

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW  
WITH  
ELDER G. JONES

NOVEMBER 13, 2007  
READYVILLE, TENNESSEE

INTERVIEWED BY EVAN HATCH

PARQ  
PRESERVE THE AREA'S RURAL QUALITIES  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW #4

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Albert Gore".

ALBERT GORE RESEARCH CENTER

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MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

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## **ABSTRACT**

Elder G. Jones (born October 1948), a native of Chattanooga, Tennessee, became a student at Middle Tennessee State University in 1967. He recalls the years he worked at the Readyville Mill starting in approximately 1970 and lasting until 1979, when owner Wayne Epperly fired all the employees and shut down the mill. Jones worked at the mill in 1978 and 1979 when Bill and Marie Carignan owned and operated the mill. They catered to local residents and those interested in organic and locally grown food. As Jones puts it in the interview, the highlights of his discussion of the daily operations of the mill are grinding a turn of corn, sharpening the millstones, and preparing corn and rye for a local moonshiner. Much of the time, he says, business was slow and he sat around a great deal waiting for customers. Jones also describes the process of grinding grain and the atmosphere at the mill when all the machinery was running. At the time of the interview, Jones was living in Readyville and working as an artist.

## **PHOTO**



Elder Jones in 2011

Photo by Jane Rust

## **Sketch of Elder Jones, Written by Evan Hatch**

The working grist mill really isn't part of American culture anymore. Cannon County's Readyville Mill serves as a reminder of times past. While present owner Tomm Brady works diligently to recover the Readyville Mill's former glory for a new generation, its completion will serve largely to educate individuals on the once-important contribution of milling to rural communities.

Elder Jones remembers such a time. Contrary to his name, Elder is a youthful, exuberant artist living in the Readyville community. According to Elder Jones, an active, operating Readyville Mill isn't as far back in the past as one might expect. He began working at the mill in the late 1960s, while attending MTSU, and he was working at the mill on the day it closed its doors in 1979. In these years the mill served a slightly different clientele than the original owners served. The farmers of Cannon County seldom brought their turns of corn to be ground into meal. The mill essentially served as a counter-cultural mill providing organic flour and meal for some of the new "back-to-the-land" community. The owners of the mill, the Carignans, imported organic wheat and also sold other wares like peanuts and dried beans from the storefront on the mill grounds. The ice manufacturing plant of an earlier generation was no longer operating at the time.

The mill was no longer the center of the community it served. Rather, it served a small niche market of devoted customers. Elder remembers that there isn't anything much better than preparing cornbread with meal still hot from being ground. Eventually the trickle of business dried up and the mill closed its doors, and in subsequent years fell into disrepair. After thirty years of moving closer and closer to ruin, the mill's got some major structural work and several new coats of paint. Tomm Brady is working hard. Perhaps the mill will open its doors again soon. When the dam is repaired, and the mill pond is again filled, and the water can begin to turn the heavy gears, some student can see how these simple, effective machines worked and shaped the culture in which they live. Elder hopes students can learn something from the mill. Perhaps they can take away a new respect for their local history. Perhaps they can.

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH  
ELDER G. JONES**

**PRESERVE THE AREA'S RURAL QUALITIES**

**ORAL HISTORY PROJECT INTERVIEW #4**

- HATCH: This is Evan Hatch recording an interview with Mr. Elder Jones at his house in Readyville, Tennessee. Can you give me the address, sir?
- JONES: 1833 Old Woodbury Pike.
- HATCH: 1833 Old Woodbury Pike, Readyville. Right across from the post office. His workshop and living quarters are [in the same place?].
- JONES: It's my compound.
- HATCH: Compound. Today this interview is going to be called Elder.Jones 11.13.07, part 1. This interview is going to be recorded for PARQ (Preserve the Area's Rural Qualities) in regards to Mr. Jones's experiences at the Readyville Mill. It is kinda late, so it's about 2:30 in the afternoon. We anticipate this taking a little bit of time today. We're just going to kind of talk conversationally about his experiences. Mr. Jones, could you tell me your full name, your age, your date of birth, and where all that happened?
- JONES: I don't know if I can remember all of that. [laughter] Elder Garrison Jones. I just turned 59 . . . when was it? . . . a couple of weeks ago.
- HATCH: Happy birthday.
- JONES: Let's see now what was the rest of it?
- HATCH: Date of birth, and where you were.
- JONES: Oh, okay. October of '48. Where I work?
- HATCH: Where you were born.
- JONES: Oh, Chattanooga, Tennessee, is where I was born.
- HATCH: How did you get over here?
- JONES: I went to college and stayed up here ever since.
- HATCH: At Middle [Tennessee State University]?

JONES: Yeah.

HATCH: Did you study art?

JONES: In '67. On and off.

HATCH: Let it be known that Elder is a sculptor of concrete in late curing stages, and makes ornamental sculptures for indoors and outdoors, and . . .

JONES: Stuff.

HATCH: . . . really nice stuff. And that is how he makes his living. Before you started making your living, or perhaps while you were making your living, you also had another job down at the Readyville Mill, is that correct?

JONES: Well back in the . . . I guess I started going there like in '70, or whenever all that was happening, because I remember I lived in Lascassas. We used to get our flour from Browns Mill before it fell in. Of course that was back in the hippie days when everybody was into whole foods and whole grains and whole . . . back to the earth times.

HATCH: [Unintelligible]?

JONES: Incidentally, this is where I met Jack Hastings. But I started working there in the mid '70s, it was just . . . I mean we would go in and out of there for years when Flipse had it, and the Carignans had it, I mean because they offered up whole grains—that kind of thing. But it wasn't till Epperly had it and Randall Branch started “managing” it so to speak. But I just worked as a clerk, just . . . you know, because I lived in Bradyville at the time. Came over here and mostly . . . seemed like it was mostly during the winter, 'cause some days we would have like three customers. And I think the time that I was really there was '78,'79, pretty much just driving in a few days and hanging out and bagging flour and grinding corn. The best parts, I guess, of the whole experience was when . . . back then, I mean, the mill was, had been down for so long people lost track of it, I think. But back then people would bring in what they called a “turn” of corn, which was a big burlap bag full of whole kernel shelled corn.

HATCH: Already shelled?

JONES: Yeah, already shelled, generally Hickory King, or Hickory Cane, whichever one it was.

HATCH: That's the type of corn?

JONES: Yeah, that's a *big* kernel corn, and they'd bring it in to get it ground and apparently the old custom was you bring in your bag, you keep half and the miller keeps half. And that's just the way it worked because, you know, people that were growing a lot of corn, you know, for them to get a

burlap bag full was nothing but to get a nice, you know, split on some fresh ground corn. Man there's nothing like cooking corn that evening before it's even gotten cool from going through the mill stones, which are the little mills for grinding the corn. Millstones, they're still there, the two little ones. The great big one was for wheat.

HATCH: Why'd they used little ones for corn and big ones for wheat?

JONES: You know, I'm not sure. Something about the burr maybe, and maybe just to keep the grains separate.

HATCH: Okay.

JONES: And maybe it was just the way it was all put together, I don't know. Randall [said], "Here, this is the one used for that."

HATCH: Alright.

JONES: But the nice thing was is we'd . . . these women . . . you could adjust the stones, the face of them, so you'd either get it coarse or fine, and some of these women . . .

HATCH: Between the?

JONES: Yeah, but this was between—depending, the stones, depending on how coarse or fine it ground and these old women, they knew what they wanted. And they'd, "No, back it off. I want it a little more coarse or a little . . ." because, you know, they knew the subtleties of it I didn't know.

HATCH: Right.

JONES: But I trusted what they knew.

HATCH: Did they teach you that? Did you learn it over time or did you never quite get it?

JONES: It's pretty simple. You know, you just turn on all the belts, and just . . . the mill's running and everything is turning, and you just put it in the hopper and it shakes and . . .

HATCH: Was it still providing power for anybody at that point?

JONES: No, I never remember it ever providing power.

HATCH: Let me ask you a question. You said you started hanging out there in the '70s. What does that mean?

JONES: Well, that's when Flipse re-did it all.

HATCH: Flipse is who?

JONES: Joe Flipse that took out most of the old white flour milling equipment. Well it wasn't old, it was new then. And he restored it just to a few stones.

HATCH: Do you know how to spell Flipse? Was it F-L-I-P-S-S-Y?

JONES: F-L-I-P-S-E.

HATCH: Flipse. Was he from around here?

JONES: Yeah, I think he still lives in Lascassas, and Jack knows him. They get together and talk actually, but I don't think he'd ever give you an interview because he's cantankerous.

HATCH: I like cantankerous.

JONES: Well, we're talking cantankerous "I'll shoot you."

HATCH: [Unintelligible.]

JONES: Right, yeah. But after he had taken it over and then the Carignans started putting in a store and baking bread and grinding stuff. Then back then, you know, if you were trying to be—especially vegetarian diet and this back-to-the-land mentality kind of thing—there weren't any sources for stuff and for a while we were grinding flour for Sunshine Grocery in Nashville, but . . .

HATCH: And that was [unintelligible].

JONES: They was so far away you just couldn't pull it off, that kind of thing. So when I say "hanging out" it's like it was the place to go for buckwheat and whole wheat and cornmeal and I think that was about it. And a few other things that they would tack on.

HATCH: For making your own bread and for everything else you used to [buy?]?

JONES: Yeah, right, and in some point they'd carry some dried beans. Kinda had this little bit of a general store thing.

HATCH: Was the store still there at that time? Were the Russells there?

JONES: Everything . . . No, Russells . . . I guess Reed's store was there and then at some point they moved it up to here, until they lost the lease and then they moved back there, and then it burned down. They rebuilt, so I think Reed's Grocery was . . . they, but you know I've got a feeling, but I can't remember. So there we go!

HATCH: And so were there a lot of back-to-landers here at the time that were . . . ?

JONES: Well at that point in the '70s, you know, that's when a lot of people were wanting to move out to the rural countryside, and that's what brought Jack

and Arlen from where they were, and that's when, the same time when all the people from California came to found Summertown.

HATCH: The Farm.

JONES: The Farm. You know, all that was happening at that time, and the mill was just another one of those, you know, new progressive arts of all that time.

HATCH: Was their philosophy progressive, or was it still old timers running it, and they knew who their audience was?

JONES: Well this was . . . it was empty . . . Flipse came in, did everything, then Carignans came in and they were kind of piggy-backed onto the whole movement. They were, you know, they were looking for a place to set up shop and sell some bread and some cookies and stuff and, you know, try to make a go of it, which of course they didn't, after a while, you know.

HATCH: Just because the traffic wasn't there you think?

JONES: Yeah, I mean it's just, it's just a hard way to go with that.

HATCH: You've just got to sell a lot of bread.

JONES: I mean, they did because, you know, they had a bunch of kids that would work and, you know, just do things and, you know, we all worked cheap, you know, and didn't make any money.

HATCH: You got free . . . What did you get? What were the benefits of it?

JONES: It was, it was a job that wasn't . . . I don't know what. I don't know if there were any benefits of it, as I look back on it. It's what I could get, you know, and of course at that point, you know, everybody was low overhead and not big consumers and not on a career track to, you know, top of the mountain.

HATCH: It's kind of remarkable. You mentioned some names there: yourself and Hastings and Arlen Indie and you seem to have pretty much stuck to that ideal in some ways. Not big time consuming, or consumers, you know, living simply, being self-sufficient and do you think that, I mean, has that happened to everybody else that was connected to that mill, or have a lot of people moved on?

JONES: It depends on what you call moving on.

HATCH: Yeah, "moving on" is probably not the right term.

JONES: Right.

HATCH: Well, change lifestyles.

JONES: Well, yeah, times do change. There are, you know, there are . . . you know, I've seen this happen in lots of places. People have gone back to the land. At some point they've all have had to move back to the cities. This is some folks I know at Virginia, and get jobs and raise kids and have contact with the world. Or I say the world—culture and social structure and all that kind of thing. But some of them are, on this farm that I'm familiar with, are now, you know, retiring and the kids are grown and they're kind of moving back to this piece of land that they had gotten, you know, back in the '60s and '70s and that kind of thing.

HATCH: [Unintelligible]?

JONES: Yeah, well, I mean some, a few people hung on to it and now they're being able to migrate back, so . . .

HATCH: You're seeing some folks you haven't seen in a while then?

JONES: No, this is some folks that I met in still—around here . . . nah, I don't know anybody.

HATCH: So it's still kind of back-back-to-the-land movement again?

JONES: I don't know. I never could afford to leave it.

HATCH: It shows the artist's lifestyle, you know, which can be rewarding, but it's pretty hard.

JONES: Well, yeah, it's like, it's like I say, "It's the corner I've painted myself into."

HATCH: Okay.

JONES: Yeah, that kind of thing. But what's really nice now at this point is that Tomm Brady buying the mill and fixing it up, it'll be interesting to see if, you know, if some kind of a thing develops there. But it's, it's a different time now. People aren't going back to the land; people are just sprawling out all over the place. It's not like there's this "let's get back to nature, let's go find some cheap land so we can build a house on five acres because we can't afford . . . you know." I'm sure there's . . . it's . . . It's a snarl of, you know, complex things. I don't know.

HATCH: You said that you had some employment there and that you were, that you worked as, that you did some of the grinding and you were also just there to help bag flour. Any other parts of your job?

JONES: Well that was it. It was just go in in the morning and open the store and, you know, it became, you know, sell, you know, the bag flour and, you know, whatever they had there, peanuts and . . .

HATCH: Which part of it was the store?

JONES: It was the little place that has the ramp. The place right next to the mill.

HATCH: Is that the one closest to road or the one that's further back?

JONES: Yeah, the one further back that has . . . and I don't know if that's . . . anyway, that's what developed as the store when the Carignans were there and that was the spot.

HATCH: What was the place that was closest to the road?

JONES: That was the old ice plant.

HATCH: That's where they made the ice, and they stopped doing that?

JONES: I never knew anything about that. I just knew that was the old ice plant from way back yonder. So I have no knowledge of that, other than it was just full of junk. But that's what I know. It was before my time.

HATCH: So the store became a place . . . Did, was it a . . . you, you know, hinted that it may have been a community meeting place? Was it a place that counter-culture people, as well as farmers used at that time, or were farmers . . .?

JONES: Nobody hanged, nobody hung out there.

HATCH: Okay, they just came and . . .

JONES: People just came and went, you know. It wasn't that kind of, you know, whittle-and-spit kind of place.

HATCH: Place of business.

JONES: Yeah, I mean, you know, sometimes when I was working in the winter, I mean it'd be all day and nobody would come through.

HATCH: Why did they choose to keep it open then, you think?

JONES: Well it, shortly after that they closed it down. Imagine that. Well, I don't know, that's a whole different story on the . . . the plan, you know, they had a lot of, I don't know, we always thought it was strange ideas about doing this and that, and thought, "Well, whatever." Show up and . . .

HATCH: What was the plan?

JONES: I have no idea exactly. It was fragmented and fractured and we just kind of went, "Okay, whatever, it's a job. We'll open up and sell whatever." And at some point he came in one day and said, "Okay." It's the middle of the summer and we're out there moving some big rocks between the stores,

and putting, trying to make some stone steps and he said, “Okay, everybody’s fired.” This was like in the summer of ’79 or the spring of ’79 and we all went “huh?” And it’s like I say, the shovels and picks fell to the ground right where we stood and everybody was told to leave. And then it sat there for whatever it was, thirty years, until Tomm Brady bought it. Not much changed except for the thieving and the vandalism.

HATCH: Who did the firing? Mr. Carignan?

JONES: Epperly. No, no, Epperly had bought it after the Carignans. Carignans were, I think, they were great. Bill and Marie had a pretty good thing for a number of years, and trying a little crafts fair there and did a few things. Of course there was no place to show and no place to park, and that kind of thing, but it was, it was one of those “rural go-to’s,” some kind of, you know, an earth based mentality happening kind of thing. And they did great, and then at some point that’s when the Carignans and the Reels family got into that. And you know they’ve, seems like the turbine had broken, but they’d got some funding and worked on getting the mill in pretty good shape, because that’s what those guys knew how to do—Kip Reel, the son-in-law, and Roy Cunningham, who knew how to do some stuff. And that’s when I was there, and they were also working up restoring and redoing Evins Mill.

HATCH: Which has changed.

JONES: Yeah, and kind of part of all that at the time, you know, and Randall had some pretty good ideas. Strictly, you know, go organic and all this kind of thing, but it just wasn’t well . . . like I say, I guess the best word is the thought processes were fragmented and uncoordinated and energy put into odd areas that didn’t need to be, and not into areas that were, kind of, I don’t know what it all was, it just . . . so consequently, it all just kind of fell apart and came to a grinding halt.

HATCH: Do you remember your feeling about that, that day? I mean, were you, how’s your, I mean we’re not in psychology class here. I’m not asking you—did you feel disappointed? Did you expect it? Did you know anything? I mean, did you, was it a surprise?

JONES: Oh yes, it surprised everybody . . .

HATCH: Yeah.

JONES: . . . you know.

HATCH: But you were working on stuff that you thought was a bad idea anyway?

JONES: Well no, I mean, it was like it was something to do, you know, and we were all back-to-the-landers—“Okay, let’s get out and move some rock

and build some stone stairs.” This was all, you know, it was all . . . part of, you know, you felt good about doing these, you know, simple work, you know, this kind of thing because back then, turn of the century, a lot of people did that kind of stuff. Take a look at all these stone walls around here and the things that have been done and, you know, this kind of thing, this kind of whole, you know, touching the natural world in a natural kind of way. So we were, you know, we were just doing that stuff and the party was over and I didn’t care. Me and my friend we went to, got in my Volkswagen bug and went to Texas. “Okay, road trip,” you know, “out of a job, okay.” At this point I was living out Burt Road, back out in there in an old cabin, no rent, no electricity, no water, no phone. Well, there was spring water, but . . . yeah.

HATCH: Just squatted?

JONES: No, no, it was one of the biology professors at the college owned this piece of property, basically said, “If you can live there, then you can live there.” I said, “Well”—

HATCH: “Bet you I can live there.”

JONES: “I really want a fluorescent light over my drawing table but . . .”

HATCH: The Carignans, there’s a lady . . .

JONES: It’s Carig-nan. Lemme spell that for you. It’s C-A-R-I-G-N-A-N. I know it’s funny. Everybody wants to say “Carrigan,” but that’s, yeah.

HATCH: So that is not the lady who’s a quilter that I know, umm, you know a Mrs. Carrigan?

JONES: I don’t even know if . . . yeah, probably not. I don’t know where Bill and Marie are. It’s been years since I’ve seen them.

HATCH: Carignan. And is that a local name, too? Is that something you hear around here or did they move . . .?

JONES: No, no, no. They came in from somewhere, way back when.

HATCH: Bill and Nina, you said?

JONES: Bill and Marie. They had some folks will know them, but a . . .

HATCH: Will you say a little bit about Kip Reel, and then we’ll talk about Ray Cunningham?

JONES: Don’t know much, you know—Kip, he was just the son-in-law of Wayne Epperly, that owned the property.

HATCH: And he was a miller?

JONES: No, no. I think he teaches . . . teaches school or he's a school administrator down in one of those counties—Wayne or Hardin or something. I saw him on the news. "Well, dang, there's Kip. He's . . . old."

HATCH: Is he old?

JONES: Well, I mean, me too. But, you know, they had this wherewithal. They were kind of these folks that built log cabins and this kind of thing and, you know, had enough skills to go in there and do stuff. It's just that they were all under the thumb of the man that wanted to make a fortune in the restoration of old mills kind of thing.

HATCH: I say the guy that did Evins Mill probably did make a fortune out of that.

JONES: Yeah, Joe L. Evins. Yeah. But I don't think they made any fortunes, mainly because the prime goal was to make the fortune and not do . . .

HATCH: The preservation?

JONES: Well, enough to try to, you know, there was a lot of, I think, skimping and how can we get by and get as much of this matching grant money and how can we work, you know, it's all kind of, to my advantage kind of thing. It's kind of what I felt was going on. The good thing is they got the gate, the broken gate cast and the turbine going again and, you know, everything trued [?] and functioning. Of course the problem is that then they closed it down and gradually people came in and stole equipment and threw shit in the—excuse me—threw crap in the mill race. Because I remember one day, it was years ago I was thinking, man I wonder if those old scales are still over at the mill. I want to go over there and grab one of those and just hang on to it, you know, if any of you ever want it back, you know, I'll bring it back. Because I wanted something to weigh my concrete on.

HATCH: A scale for weighing . . .?

JONES: It's these nice rolling scales, you know, with the little, you know, like a doctor's office but for bigger things, and I went and looked around and I went, "Dang." I went, looked out and went, "Dang, somebody took that and threw it in the race." And there it was all buried in mud. I went, "I'm not digging that out, because . . ."

HATCH: Some strange, strange things people do, you know?

JONES: You know, it's like because there's something of value there and I have no power, so if I destroy this then I will get power from that and I need that power because the rest of the world is so much bigger than me and

overwhelming and I'm way down here in the, you know, I'm bedrock and so I can—I think the same thing is, the same mentality as burning rubber.

HATCH: Yeah, bullying.

JONES: You know, it's just like, okay, it's kind of the roar of the lion kind of thing, but it's like vandalism is that whole kind of thing, I think. It's like a moment of the rush of having this little bit of power, which is not power at all, it's just heightened ignorance, I think. Yeah, that's the world of glamour.

HATCH: Who's Mr. Epperly?

JONES: He's, Wayne Epperly who died ten, twelve years ago. I forget. PARQ has been, after that point we all thought, "Okay, he's gone. Now maybe they'll loosen up and we can get the mill, you know, the," well you're familiar with all of that.

HATCH: He's the owner of the property and the mill?

JONES: Right, and I don't know if... Tomm Brady could tell you, I guess, because the Carignans were on the deed, and the Flipses were on the deed, you know, everybody was, there was some kind of understanding.

HATCH: [Unintelligible]?

JONES: I'm not too sure how all that happened, who held what... but he lived in Nashville and had a number of tenements and that kind of thing.

HATCH: That's good money.

JONES: Yeah right, Chris Armstrong called him the slum lord. But he, he's the one that bought it from Carignans with all this in mind. Sent his son-in-law to get in there and do it. He came out to try to be, I'm not sure what he was all about, I know he wanted us all to, you know, get down and pray with him or all this kind of stuff, and Chris Armstrong and I are going "excuse me?" You know, so . . .

HATCH: Who were some other folks you worked with when you were out there?

JONES: Well Chris Armstrong worked there with me

HATCH: And he's still around too?

JONES: Yeah, Chris, he's, where does he live? Out towards Fairview, I think something like that.

HATCH: Back-to-the-lander, too?

JONES: Nah, just college student, just looking for part-time work.

HATCH: Okay.

JONES: You know, that kinda thing.

HATCH: Were you an art major?

JONES: For a while yeah, on and off. Art and science.

HATCH: Art and science?

JONES: Yeah.

HATCH: Okay. Well that's helpful. Especially dealing with concrete now, I guess.

JONES: Yeah right, yeah. I know all the chemistry.

HATCH: I wonder if you would have been a concrete major.

JONES: Hey, if they had it then!

HATCH: It's the newest thing they have.

JONES: I'll tell you I thought about going in there and taking a course so I could learn something about how this stuff works, but I don't need to know that.

HATCH: Um, Roy Cunningham?

JONES: Don't know anything about Roy anymore, where he is or what he's doing.

HATCH: What was his role at the time?

JONES: He's the guy that knew how to make it work, you know? He knew how to pour the bearings, line the shafts, fix the belts, all of that kind of thing.

HATCH: Okay.

JONES: Uh . . .

HATCH: Was he from a milling family or was he [unintelligible]?

JONES: I have, I have no idea. I think he's just, you know, just a skilled tinkerer . . . yeah, don't know anything about him. Friend of Kip's from west Tennessee. So the other cool thing that happened when I was working there, as opposed to the folks bringing in the turn of corn, was one day the guy from Fall's Mill, which has been a functioning mill for a number of years and I think still is, the miller from up there came up one day to sharpen the stone, and he said, "Hey," pointing to me, "Come on down here, I'm gonna show you how to do this." So I went down there and he pulled the stone off and sat down and he showed me.

HATCH: How big is the stone, can you tell me?

JONES: It's, what is it probably thirty-two inches diameter, maybe, something like that. Two of them, one that sat in the floor and one that spins on top.

HATCH: And they're kind of perpendicular is that right?

JONES: Yeah, these two, the slope is . . . they sit horizontal to each other.

HATCH: Oh, so they're right on top of each other.

JONES: Right those are the big ones on this side, and the two little vertical ones are the free-standing mills. They're kinda on their little skids kinda thing. So he, he pulled me over there and showed me how to set this stone down and how to take this little hammer and peck away at that stone and line it all up.

HATCH: So you're essentially picking away at the stone and creating a new edge on it, is that right?

JONES: Yeah, pretty much rough it up and there's this crazy little hammer that, I've never come across one, it's got like, it's got like one of those meat tenderizer hammers, it's got all these points on it.

HATCH: Uh-huh.

JONES: But it's made out of hard steel and it's smaller, and you peck away, and they had a pneumatic one there where you could do this pneumatically, which was a real trick but, it's also hard granite you're working on.

HATCH: Okay. Where are the millstones coming from?

JONES: Not sure, I guess they're all from France. French burr. I think that's what all the stones were.

HATCH: French burr?

JONES: That's what they call them. Brought over as ballast in the ships and all turned into millstones.

HATCH: Really?

JONES: Uh-huh.

HATCH: Totally new to me. I thought they had, I thought they used some of the, some of that stone from around here and they could make them from around here.

JONES: Limestone? Nope.

HATCH: Too soft?

JONES: Yep. I don't think they use anything but granite. Or, or they could, really cause you need a hard sharp tooth on that stone and get all the dust out because . . .

HATCH: It will rot.

JONES: It won't rot, just somebody will chip a tooth on a piece of that granite if you don't get it, you know, all, you know, cleaned off.

HATCH: Uh-huh.

JONES: Sharp edge. I guess, I can't remember. It seemed like they had, nah, I don't think they even ran it through a screen. Nah, they didn't. It was just, just knew how to do it.

HATCH: Wasn't sure what to do when you get home then, huh? Running a screen?

JONES: Well, maybe not. It all comes out pretty clean 'cause you're running pounds and pounds of flour through that thing.

HATCH: Just for a person who doesn't really have—

JONES: It seems like they may dump off the first after sharpening, but once it's sharp, I would think we only sharpened it once.

HATCH: How much did that person, did they make money to do that? I mean, was that a real, like an artisanal skill?

JONES: I don't know. Randall set all that up.

HATCH: When they brought in wheat did it look like that, is that what they brought in, the top part of it or did they bring in the whole stalk or what did you—

JONES: Nobody brought wheat to get milled. It was always corn.

HATCH: Really? Why is that?

JONES: All the wheat . . . not wheat country, to speak of. I mean they do it now for hay.

HATCH: So all the flour it was made in the mill, and the . . .

JONES: All the flour was probably brought in from north—Michigan, Minnesota, Dakotas. Hard spring wheat, that kind of thing.

HATCH: They bought the wheat?

JONES: Yeah we bought that, it was organic.

HATCH: Oh!

JONES: You know, that kinda thing.

HATCH: Did you hear about the previous—

JONES: Least they said it was organic.

HATCH: Owners, like umm, because it seems that in one generation you've got this power, the power of the ownership of the mill is switching but also an idealistical shift, an ideological shift, that used to be, at a time when you probably could of gone to, when most people around here were going to grocery stores and buying flour, you were coming to the mill to buy fresh flour. And . . .

JONES: Right.

HATCH: And organics and stuff that you knew you could quality control on, that you knew was, was good and healthy and natural for you.

JONES: Yeah, it was just the natural thing that was offered, right.

HATCH: So you really didn't see a lot of the—

JONES: No you didn't.

HATCH: Farmers around here. They didn't use it anymore did they?

JONES: No.

HATCH: Okay.

JONES: Didn't need to.

HATCH: Yeah.

JONES: They were shipping it all off to one of these processing things for turning it into cattle feed and that kind of thing . . . yeah, and I'm sure I think that might have been one of their plans, was to mill and have the label and ship the, you know, but, I just . . .

HATCH: What was the name of the flour?

JONES: Fragmented. It's just Readyville Mill.

HATCH: Just Readyville Mill?

JONES: Yeah, whole wheat flour.

HATCH: I heard somebody call it Johnny Conquer or something like that?

JONES: Not out here, oh there's all kinds, you know, 'cause, you know, in some, before, you know, when there were communities there would be little mills everywhere. I mean there were mills all down the river.

HATCH: Yes, that's what—

JONES: You know, there's Halls Hill, Brown's Mill, Walter Hill, all those were mills for people to go and, you know, turn their, but now they've got, you know, gas powered hammer mills, and all this kind of thing and bringing in truck loads and everything is dispersed but, or dispersed and consolidated. Same thing.

HATCH: What did you use your corn for?

JONES: Huh?

HATCH: Cooking. Did you make cornbread, did you make, what did you—

JONES: Cornbread.

HATCH: Pretty much cornbread?

JONES: Yeah.

HATCH: Use it for coating vegetables or fish or meat or anything like that?

JONES: No, I'm vegetarian.

HATCH: Okay. Still are?

JONES: Pretty much.

HATCH: Yeah. What would you eat if you did not eat vegetarian? Fish?

JONES: I don't know, haven't thought about it. If I was starving, I'd eat you. [laughing] But I'm not starving and there's still fish left and there's still game left and there's still all these things on the hierarchy, so—

HATCH: Yeah, so I'm safe for a little while.

JONES: And if you were starving, guess what? You'd eat me. (laughing)

HATCH: True. Okay, so, how were you treated, being, were you treated as a local after a while or—you're from Cannon County?

JONES: I've been here since the late '60s—when did I move to Lascassas, in '70? I'm still not a local.

HATCH: Yeah.

JONES: If you weren't born here, it's not a who's your daddy thing, and Jack had explained this to me years ago. He said, "I own land, I've been here for years and," he says, "but you go down there and you're still from somewhere else. You always will be from somewhere else."

HATCH: That is true, particularly characteristic of this county too, not just, not of the South necessarily, but of this particular county. I've seen it here more than anywhere else I've ever been.

JONES: Really?

HATCH: Yeah.

JONES: That's interesting.

HATCH: Definitely, and I always thought, I'm from North Carolina, and I always thought North Carolina was the South, until I moved to Mississippi and Tennessee, then I realized that North Carolina is kind of the East Coast.

JONES: Yeah, yeah, right. Different mentality altogether.

HATCH: Yeah, different mentality there.

JONES: Well, we're getting off—

HATCH: You said they were ever used for, were there ever any, you'd mentioned craft fair. Were there any concerts there? Festivals, like any other—

JONES: It's funny you should ask. Me and a friend had a big party there. It was, actually they closed shortly after that.

HATCH: So what happened at this party?

JONES: It was called the Millstone. This was back in...

HATCH: '78?

JONES: Or I guess it was '79, 'cause I... anyway, me and a friend just decided to have a big party and have it at the mill, you know, and—

HATCH: Was this okayed with Epperly?

JONES: Oh no. It wasn't okayed with anybody but he never was around much anyway. Course, word got out, I mean, we bought six kegs of beer and by about 11:30 or 12:00 that was all gone, and there were probably about 300 people there, people just wandering in, off the road, and, you know, and it was nice. I mean, there weren't any fights, there weren't any craziness. I mean some people brought instruments and were standing on the porch and picking, and you know and some pretty good music and all this kind of thing, and, you know, and we had some lights and it was all just right

there on the driveway. So that was the only event that I could recall ever being held there.

HATCH: Well, it's good you can recall. It must have had a, had a not too good of a time, if, I'm just kidding. [Unintelligible.]

JONES: Yeah, well no, no, well right. Yeah, yeah it was pretty strange. It was a lot of fun, but back then the whole, everything was different. You know . . .

HATCH: Is the way that the mill looks now, so far as landscaping, is that how it's always looked to you, or are some of those woods they reclaimed some of the area? Was there more open space in front of it? Was it more accessible to the road ever?

JONES: I don't think so. Not that I know of.

HATCH: Just kind of looks that same way?

JONES: Yeah, because you have to have trees along the race.

HATCH: For what reason?

JONES: Well, to keep the banks from eroding away, those have to grow there to hold all that in place.

HATCH: Well, that's true.

JONES: So yeah it all looks about the same. I mean, they cleared off the back a little and built the fence and that was never there that I knew of. And the railings everywhere that's, I'm sure that's for safety's sake, you know, 'cause you know, there was so much litigation and stuff going on now. All you gotta do is twist an ankle and retire, depending on. But yeah I had a little, you know even though he painted it all up. The ice house used to be red, but he painted it gray.

HATCH: Brady did?

JONES: Yeah, you know, but who cares, he's in there doing stuff and fixing the roof and fixing—

HATCH: What is he [unintelligible]?

JONES: —you know, I don't know, I don't know, I don't know much about him.

HATCH: I think it's kind of a hobby of his.

JONES: Really?

HATCH: Restoration is for some people. I could be wrong, completely wrong. But, you talked to the guy, right?

JONES: Yeah, I mean, cause he came around when he was looking at it, you know, and asking questions, you know, what he felt, you know, people felt about things and, you know, he was really scoping it out, to say, you know, and he got structural engineers in there and says, “First, before I could do anything I’m going to get somebody to come in there and say ‘Can this thing be saved,’ you know, and I don’t want to buy something that, you know, you’re going to kick it and it’s going to fall in.” So yeah, he did his homework on checking it out.

HATCH: Other than vandalism, what do you think has contributed to the decline of the mill?

JONES: Epperly, being so stubborn and wanting to sell it for way, way, way more than it’s worth. And, the more it ran down and became worth less, the more he wanted for it. Nobody could afford it, and then the people that tried to do anything, he wouldn’t talk. So it just sat there, you know, in like bondage, that kind of thing.

HATCH: Did the water affect it, in the course of the—

JONES: Held up pretty dang good through all that high water.

HATCH: Yeah, it did.

JONES: Of course then again I remember in ’70, I don’t know—different people have said different things, I thought it was ’73, but when we had high water for a few years, it got up really high, and I hadn’t seen it that high since like 2003 or 2004 when it got up high again, I mean it would get up but . . .

HATCH: It came up to the level of the road, though, right?

JONES: Yeah, it was over the road out front and going over the road down by the race.

HATCH: What did you do?

JONES: It wasn’t over this road. It was over that little road by the—

HATCH: Okay.

JONES: It was close, I mean it was about up where that bird bath is out there.

HATCH: Yeah, it was licking at your back door.

JONES: And I was going “whoa!” But Russell said he’s seen it where this is in water back here. I don’t want to see that, but if we have the rain like they had in Texas this summer. I mean six inches of hard rain even in the

middle of the summer brings that river up pretty high. And they had gotten like twelve inches. I'm going, "twelve inches?" Man, I'd be wading.

HATCH: It would not be something you would want to get on a canoe in.

JONES: Yeah, well, if it gets this wet down here, there's a bunch of people screwed downstream.

HATCH: Yeah.

JONES: You know because this is high enough up it raises up real fast and goes down real quick, because it starts to spread out right through here.

HATCH: Did you ever see anyone doing any damage to it? Did you ever catch anybody out there or anything like that?

JONES: No.

HATCH: Hear of anybody proud of it or anything like that?

JONES: No, I never hear. I never really relate to most of the people around here. No, you know, most of the vandalism happened years ago that I can remember. I just never went over there anymore because . . . why? There was nothing for me to do except walk around every once in a while, you know, every ten years and go, "Yeah there's where we were, there's that rock right where we left it, and there's, you know, pretty much the same."

HATCH: Did you ever think that they were going to turn it into an Evins Mill? Did they ever mention that as part of their plan? Turn it into a bed and breakfast, turn it into a restaurant?

JONES: I had no idea, I had no idea what they were up to, you know. We were just, you know, I had no idea, all I knew is that I was supposed to show up and do this and do that. When they came up with something to do: "Okay, kinda weird but whatever," you know. Anyway.

HATCH: Just being a good worker there.

JONES: Yeah, hell, I didn't care. I was just wanting to go in and have something to do close to home.

HATCH: Do you think that there is anything people can learn from milling? Or from that Readyville Mill, is there anything you think is special about it?

JONES: Oh, yeah, I mean, you know, of course, you know, Tomm, the big challenge now is to fix the dam, and once you fix the dam, then you can have a mill pond, and when you have a mill pond then you can make the wheel go round, and wheel go round then everything will turn and that kind of thing.

HATCH: What's wrong with the dam?

JONES: It's breeched.

HATCH: Isn't that Army Corps of Engineers? Or are they just not going to do anything about it.

JONES: No, it's no, Tomm will have to do it. Apparently at this point Tomm's talked to the corps. They're going to send out letters to people that live right around here, and ask them how they feel about repairing the breach and putting, and getting the dam back functioning. It's one of those query kind of things.

HATCH: Would there be any kind of problem, do you think they would oppose that?

JONES: I know one person that is, but most folks are, you know, and I haven't talked to but just a handful of people really, but I think most everybody that I've talked to has said, "Yeah, let's have our mill pond back." Especially the folks that own the property there where it's breeched, I'm saying, "You know, you better hope that gets back. What we don't want is a new channel being cut by the river."

HATCH: That's what it's doing.

JONES: It is doing it. So that's kind of—

HATCH: Why would somebody not want it done? They don't want people here in this area?

JONES: I don't know.

HATCH: Okay. Could you think of a reason, unless you just wanted no one to come down here?

JONES: Well, I won't go into the particulars on that but, but anyways, I think that most folks are in favor of, you know, mainly just to restore what was there and the heritage of the place, and you know, you ask, you know, what can be learned. You know, back then when things were simple, this is a simple device that had its place, and you know it's good to have functioning parts of history to look back and the way things are going, this may come to the front again. You know, you can't ever tell when everything [will] go "plop." Because it's pretty tenuous across, you know, across the board. It all seemed so solid in my eyes but, you know. Hey, Toots.

HATCH: Toots?

JONES: Well, City, that's what I call her. She's hungry.

HATCH: She's been eating over there.

JONES: Well good, she doesn't get anything till four o'clock. She's got an eating disorder.

HATCH: Oh yeah?

JONES: Yeah, eats all the time. Get you that little [Jones pants, mimicking the dog] Get over it. Eat out. So yeah, it would be great, you know it'd be nice, it's great that he's fixing this up. If he can get it working again, you know, I can see, you know, school kids coming out and somebody doing one of these things, because it's impressive when you turn that water on and the water moves through there and all those shafts start turning and the belts start going and the machinery starts running and it's only because water is falling through a little thing.

HATCH: Yeah, can you explain that to, um, somebody who's watching that, to somebody who doesn't really know how one works. Let's say, first of all, how does one one fix a breeched dam? What is it? There's holes in the bottom of it or in the top of it, have they gotten over the top of the dam, or is it cracked?

JONES: It's cut all the way around the side and going all the way around the dam. So the dam's still sitting there. The river has just gone around it.

HATCH: It's found a way around it.

JONES: Yeah.

HATCH: Okay, so what does one have to do to fix that? Just patch it?

JONES: Spend a whole lot of money.

HATCH: Yeah, but you can't just put your thumb in it?

JONES: You couldn't park a truck in it.

HATCH: Okay.

JONES: You know, it's just going to be, you know, tons of rock, tons of soil, tons of concrete, somebody that knows what they're doing in engineering, probably driving metal into the ground. It'll be a big operation. I told Tomm that. I says, "Forget the mill. Here's where you're going to spend your money." And apparently he's got it, you know. He'll never make back what he's put in. It's just, you know, it's just a love and a passion for him. The best that I could figure out, you know, he's just having fun. Hey! I don't blame him.

HATCH: How old is he? I never met him either.

JONES: You never met Tomm? He'd be the person to talk to about, you know, what's happening. The current state of things. Tomm, he's 50 or better, around there.

HATCH: Yeah, it looks like that, I saw his picture, presentable there. So let's get a dam, the dam gets fixed, then you get a mill pond, and a mill pond is just a still body of water, right? Just like a pond?

JONES: It's just the head. That means bringing the river up to a level, so you can run it through the race, the little cut through there. And then the height that the water above the turbine, determines the force that you can get. And it falls through there, and that falling, that pressure turns that. Then it flows back out into the river.

HATCH: Okay, and goes on down, as long as you got a constant supply. How is the dam locked off, or how does it, if it is fixed, is it opened like a channel, like a canal, and to let water through, or does it just keep it at a—

JONES: It just, it just, you have a, it just brings the river up. It's the dam.

HATCH: Okay.

JONES: And then that race that goes all the way down, keeps that same level of water up to the mill.

HATCH: Okay.

JONES: And it just sits there, until you turn it on and let it start flowing through. And when you do that, then, *then* you see a little current down there.

HATCH: From starting when you first turn it on, how long before that whole process.

JONES: It's just as soon as you turn it on, it starts going around, and as you open it up it starts going around and around faster, and man that's quite, well I say quite, but it's a lot of flapping and slapping of these belts and things turning, but, then you start shutting it down and it just all stops, you know. And back then I think the, on those shafts they turned a generator, and generated electricity for this area, early on.

HATCH: Right, and that apparently one of the early owners was real ingenious, you know, doing that before TVA thought about it or anything, make some money you know and actually get electricity to a lot of people.

JONES: Yeah, way back when. I mean *way* back when. I mean, this was around here the only first place that had electricity.

HATCH: Right.

JONES: I mean even before Murfreesboro I think.

HATCH: Nine o'clock at night.

JONES: Oh, really?

HATCH: Yeah, then he stopped it.

JONES: Yeah.

HATCH: Everybody had to go to bed. [Unintelligible.]

JONES: I wonder how much of an area they serviced.

HATCH: Apparently went up into Bradyville.

JONES: Really? That's pretty cool.

HATCH: I mean really ingenious, and the ice thing was pretty ingenious, too.

JONES: Yeah, yeah the ice plant.

HATCH: But that wasn't anything at all when you were there?

JONES: No, no there wasn't any sign of anything that I could tell.

HATCH: Well, I guess you wouldn't—

JONES: Russell might know because you know he grew up around here.

HATCH: I'd like to talk with Russell.

JONES: Yeah.

HATCH: He's not too fond of me. I don't know why exactly.

JONES: Oh, Russell's just getting cranky because he's had to work every day of his life. In what he's doing, he has to deal with the public, ah anyway.

HATCH: You're pretty tight with Russell then? Or as tight as one gets.

JONES: Yeah, I mean, I've known him for a long time. You know we're fine, but we don't get to hang out much. I don't know anybody else that would . . . I don't know who else could tell you anything. Talk to—but they might be able to direct you to somebody that can give you some kind of history about it.

HATCH: Can you tell me what your typical day is when you were working there. You went in at?

JONES: Whenever we got there. Nine or ten. I can't remember. You know, you sit around and if customers come you sell them what they want, and otherwise if you needed to grind something you'd grind something, and then you'd bag it.

HATCH: Did you do a race at a time? What you called a race of corn?

JONES: A turn.

HATCH: A turn of corn.

JONES: No that's only what people brought in. Just, you know, I think we were getting some of the, well we'd get, they'd buy the wheat and we'd grind that, and we'd grind the corn, but a lot of stuff they'd get from like Tree of Life, that health food store place. Like buckwheat and grits and some things like that. I can't even remember what they offered, some beans and stuff but . . . there wasn't much to do because we'd come up with things to do so, "Well, why don't we do this?" They'd go, "No, no, we don't want to do that."

HATCH: Like rock steps?

JONES: You know, right. So they went okay. We sat around a lot, you know, it was mainly just be there to run the store, you know like I say in the winter, there wasn't much happening. We did turn corn and—was it rye?—for a moonshiner here years ago.

HATCH: What?

JONES: Toy Youngblood. He'd come in in the evening.

HATCH: After everything was closed down?

JONES: Well, yeah, or just at a certain time and he'd set up all this stuff up with Randall. And of course I'm sure he was certified by the sheriff.

HATCH: Who is Randall?

JONES: Randall Branch is kind of the guy that managed it for Epperly.

HATCH: I've heard of Randall Branch.

JONES: Yeah, he's real big on the river stuff now.

HATCH: He still around?

JONES: Yeah, he's still in Murfreesboro or right down here off of, around Kittrell, not Kittrell. Yeah, back in there somewhere. Oh, he could tell you all kinds of stuff. He'd know more of the master plan and the workings of things, you know, and the philosophy and all that kind of thing.

HATCH: He was kind of the miller at that point then, too. Or he was the—

JONES: Yeah, he was the one that appointed me miller. And clerk and stone mover and just show up and—

HATCH: So he got fired with everybody when everybody else got?

JONES: Yeah, pretty much.

HATCH: So, you ground wheat and rye. He was making rye whiskey too?

JONES: So this guy would come in and bring, he'd bring corn and rye. Because he was making mash he wants it ground real coarse. And you know, and so this is the place where he can get it ground the way he wants it to make it work.

HATCH: And not raising anybody's eyebrows either.

JONES: No, you know, and so consequently he'd give Randall a bunch of moonshine for doing this.

HATCH: It seems fair.

JONES: Yeah, right.

HATCH: Did you ever have any of it?

JONES: Oh, gosh, yeah.

HATCH: Was it good?

JONES: Yeah, it was killer.

HATCH: Did he age it at all?

JONES: Yeah, some of it he would age in oak barrels, so he had some of it that was kind of ambered and then some of it that was just the plain white lightning. But Randall checked him out, you know, to see that he had a clean copper still and all that kind of thing so we knew we weren't going to go blind. We were just going to get drunk. And to this day I don't even want to smell moonshine anymore. Yep, okay, keep that away from me.

HATCH: I got some real good stuff from Altamont not too long ago. I brought it down in the tradition of Hamper McBee, you know. Do you have a DVD player here?

JONES: Yeah.

HATCH: I'll bring you a DVD. We're making DVDs up there at the art center now, something you'll appreciate.

JONES: Oh, okay.

HATCH: So, Toy Youngblood, how long was he doing stuff like that?

JONES: Shew, I don't know, for all I know, and I barely met him one time. I don't know, been around here for a long time as far as I know.

HATCH: That man was inventive and he was a good businessman from what I understand.

JONES: Really?

HATCH: Yeah, I mean he did pretty well for himself. He got, he ran afoul of the law quite a few times, but he was quite the entrepreneur. He's related to Donald somehow.

JONES: Oh really? Uh-huh.

HATCH: Donald's got all the black sheeps in his family.

JONES: I didn't even know about that.

HATCH: Wow, so that's cool. So did you ever, did they give, or anybody else ever ask you to do anything strange at the mill?

JONES: No, that was as strange as it got.

HATCH: No pot plowing or anything like that.

JONES: No, not that I can recall, other than ourselves.

HATCH: I mean, I would think that, that would be kind of a big thing to grind just a small amount of. It seems like those are designed to do large amounts of stuff.

JONES: Oh, like grinding hemp seed or something. Ah, nobody even had a clue about that back then.

HATCH: Let's say you got the two stones on top. How did you manage to, did you raise one stone up to put the corn on it then raise it back down?

JONES: No, there was an adjustment that you could adjust for coarse and fine on both, you know. But, now there's a hole in the middle and the wheat goes down through the middle and as the stone turns it pushes it out to the outside and grinds it, and then it falls over the edge, goes through this little hopper, goes into these little cups, gets carried up, up, somewhere up in the mill to a bin, and it'll stay in there, and then it would come down through a chute where you could put a bag underneath and pull a little latch and it would fill up a bag and then you could . . .

HATCH: Did you already have the stuff bagged up, or would you do it for them?

JONES: So, no, we'd fill up a large bag, and then we'd take it up in the store and then sit down and weigh out two-pound bags and five-pound bags and put them in the little paper bags that had the logo and the Readyville Mill bags and that kind of thing.

HATCH: What was the logo on it?

JONES: It just had a picture of the mill. Right—that's one of Merriam's bags. There was some around. Tomm's probably got some too.

HATCH: Okay, you don't have any?

JONES: I just, I had a couple and I gave them to Russell and Merriam just the other day. I found them in a drawer when I was cleaning up. Oh yeah, if I've got some I don't know where they are, but—

HATCH: Was it color, or was it black and white?

JONES: It was kind of a yellow bag with green color, nothing fancy like in the . . . I don't know what the old bags looked like.

HATCH: Apparently it had some weirdo names, like John the Conqueror or something like that. Which is, you know, just a strange name for flour anyway.

JONES: I know they had some like, apparently, Evins Mill. What was the real popular . . . Martha White that did Opry and all that kind of thing. Well apparently Evins Mill they had their own brand called Myrty-Ann. [Editor's note: The flour brand is Myrty-Ann, named for the woman Myrtie Ann Evins.] Of course they had Martha White, they had this cute little picture of Martha White on the bag you know. So this was one of the Evins, from the way I understand it, one of the Evin's children's niece, some kind of thing, so they put Myrtie Ann on there. Myrtie Ann was not a charming little girl, she was kind of goofy looking, so I'd love to have one of those bags with Myrtie Ann, because there's this strange little girl on the—

HATCH: That's what happens if you eat our flour.

JONES: Or you just go with what you got. [phone rings once] If that's Dick Cheney, I'm not here.

HATCH: Okay, he's staying away from us. Wow, so do you have any, is there anything else you ever got from the mill, like, um, for memories, those kind of things? The stones, are the stones . . .?

JONES: All the stones, the corn stones and the wheat stones are still there. People ripped off a few of those that Flipse had built in to, you know, for decorative things, people stole those. Do I have anything? Any memorabilia? Besides my jacket? I have a jacket with the mill printed up. I had it out somewhere. On the back Randall had a bunch of those printed up, that and the flour bag that he had printed up at the time but, other than that, nah. I don't have a thing. Well, there wasn't anything to have, really.

HATCH: Would you go back there and work if they opened it up again?

JONES: Uh-uh, not even. Well, I mean, what would I want to do? Grind stuff?

HATCH: Grind stuff.

JONES: Yeah, right. Not really my idea of . . .

HATCH: You'd be part of a demonstration.

JONES: I'd rather just spend an afternoon and teach somebody how to do it, and say, "Take her away."

HATCH: Teach them how to fish?

JONES: Yeah, right, there we go.

HATCH: I'm going to go ahead and . . . Anything else you want to say to us sir?

JONES: That's the high points: the turn of corn, to sharpen a stone, and Toy Youngblood. Everything else is just filler.

HATCH: There wasn't a chisel? So you just used a hammer to sharpen it?

JONES: Yeah, it was a special pointed, it's like it had nine or twelve or something sharp points on it that you had to chip. And it would chip and rough it up. Sculptors use that kind of thing. I've seen them here and there, but, yeah, there's a real trick to it. I know it. I know the trick.

HATCH: You do know the trick?

JONES: Yeah, I told Tomm, I says, "Whenever the time comes, you know, if you need to sharpen this, I'll show you how, from what I remember." It's not one of those skills that you take on the road anymore.

HATCH: Right. Millstones last forever though, don't you think? Or how long do you think before they—

JONES: Well apparently they don't because I guess at some point they get, especially, you know, I guess when they were heavily milling all the time they would wear down. Because Flipse, the one's he decoratively put in, or some that he'd fished out of the river, you know and he'd cemented

them in, you know, and made stuff with them and that kind of thing. So apparently they do get degraded to some point to where they don't work anymore. You know, I don't know.

HATCH: Everybody, man, water will wear it down, stone wears down. All this different stuff water does it to everything.

JONES: Yeah, it's like, pretty much, all things must pass.

HATCH: Why were you named Elder?

JONES: I was named after my father. Why was he named Elder?

HATCH: Why was he named Elder?

JONES: I don't know! I asked him the other day. I said, "Where did your name?" He says, "Well, I don't know." I said, "Well, damn, if you don't know, how am I ever going to know?" So there we go.

HATCH: Make something up.

JONES: Huh?

HATCH: Make something up.

JONES: Yeah, well, I have the, the best that I can come up with is, apparently the doctor's name was Elder. There was some Elder family down there in Chattanooga, and Elder Mountain and all this kind of thing, and, kind of, since all my folks came from Marion County and Jasper, and I figure well maybe he just, he was, this guy was a doctor and he delivered my father and that's why the name came. And of course Willis, my grandfather, is long gone, so it's a mystery and I don't know the answer, dang it. I'd like to know myself.

HATCH: It's a neat name.

JONES: Yeah, I like it.

HATCH: Well, Mr. Jones, I appreciate it. This is Evan Hatch signing off for the interview Elder.Jones, 11.13.07, part 1. It's been a very informative time. I appreciate all your help.

JONES: Me, too. It was casual. You're easy to hang out with.

**END OF INTERVIEW**