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**Excerpts from  
Original Transcript of  
Interview with Barney Whatley  
By Charles Morgan, Jr.  
1970**

(Morgan in parenthesis):

Hugo's father in the later years of his life as I remember ~~was~~ it now, wasn't old enough to know too much about it or care too much about it then - he took to drinking a little too much bootlegged liquor. Never would get drunk but he would get feeling pretty good by it and he ran a little store <sup>in</sup> which I suppose he gave credit to most of the farmers. Farmers had to live on credit all year till they sold the cotton in the fall you know and then they'd go ahead if they could and pay their debts. When old man Lafayette Black died, Hugo's older brother, Lee, took over. In the meantime, Hugo's brother, Vernon, died. Vernon was by the old folks regarded as the most brilliant of the Black boys- for some reason. They all thought of him so. He was just a young fellow. Older than Hugo. I remember distinctly that on those days when a person died, they made his coffin out of boards and tacked black cloth around the outside. But it was the custom that friends came and sat up all night with the corpse. There was no such thing as undertaking parlors and things like that. No such thing as injecting them to preserve them. I remember that I felt ~~that~~ <sup>that</sup> I just had to go and sit up with Vernon along with the others. Why, I don't know. I was just a kid. But I did. I sat up all night long. A lot of the old people did too. Old men mostly. I think the principle of the theory was, <sup>Now</sup> that if somebody didn't sit up with them cats or some- <sup>thing else would come in and chew them up.</sup> ~~and~~ All kinds of things were advanced as reasons for it.

Then came Pelham. Pelham became a lawyer in Ashland. But he definitely became an alcoholic. He finally died on his way home from Talladega where he had presumably <sup>been</sup> gone to get whiskey and got drunk and headed home in the buggy driving the Black's big old white horse. They had a horse. The rest of us didn't, for the most part. He drove that horse off into a mill pond and Pelham and the horse both were drowned. ~~(When was that, remember?)~~

Oh, that was in Ashland. It was between Ashland and Talladega. ~~But~~ was while Hugo and I both were still kids.

~~(He liked Pelham very much didn't he?)~~

Yes, Pelham was a brilliant man. If he hadn't taken to whiskey he would have been great but that's why Hugo was for so long such an ardent Prohibitionist.

~~(Which one was the doctor?)~~

Orlando. He was older than Pelham. But he had - I think he was practicing over at a place called Wilsonville, well as I remember it. Not far from Calera - between there and Talladega somewhere over in that neck of the woods, I don't remember for sure just where it was. But that's why Hugo thought after we couldn't go together and be lawyers, he was going to be a doctor instead. But he didn't stick with it. He went one year to medical school.

~~(He stayed an ardent Prohibitionist didn't he?)~~

Oh Lord, he was a very ardent one. He wouldn't - I think he takes a little drink now occasionally but not much. He's very careful about it. He does it only because he thinks he almost has to when he has guests who want a drink or take one. I always kid him a lot about

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not having any when I'm back there. When he comes out here he seldom will take it even to this day.

(How about your dad? Was your dad a Prohibitionist?)

Oh, everybody was Prohibitionist in the sense that they didn't advocate saloons and didn't patronize saloons. But everybody - in the country people, at least - had what they called a community still. They would make up maybe once a year a supply of homemade liquor. Everyone would contribute something - corn or whatever they had to make first the mash, I think. My earliest recollection of it <sup>is</sup> was when the Reven<sup>66/22</sup>aries we called them, came and got my father when it was his turn to run the still. They took him off to Montgomery and he was gone several weeks before they finally turned him loose and sent him home I suppose with an admonition ~~xxxxxx~~ to be careful - I don't know. They didn't sell it. They just made it for their own use but it was a community proposition. ~~Every~~ body participated. So there was usually some of that stuff around the house. Later on when everybody would go to Talldega in the fall to sell their cotton they'd pack up their eggs and whatever they had they didn't need it was a barter business mostly, They'd turn those eggs in for a little sugar and a little coffee and most part we used what was called long sweetenen. We made our own syrup as a rule and if you cooked it a bit too much it would turn to sugar and be a yellow conglomerate<sup>stuff</sup>. That was called long sweetenen.

White granulated sugar was short sweeteren. That was what they'd use. That was the difference in them. But unless there was compary everybody would use long sweetenen. A barrel of it froze and you'd have enough to give the neighbors a whole lot of it. Somebody killed a

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beef or a goat one thing at that time they'd share it with all the neighbors cause they couldn't keep it. It wouldn't keep. That's all there was to it. There was no way to keep it for any length of time. But those were barter days. Nobody had money that I know of. I think once ~~and~~ in a while I got a quarter for Christmas but it was mighty rare.

(It was the same for Hugo wasn't it?)

Well, not quite so much for town kids. They had a little bit more, of course. His father had a store and ~~he~~<sup>the</sup> could get stuff out of the store. I suppose. I don't think he ever made any money to speak of but you know country kids would see somebody in town that had a store and you'd just get the impression that "Good golly, they must be plenty rich". Kids idea - impression of it.

.....  
(You stayed a Democrat out here in Colorado didn't you?)

Oh yes, Yes I came out here in 1910. Spent that first winter in a tubercular home. In 1911 I read in the newspaper one day that the Bar Association of Summit County was dead. I couldn't quite understand it so I read the article - just a little short piece. It said A.A. Rivers, the only lawyer in Summit County died yesterday. Well I'd never heard of a whole county that didn't have a lawyer in it I didn't yet have a Colorado licence. My God, I thought a whole

county with nobody in it - no lawyer. I said I'm going up there and find out about that. So I inquired around to find out how you'd get to Breckenridge, Summit County. I didn't know. I had no remote idea where it was or what ~~it~~ was. They told me I would have to get on <sup>little</sup> ~~narrow~~ <sup>U</sup> ~~gauge~~ train down here at the Union Station and that would take me up there. That was in May of 1911, the latter part of May. So I went down and got on that little old train. Down here it was hot by then. So I put on my little two piece Alabama cotton suit and straw hat and white shoes and white socks and bvd's and no wrap or coat of any kind and went up to impress the natives. The further we got out of Denver the colder it got and the more I kept inching over to this little old ~~garden~~ coal stove that heated that coach. Finally we got up to a little old place called Como and the conductor called "All out for lunch" and everybody got up and headed out and I followed them but when I stepped out of the coach the wind caught my straw hat and rolled it way down the track and I had to chase it and I was weak anyhow from tuberculosis. I didn't have any strength. By the time I got my hat and got back to the train he was saying "All aboard". Everybody had had their lunch. So I got back on and went on over to Breckenridge. Before we got there, up on Boreas Pass it had started to snow and I don't think I had ever seen it snow like that in my life before. I know I hadn't. Anyhow we finally got down to the town and I got off, dressed just as I told you and the snow was there.

Everybody was wrapped in fur coats, horse blankets and everything else. And I was about to freeze to death. So an old fellow who drove a little old ~~carriage~~ <sup>AT</sup> wagon we called ~~him~~ would haul the mail and stuff

over from the depot to the office put me on the front seat of his little wagon and put a horse blanket over me and let me ride over there. That was my entrance into Summit County in 1911. But in 1912 they nominated me for district attorney and elected me. I didn't know anybody in the county hardly but I was the only lawyer in that county in a three county district. It just ~~so~~ happened that the old district attorney decided he wanted to be district judge so he was running and he got beat, but I got elected. So I couldn't even vote for myself in the primary. I hadn't even been here long enough. I was old enough to vote by the time the election came along. I was elected district attorney. And I was district attorney when Hugo ran for solicitor down in Birmingham. That's when I went back then to help him out.

(When he was solicitor in Birmingham that would uh uh)  
He was prosecuting attorney. That must have been about 1912 ~~or 14~~ 1914  
or  
somewhere along in there I don't remember for sure. I know he ran  
against Harrington Heflin who was the solicitor. <sup>Tom</sup> ~~Howix~~ Heflin  
came to help out his brother Harrington. Tom Heflin was a great friend  
of my family over in Clay County. And Hugo's family. But anyhow, we  
got Hugo elected.

<sup>Hugo's  
mother</sup>  
(That was a good job wasn't it? Solicitor or district attorney?)  
Oh yes that is the same as district attorney out here you see, I <sup>guess they</sup>  
still call it solicitor down there.

(They changed the name about four years ago. Call it district attorney  
now. County solicitor is still county solicitor but it's district  
attorney for the uh )

campaign. So we were pitted against both Tom and his brother <sup>back</sup> then.

(How did you run that campaign? How'd it go?)

Well I don't know that I can remember all ~~of~~ the details. I remember there were about five - at least five candidates. And Heflin was in

office and had been. After I got down there and we got a caucus with Albert Lee Smith and the rest of us we decided the only one hope we had to elect Hugo probably was to try to convince the public that he was the only one that could beat Heflin. Heflin, of course, any district attorney has certain enemies. He makes them as he goes along, you know and the longer he's in the more he has as a rule. I used to tell them <sup>out</sup> ~~down~~ here even, You're a son of a bitch ~~xxxxxx~~ to half of them if you do and a son of a bitch to the other half if you don't. So we decided then that we had to emphasize that in some way so we had mirads of little old ~~covered~~ cards printed - not much bigger than your finger. All it had on it was "Black or Heflin - which?" And we had those printed by, I guess the hundreds of thousands and all of Hugo's workers got out. We'd go down on the street and just give them out to anybody that would come along. "Black or Heflin". In almost no time the other fellows tried the same thing. They got a different card saying <sup>them or Heflin</sup> but we had the lead. We'd gotten it out first and originated the idea ~~xxx~~ Hugo beat the whole bench of them including Harrington.

(In campaigns back then were there many debates? many speech makings.)  
Not very much. Hugo <sup>made</sup> ~~made~~ a few but most of it was just contacting people. <sup>gettin</sup> ~~gettin~~ <sup>seeing</sup> ~~see~~ them. <sup>callin</sup> ~~callin~~ on them. Shaking hands with <sup>them</sup> ~~them~~.

When Hugo first came over there of course I had many more friends in Birmingham than he did cause I had been there longer and I was right active in church work out at the old Ruhama church there <sup>at Howard College.</sup>

(Ruhama Baptist?)

Yes, I was active there and Baraca Wood and got Hugo to take a little