite close to Aunt Alma from everything that.....

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Aunt Alma would of been?

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** That was one of his sisters.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Younger sisters.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** From everything I've been able to put together and piece, he was probably closer to his sisters than he was to his brothers. I don't know whether that was a sense of competition or what it was, but in the letters and in the stories that my mother told about him and how he and Aunt....he was always teasing Aunt Alma and they were constantly getting back at each other, constantly and all of the interactions that they had. I get the impression that he was much closer to his sisters than he was to his brothers and it was probably some type of competition among the brothers.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay, we'll come back on all of this. Let's move on. Frank is the second.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Yes.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And he had how many .....you say he had three.....

**HARRISON HAMER:** He had two children. His first wife was named Molly. They were married, we think, in Dallas in 1911.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** We know that.

**HARRISON HAMER:** We know that because we got a postcard that Molly sent back to our Great Grandmother where they were married. I'll read from it, she says here, "Dear Mother, we were married Sunday and are in Dallas now. We will return to Navasota in a few days. Write to us soon. With Love, Molly" It's post marked Dallas, Texas, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 11:30 p.m., 1911. And it's shows on the side the old Southland Hotel in Dallas, Texas. We have heard that she died at a Sunday school picnic about six months later. She drowned. And then later on he married Gladys Hamer, or Gladys Johnson she was then.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Gladys Johnson Sims was her name when she married, cause she had been married before.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Okay, she had two daughters, Beverly and ah....Tr.....

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Helen.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Helen, and he just adopted 'em. Boy they were his. Now they felt like that was their daddy. And you talked to the family now and they still think the same thing of him. Then him and Gladys had two sons, Frank Jr. who is still alive and on the display case in there. He is the only one that's in that display case that's still alive. Everybody else is dead. But there was Frank Jr., he was the oldest, he was a Marine Corp fighter pilot during World War II. He was a Texas Ranger, a bodyguard for Allen Shivers, and then he changed over. They offered him a job flying an airplane, he'd rather fly, so he became a Game Warden, went to work for the Game and Fish Commission, that was whenever they were independent.

And the other son was Billy Beckham. Billy was married to a woman named Joy Stubblefield. Joy and Billy broke up Billy was in the Marine Corp. I think of Billy, and other people may disagree with me, but I have a military background and I'm retired from the Air Force, so I can associate with military people. And to me Billy was a hero, he was one of the people that died in the invasion of Iwo Jima and he has a high Marine Corp decoration for it. To me he is a real true hero. Those people at Iwo Jima are nothing but heroes to me. He died there.

His daughter, we don't know what happened to her. Her name is Beverly Ann, we've tried to track her down. Uncle Frank told one of my cousins, Alma Grace, one time that he knew where Beverly was and she didn't want to be found. She didn't want to be part of the family and he told her, he told Alma Grace to just leave her alone, the poor girl's been through enough, just leave her be and she's disappeared in the mist. We don't know where she is. And we're honoring that desire of his.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay now, the third brother would be Harrison.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Third brother was....well no the third brother was Sant.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** His name was Clinton Sanford.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Yeah, they called him Sant, S A N T and he was the one that died of mercury poisoning.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Aunt Pat wrote in one of her letters that he was extremely strong, very strong, he could pick up a half a barrel of water. I don't know how much that weighs, but he also....

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Assuming that's 55 gallons and 8 pounds to the gallon, that's a lot of weight.

**BUD HAMER:** Eight pounds to the gallon, yeah.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Anyway, on a bet one time, in a bar or somewhere, somebody bet two men that they couldn't hold him down. So he laid down on the floor, two men got on top of him, laid on top of him, and he got up with both of them on him.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Hmmm.

**HARRISON HAMER:** A very strong man and yet you read about him dying of mercury poisoning at a young age.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Did he have any children?

**HARRISON HAMER:** He was never married, that we know of.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Then the fourth son would be Harrison?

**HARRISON HAMER:** Fourth son would of been Harrison.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And then your father would of been the fifth. Do you have any brothers and sisters?

**BUD HAMER:** My brother died in 1965 in a boat racing accident.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** What was his name?

**BUD HAMER:** Bartsey Charles Hamer.

**HARRISON HAMER:** He was a professional boat driver, he didn't say that, he raced hydroplanes.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Tell us something about your dad.

**BUD HAMER:** Well of course dad was the youngest and by the time dad was born the other brothers were grown up. So the girls and him was the ones that .... and they were older than dad.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** When was your dad born?

**BUD HAMER:** 1900.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay.

**HARRISON HAMER:** One hundred years ago.

**BUD HAMER:** February the 21<sup>st</sup>, 1900. I think it was the 21<sup>st</sup> wasn't it....22<sup>nd</sup>....I think it was the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**HARRISON HAMER:** You're the son, not I .

**BUD HAMER:** Well see George Washington's birthday is the 22<sup>nd</sup> right?

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**BUD HAMER:** That's right, he used to say, "I was born one day and George was born the next". But I guess during school, I guess he liked to fight when he was a kid, and when he grew up too, for that matter. He told me that his sisters had to help him home quite a number of times cause his eyes was so black and swollen he couldn't see where he was going. But anyway, he left home at an early age.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Now where was he raised?

**BUD HAMER:** West Texas I think.

**HARRISON HAMER:** He was born in Goldwaith and Grandpa Hamer moved around, whenever, as Uncle Frank used to brag that he had an Oxford education, can you believe that. That's because he went to school in Oxford, Texas and that's right south of Llano and at that point and time I know that my grandfather was there because McSwain—I think was the family name—tried to hire Uncle Frank to kill somebody. Uncle Frank told 'em, no he wasn't going to and not only wasn't he going to not kill 'em, he was going to go tell 'em. And somebody told him, said, "You go tell 'em and you know McSwain will kill you". And Uncle Frank says, "He can try". And sure enough he went and

told ‘em and McSwain did come by to shoot him and to kill him, from a wagon one day. They were out plowing a field for McSwain, and now this was in the book by Shelton, that’s where I read it.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Your grandfather Harrison was out there in the field with him.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Yes. Apparently they were kind of close during this period of time. And my grandfather hollered at him and McSwain was over there with a gun, said, “Duck, he’s going to shoot him”. McSwain apparently got off a shot and my grandfather hollered at him and said, “I can shoot him from here” and Uncle Frank said, “No, don’t do it”. And they didn’t shoot him. I think they kind of beat him up a little bit or he may of wound up shooting him a little bit later.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** I think they went back down there and then shot him.

**HARRISON HAMER:** He didn’t have a choice.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Yeah.

**BUD HAMER:** Well Uncle Frank, he did shoot and McSwain shot Uncle Frank.

**HARRISON HAMER:** McSwain....yeah.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Yeah.

**BUD HAMER:** And Uncle Frank had to go get well before he’d come back.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Was that the one that Daddy Ham killed because he was trying to kill Uncle Frank?

**BUD HAMER:** No, no that was back ....that was ah....

**HARRISON HAMER:** Unc....this one here, Daddy Ham was going to shoot him....

**BUD HAMER:** Yeah.

**HARRISON HAMER:** ....and Uncle Frank said, “No, don’t”.

**BUD HAMER:** But Uncle Frank come back after he got well from being shot.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And did kill him.

**BUD HAMER:** And did kill him, killed McSwain.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Yeah.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Yeah, that was in Oxford. Now there's another story, there's some other stories that nobody knows about, about Uncle Frank. And whenever my grandson was graduating from Border Patrol school his fiancé was sitting in the airport terminal in Atlanta. And just casually....there was some reason or other this woman next to her, older woman, got involved in a conversation. She found out that that this young lady had been to my grandson's graduation. My grandson was a decedent of a Hamer and this woman knew Frank Hamer. And she was telling about the time she was carrying some water or something and there was a woman in the street that was about ready to get shot or something, or that shot a man.....a woman in the street shot a man. And whenever all the dust settled Uncle Frank told the authorities he shot him, to keep the woman from being blamed for that shot. I've heard that out in West Texas one time that Aunt Gladys shot somebody. You got to understand, we had some tough.....

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well Frank got shot in that incident too. That incident is covered pretty well in Bill O'Neill's book on Pink Higgins.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Where ah....

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Gladys and Frank and Harrison were all blazing away at people and ah.....

**HARRISON HAMER:** Well Gladys shot somebody and Uncle Frank took credit for for shooting him.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well he ended up shot too.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Yeah.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And then Harrison got in on the shooting too on that deal.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Was that the one where he saved saved his life....

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Yeah that was over Gladys' first husband and all that stuff was going on.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Yeah.

**HARRISON HAMER:** There's another story, now Frank Jr. told me this one and I don't know how true it is, that's the first time I heard about it. This may be the prelude to that story, that Uncle Frank was down in Del Rio and my grandfather, and I refer to my grandfather as Daddy Ham, so if I slip and call him Daddy Ham I'm referring to my grandfather.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** That's Harrison Hamer.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Harrison Hamer. Daddy Ham was up there and he was a bodyguard for Gladys. I didn't know Daddy Ham was ever a bodyguard for Aunt Gladys, but they said that was true, and the word got down to Uncle Frank in Del Rio that there was people up there, McGinns or somebody, that was going to try and get into a gunfight with my grandfather and shoot and kill him. They were stepping on his boots, grinding 'em, spitting on him and everything else. Uncle Frank threw his saddle on his horse and rode up there and shot 'em. Frank Jr. is the one that told me that story.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well on the story of Gladys and Frank and Harrison and all in it, I'd recommend you get the book called Pink Higgins by Bill O'Neill, it covers that....

**HARRISON HAMER:** Is it in here in the book store?

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** I don't know if it's in here or not....

**HARRISON HAMER:** Where can I get it?

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** .... but it covers that incident real well.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Where can I get that?

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** I check on that later. Let's go back to your dad. You said, now he left home at an early age.

**BUD HAMER:** Yeah. He left home at an early age and got a job as a horse wrangler.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Let me interrupt you once more, you remember about what age he was when he left?

**BUD HAMER:** He was about 12 or 13.....

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay.

**BUD HAMER:** .....when he left home.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay.

**BUD HAMER:** He went to work for a cattle outfit. I don't know which one it was and then of course when he got older he went in the Texas Rangers. And he was in the Texas Rangers off and on for quite awhile.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Yeah.

**BUD HAMER:** He had his share of riding and fighting too, and stories just like Sonny was saying, they didn't like to talk a whole lot about it. Now he told me stuff about Uncle Harrison and Uncle Frank.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well can you relate some of those stories for us.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Yeah.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Let me inter.....have ya'll pulled your ancestors records over here?

**HARRISON HAMER:** I think what they didn't have, we supplemented.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay, I didn't know if they had their service record in there, but anyway we'll.....

**HARRISON HAMER:** I think I've got ..... I know I have a lot of his dad's service records that I've passed on to him. I don't have anything on her father, maybe I do, she may have given me some. She gave me some of my grandfather's, I don't have any of Frank's.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay, let's go back, I got sidetracked there.

**BUD HAMER:** Anyway according to my dad ah.....you hear all these stories about how fast Uncle Frank was and how good he was a shot, but according to my dad Uncle Harrison was probably one of the finest shots there was. And my dad was too. He was extremely quick to begin with and extremely accurate. He shot geese with that .44 in there and stuff like that while it was flying. So you can figure he must of been a fair shot.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Yeah.

**BUD HAMER:** And he was a heck of a rifle shot too. Dad had been shot a number of times. But he never would say where the shots came. He got shot in the leg. I got to tell this one, even though it's on tape. The time he investigated himself.

**HARRISON HAMER:** I got....yeah he started telling this.

**BUD HAMER:** He was in the Ranger service and my dad, like all the rest of the Hamers he definitely, definitely liked women. He wasn't married of course and so anyway, it seems him and this gal got together and apparently they were really enjoying their selves and the old boy, her husband, and he didn't know she was married, he said, I don't know. But anyway, apparently he came home. They was in the oil field, I think probably Brazoria or somewhere like that. And so anyway, he came home and this woman, she of course didn't want to get caught and she starts

yelling rape. The old man jumped out the window.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Your dad?

**BUD HAMER:** Yeah, my dad jumped out the window, the old boy shot him. Shot him in the leg.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well I just got to ask, how was he dressed when he went out the window?

**BUD HAMER:** Well apparently he had his boots on, I'm not sure whether he had his pants on or not. But anyway.....

**HARRISON HAMER:** His hat too.

**BUD HAMER:** I guess he had his pants on too. It must of been one of those kinds that wasn't planning on being an all night occasion or something. But anyway he took off and he went down to the headquarters, Ranger headquarters. About that time they got this phone call that somebody tried to rape this lady and they had to go out and investigate it. So of course dad had to go. He said he got out there and he was investigating and his boot was full of blood. Apparently they never did catch the perpetrator. I always loved that one.

But no, my dad an extremely fast man and I believe that my dad was the first cop, city police, in Pecos, Texas. And he was in different parts of law enforcement through the early part of his life and he did a lot of ranching, did a lot of rodeo. He was a heck of a roper and a heck of a bronc rider.

And he was an extremely strong man. He was slim, slim built, but his hands were probably twice as big as mine. And they told off on him that down in that area where he was there was a lot of horses with broken ears, because rather than snub a horse, when he got ready to .....

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** What's snub a horse?

**BUD HAMER:** Snub 'em up to a snubbing post to where they can't move.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay.

**BUD HAMER:** Well it seemed that dad would just reach up and grab ‘em by the ear and hold ‘em and go ahead and saddle ‘em. And in doing that he’d break their ears down because he was holding ‘em so tight they couldn’t get away. And I know that he was very strong, he could straighten a horseshoe with his hands. Just take and straighten one straight out.

**HARRISON HAMER:** That’s two of ‘em, Sant was strong too.

**BUD HAMER:** Yeah, but dad’s arms were long and everything was thin, looked like they was thin, but it was long ropey muscle. He was extremely strong. And anyway, like I say, he was in law enforcement and he had a contract with Dal Magnesium down in Galveston, Texas when I was just a baby. He got measles and he went out to work on some equipment that was broke down while he had those measles. Well when he come back he was really sick and as a matter of fact he was out for three days, when he woke up he had asthma. So we got to moving and he liked it, so we kept moving. We’ve been to Montana, California, Nevada, first one place then another, but the thing about my dad was that wherever he was he made some kind of a mark when he was there. Like when we were in the Musion Mountains, he was running cattle up there.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Excuse me for just a minute.

**BUD HAMER:** Anyway, he was also the man that wouldn’t walk anywhere.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well I was going to ask you, was he a cowboy?

**BUD HAMER:** Oh yes.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Because I have never talked to a cowboy yet that would hit a lick at a snake if they had to get off the back of that horse to do it.

**BUD HAMER:** That’s right.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Go ahead.

**BUD HAMER:** Well anyway, I'll never forget it. I was just a little old kid then, and the country we was in was so rugged that a horse couldn't walk up the trail. It was right along side the cliff, go up from the bottom to the top where the cattle were up on top, it was a few miles. I don't know many miles, but everybody else would get off their animal and walk up the trail and lead the horse. But my dad wouldn't and of course he had me on a saddle mule so I wouldn't walk either, you know. He didn't expect me to walk, he expected me to ride that horse. We rode up cliffs that you could spit down a half a mile and never thought anything about it. We'd just ride up over the top of it while everybody else walked. They said he was the only one in that country that rode a horse up that thing.

**HARRISON HAMER:** I have to tell you about his dad and a characteristic of the family, these brothers, that I have observed. In looking at the pictures, the old pictures of these people whenever they were 20 and 30 years old, every case, they stood straight like they had a piece of steel up their back bone, a steel pole. That was a characteristic of all of them I believe. And his dad, whenever I look at his pictures, man he's just as stiff as a board, standing just as straight as an arrow in every case. Now if he rode a horse like that, he must of been a hell of a sight on that horse with that standing up tall like that.

**BUD HAMER:** Well he could dang sure ride one I'll tell you.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** I've read that Frank didn't care that much for horses. If he could go some other route other than a horse, he went.

**HARRISON HAMER:** He liked to ride horses.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** He didn't like to wear cowboy boots. He used to drive the Rangers crazy, cause he would wear shoes.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** You know, one characteristic of all of them is they were loners in

basically everything that they did. When I say loners, they were very personable, got along fine with people, but when they did anything as far as law enforcement or anything, they were loners. And very remote, at least I know my grandfather was. And when I say remote, I mean very, very private, he would never discuss anything personal for anything in this world. That just wasn't something that he did. Frank he was the same way. He was never of anything personal at all. And Estill was apparently a very private loner and I....

**HARRISON HAMER:** Extremely.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Yeah, and ah.....Flavus to probably.

**BUD HAMER:** Yeah, my dad....my dad was he....

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Yeah, they were very, very private people. I have grew up very, very close to my grandfather. We spent a lot of time with him. You could talk to him and he would talk to you all the time, if he had anything to say. He didn't just sit over there and jabber about nothing. If he had something to say he said it. But he didn't ever talk about himself. I was asking Sonny, can you really stop and think about anything he actually discussed and anything on a personal level. No you never can. He never discussed anything on a personal level. It was always an impersonal conversation, what may happen today or what was the score in a domino game or something like that. He was not a personal. He [was] very, very private and my dad was that way. They all were very, very honest. My dad got very, very upset because they wanted him to sign a contract. He said, "If I shake hands with you, it's good, you can take that to the bank, any bank in the world, it's good". And we would say, "But daddy that's not the way it is now days, you have to sign a contract, not only to protect them, but to protect yourself, because everybody is not as honest as you are". And just before he died, two weeks before he died he was sitting on the side of the bed, he knew he was

going to M.D. Anderson and would never be back and he was holding my grandson, who was only two years old at the time, and he told him, he said “One of the things you’ve always got to remember all your life is you have to always be honest, your word should always be good and you have to protect your good name”. He said, “Those are the things that are important, money is not important and other things aren’t important, but your name, your word and your honesty and integrity are the things that are important”. And I think this was very, very characteristic of all of them. That was something that was taught to us all of our lives. You did not cheat five cents on an income tax form. If he was supposed to pay a certain amount, that’s what he paid. He really drilled that into us all of our lives, you know, your honesty is one of the most important things. A dishonest person, you can’t trust them in anything that there is. Today, when I look at people and I have somebody lie to me, to me that’s almost as bad as murder or something else, because it’s just you never can trust that person again. And that was something that he was always. They were very quiet. If they had something to say, they said it. If they had something to say you might as well sit back and relax because it was going to take awhile to get out. Talked very slow and it’s a characteristic of all of the men in the family.

**BUD HAMER:** You think they were related?

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** You were very.....

**HARRISON HAMER:** You know that teaching carries down. I go in and whenever I pay my bill at a restaurant or somewhere like that, I’ll make a joke, I’ll say, “50 cents is what that woman over there said” and the woman will sit there and she’ll go through it if she makes a mistake. I gave her a ten dollar bill and she gives me the ten dollar bill back and a couple of ones, I said, “You made a mistake, that ten is supposed to be yours”. Very few people will correct somebody, they’ll take the

ten and go on and run. I don't. That's what my grandfather taught me, honesty like that. And ah.....

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** I would assume they were the type people, basically, if I owe you a penny, you're going to get it.

**HARRISON HAMER:** That's right.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** But if you owe me a penny, I want it.

**HARRISON HAMER:** That's right.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** I've driven all the way across the whole city of Montgomery, Alabama because they gave me two cents too much change. And the woman said, "Well what do I do with it now". I said, "That's not my problem, it's yours."

**HARRISON HAMER:** I've done the same thing.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Yeah.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** I'm sorry, the oldest brother's name was ...again?

**HARRISON HAMER:** Estill

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Estill and Frank weren't very close, but how about Estill and Harrison, or Harrison and Flavus and I know Harrison and Frank at one time were very close.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Harrison and Frank were always very close, very, very close. My dad was very, very close to Frank. He worked for Frank when he had a security service for Fort Houston and everything in Houston, after he retired from the Rangers.

**HARRISON HAMER:** He signed his Ranger warrants didn't he.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Yeah. Well he signed one and Estill signed one. But he was very, very close to Frank and he was as close as he could be to Flavus considering the fact Flavus was off in another world most of the time, another part of the country most of the time. So, you know, they

thought a lot of him, but they just didn't see him very much because he was in a different part of the country and he didn't do a lot of traveling.

**HARRISON HAMER:** In reading about the Hamer family, the various books, you always read about my grandfather, Harrison, you'll read about Frank and maybe occasionally Flavus. But you never read anywhere about Estill. And yet whenever I visited Uncle Estill in 1957, I went down there and my grandmother told me, "Go to the Bowman Hotel, that's where you'll find him, in Nogales, Arizona". I went there and they didn't know who he was. Finally I got it out of 'em, they said, "Oh you mean Cap, you'll find him sitting on a park bench out there". The guy was a bum, plain and simple. I came back and told my dad and he said, "Oh no, he is rich, you just didn't see, you don't know". In 1970 or the 1960's whenever Uncle Estill died, my dad went out there and he came back and he told me, he said, "You're right, Uncle Estill was poor, he didn't have a dime. But don't you ever breath a word of this to your grandmother or your grandfather, because they believe he died with lots of money." So even whenever he died, they protected his image. I don't believe that Estill was completely outside the family. I think that he was thought highly of, but for some reason or another he just didn't seem to be in the circle that you read about. I can't explain....well I can too explain why ah....part of the reason. Something we haven't brought up and I've been told maybe I shouldn't bring it up.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Huh uh.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Huh? But I think it's part of history and I think that the history needs to be told. And whenever Ma Ferguson got elected to Governor, Uncle Frank quit, he got mad. Now the stories are she fired some and some quit, you can take any side of the story you want. At any rate, he left the Ranger Service.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** I think he left about two or three months before she took office, because he knew what was going to happen.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Yes. Anyway, when she went and got Uncle Estill to be the Senior Captain of the Headquarters Company in Uncle Frank's place, he took Uncle Frank's place. And nobody knew that. And Frank Jr. told me this and I talked to Tina (Christina Stopka) down here and she said, "We don't know, that's a gap". I said, "Well we'll try and find .....if it wasn't Estill Hamer." Now she's advertising it, so she must of verified it. And I am told that Frank and Estill nearly came to a fistfight over that. Frank got madder than a wet hornet at him, about that. I think he felt like Uncle Estill stabbed him in the back. I don't think they would talk to each other after that at all. And that would of been what, '33...'34, somewhere in there.

**BUD HAMER:** Ah.....'33.

**HARRISON HAMER:** '33. Now Flavus here tells me that something happened before he was born and he was born in '39, that came between the brothers and he doesn't know what it is. And I think it was that event right there that kind of split the brothers up a little bit. My grandfather I think was able to ride the fence and stay both ways. But Estill, I think he...boy he was the ah....Uncle Frank I know was madder than a wet hen about that. And exactly how Flavus got involved in it, I don't know, because we find Frank's signature on Flavus' warrants as appointment for Texas Rangers. And on her dad we find both, Uncle Frank and Uncle Estill's signatures. So there was something went on in that period of time that the two brothers fell out. In the book that *Manhunter* by Shelton, you Uncle Estill is mentioned one time in there. They talk about the Hamer family in Oxford, the McSwain incident, and they mention Uncle Estill. But they talk about Uncle Frank's sister, older sister, Estille, he got the wrong sex of the person and he got the name spelled wrong. He should of

said older brother, Estill, is what he should of said and he didn't, he made a mistake there. That's the only mistake I found in the book incidentally, an excellent book. But that caused a riff right there and how deep. We know it went deep between the two, how far it spread between the others, I think my grandfather, he rode the line between it, I don't know about Uncle Flavus, I really don't.

**BUD HAMER:** Uncle....or my dad and Uncle Frank, from the time I was born, and I don't know how long before that, when they were younger..... when dad was younger, he thought the world of Uncle Frank. I mean, Uncle Frank was his hero. But he said happened, now it could of been that, but I do know that they never talked, never corresponded, in all the time. I never met Uncle Frank because of it. Because dad would not have anything to do with him. And vice versa apparently. I have no idea what it was ah.....it was just one of those....you know, one of those things. But one thing about it, my dad I do know, cause I seen it happen, when my dad had a friend, his friend could do no wrong, unless his friend did something ....I mean really wrong to my dad. And whenever that happened my dad would drop him. He could be setting like us right here, my dad could be looking and he'd look right through him, he would never say anything.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well how did your dad get along with Harrison and Estill?

**BUD HAMER:** Oh great. Yeah, he got along with Estill. Of course Uncle Estill he was .... like they were saying, he was down at Mexico most of the time. But my dad apparently ..... I never met Uncle Estill, because we were in a different part of the country, you know. But Uncle Harrison and dad got along swell. And Uncle Estill and dad got along swell. Like I said, the brothers at that time were scattered so they didn't, you know, didn't see each other a lot. At one time years and years ago apparently Uncle Estill changed his mind. Uncle Estill wouldn't write. He would not put anything down on paper. And he told my dad something one time, he said....he said....I'll never forget it, he

said that his brother Estill told him, “Words spoken are as free as air, but words written are always there”, and he said he wouldn’t put anything down on paper. Now that was when he was younger, but then Sonny showed me some letters and stuff like that and told me about how he wrote.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well, as a historian I’d be remiss if I don’t ask this, did the brothers have any resentment or jealousy to the fame Frank got for killing Bonnie and Clyde?

**HARRISON HAMER:** Yes.

**BUD HAMER:** No.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Yes?

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** You think so?

**BUD HAMER:** My dad didn’t.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Daddy Ham did. Daddy Ham....

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** I don’t think so.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Yeah, yeah, I do. This is one thing that I was told, that Daddy Ham always felt that Uncle Frank got fame undeserved. That he....that.....

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Who told you that?

**HARRISON HAMER:** Daddy Ham did....or Mama Ham one, Mama Ham may have. That there was something about the Bonnie and Clyde situation that Daddy Ham resented. That Uncle....ah....what it was, it wasn’t the fact that Uncle Frank did the work. It was the publicity that he got for doing it. That’s what Daddy Ham resented.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** But that wouldn’t of been Frank’s fault.

**HARRISON HAMER:** It wasn’t Frank’s fault, but ....and it didn’t carry into any resentment in the family, my grandfather kept it inside him. Now you heard what I said and you heard what they said.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** But you....you disagree?

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Yeah I do.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Ah....

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Expand on that a little bit.

**BUD HAMER:** As far as I know, now of course I don't know for sure, but I do know that my dad never even acted like there was a resentment there. He did say one time that Uncle Frank hated it, what he had to do, because when he killed Bonnie. She was built a lot like his wife, looked somewhat similar.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Gladys or ...?

**BUD HAMER:** Uh hum. And he hated that, he just thought of that, so apparently, I don't.... like I say, I don't know what happened. But anyway, I know my dad never had any resentment towards that. They did their own thing ah....they all....

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Which story is this?

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay, we were talking about [Bonnie and Clyde]. You didn't agree that they resented Frank's fame from killing Bonnie and Clyde.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** I really don't. I know daddy had a scrapbook of it and he talked about it all the time. And Daddy Ham talked about it somewhat and they saved all these things. And all the time I was living he never showed any resentment. I think they were talking about wanting to take Uncle Frank to go to California and be in a movie because of that. And they were talking about Frank didn't really like the publicity that he got. But I never heard any....and daddy .....and Daddy Ham ah....talked about it somewhat when we talked to 'em about it, not a whole lot. But I never heard any sign of resentment.

**HARRISON HAMER:** It was more, yeah I think it was resentment, Mama Ham told me about it.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Well Mama Ham .....

**HARRISON HAMER:** And she said that it was resentment towards the publicity, not towards what he did or anything like that, it was the publicity of the situation. It was overblown, it was too much. It was exaggerated I think.

**BUD HAMER:** Well I know one time when dad used to read a lot of detective magazines, *True Detective*, that was his favorite book and there was a story of Uncle Frank in that and we were just little kids then. But he brought us in and read the story ....or showed....you know, give us the book to read.... I could read ah....give me the story to read of Uncle Frank. And you know, he seemed like he was proud of it you know, as far as that part goes. And like I say, as far as I'm concerned, as far as I know, I know my dad didn't resent him now. Someone else might of, Uncle Harrison might of, I don't know but....

**HARRISON HAMER:** Daddy Ham never said it to me, he never let on to me, and it was only from my grandmother that I got this, so ah.....I .... I don't know.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Well of course ah.....

**HARRISON HAMER:** You got to understand my grandmother.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** She somewhat resented the Hamer family period, so to look at her view of something like that I think would be .....

**HARRISON HAMER:** More appropriate?

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Not particularly appropriate because I think as far as the family themselves they probably did not. Now what she felt and what she resented and things would be probably entirely different from what they would feel.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Well ah....

**BUD HAMER:** Well it's what she said....(unintelligible).....

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well one other thing I'm going to do on this and then we'll be finished with this all together. And it may have been ya'll that was part of this, that when the movie [Bonnie and Clyde] came out and it made Frank look like a buffoon.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Oh were....made him look like a.....

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And I read where the family ....some family members really....

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Well Gladys sued them.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Uh hum.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** They got a settlement on it, because they said that it wasn't the truth. And all of the family, as far as I know, I know my dad was, were very, very upset at the time that the movie came out, because of the way they betrayed him and seemed to exalt Bonnie and Clyde more than they did the ones that actually got 'em.

**BUD HAMER:** And I was upset, I guarantee you, I was personally upset, cause that was a pack of lies.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Yeah.

**BUD HAMER:** What they put in that movie.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Yeah.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Pack a lies! That makes it sound nice, I thought it was worse than that.

**BUD HAMER:** Well I ....we got ladies present and it's going to be shown, so I figured pack of lies was as close as I could go. Ah....

**HARRISON HAMER:** Okay.

**BUD HAMER:** But the thing is that Uncle Frank and Bonnie and Clyde never made contact at any time during the time he was chasing them. The first contact they had was when they killed Bonnie and Clyde. And that bull about them putting him in that boat and sending him down the river and stuff like that, not even hardly. There was nothing to it, I don't know where in the world they come up with that stuff.

**HARRISON HAMER:** I had occasion recently ....this will show you how things go in circles. I had occasion recently to be called by a lawyer from Houston that wanted to interview me about a lawsuit concerning an aviation accident in New Orleans, about three or four years ago, where some people were killed. I told him yeah, he wanted to interview me as an expert witness type arrangement. So he asked me if I was any kin to Frank Hamer and I said, yes and he told me that the lawsuit that Aunt Gladys sued Warner Brothers for, he took Aunt Gladys' deposition for that lawsuit. And I asked him I said, now through it's a gone thing, it's been thirty something years ago, so I would like to know I've been telling everybody that she lost the case. He said, "No she didn't lose the case. She didn't win it either, it was settled out of court." He didn't know how much. He doesn't know anything cause it was sealed and it's still sealed, so he doesn't know any of the particulars on it, but that there was a settlement. And you mentioned that just now too. So I never did find out anything more, but he said she was a nice lady, very nice lady to do the deposition for.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well, we'll move on from Bonnie and Clyde, but I just felt like that had to be a question that was asked because with the conflicts between Estill and Frank, then all of a sudden he starts getting this fame, you just have to wonder that might deservedly or undeservedly fester.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** I really don't think any of them wanted fame.

**HARRISON HAMER:** No.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** They were too private people, too private a person, every one of them was too private of people to want any kind of fame or notoriety of any kind.

**HARRISON HAMER:** I agree.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** They did what they did because they felt it was right. I know with my dad and my grandfather and what little contact I had with Uncle Frank, this was the part of their makeup. They did what they thought was right.

**BUD HAMER:** But anyway you talk about dad before and he was very private. He didn't want any fame. Now like I told you before, he was quite a gunman too. But he was dead honest, just like the other brothers and that was he main thing. He said, "Your word is your bond." He said, "If I tell you the sun is not going to come up in the morning. It's not coming up." That was just how he felt about it. And his handshake on anything and his word was his bond. And if he told me something he meant it too, no question about it.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well you said how good a shot your dad was and Harrison was a great shot and we know Frank was a great shot and so forth.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** I've seen daddy, who was Clint, drive across the pasture in a pickup, pick up his pistol off the seat and hit a running jackrabbit without ever slowing the pickup down.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And you've seen your dad shoot....

**BUD HAMER:** I've seen dad do the same thing.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** .....shoot geese with a .44 out of the air.

**BUD HAMER:** Yeah, I've seen him kill an antelope one day on a fence line up in Montana. And this antelope come by and of course back in those days that's what we ate up there was antelope and sage chicken, grouse, deer because we was fifty miles from town. We didn't get to town that often.

And this jack....I mean this....antelope run by, the old man just whipped it out and went like that and shot that son-of-a-gun right through the neck.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Was your dad left handed?

**BUD HAMER:** Well no, I'm left handed.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well the reason I'm asking that, I know Frank and I hate to keep harping on him, but I know he got shot in the elbow and he lost, I think it was the left elbow, or the right elbow and that arm was bent. The way I understand it, permanent. I don't remember which arm it was and I think Frank Hamer was left handed.

**BUD HAMER:** No Uncle Sant was left handed.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay.

**BUD HAMER:** Billy was left handed.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Billy Beckham?

**BUD HAMER:** That's Uncle....yeah.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay.

**BUD HAMER:** Ah....the boy....what was his name, the one that died of appendicitis?

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** H. L.

**BUD HAMER:** H. L., he was left handed. As a matter of fact every one that had a boy that was left handed, the boy got killed or died.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Hmmm.

**BUD HAMER:** And that's the reason I didn't figure I was going to make it as long as I did. Cause I was the left handed one in my family.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well the question I was coming to there, this seemed to run like.....are you

left handed son?

**BUD HAMER:** Well....

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** I warn you.

**BUD HAMER:** I think .... I think I broke the spell.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** They were all great shots, was that a natural. Are any of ya'll good shooters?

**BUD HAMER:** Well I used to be a really good rifle shot. Now I never was an outstanding pistol shot, I can shoot a pistol, but I never was anything like my dad. Now with a rifle I don't think that there was too many people any better than me. I used to do a lot of exhibition shooting and stuff like that, not professionally, just because I liked to do it.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Before we get done there's some stuff I want to ask you about over in East Texas and your years over there, that won't have nothing to do with this.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Well the culture has changed where people don't get out, you know, when they grew up, they grew up in the early 1900s, 1890 to 1900 and people carried guns around like you carry your cell phone and your digital camera. You know that was the way they lived. They said Uncle Frank used to go out in the woods and live like an Indian, tracking and stuff like that. And I believe it. I don't know of anybody today.....well my grandson maybe, but people don't live that kind of style now days. They don't....

**BUD HAMER:** My dad did the same thing.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Yeah. They don't go out and live in that type of a culture no more. That's not the way we live. There's not that much outdoors to do it in.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Yeah.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Yeah, but haven't you ever been deer hunting?

**HARRISON HAMER:** Oh yeah, I've been deer hunting.

**BUD HAMER:** Well dad would take me out when we would go and ah....we'd be walking along, he'd be showing me these tracks. He had phenomenal eyes, so did Uncle Frank and Uncle Harrison, I don't know, they all had good eyes, so did I, they could actually see a bullet that left a gun and watch it hit the target. That was how good their eyes were.

**HARRISON HAMER:** I've heard that about Uncle Frank, was that true about your dad too?

**BUD HAMER:** You bet ya. You bet ya.

**HARRISON HAMER:** I have never heard about any other member of the family.

**BUD HAMER:** You bet ya.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** My daddy was a real good tracker. He could look at the ground and say, "Hum, such and such has been by here, a car's driven by here or an animal's been by here," so many hours ago or something like that.

**HARRISON HAMER:** But you see in those days the guns were as much a part of their body as their boots and their hat. And they say that back in those days whenever a man undressed to go to bed the last thing he took off was his hat. And the first thing that went on in the morning was his hat, and then his boots. The guns were just part of their body. That was the culture that lived then and that's why they're such good shots. Charlie Shiner was telling me, Charlie III, that Uncle Frank was going over there deer hunting on the ...(unintelligible)....ranch and he would scoot down, he'd been crippled so much, he'd scoot down and he only went hunting with one bullet. He said that's all he needed. And he'd scoot down and he'd take aim and he'd kill the deer on the run.....if, you know, that kind of a shot, even crippled as he was. So I think it was the culture of the day really. And we don't see that kind of thing today because our culture is different. We got the anti-gun that's coming

up.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Daddy took me hunting and he said, “Now where you hit a deer, you hit it right in the neck, right there where it breaks the neck and that way it doesn’t mess up to much of the meat.” So we went out and we got in the deer blind and I shot my deer and it dropped right there and he went over there and he said, “You nearly missed.” And I said, “How do you figure?” He said, “It went right through the neck.” And I said, “Well that’s just where you told me to put it wasn’t it.” He said, “You mean that’s where you were aiming it.”

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** I could understand. An East Texas friend of mine over there is Wes Whatley, lives in Longview, and Wes was a world champion, NRA pistol shot champion two years in a row, US Army champion three years, and he’s in his 70's and I won’t go to the range with him anymore because he takes a .45, one arm, one hand and you shoot a 1 3/4" at 50 yards and he’d say, “Call your shot.” “What do you mean, call your shot.” “Well what part of that target [bull’s eye] are you going to hit.” I said, “Hell, I can’t even see the target let alone the bull’s eye and you want me to tell you what part I’m going to hit.”

**BUD HAMER:** Dad pull your leg, I mean, like I said, he was dead honest but he did like to have fun and he would hooray you. He killed a snow goose with a .45 single action, flying. This old boy was with him and he pulled that thing up and popped that goose and he told the old boy, he said, “If I didn’t hit it in the head or neck, the shot don’t count.” Well what it was, he could tell the way the goose fell that he’d killed it instantly, you know and shot it in the head or neck. And sure as heck, when they went over there that bullet had hit that goose in the neck and he said that guy told all over the country, he said he’d never seen a shot like that in his life and said, “Hayward called that shot”. But dad was pulling his leg. I’d done the same thing with not particularly that thing, but with a

pistol. I had an old boy wanting to shoot against me one day and he was always shooting. I had that little .38 and he said, "What do you want to shoot at." Well there was a rock, oh about the size of a big marble down the road, it was fifty, sixty feet and I said, "Well let's shoot that." Boy, he pulled his pistol out and he went to work on it and he missed it of course, every time. And I had mine back here and whipped it out like that and went like that and I hit that dang thing. I couldn't hit that thing on purpose for nothing. I just put my pistol back in my waistband like I did it every day you know. That's the way dad used to pull stuff like that too. When I got my first rifle when I was seven years old, dad did not believe in BB guns, he would not let us boys have a BB gun. He said, "A gun is a tool, if you get a toy like that you're liable to shoot somebody." All of our guns was always loaded in the house, the rifles and the pistols and we knew better than to go mess with them guns, cause we knew they was loaded, we were brought up that way. But that .22 single shot ah...on Christmas after my seventh birthday I got it, I've still got it at home now. Now that was a gun that I killed almost all the deer I've ever killed with was with that .22. And of all the deer that I've ever killed, I've shot every one but two between the eyes or in the head, depending on which way they stood. But you know you think that's a real good shot and it is, they're good shots, but if you figure .....you don't shoot at the whole animal, he always taught me that, you pick a spot, that's what you shoot at. Because if you shoot the animal no telling where you're going to hit it. But you figure a deer's head is a lot bigger than a squirrel or something like that and you aim for what you're aiming at, you know and then you can get it where you want to.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Were guns prevalent in ya'll's houses?

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Always, my dad was in law enforcement all his life. When he retired he retired as part of the security force at Roman Haus Chemical Company out of Houston and yeah

we always had a gun in the house. We didn't touch it, like you said, we grew up with them, we didn't touch 'em. That was something that we knew, we were taught. I think probably one of the things that they're not teaching today is you know, that we were taught guns were a weapon, we never touched those things, they could hurt you. But we were also taught some form of responsibility for the things we did.

**BUD HAMER:** Absolutely.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** And so if we did something that wasn't right, we were taught it's not right, you are responsible. But you were wanting to know something about 'em when they got a little bit older. When Harrison, Daddy Ham, retired, he retired on my dad's place out of Giddings. And he and my grandmother lived up there from the time they retired until she died in 1968. And he loved to play dominos, that was one of his....

**HARRISON HAMER:** Oh yeah.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** .....oh he really loved to play dominos.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Play a little moon huh?

**HARRISON HAMER:** He'd beat you every time too.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Yeah, he played dominos in a domino hall downtown. That's one of his main activity then. And he would go to the Ranger [Museum] up here to Waco and he would talk to 'em and he would do different things like that. My dad got into politics. He almost changed Lee County from a Democratic county to a Republican county in the time that he got involved in the politics over there. And he was one of the original directors in the Independent Cattlemen's Association, so he was very, very busy with that for a while. He was a cattle broker and so he bought and sold cattle. He was what they call the Aptosa, down in Mexico for about three or four years.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Do you know what that is?

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** He was an inspector. It was when they had hoof and mouth disease in Mexico, they took American inspectors down there and they were teamed up with a Mexican inspector, or a Mexican down there. And his team mate was what they call....we called Uncle Charlie and he was....he had ridden with Pancho Villa one time, and he was a very interesting little man. Daddy spoke Spanish and he'd been out in the back country in Mexico for quite a few years.....for quite a few days and hadn't gotten a bath or shave or anything, he drove up to a pump to fill up the wagon he was driving. They had some kind of army surplus vehicles they were driving. And an American drove up and started talking to him and he had his book and he was trying to pick out words in Spanish out of this book and he was trying to talk to him in Spanish. And daddy stood there while he was filling up, listened to him for a long time, finally when he got through filling his car he turned around and looked at him and said, "Now if you'll just ask me what you want to know in English I'll tell you." And said that man nearly dropped his teeth. Of course daddy was 6'2" or better and you never, ever saw him without his cowboy hat, I mean that was his trade mark, he had his boots and his cowboy hat. Why they thought he was Mexican I guess because he was in Mexico and he was rather dirty and beard and things at that time. But they still were very, very active in civic type things even though they weren't Ranger involved any more.

**HARRISON HAMER:** They had their own personal bodyguards down there because whenever the inspectors would go out, they would kill the animals that were contaminated with hoof and mouth disease. And these people ....these....

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** They had their soldiers....they carried soldiers with them.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Yeah, these people didn't understand why they were shooting animals, the

animal looked good to them. And they objected to it, so they had soldiers with them to protect them, the just about the whole time you was down there, didn't you.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** He had soldiers with him when he went, Uncle Charlie went with him. They didn't fool with Uncle Charlie, and Uncle Charlie was about 5' tall and about 95 pounds, but he apparently had quite a reputation down there. But we didn't have any bodyguards where we were, we stayed .... (unintelligible)...the times that we were down there was in the summer and we stayed in Marilia. We had a high stone fence around the houses where we lived. But you know, they didn't bother us. But daddy always had soldiers with him when he was down there.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** One other thing I'd like to straighten up for the record here too, we were talking about movies, that it was your grandfather Harrison who captured Jess Newton.

**BUD HAMER:** Yes sir.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Contrary to the way the movie [The Newton Boys] ....

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Right.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** ....the Newton Boys has it being Frank. You want to relate the story, you told me on the phone how he captured him.

**HARRISON HAMER:** Well the newspaper....first of all let me clarify something. The museum here .... I guess the movie people came to them and wanted to know what they had on the Jess Newton gang and who captured 'em and all that. They didn't know and the movie people said they thought it was Frank Hamer. Well they had the Hamer part right, but it wasn't Uncle Frank. Now that was the way it got put out in the movies. And of course we in the family kind of objected to that. If somebody's going to get some credit for something, we'd like for it to be placed in the right place. Whether it's good credit or bad credit, we wanted it put in the right place. Anyway Daddy Ham, at

that point in time he was with the Customs Mounted Patrol, along the Mexican border and so he went walking by there and it was July the 4<sup>th</sup> and they were having a rodeo there. And the newspaper clipping says that Daddy Ham made the comment and said to himself, “Well,” he said, “I’ll go down here and maybe old Jess Newton will be here.” And then he looked around and saw all these Rangers there and he said, “Ahhh, there’s enough Rangers,” and then he said, “Wait a minute, I’m not a Ranger now, so I’ll stick around.” Well Jess Newton and his family came in and my grandfather recognized him. They went up into the stands and my grandfather watched ‘em and old Jess Newton came down out of the stands for something and grandfather walked up.....and my grandfather had a grip, boy was it a grip. I mean he put his hand around your arm like that, you knew that you didn’t break loose. And he grabbed him around the arm like that and he says, “Come on with me, you’re under arrest.” And old Jess Newton .....he walked over there and there was some cowboys over there getting ready for the rodeo, they were at a July the 4<sup>th</sup> rodeo, and he told ‘em, “You watch this guy here and watch him close because he’s a pretty mean man.” And then he went back up there in the stands and he got the manager of the rodeo and he says, “You see that woman up there.” “Yeah”, he says, “You tell her that her husband wants to see her down here.” And the guy went up there and got Jess’ wife and brought her back down there and got out of sight, my grandfather arrested her too. And that’s the story about how .....

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Why did he arrest her, because .... I know she....

**HARRISON HAMER:** Don’t have the faintest idea, I don’t know.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** .....she wasn’t involved in any of the robberies.

**HARRISON HAMER:** He didn’t know that at the time I guess.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay.

**HARRISON HAMER:** That was how he captured Jess Newton. Now the Ranger Museum here has the true story. Somebody comes up and does research on him now, they're going to get the right story, I've seen to that. But that was kind of a sore spot here amongst the family for a while. But you know Uncle Frank, he deserved everything he got, we don't deny him that. But for him to get credit for that was not right. And we wanted to set the record straight on that. There's some other stories about our grandfather. She has some papers that the Mexican consulate, wrote a letter to the Ranger people here about my grandfather's treatment of a Mexican national. They claim that my grandfather caught this Mexican national that illegally crossed the border and handcuffed him to a tree and left him there all day in the sun, and they were complaining about that. So they wrote a letter to the to the Ranger people and they said, "Well he's not a Ranger no more, you want to talk to so and so," and so they wrote a letter to them and they said, "Well he's not with us no more, you want to talk to so and so." And they finally talked to a Mr. Swinning in Senora who was in the Sheep and Goat Raisers Association where my grandfather worked at the time and it just disappeared, nothing ever happened to him. There was another case during prohibition days .... I really like this one here, two situations came up down at Brackettville there in Del Rio there was a general down there that would loan some Army people to my grandfather to assist and where we have drug traffic now, they were bringing whiskey and stuff over. And so he told these Army guys, these sergeants, he says, "Now I tell you what you do....," this was right before sunrise, he says, "You guys sit right here, loan me your rifle, and I'll bring 'em to you." And he got up on top of a hill and he walked up there and there was a volley of gun shots, he said you wouldn't believe, and he waited until they were nearly all the way across and then he went over there and they captured nearly all of them. Another time Washington ah.....this general called him in and he was real good friends with the general, and

somebody had complained about my grandfather, imagine that, somebody complaining. Anyway, they'd complained about him, so the general called him in...or the captain called him in and they said, "Got this complaint and I want to hear your answers." Now you've heard how honest these people are. So he goes down the list and he says, "It says here you did this, did you do that." My grandfather said, "Yep, sure did." "And it says here you did that, did you do that." "Yep, sure did." "No you wouldn't do that, no you wouldn't do that, did you do this." "Yep, sure did." And he went down the list and that's the way it was, they walked out of there, nothing ever happened there. Another time they had my grandfather must of got a lot of complaints out of Washington, cause they sent somebody down to investigate him one time. And my grandfather says, "Okay, let's go over to Mexico," and they went over there and they must of got into a hell of a gun fight over there, because the guy came back scared to death, went back and reported, "Harrison Hamer is doing his job, leave him alone."

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Estill. Can any of ya'll describe him physically? I mean about how tall was he, what did he weigh?

**HARRISON HAMER:** I would say somewhere ....

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** I have out in the car....no I don't, it's over in the motel room, I have his ah....

**HARRISON HAMER:** Enlistment....

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** .....enlistment papers and it tells you....it tells exactly how tall he was, how much he weighed and everything. But I didn't even look at 'em.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well what about Frank?

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Frank was about 6' 4" or 5", he was a big man, he was not only tall,

but he was big. Now Daddy Ham and my dad and Flavus were very slender, they were tall. And Daddy Ham wasn't as slender as daddy and Flavus was much more so than Frank and Estill. Frank and Estill both were bigger boned ....bigger men.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** What about Sant?

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Huh?

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** What about Sant?

**HARRISON HAMER:** We don't know.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Sant what little we know about him, he died when he was 21?

**HARRISON HAMER:** I don't even remember what year he was born, but he died in 1908.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Well I think he was about 21 whenever he died.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well we know he died of mercury poisoning.

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Right.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** So let's go back, what did Estill die of?

**HARRISON HAMER:** Old age.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And Frank?

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** He had a heart attack.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And your grandfather?

**HARRISON HAMER:** Old age.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And your father?

**BOBBIE HAMER SMITH:** Well they said heart attack, I'm not sure, I've got his death certificate.

**BUD HAMER:** Well my dad died just because I think my brother died and he just quit, one day he just decided to die and he did.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well while we were at break you told me a fascinating story about your dad's deathbed and yourself, could you relate that?

**BUD HAMER:** Oh yeah, I got a call, I was down in the Bay area and they said my dad was unconscious. He was in a coma and he'd been in a coma for three days. Now I jumped on a bus and come up and I went in the hospital room and sure enough he was laying down there in a coma. And the nurse had told me that he'd been in a coma for three days and I walked in and I said, "Hi dad," I said, "I'm here," And he says, "Bubba, is that you." And I said, "Yeah," and he got this look on his face, just calm and peaceful and kind of smiled and he died.

**HARRISON HAMER:** That's a good ending for your tape.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** That's a good ending to the tape. Thank ya'll.