

I Been Wanting to Go Home
1992

Harrell Fletcher

In the summer of 1990, I drove across the country and back with my friend Cleveland. It was a strange trip spent mostly in my truck, usually with one person up front driving and the other back in the camper shell reading or sleeping. We weren't exactly sure why we did it that way, but that's how we did it. I remember one night during about a twelve hour drive through Virginia there was a lightning storm and for some reason I thought about going to see my Aunt Grace in Oklahoma. A few days later in Lawrence, Kansas, I called my grandmother in California and asked her for the address of the nursing home that Grace had checked into a few weeks before. My grandmother told me that Grace probably wouldn't remember who I was, but that I should tell her who I was and that she would be happy to see me.

The last time I had seen Grace (and maybe the only time I had seen her) was seven years earlier. I had gone to visit my grandmother who was living at the time in Wilburton, Oklahoma at Grace's request. When I met Grace she said about me, "He ain't my Harrell," referring to my father who has my same name and is "her Harrell." He had stayed with her a lot when he was little, and I guess she had a fondness for him that didn't extend to me just because I had the same name.

I wasn't sure what to expect from seeing Grace again. I think I wanted some answers from her. I've had the tape from our conversation for almost three years now. Several times I have tried to transcribe it, but have never been able to get very far. I think what stopped me wasn't so much the burden of writing it all out, as the burden of facing what the conversation might mean.

This is a sort of a side note, but in reading this, some people might ask (as my housemate Saskia did when I read her a part of it) why I didn't edit it down, take out all the dead wood and leave the "interesting stuff." I guess that is just it for me, the dead wood is the interesting part. I want to represent my

experience and my aunt as accurately as I can, and that includes a lot of repetition and some confusion, and I think through that, a lot of insight into what Grace was all about at that point in her life, and what I was all about at that point in my life.

(Outside in the parking lot of the nursing home.)

Cleveland: Recording now.

Harrell: What?

C: Recording now.

H: You're recording?

C: I'm recording right now, yeah.

(The nursing home is small, single story and I think made of cinder block. We go inside and walk up to the front desk.)

H: Can I see Grace Yancy?

Attendant: Yep. You family?

H: Yep.

A: Yeah, you a nephew?

H: Great nephew.

A: Great nephew. Hi, she's in here snoozing.

(The attendant walks us into the adjoining room where a television is on really loud, there are also various generator and air conditioning noises. She calls out, "Gracie.")

Grace: (Startled) Oh.

A: I was afraid I was gonna scare you when you woke up. Look who's here to see you.

H: She might not recognize me, I haven't seen her in about seven years.

A: Oh, well. You just tell her who you are.

H: Hi Grace, I'm, uh, Beatrice's grandson.

A: Sit right down there and talk to her where she can hear you.

G: Who are you?

H: Beatrice's... Your sister Bea's grandson Harrell.

G: Harrell? My goodness, my goodness.

H: How you doing?

G: Not so good.

H: Yeah?

G: (Looks at Cleve) Who are you?

C: Just a friend of his.

H: This is my friend Cleveland.

G: Are you his brother?

H: No, he's a good friend of mine.

G: Where do you live, honey?

H: I live in California, but we were just driving through and thought we would stop by and say hello.

G: How come you're here?

H: We're driving through from New York, we were in New York.

G: Oh, I wish I could go home. I've got a big house, a brick home, and you all could stay and have your own bed and everything. I don't live very far from here, but I can't stay there by myself, and then you all wouldn't have to go. I'd be glad to have you.

H: Well, that's okay, we were just driving through and though we'd stop by. We have a truck we can sleep in anyway.

G: What, Hon?

H: We got a truck, with a camper shell.

G: I know, but I have a brick home that has everything.

H: Yeah, I know, I was here about seven years ago with my dad, and...and when my grandmother was living here.

G: Where you all headed for?

H: We're going back to California.

G: Where have you been?

H: Well, we've been all over the place, we drove across the country on the top, on the top of the states.

G: Probably to see the country, to see the world.

H: Yeah.

G: And your sister Bea's son?

H: Uh, yeah, well, I'm your sister Bea's grandson. Harrell's son, Harrell.

G: You're Harrell's son?

H: Yeah.

G: (Excited) Oh, you're Harrell's son.

H: I'm Harrell.

G: Oh honey, your aunt Grace is so glad, I wish I could go with ya. Could you stay a few days?

H: Well...

G: I'm wanting to go home.

H: Yeah well, we got to be going back. We actually just came down from Kansas.

G: Huh?

H: We just drove down from Kansas today to drop by to say hello.

G: And who are you? Are you his...

C: Just a friend.

G: (Very excited) You my nephew too, Hon, you didn't hug Aunt Grace (she reaches out and hugs Cleveland).

C: I'm, uh, just his friend actually.

G: Oh you're just his friend. What do you have there? A gun?

C: No (chuckles).

H: It's a tape recorder.

G: Huh, what is that?

C: Just a walkman.

G: Huh?

C: It's a walkman...it's uh, it's a recorder thing.

G: I like this.

H: I was wondering, do you remember when...

G: Now what's this for, (she taps on the recording level indicator) just to look at? Is it good for something to do?

C: You can listen to music and record things...

G: Look at that, look ain't that pretty, looka there, those red things are moving in there.

C: Yeah, it's picking up a sound.

H: Grace, do you remember when my dad was a little kid, and he stayed with you when his mom and dad were having to travel around?

G: Yes.

H: Didn't he stay with you for a year or something and you had a horse that you could ride?

G: You mean Bea and her husband?

H: Yeah, when they were travelling.

G: And you are Bea's son?

H: Grandson, right.

G: You're sister Bea's grandson.

H: Yeah, my father Harrell stayed with you for awhile.

G: Yes, her son.

H: Do you remember when we stayed with you?

G: Yes, they used to come to be with me, we used to visit all the time then.

H: Do you got any stories about my dad when he was a kid?

G: What's that, Hon?

H: Do you have any stories about my dad when he was a kid...Harrell?

G: Well, I don't know. He was something else, he was a nice fella, nice kid. He was pretty smart you know, and he went places and done things. He was quite a boy, quite a boy. I been wanting to go home, I wonder if you boys...I been trying to get someone to take me home... I don't want to stay here, it's just awful.

H: Is that right? You don't like it here?

G: And uh, I sure want to go home.

H: Well, but, I sorta...

G: I don't live very far from here.

H: Except they're sorta taking care of you here, aren't they?

G: Huh?

H: They're taking care of you here, aren't they taking care of you here?

G: Yes, I'd go home, but I've got to have somebody to stay with me.

H: Yeah.

G: Uh, Aunt Grace is ninety six years old.

H: Is that right?

G: I'm getting up in years, (excited) and you're Bea's grandson.

H: That's right, I am. My grandma's about... She's eighty eight now I think.

G: Huh?

H: My grandma Bea is eighty-eight years old now.

G: Yes.

H: How many brothers and sisters did you guys have?

G: Well, there was me, I was the oldest of the childs, you want to know how many? There was me and Ernest and Lewis and Ruby and Bea and Pauline. I was the oldest and Ernest was next and Lewis was next and Beatrice was next and Pauline and Bud. There was six of us children.

H: Are you and Bea the only ones left now?

G: Yes. Now I don't know, now Ernest and Lewis they was uh, now Ernest is gone and Lewis is gone, Bud's gone. Let's see, there's me and Bea and Ruby that's living at this time.

H: Where's Ruby? (I'd never heard much about Ruby. As it turned out, she died about six months after I visited Grace. She lived in another part of Oklahoma.)

G: We was uh, my daddy was a pretty wealthy man, he was smart and knew about everything, he provided well for us.

H: Didn't he get in a buggy accident.

G: Uh, a bug, a wha, my father?

H: Didn't he get hurt in an accident?

G: Yes, yes he did.

H: Uh, broke his leg or something? (He died of complications from this accident when my grandmother was about eight, I think.)

G: Well, you can say one thing, you had one of the greatest grandfathers that ever lived. He was a good provider and he was kind and smart and everything, and he had more friends I

guess than... you know his name was W.B. Cooper... I guess that he had more friends or as many as anybody in the county. Yes he was very well liked, he was pretty smart and he knew lots of people. He was a very well provider. He provided well for us, he sent us to school, taken us to church on Sunday, why we always went to church and Sunday school. And he educated us, I guess I don't... what grade is Bea in?

H: What? Well...

G: Your sister, your mother, Aunt Bea, isn't Beatrice your mother? Who's your mother?

H: Well, my mother is is uh Betty, my father is Harrell, see Bea is my grandmother.

G: Huh?

H: Bea, Bea is my grandmother.

G: Oh Bea, Beatrice is your grandmother, yes.

H: That's right.

G: And she and I are sisters, and I'm your aunt.

H: That's right, my great aunt, yep.

G: We're blood relatives Honey, me and Bea is blood sisters.

H: Oh, that's right, yeah.

(Here I am going to put an * to show where I stopped writing when I was transcribing this from the tape. It was a very difficult business because my tape player is on the ground in my room and I had to stay close to it so I could press play and pause and rewind. It just wound up taking a very long time, so whenever you see an * that's where I stopped transcribing for awhile. Maybe it would be a good place for you to take a break from reading it too if you wanted.

G: That'd be, I'd be your aunt wouldn't I?

H: That's right.

G: And are you his brother?

C: No, I'm just his friend, just, just...

G: Oh, just... what's your name.

C: Cleveland.

G: Pete who?

C: Cleveland.

G: Steven?

C: Cleveland.

G: How do you spell that? C L E V E...

C: Yeah, C L E V E...

H: Cleveland, like the city.

G: Well, there's more to it than that ain't there?

C: Leffler.

G: How do you spell it?

C: L E F F L E R.

G: I see. I sure do wish... I been wanting to go home. I don't live too far from here. I could go home and you boys could stay with me. If they have the gates... I have, I have... Not that I'm talking off, but I have a lot of furniture and I have uh one man who is like a brother to me, and his whole family to me, they call me Aunt and uh, he keeps the gates locked. I have double gates for cars. I have my car in the garage, it's attached to the house, it's part of it, and I have a nice car. It

only has a few miles on it. I haven't rode in it since I haven't been well. I sure do wish... I would be willing to go home tonight. I tell ya, I'm just tired of this place, but I don't know who in the world I could get to stay with me. I'm not feeling really physical, physically the best.

H: But you were staying by yourself for quite awhile there weren't you?

G: Do what Hon?

H: Weren't you just living by yourself for a long time there?

G: Oh yes, and I'm a retired doctor you know (laughs).

H: You did massage right?

G: Huh?

H: Massage, didn't you do massage or something?

G: Uh, what Hon?

H: You did massaging?

G: Yes, no! No, no I had my doctor's thing, well I had vibrators and everything.

H: Right, yeah.

G: I decided I'd make a doctor, and I did. I don't know why I did, you see Aunt Grace is ninety-six years old, getting up in years.

H: How long you been living here in Wilburton?

G: Huh, well I was alone and I thought I better stay with someone awhile cause I was by myself and did you, have you seen my home?

H: Well, I did about seven years ago when I came to visit.

G: It's a big brick home.

H: That's right, I remember.

G: I have two big driveways, concrete that comes from the highway to the house. I don't know why. I wish some of the boys like yourselves would come and stay with me. I'd go home and certainly will them my place. I got a nice place... to build it now... I, I guess I could hardly get it built. And Don Maclain, I have some friends by the name of Maclain. He says he has the gates locked and everything, but you boys could stay all night if uh... I been wanting to go home awful bad and I... If I knew I could get someone to stay with me, some girl, there's lots of nice girls here, and if I could get someone to stay with me I'd give them part of the house cause they may go to college. We have an awfully good college.

H: What's that called?

G: Yeah.

H: What, what college is that?

G: Huh?

H: What college is that?

G: It's uh, Lattermore County College. It sure is a nice big college. We have lots of things here, it's a pretty wealthy place. I don't know what all have you seen?

H: We just sorta drove in, we haven't seen much, we just drove in now, we haven't seen too much of it.

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G: Well, we could go to my house, you boys could stay the night if you want.

H: Well, that's okay, I think we're gonna...

G: Huh?

H: We're gonna, we're gonna just... We're just passing through, we're gonna be driving out. We need to get away from the heat. It's a little too hot down here for us.

G: Where have you been?

H: Well, I'll tell ya, let's see, we were just up in Lawrence, Kansas.

G: In Kansas?

H: Yeah.

G: Is it pretty cold up there now?

H: No, it's hot, really hot.

G: In Kansas?

H: Yeah, it's about, it's about...

G: Let's see, Kansas is south of here isn't it?

H: It's uh, it's north of here.

G: Yes I thought it was. It ought to be cool up there now.

H: It's hot let me tell ya. And before that uh, let's see what was that state before that? We've gone through Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia.

G: You have? You boys have been driving that far?

H: Yeah.

G: What type of car have you?

H: It's a truck, a little pick-up truck with a camper shell on the back.

G: You ought to see my nice car, it hasn't been drove very much, I don't suppose it even has a hundred miles on it. It looks just like it did when I bought it.

H: What kinda car is it?

G: It's a Buick.

H: A Buick?

G: Uh-huh. Yes, I bought it new, and it doesn't get taken out, it's hardly been drove.

(Pause, TV sounds in the background.)

H: Say, have you talked to Bea lately.

G: Pardon?

H: Have you talked to Beatrice lately?

G: Have you done what?

H: Have you heard from Bea?

G: No I uh, yes, yes I hear from Bea, she's doing alright.

H: She calls you now and then?

G: She says she will never come back to live here.

H: She stayed here awhile.

G: Yes.

H: I think it's too hot for her.

G: (Laughs) I guess so.

H: She's so used to California.

G: Now is he your brother? (She said this slightly muffled.)

H: My brother or my mother?

G: Your brother and your mother?

H: I don't have a brother, but my father is Harrell, and my grandmother is Bea. I didn't get any brothers.

G: Your mother is who?

H: My mother is Betty, but you probably don't remember her, my father is Harrell.

G: Harrell Cooper is your daddy?

H: Harrell Fletcher.

G: Harrell Fletcher?

H: Right, yeah.

G: You're my nephew ain't you?

H: And you might remember my sisters, there's Martha...

G: Martha.

H: And Sandra, and Linda Fletcher, my father's daughters.

G: Yes, I...

H: Sandra. Sandra lived in Kansas and also in Oklahoma. She lived in Norman, Oklahoma.

G: Have you been visiting her?

H: Well she doesn't live here anymore. I visited her in Oklahoma when I was about three years old.

G: They all have left. Let's see, Beatrice lives in California doesn't she?

H: That's right.

G: Santa Maria.

H: That's right, that's where I'm from, Santa Maria.

G: Are you all just come from there?

H: Well. I've moved around since then, but that's where I was born.

G: How far have you boys been?

H: On our trip?

G: Yes, have you been further north or south?

H: We, we've gone all the way across from California, we started off in San Francisco area.

G: To Kansas?

H: Well, we went all the way to New York City.

G: Ohhh my gracious.

H: So we went, we had to go through Nevada, Wyoming and uh Nebraska.

G: Just to see the country?

H: Yeah.

G: Well, and what kinda car do you have?

H: We got a pick-up truck and we can sleep in the back of it.

G: Well (chuckles) my car you can't tell it's ever been drove, it's in the garage. I hope it's in the garage. (Bullet shots from the TV) I have my garage built to the house. It's a big one, I don't think it has too many miles on it. I wish I had some of my folks who could take me in the car and we could

go see places in the car. I don't guess I'll ever do that... I suppose I'll, I'll...

H: Have you, you've done some travelling in your life though, haven't you?

G: Do what?

H: Haven't you done some travelling in your live... done some?

G: Oh, yes, I've done, and I've been a doctor, you know. And I've had lots of experience, (laughs) I don't know why I wanted to make one, but I did, you see, I'm ninety-six years old. I guess I look it too.

H: No, you look pretty good.

G: (Laughs) I don't feel like when I was young.

H: What's, what's your problem, what's wrong?

G: Huh?

H: What's wrong, why aren't you feeling so good?

G: What Hon?

H: Why aren't you feeling so good? What's wrong?

G: With me?

H: Yeah.

G: Well, I'm just wore out, I'm ninety-six years old, when you get that old, you ain't a kid anymore (laughs).

H: You know what I remember, last time I came here we went to a lake and it had some robbers' caves or something.

G: Well yes, Robbers' Caves is still here, it oh, it's really a big place.

H: That was a nice lake.

G: Have you been there this time?

H: No, not this time.

G: How far are you going?

H: Well, we're going all the way back to California in the next couple days, we got about another six days.

G: Well I been trying to get someone to take me home. If you boys will take me home. I've got a nice room, you'd have your own bed and everything. I don't want to be here.

H: How long you been here, anyway?

G: Oh, I don't know, I'd have to count back, I been here quite a long while though, and this is quite a place.

H: Yeah?

G: It's quite a place, and they serve good meals. Now you all... let's see, what time is it?

H: It's almost seven o' clock.

G: Well, I guess we could get something to eat in the dining room.

H: Uh-huh, you got some friends here?

G: Huh?

H: You got some friends that live here?

G: Me, no (chuckles) I don't have... Don Maclain is taking care of my place. There's a neighbor and a friend of mine. He's taking care of everything, and my little dog. You ought to see him, now you talk about spoilt little dogs, he is

one of em. He has a basket and his bed in it and everything and he's something else.

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G: You boys could take me with you, you could take me to my home.

H: But I thought you needed someone to take care of you. This place takes care of you pretty good.

G: Well, I'm gonna have to have someone and I don't know what to do. Aunt Grace is getting old, (laughs) and when you're a doctor you do something... that's what you should be. Boy, there's plenty of money. I'm not broke, but I'm not the ... but I'm not poor either, some people don't have a penny.

H: Hey, do you think I could take a picture of you?

G: What?

H: Take a picture of you with a camera.

G: (Laughs) take a picture of me?

H: I could show your sister when I get back to California.

G: I could take this thing, this sweater off.

H: It's okay, you can leave it on.

G: No, I'll take it off, we should get out in the light.

H: This is okay, it's okay, do you want me to help you with that?

G: Now what's going on with this thing (pause). Now I'd like it if... can you lift me up?

C: Sure.

G: You'll have to Hon.

H: You don't have to stand up if you don't want to.

G: I can get, I can walk and get there by the door if you want me to. It will make a better picture if we get in the light.

H: Okay.

G: Pick up my thing there.

H: Where do you want to go, over here?

G: Uh, let's...this is my cart but if you all can help me I can walk to the door.

C: Alright.

G: Do you want to sit on the porch or do you want...

H: Sure.

C: The porch is fine.

G: Huh?

H: Wherever you like, wherever you want your picture taken.

G: Well, wherever you think is best, inside?

H: Either way, we could go outside for a second if it's not too hot for you.

C: It's pretty hot out here.

H: We'll make it quick.

C: Got the door Harrell?

H: Uh-huh.

G: Well, have we should get in the light somewhere?

H: This is good enough.

C: Yeah, this is fine.

H: How about, how about right here?

G: You'll have to hold me up Honey, I can't walk by...

C: Sure thing.

G: You'll have to hold me up. Do you want that door closed?

H: No, it's fine.

G: (Chuckles)

H: I'll show this picture to my dad and grandma so they will see how you're doing, okay?

G: Now you just... (the camera clicks) do you think that picture will be alright?

H: I'll tell you what, I'll have Cleveland take another one.



He'll take one with me and you.

G: Hadn't we get in the light, won't that be better? We could get in the sun if it's better or stay in this light, whatever you like.

H: Okay, this is good. Here, Cleve, it's on automatic so just focus it.

C: Hold this, hold this.

G: Had we better get in the sun?

H: This is okay (birds chirp in the background).

G: Had I better pull off my glasses?

H: It's okay (pause, shutter clicks). Okay, do you want to walk back in?

G: Help me (click, muffled talking as we re-enter the building, click, pause). Here, Honey, we can sit right here.

H: Anything you want me to tell my grandmother when I see her? (Pause) is there anything you want me to tell my grandmother when I see her?

G: Huh?

H: Is there anything you want to tell my grandma Bea when I get back to California?

G: Uh yes! Tell her I wished she'd come to see me because I'm not well, I'm gonna be here a long time.

H: Okay.

G: Well, see Aunt Grace, I'm your aunt, I'm ninety-six years old and I'm a doctor, and a doctor has lots of work to do. If I had it to do over again, I don't think I'd be a doctor.

H: What would you be?

G: Huh?

H: What would you do instead?

G: Nothing (laughs). Well, I guess that's what I'd say because a doctor has to go day or night. If you're a doctor and people know you're a doctor then they send for you, and you've got to go. And I'd just love to go home if you boys would take me with you to my house tonight, and you boys could have your own room. Don's got the gates locked, lets see, ask him where the dog is, we'll go over to his house and ask him for the key

to unlock the gates. He said he had got a big brick house. I don't know... If some of my folks, like you boys would be or could be to come home and stay with me. I ain't got long here anyway, I'm ninety six years old, I would just leave to you everything, my home because I've got a nice big brick home, and cause I'm alone here you know and I ain't got none of the folks here, and I'd have to stay away from home all of the time. If you boys wanted to go down there we could just go down on the road.

H: Well, we have a long drive ahead of us, and we gotta, we gotta get going.

G: How far are you... are you just going somewhere now?

H: Well, we're going, we're headed back to California now.

G: And where have you been?

H: Let's see, we've been through, uh Virginia.

G: My gracious.

H: New Jersey and through uh...

C: Pennsylvania.

G: Lord (laughs).

H: Have you ever been to Pennsylvania?

G: No, I've never been to Pennsylvania, nor New Jersey, nor none of those places.

C: Ohio?

H: Have you ever been to Ohio?

G: To where?

H: Ohio, no, I'll tell ya, I've never been to those places. I've been to a lot of places, but I haven't been back there.

H: We're gonna go to Texas next.

G: That's where I was born?

H: Where were you born?

G: In Texas.

H: What city?

G: Wolfe City.

H: What one?

G: Wolfe City, Texas.

H: Is that right.

G: Uh-huh.

H: Hmm... I thought your family lived in Arkansas.

G: Well they was, but they wasn't then, my daddy and his cousin went to Texas and uhh together. I think they went there on purpose, some kind of special work there.

H: Uh-huh.

G: Probably, cause your grandpa was a pretty smart man.

H: Uh-huh.

G: Pretty smart man I'll tell ya. His name was W.B. Cooper you know. Bud, Daddy B, nearly everybody called him Uncle Bud, that's what they called your grandfather.

H: Uncle Bud?

G: Yeah, everybody called him that.

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G: He had lots of friends.

H: But, but, uh lets see uh my dad, Harrell, was born in Rosebud, Arkansas.

G: Oh yes, oh yes, sure.

H: Rosebud, and that's where uh my grandparents were married.

G: No, they were married, I believe they were married, mamma and papa were married in Texas, and they lived there for awhile. Let's see there was me, I was the oldest child, and Ernest and Lewis and Bud, and there was me and Ernest and Lewis and Beatrice, no Ruby was next and Pauline and Bud. There was seven of us, and little Theo, she died. Their first child died, her name was Theoetta.

H: Theoetta?

G: Yes.

H: Do you remember where Beatrice and Lee, Lee Fletcher, were married?

G: Bea?

H: Bea and Lee Fletcher.

G: Well Hon, Bea is my sister you know.

H: Well, yeah.

G: And you're her son?

H: Her grandson.

G: And, well I'd be your great aunt.

H: That's right.

G: Not very great, (laughs) not very great, but honey, I've got lots of friends because I've doctored people, delivered babies and uh, I'd not make a doctor again I'll tell you, but if I was a man like you boys, I'll tell ya you can't beat being a doctor, you can make money all the time anytime because there is always somebody sick. Now, what are you gonna be?

H: A teacher.

G: A teacher, are you already a teacher?

H: Not yet, I'm in college but...

G: You ain't old enough to teach yet are you?

H: Not quite yet, but pretty soon though.

G: How old are you?

H: Twenty-two.

G: Well Honey do you have to be twenty-five before you teach?

H: Somewhere around there.

G: And what are you gonna be?

C: I'm not sure yet.

G: Is this, is this your brother?

H: He's just a good friend of mine.

G: Oh, just a friend, what's your name?

C: Cleveland.

G: What?

C: Cleveland.

G: Steven who?

C: Cleveland like the city, like Cleveland.

G: How do you spell that?

C: C L E V E L A N D

G: Well, this is a pretty good country to make money here.

H: Oklahoma?

G: Yes, you know there's lots of gas you can drill here. I happen to have a new well.

H: Is that right.

G: I got this new gas well on the place you know (loud carts or something are being pushed by). I guess I've had it now for about six months, and I've been wanting to go home and if you boys could take me over to my house and you all could have your own bed.

H: Well, well that would be nice, but we gotta keep driving.

G: And where have you been?

H: Well, let's see where else have we been? We've been to uh, we've been to uh... Utah.

G: Where?

H: Utah.

G: Ufalla?

H: Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.

G: Oh, Utah, you have?

H: Yep.

G: (Laughs) well why did you go there for?

H: Oh, just driving through, and we've been to, where's another one we've been to?

C: Well, we've been to Wyoming.

G: Utah, that's a long ways.

H: Well, it's pretty close to California, we'll be going through there on our way back. It's just two states over...

G: Well, I've got a nice place down the highway. It's a brick home, it's got two big driveways and I've got concrete to the, clear to the highway, I just thought it would be better for my car. I guess it's got thirty, maybe thirty-five miles on it. My car, I guess she's got ... it must have... it don't have near fifty miles on it yet. Maybe fifty miles on it.

H: Well Grace...

G: Cause I don't have nobody to drive it, it's in the garage all the time. Don Maclain is my friend, I have him in charge, you know, to see after my place. I've got a big brick home, I have my concrete driveway... to the road.

H: Uh, what street is that on?

G: What's what Hon?

H: What street is your house on?

G: Oh, what street, well I'm down on uh... lets see haw far is it? It's not a street, it's a road. I think it's concrete, part of it, because I've got concrete clear out to the highway almost. It wouldn't be a street I don't guess. There's people down there it's down south, I've been wanting to go home awful bad. (First side of the tape ends and is flipped over).

H: On the tenth you are turning ninety-seven or ninety-eight?

G: Me?

H: Yeah?

G: Well, I'll be ninety-eight.

H: Oh, you'll be ninety-eight then.

G: Uh-huh.

H: Okay.

G: Yeah, Aunt Grace... I'm the oldest in the family, you know. I'm the oldest and then there was Ernest and Lewis and Ruby and Bea and Pauline and Bud, there was six of us children.

H: So do you have any advice for me since you've lived so many years?

G: Well there's several, but none of them live here.

H: Uh-huh.

G: I'm just alone... I wish... If I could just sell out, but I don't guess I can. I have a big brick home, I have two driveways that I had concreted to the highway. And I have a nice car, I bought it new, it don't have but a few miles on it, I don't have no one to drive it.

H: Well Grace, we're gonna have to, we're gonna have to take off, but, but let me give you a hug, okay?

G: Honey, don't, you don't, why don't you stay, why don't you stay awhile Hon?

H: Well, we got to get driving before it gets dark.

G: Where are you going tonight?

H: We're gonna try to get to Texas.

G: Where?

H: We're gonna try to drive over to Texas.

G: Oh, to Texas.

H: Yeah.

G: I was born in Texas. Well, are you coming back through here or are you going another route?

H: No, we're gonna go to Texas and then to California.

G: You're going to California, well you live in California.

H: Yeah, we got to get back there pretty soon.

G: What part... where is it you live there?

H: Right now I'm living, uh around the San Francisco area.

G: (Coughs) and now... you're Bea's grandson?

H: That's right.

G: Bea's grandson.

H: Yeah, Harrell.

G: Well, I sure do wish you had a picture of yourself you could leave with me.

H: Well, I didn't know to bring one, maybe I'll send you one. (I actually sent her a copy of the picture shown above).

G: Will you, sure enough, and who are you?

C: His friend.

G: Are you... just a friend, yes?

C: Uh-huh.

G: You're a big ol' boy.

H: Yeah, he's a big one, not like us Fletchers and Coopers and uh...

G: Yeah, well I'm so glad you come Honey.

H: Okay, so uh, I'll send you a picture okay?

G: Oh do, oh do.

H: Take care of yourself.

G: And you be careful, you... your hands are so nice and warm, aren't they? Why look what hands that boy's got, why just looka how big he is, my goodness (laughs). You boys won't come back through here, will you?

H: I don't think so, but if I ever drive across the country again I will.

G: Well, if I don't ever see you again in this world be a good boy.

H: Okay.

G: Hug Aunt Grace.

H: Okay, take care of yourself Grace.

G: Okay Hon.

H: I'll send you a uh letter.

G: Bye bye. Tell the folks you come by to see me, I'm so glad you did (the mic distorts as Cleve hugs her).

H: Okay, bye Grace.

G: Tell all the folks at home hello. (Climactic music is playing on the TV)

H: Okay.

G: Tell 'em I'd love to see 'em.

H: Okay, take care.

G: Bye bye.

H: Bye.

Aunt Grace died about a year and a half after I visited her. I was the last one from my immediate family to see her alive. My grandmother told me that Grace had a cold a few days before she died. Then she got better and, according to some friends that visited her, became incredibly lucid, able to keep track of everyone's names and everything. That night she died in her sleep.

As far as I know she never went back home to her brick house and two driveways and low-mileage Buick. I did go back to California, and was actually there a day earlier than I had planned. That day sort of gnaws at me, like it could have been a day spent with Grace, maybe at her brick home or driving out to Robber's Caves. I called Cleveland the other day to talk about it, to ask him why I hadn't trusted the situation enough to just deviate a little from our schedule of getting to Texas. He seemed to think that I had done enough, and that maybe if we had taken her home it would've made it that much harder for her to leave again. I don't know, maybe I should have sent Cleveland on home with my truck and settled down there in Oklahoma. I would have had my own bed and everything.