



2007 Sesquicentennial Oral Interview

Glenn Jackson

CH: Today is June 4th. This is Cindy Higgins. I am talking with Glenn Jackson for the Eudora oral history project. Now, Glenn, I know you live at 802 Elm Street. How long have you lived at your house?

GJ: Since 1965.

CH: Okay, and can you describe what it was like growing up in that neighborhood and maybe whom some of your posse were?

GW: Well, as far as the houses and physical buildings, there hadn't really been that much change. Almost all of the original houses from back then are still around with very little change to 'em. The people have changed. But, with few exceptions, the houses are pretty much the same. A lot of them from the early 1900s and late 1880s. So, it is very picturesque. Same thing with Main Street. We've had businesses come and go but the majority of the buildings are still the same. My posse, well, we had at the time, we've had two, three, four guys similar age when I moved in, and we had known each other before when we were in school. And, we would hang out. We'd do crazy things; I wouldn't say crazy compared to now. They would not be crazy. At the time, we could get by with and not have to worry our mothers with. Like skateboarding down the hill, which is nothing now, particularly with the tricks that they do, but back then, it was very thin wheels; It's like riding a Model T to a Corvette nowadays. That's how it was. If you could stand upright, it was a big deal. If you could make a little S-curve down the hill, that was about all you could do with those skateboards at that time. You had Mr. Trefz downtown □ I think they had the Trefz Plumbing □ they also had the Trefz Thrift store and we would always go down there and get the candy. He was an old man at the time and I guess he had been doing it for decades. We'd get the candy lips and penny candy, the things available at the point. We didn't go to the grocery store. We went to the candy store, the novelty store. Little knick knacks. There was also Hy-Klas store, grocery store, was downtown at that time. I think, it turned into Colman's hardware store, and it was a flower store. Let's see. Keep me on track.



CH: What was it like, when you were growing up, wasn't there a slaughterhouse almost across the street in the alley? What was that like? Or was that later on?

GJ: Oh, no, no. Yeah, that was kinda interesting. I'm not sure I want to bring that up. Where Pyle's Meat Market is--there was another individual before we got there - in

town, there was another group that had the meat market/slaughterhouse. They brought in animals and they slaughtered them right on site, in the middle of town. When we came there, we had several instances of animals getting loose, wandering up the street, had a couple of very large sows in our front lawn. Yeah, that was not a good thing. They had about one or two bad years like that, and they didn't have any instances.

CH: Then you also grew up pretty much, a walk away from the school, right?

GJ: Yeah, that was the thing. The house was half block from the church, two, three blocks from Doctor Holliday's office where the doctor's office still is now and the pharmacy next door. Everything, even the cemetery, within two or three blocks. Everything was right here.

CH: Do you still feel centrally located? What are your bearings now in terms of where you live and what you do in the town?

GJ: It seems like a lot of things are moving south. If you are going to have growth, you have to go someplace. It's either build high rises in the middle of town or do the suburbs. I would rather have them do suburbs but somehow maintain the character of center part of town and have it not deteriorate. Some places are going to deteriorate in town. It's the nature of the beast, I think, when it comes to town. I just hope it isn't the center part.

CH: After college, and you have an engineering degree, correct?

GJ: Undergraduate and graduate at KU [University of Kansas] in civil engineering.

CH: You spent several years working at the Sunflower Ammunition Plant.

GJ: Spent twenty years. Several years, yes, 20 years.

CH: Would you say that there were several other Eudora people working over there even though it was in shutdown phase?

GJ: When I was there, it was during practically the entire, well, I would say it was the start up and operation and the closedown, and it actually started to disassemble the nitroguanidine area, which was the most modern area and the area they had built up so it is a component of nitroguanide, is a component propellant. They would take it and go off to Virginia, another ammunition plant, and we mixed in and it would become propellant for tank shells, which was used in the last two Middle East conflicts that we were at. Didn't even make a dent. Anyway, we kept making this stuff until it was enough. That's why there isn't a Sunflower plant anymore. They made nitroguanidine and the shelf life on that stuff is a long time and it takes a lot to get down to the reserve. We are trying a little bit to bring down that reserve. Hopefully, we won't have to worry about that too much.

CH: Weren't you one of the last people to be working out there?

GJ: Yeah, we actually changed from the ammunition company that was doing work from an operating contractor to a maintenance contractor. They kicked me out □ just not quite before they brought in someone else to help oversee the plant before until they were able to turn it over to private hands, which was about a year and a half ago, I think. The thing about it is, World War II, there was a lot of people that were brought in from Arkansas, and south of the Mason Dixon Line because our own local guys were off doing battle and preparing to do so anyway, part of them. and others were already out there. They needed the workers to make propellant.

CH: That brings the question: what brought the Jackson family to Eudora?

GJ: That is an interesting thing. We were in Ottawa. My dad was in Ottawa. This is back in the '40s. He moved there. He originally was from west of Ottawa, Paola-Rantoul area. on a small farm and World War II came up, they moved to Ottawa and he worked awhile in a nursery and knows a lot about plants but when World War II started up, he started working in the water department at Sunflower. Because he had some college at KU, an engineer took him under his wing and within 10 years he went from being an operator to the head of the water department.

CH: So, Sunflower brought your family here, in a way.

GJ: In a way. We had housing at the time. There was housing at Sunflower, what they used to call Sunflower Village on one side of the road where the workers were at, had the choice of staying, or you had Sunflower Village, which is a row of houses for the supervisors. And we were in a Staff Village, Staff House No. 1. We were kind of the low end supervisor, even though Dad was in charge of a lot of guys. Then at the far end of the line was the commander of the post.

CH: Like your dad, you worked at Sunflower.

GJ: Yeah.

CH: Like your dad, you both have been involved with Boy Scouts.

GJ: Yeah.

CH: That's what Jacksons do.

GJ: Seems like it.

CH: What year did your dad start? That's Hugh Jackson.

GJ: Yeah.

CH: How did he start and then a short summary of what he did and what you've been up to in Scouts. And are you still the youngest Eagle Scout in Eudora?

GJ: I am not the youngest Eagle Scout. I think I am the second youngest. One of our early Eagles was the same age but I think I got it before him, as far as age wise. Let me

finish one statement □ how we got out of the village, is that they kicked us out in 1965. They said no more private housing. That's how we got moved to Eudora.

CH: No more private housing.

GJ: Yeah. That's probably the short answer to that. But the commander still stayed out there for a few more years. Anyway, this all started back when Dad was a kid. Back then, Scouts started when you were 12 instead of 11. They was no scouting around then, 1926. But his mom said, okay, I can't do scouting (she was a widow, father died two years prior and he was on a farm and three kids). Just a very tough woman but very, very busy, but she bought Dad a subscription to Boy's Life. That's how he got interested in Boy Scouts, but he wasn't able to get into it until he had me and I came of age. At the age of 57 or something like that, he rubbed his hands together, now, we're busy. 1968, '69, '68 I joined Cub Scouts. '69 I joined Boy Scouts and Dad came along with me. In 1970, he became [Boy Scout] Committee Chairman and kept that job up till, I want to say '98, '99, something like that. '98. All that time. I think he was like 85, 86 when he retired off that. He also spent his last 10 years as charter organizational representative for the Lions Club. During his retirement, that's when we really started to go out and visited Philmont; he was a special guest for the '97, '98, '97, somewhere in there, National Jamboree. So, I took him out there, and he had a special area to sit in. That was pretty cool.

CH: With your Scouts right now, what are some places around Eudora that you do go camping at?

GJ: Well, we used to go to Alf Oleson's, just outside of town; it's practically inside town now. He had a nice lot and we camped there several times. We went to Charles Slaughter's farm, which is, that's south of town. Ole's place was just north. We actually built a primitive stone campfire ring ceremonial area and every fall, after summer camp we go out there and have a big outdoor potluck dinner and have a nighttime Court of Honor complete with guys in Indian outfits bringing torches down. We revived that tradition in the last two, three years. And we do Camp Naish. There were several other farms that we had camped at once or twice throughout the years, depending on who was in the troop at the time.

CH: Eudora's managed to keep its Boy Scout troop active all these years, from right now until when you started are there some basic changes? I mean, competition from other organizations, the mindset? What do you deal with that your dad probably didn't deal with as a scout leader.?

GJ: We had in my dad's day - we had different things taken the young man's attention away. The [Vietnam] War, the turbulent 60s where Boy Scouts was irrelevant to everything but even though that was sort of a college thing or older boy thing that kind of filtered down to boys making fun of Scouts type of thing. Today it is not so much that. But it is more on the bad side, you got the drugs, and you had the drugs back then. That is still a constant just a different type. The increase in competitive sports, the higher level organization, it seemed like the amount of time that each season takes and they kind of blend together. It doesn't seem to be - it seems to be slowly crowding out Scout time. And we have not been a very large group in Eudora while organized sports have

grown a lot. Hey, that's fine. I'd rather them be doing something. But for a young man who wants to do both, sometimes his loyalty is pretty well tested. Scouts, and I am very biased, provide the better program as far as being well rounded and being useful in later life and all that stuff. Sports teaches many things about leadership and working within the group and building the physical body and having a lot of fun and you can't be against that. But as far doing more and being a part of something, I think people kind of recognize when you get the Eagle Scout, a lot of people think, I think being an Eagle Scout is a higher honor than having a sports letter. Is that controversial or what? [Sirens are going off at this point] I'm setting the town on fire.

CH: Living downtown there's the fire department.

GJ: The other thing, in my Dad's day, and I think this is a good development, there were no female scoutmasters, female leaders. All the women, the mothers were part of the ladies auxiliary. And they even had in the early 1970s, a patch that said Women's Auxiliary. They were the ones that baked the cookies and planned the reception at the Eagle Court of Honor and that sort of thing. So, around 1990, they said, I think it was around that time, they said guess what? That's not going to happen anymore. So, women now can, as long as they are 18; I think 21, excuse me, 21, they can be anything a guy can be.

CH: Well, besides the composition of the group, I know that you've held meetings at Salem Chapel.

GJ: Yes

CH: And now you are holding meetings in the former middle school or elementary school [on Tenth Street], what is your ideal location?

GJ: That is the question. We've got Mr. Scott, one of our oldest Eagles, remembers making meetings at the Odd Fellows building downtown. That is where he was during part of the 1950s. And, we met at City Hall. One of my first meeting places is the little building besides the gazebo down in the park. Like I said, most of the time, we were in the Salem Church and had been in there for 25 to 30 years. We got pretty spoiled. We had one of the best set ups in the county. Now, we've been to the Methodist Church, and now we are at the old elementary school, the old middle school, excuse me. I don't know. We need a definite place where we find some permanence like we had at Salem and not going to be kicked out next year.

CH: That is your desire for the Scouts. We are doing these interviews for Eudora's 150th birthday.

GJ: Yeah.

CH: Looking larger scale at Eudora itself, can you think of a really good birthday present that if you were able to you would give Eudora. Maybe it is adding, taking away, or has to do with our infrastructure, our buildings. It is not an easy question to have offhand. What's one of the first things that comes to your mind that would make it better for everything including Glenn Jackson?

GJ: Do you have a pause button on that? I'm going to give maybe the easy answer for us begin a scout group. I tend to think: What can Scouts contribute to Eudora? I think the best way is to continue being active and a good example even though there is not too many of us compared to the people out there. People know who we are. They expect certain things from us. Whenever we do something like Mr. Whitten's recent project, putting the sign out at the [Bluejacket] park, something highly visible. Even just doing the flags every year. I think that gives a boost to Eudora's attitude. Long as we keep guys like Mr. [Jim] Morrison attracted to Scouts we can continue doing that.

CH: Can you think of anything you would like to see downtown?

GJ: I would like to where the old buildings are worn down a little bit, I would like to see those re-done. Maybe, I am not going to name buildings. You can go down there and take a look and there's buildings not being used and haven't been used for quite some time and they need repair. We can let them fall apart and deteriorate or we can add some modern improvements on them and make them useful. It could be useful for—right now they are all private property, of course, and there is not much we can do about that. There has to be a willingness to do that. If they can be done, and can be used to put businesses in or other things, like the arts center down there where young people go down there and learn how to dance and do Taekwando or whatever. Or the occasional businesses down there that is unique like the Harley [motorcycle] place, biking accessories, that brings people into town. Yeah. We got some old buildings that have been around awhile. I think we need to keep those buildings up and useful.

CH: What is one place in Lawrence or Kansas City you go to that might be nice to have in Eudora?

GJ: That's a good one. I don't know. We got a lot of, not a lot, several restaurants here. I always think about food; you can tell that by looking at me.

CH: So, you are pretty content with what Eudora has?

GJ: I'll put it this way: Construction work is going on right now, particularly at the pool and the pool building. I know they had wanted to put some things up, which would have been interesting and useful to the community. I know the Methodist Church is putting a new church out south of town, for instance, with a building that might be used for scouts and other organizations. I don't know the condition of that. But if that goes in; that would be a cool thing. All of which improves the visibility of the town and the quality of life thereof.

CH: Been working you pretty hard here, that pretty much concludes the interview unless there is just one message you might say about Eudora having its 150th birthday.

GJ: Talking as scoutmaster, we are glad that we have been a part of this community since for the most part 1929, except for a few years in The Depression. We are looking forward to being part of the community until well into the 21st century.

CH: And beyond.

GJ: And beyond.

CH: Thank you very much, Glenn, this concludes our interview.