

Roger Huston interview by Richard Leavy
Little Brown Jug History Project
September 15, 2018 at the Delaware County District Library

Leavy: Growing up in Western Ohio, I think your uncle was an announcer at Lebanon.

Huston: I was born and raised in Xenia and my uncle started announcing in 1953 at Lebanon Raceway and at county fairs all over Ohio. I started going with him as a middle school and high schooler. I probably went to the races more than I went to school.

Leavy: How old were you when you first experienced the Little Brown Jug race?

Huston: 1958. More than likely...my birthday is always Jug Week. Tomorrow is my birthday.

Leavy: Happy Birthday.

Huston: September 16th. So I am guessing, I am not sure what day September 16 was in 1958. So, I don't know whether I was 16 or maybe I was 15.

Leavy: Close enough. Close enough. Do you have any recollections of your first impressions?

Huston: I remember like it was yesterday.

Leavy: Really?

Huston: Yeah. (Pause) I am getting emotional about this, because I doubt there's anybody you're going to interview that been around the Jug as long as I have. My interest was of course in harness racing, My dad worked for the Farm Bureau and he had a customer by the name of Freemont Whittington who was a farmer in Bowersville, Ohio and he said 'do you think Roger would want to go up to the Jug?' Well, yes, so I got to his house about 5 am in the morning and I think we got to Delaware right around 6:15. We took our lawn chairs and we put them in the area in front of the grandstand. It was a cool morning, like most Jugs mornings are, but back in those days, I think it was even cooler than what we experienced today. We immediately went to one of the church tents that served meals. And at that time at the Delaware County Fair, I think there were three church tents and they were all packed at 6:15 in the morning, believe it or not. And we had breakfast and it was so cool that the tent flaps were down. Everybody was inside to keep warm. Had a normal breakfast. The next thing you do is buy a racing program and we started walking the barn area trying to find every horse that was in the Little Brown Jug. Of course now it's much easier because they have the Jug Barn, where all the Jug horses are together. But in those days they were with their individual stables all over the fairgrounds and the whole idea was to find all the horses in the Jug. It probably took us a good two hours to do so because you had to walk through every barn as there was hardly any in the same barn, they were just everywhere. You knew who the trainer was, so usually look for his colors and find that. I really can't remember what we did up until post time, which in those days I'm sure was one o'clock. We went to our seats somewhere around twelve noon and watched the races. I really don't have much of a recollection as far as the racing that day or anything like that because I was in awe and at that point it was never in my mind that one day I would be calling the Jug. It wasn't even a thought. I think Charlie Hinkle was announcing then and he also was from Xenia, Ohio and Charlie was probably one of the best announcers in all of harness racing. So here I have an uncle that's announcing and I have Charlie Hinkle that's announcing, totally two different styles, totally two different styles. So I don't think I missed a single Jug, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66.

I don't think I missed a Jug whatsoever. At that point in time, in the early 60s, I was going to college at Wilmington, working at a radio station in Xenia, Ohio and it looked like I was going to miss the Bret Hanover Jug because I was pulling an afternoon shift until one o'clock at the radio station, but the race was delayed that year and I made it Delaware on time to see that race. In that process of 60 to 66 I started announcing horse races. In 1960, I was still in high school, I hadn't graduated yet. It was a matinee race program in Wilmington, Ohio for the Sertoma Club, I believe. My uncle called me to the judge's stand after the first race and he said 'I got to go to the bathroom. Do the post parade.' So I did the post parade and I said something as they were going to the gate and they said he wasn't coming back and that I was announcing the rest of the card. Needless to say it was a shock because I wasn't prepared for it. Probably the first race I called was horrible. Thank goodness the second got better and the third, fourth got better. Eventually, I got five county fairs in Ohio in 1960. Lebanon, Urbana, London, Marietta and Hamilton. Now you have to remember that I just graduated from high school and hadn't got to college yet and I thought 'boy, announcing horse races, this is an easy way to make a living.' So, what can I do to work around this summer job of racing and I decided to be a school teacher. You only have to work nine months a year.

Leavy: And you get the summer off.

Huston: So, I went to school and lacked everything but the student teaching. But at that point, I never once considered that I would ever call the Little Brown Jug, I just never expected that.

Leavy: How did it come about that you wound up doing it in 1968?

Huston: Thanks to Charlie Hinkle. It was the Adios and it was the second Saturday in August of 1967. Hank Thomson, who I don't have to tell you who he was, was at the Adios that afternoon and Charlie was also the announcer at the Meadows. Charlie told Hank in the presence of Corwin Nixon, who was president of the United States Trotting Association and a state representative representing Warren County, and Stan Bergstein of the USTA, I don't know if he was the Vice President or something at the time. Charlie says 'I'm going to California and announce basketball for the new ABA team owned by Pat Boone, so I won't be at Delaware.' (cell phone rings). I had trouble getting here and I parked on the wrong street and you couldn't come in that entrance and I was totally lost, I didn't know where Henry Street was, so anyway. He said 'I can't be there and you are going to have to find someone else to do the Jug.' Well Bergstein immediately spoke up and said 'I can cover you on Jug day, but I can announce the rest of the week because of the Jewish holiday.' Corwin Nixon then spoke up and said 'why don't you get that young kid from down in Xenia?' What's his name? Corwin says "well its Huston something. I don't know his first name.' So Hank goes home that night and about ten o'clock. This was in the day when you could call the operator in a certain city and talk directly to the operator. 'How many Huston's do you got in the phone book?' She said 'seven.' Which one do you want? Well let's start with the very first one, that was Cecil, my dad. So he called Cecil. He said, "Ah, you're trying to get ahold of my son gave him the phone number. I think it was about 10:30 at night maybe even closer to all 11 and I get this phone call and we were in bed, pretty sure I was sound asleep and I answered the phone and I'll never will forget, he said 'I doubt that you know me but my name is Hank Thomson.' Little did he know I knew who Hank Thomson was and he said, 'Charlie Hinkle's going to California I need an announcer. Bergstein can do Jug day but would you do Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and I'm sure Hank will let, I mean I'm sure that Stan will have you announce some on Thursday.' So I immediately said 'yes.' Hung up the telephone, that was all the conversation there was. There's no other discussion and my wife at that time, my first wife, the natural words first come out of her mouth was 'how much they paying you?' I said 'I don't know, I'm gonna announced at Delaware.' So I announced those first three days and I also announced some on Jug day and Hank told me Wednesday night before the Jug, he says, "you'll call the Jug next year.' I said 'really?' He says "yeah, you'll call the Jug next year.' He actually apologized to me, he says "I'm sorry you can't call the Jug tomorrow, but I've already committed it to Stan Bergstein.' So I accepted it, but and this and I don't know what you want to make part of this story or not, I'm in the process of writing a book and it's going to be in the book so,

I can talk about it now. Not knowing the power of Stan Bergstein, most powerful man in harness racing, I didn't tell anybody that I was calling the Jug. Because I felt that he'd pull rank and call the Jug. So when I got there in 68, first thing I did was open a racing program and it had 'Announcer - Roger Houston Xenia, Ohio,' no other names. But I still wasn't sure. So I still didn't tell anybody. On Thursday morning, Bergstein walked into the Log Cabin with his binoculars and Hank said to him, 'I didn't know you were coming this year' and Stan said, 'yeah, I'm here to call the Jug' and Hank says, 'no, Roger's calling the Jug.' Bergstein picked up his binoculars walked out the door of the Log Cabin and didn't come back for ten years.

Leavy: Goodness

Huston: Yeah and that was the start. Called my first Jug in 1968. But Hank Thomson was a man of his word. That's the story.

Leavy: Were you not on speaking terms with Stan Bergstein?

Huston: No, I don't think it was ever that, because we worked the Red Mile in Lexington in the fall meet together from I think it was 1967, as well through 75 and he announced all the days and I announced the other days that he couldn't be there if he had a speaking engagement. He...I don't know how to put it really, we never had words about anything. The only thing that upset me for so many years was that the years he was at the USTA they made movies of the Jug and even though I was calling the Jug, Bergstein would go to Ed Lang Productions in Centerville, Ohio and re-record the audio of the Little Brown Jug.

Leavy: With his voice in it?

Huston: With his voice doing the Jug. You can take that, can read into it anything you want to, I never talked to him about it.

Leavy: Huh, how long did that go on?

Huston: Probably until about 72, 73. Five or six years. Until he left the USTA and when he left the USTA, I believe they stopped making those films. You don't know how many times people would say to me, 'I thought you called the Jug' and I said 'I did.' 'Well we got the tape of the movie from USTA and it was Bergstein. That hurt, really hurt, but 52 years later it's a minor hurt, but I still get very emotional about it because it is part of the Jug lore, the Jug history or something like that.

Leavy: Yeah, who would you say are the most important people who have made the Jug?

Huston: Well there's only...I did not know Joe Neville, I'll preface that. I never met Joe Neville. So to me it was Hank Thomson. There was nobody else, he was the man. He put a lot of faith in a young kid from Xenia, Ohio and allowed him to call the biggest race in harness racing. So it was Hank. Yeah all the way. I've actually probably been adopted by the rest of the family over the years. Tommy was like the brother I never had. I'm still best of friends with all Tommy's youngsters and their families and I go to weddings and everything like that. Relationship...I think there were only three horsemen at Tom Thomson's second marriage to Sherry - Phil Terry, Chip Hastings and myself were the only three people at Tommy's second marriage that were involved in harness racing and I think that to me showed the closeness of the three of us, four of us all together. It was because of the Jug. So the Jug's been all my life.

Leavy: Yeah and it sounds as though Hank was really critical for your career.

Huston: Oh yeah, I felt bad in one way when Hank turn things over to Tommy, because whenever you have a change in any business, it doesn't mean that it's going to carry on the same. But Tommy did his level best to carry it on in the same tradition and everything. A few years back somebody asked me what what's important about the Jug and I've always said, 'tradition, tradition, tradition.' There have been changes - they've gone from a hub rail to no hub rail, they've gone from possible three heats to second heat and it's over. There have been changes, but basically the Jug is still the Jug that Joe Neville and Hank Thomson founded back in 1946. That's what makes the Jug, tradition, tradition, tradition...and the people.

Leavy: Well, I was going to ask, you have been everywhere no and I guess maybe you've answered it, but what makes the Little Brown Jug special? What traditions or what people?

Huston: Well, I think what makes it special...well the race itself is special. It's a beautiful setting. The Delaware County Fair Grounds is just beautiful, the grandstand, the racetrack itself the infield and everything. I've announced at 37 county fairs in Ohio alone, that's over half of them, and people that have never been to the Jug and this is even for people in Europe, in countries that I have announced as well, that have half-mile tracks. I said, 'can you imagine right here at Portmarnock Racetrack in Dublin, Ireland. Can you imagine 40,000 people standing around your track watching your big race? Can you imagine that Hanover, Ontario, Canada, a half mile track, can you imagine 40,000 people? If you haven't been to the Jug, you can't. You can't even fathom it. And again, we're back to the people. The people have made the Jug what it is and they will continue to. We just hope we don't get in their way and make too many changes to make them not like the Jug.

Leavy: What impact do you think the changes have had on the race, on the experience?

Huston: I make no bones about it when they had the vote in the Jug Society to do away with the third heat, I was one of the ones that voted negative. I think when they did away with the third heat that to a degree upset many fans. They lived for that final battle against the three champions. You know even though it was a three horse race or a four horse race. But the horse industry itself - the owners, the trainers, the drivers and everybody that is involved - were against that. They say the horses today are not the horses of yesteryear. They're going so much faster today and they can't go three heats and stuff like that. So in a way the horsemen have won out on one of, what I felt was, one of the biggest traditions of the Jug. I'm probably the only one that will say it, but I'm gonna say it. I think it has hurt the Jug. It's hurt to Jug. It hasn't increased entries from the horsemen that didn't want to go three heats. I mean, they haven't come out of the woodwork to go two heats or something like that. You know? The biggest field we ever had was when we had the three heat rule still in effect. So by doing away with it, like the horseman wanted, and believe me the Jug Society voted to do away with it and I can't blame anybody that voted to do away with it. I don't think it's their fault, or anything like that, but I do think that they thought it would get more people not to skip the Jug, you know? A lot of people would skip it and go to Lexington because they didn't want to go two or three heats on a half mile track in Delaware, where post-position is a big thing. But I do think it hurt our fan base. Percentage-wise, I can't tell you. I have no way of knowing how many fans that turned off, but I'm sure it turned off. The other thing, a modern way of putting the races on TV has diminished the fan base. Where they'll say 'it's much easier to stay at home and watch it on the computer' or go to their local track and simulcast or something like that or 'why should I go from Northfield, drive two and a half hours to Delaware when I can go over to the grandstand and watch it on TV?' So that is a problem that they've been faced with and another reason for the drop in attendance, but I think we had to keep up with the times and the times was to put it on TV and stuff. I think it has hurt but that's one of the things that you have to do in life that you just can't go around it.

Leavy: Harness racing isn't what it used to be and I guess, at least my impression is, that horse racing isn't it used to be.

Huston: I won't say that I totally agree with you. I think harness racing is what it used to be. What we didn't have when harness racing was at the top, is more competition. I work at a track called The Meadows over in western Pennsylvania south of Pittsburgh. When I went to the Meadows in 1976, there probably were no more than five restaurants within three miles of the racetrack. Now there's thirty. There wasn't but maybe one movie theater with one screen in 76. Now there's three movie theaters with 15 screens within five miles of the racetrack. There's more competition. There's more things for people to do than just to go to harness racing. Harness racing was big in those days - go to the track have dinner in the clubhouse and things like that, enjoy the races - and we have not been able to outdo our competition and I'm not blaming harness racing for that. I don't know that there have ever been a way to overcome that. The growth of professional football, for instance. It has grown over the years where we've gone down but professional football back in the 50s and 60s was not as big as it is today, so that's my own personal opinion.

Leavy: Do you have any thoughts about what you think needs to be done to sustain the Jug into the future?

Huston: As in anything, you've got to develop the fan base. If you don't get the young person to the racetrack by the time there are 21 years old, you've lost them. We have in harness racing, Harness Horse Youth Foundation and they have seminars and things at various racetracks and to draw young people into harness racing. A lot of tracks have family fun nights one night a month or something like that where they might have a balloon artists or a petting zoo or something like that. You've got to develop the youngster to like harness racing because, but like I said, by the time they reach 21, you've lost them. So I think, I don't know of anything else we can do. It's not doing way of the third heat. That's not drawing them to the racetrack. Delaware's still special though when you consider that its 20 miles north of Columbus, in a small town that's 15 to 20,000 people, on a Thursday afternoon. If you were if you were gonna have, well you might get it with the Ohio State Buckeyes. If the Buckeyes played Thursday afternoon at one o'clock, you might get 70 or 80,000 people, but with the vast majority of things you're not going to get that many at one o'clock on a Thursday afternoon.

Leavy: You've announced 50 Jug races. If you were thinking about the really memorable races, what would be around the top of your list?

Huston: I've kind of always shied away from saying 'what's the number one' for a lot of reasons, but I have a lot of races that stick out in my mind as memorable and I go back to the early 70s with Nansemond and Albatross. Albatross was the number one horse and Stanley Dancer was quoted as saying when he won the week before and I believe it was either at Wolverine or Hazel Park in Michigan, 'all I have to do is go to Delaware, jog around the race track and win the Little Brown Jug.' Well somebody put that quote on strips of paper and put them all over Delaware, Ohio at the fairgrounds. If gentlemen went to the bathroom that was right there as he standing at the urinal. 'All I have to do this job around the track,' so that quote automatically turned a lot of people off of Albatross and Dancer. To the point that Dancer got booed in the post parade and of course Dancer won a heat. Nanesmond won a heat, HT Luca won a heat. I think Dancer won a heat. I'd have to get the book out. Somebody else won the other heat. Nanesmond won the second race, second heat. The two fields come down to four and four and Nanesmond won and then they came back, the three to three of them and Nanesmond won the race and Herve, of course, was a showman and the crowd just cheered like you wouldn't believe. Dancer was so upset with the crowd, he said, he told people 'I'm not coming back to Delaware until, I know, I can win the race' and so he missed a couple years and finally came back and did win, but I know that bothered Stanley - getting booed like he did.

More present day? Big Bad John, owned by local residents Ed and Suzie Telle. Ron Potter was the trainer. He was a Pennsylvania bred, so he raced at the Meadows quite a bit. He also raced as a two-year-old. In the races that I

called, Big Bad John was a perfect nine for nine. He never lost a race with me announcing, including the Jug and Pennsylvania races and everything, so he was very close to me.

Wiggle It Jiggleit, two years ago. The greatest harness race of all time, as far as I'm concerned. Hung almost every step of the mile, beaten at the top of the stretch by a length and sheer heart and determination come back and wins it in the final two strides or something. A lot of people say that that's the greatest, not the greatest Jug, but they say the greatest race in all of harness racing. Well of course people change year to year on things like that.

The other race besides the Jug, but it occurred on Jug day, was Falcon Seelster. He was in a six horse open pace for I think four thousand dollars on Jug day and he set the world's record a 1:51 with Tom Harmer driving. Of all the races I've called. It's the one people remember the most. I said at the top, in the race and it wasn't planned, 'if you've never been on your feet, you better stand up now.' Which is, I meant you're gonna see something that you've never seen before and he won that day in 151 and I think the Jug only went fifty-two and something, so it kind of overshadowed the Jug on that particular day.

Life Sign, they talked about him. The question I asked John Campbell after he won it, John Campbell the driver said 'it's the worst drive I've ever made in my life.' He was only at the rail for maybe seven seconds. As soon as he got into the rail it came right back out again and again heart, determination and things like that he got up and won it in the final few strides so there's a lot of races a lot of races that stick out of my memory, but for different reasons.

Leavy: Are there some funny, entertaining stories, moments that that you recall over these years? I'm assuming there have been some things that were not planned.

Huston: I don't know that they're funny or anything like that because there's stories about the Jug though. Governor Skipper when he won the Jug they went to his stall that morning and he had a two and a half inch splinter in his gum, the morning of the Jug. He'd been eating the wood of the stall and of course being race day they couldn't treat him with anything, so they removed the splinter and changed to a rubber bit and he overcome that and won the Jug.

Roland Beaulieu did not win the Jug with Columbia George. It was in with Most Happy Fella and Stanley Dancer and there was I think 10 or 11 horses that year. Roland and Columbia George had an impossible post position to overcome. I'm not sure whether he was on the eighth hole on the outside or in the second tier. I'd have to check the book on that. But knowing that he couldn't win the first heat because Most Happy Fella had the rail. Knowing that he couldn't win the first heat that is probably gonna be one but Most Happy Fella all he could hope for was to be close, get a decent post position win the second heat and then in the race off beat Most Happy Fella. Most Happy Fella won the first. Columbia George was second. But the story that nobody knew knowing that it's possibly going to go three heats or maybe even four, Columbia George and Roland Beaulieu came to the track before 9 a.m. that morning. The first heat of the Jug is not going to be until 2 o'clock or so. That's unheard of to bring a horse five hours before the race. He just jogged him a couple miles, taking back to the barn, brings him back out a little after 10:00, goes slow mile about 2:30, 2:45. Brings him back out again around 12:30 goes another little faster mile the horse had been on the track four times before the first heat knowing he's gonna have to go three heats so Columbia George was actually on the track seven times that day, which is just Roland Beaulieu, I guess. He got beat by Most Happy Fella. But taking the horse to the track that many times just nobody could imagine, not me.

The one thing that stands out in my mind more than anything else about the Jug is John Hayes, who was the owner and driver of a lot of horses over the years and he had a horse named Strike Out and there was Ohio favorite by

the name of Jay Time and the beginning of the USTA film that year showed John Hayes sitting in a lawn chair up against the fence at Delaware. 'I didn't come to Ohio to be elected governor. I came here to win the Little Brown Jug.' Well, he was always making statements like that. He made a statement one time, 'I'd rather win the Jug than go to heaven.' That's just the kind of guy he was. But the last year that he was able to come to the Jug because he was in failing health and they brought him to the Jug breakfast, which was at that time held at Ohio Wesleyan and his wife brought him. I had known John for 15 - 20 years. Interviewed him on television and at the racetrack and everything. I asked his wife, 'do you think he'll know me?' She says, 'I hate to tell you this, no he won't know you, but I know he wanted to come.' So, I introduced myself and with that blank stare you knew that he probably didn't even know he was at the Jug breakfast. She was interviewed after his death and she is quoted as saying about what we're talking about. All that, but she said, 'the minute we got to the Delaware County Fairgrounds and he heard Roger's voice, it came into his eyes.' She said, "For the first time he knew where he was." Yeah, now how is that gonna make any individual feel when they're talking about you but that's probably my greatest Jug story and it had nothing to do with the race. The impact that you have on people over a long career you gotta imagine, you got to be pretty old to have never heard anybody besides Roger at Delaware. I mean 52 years, this year, and by the time we get to 75 hopefully it'll be 54 years, but the good lord willing and the creek don't rise. You know, you got to be pretty old ever heard anybody else, so that's another part of my Jug story.

Leavy: You are called "the voice" for a reason.

Huston: Yeah, I don't know where that all came about either. I have no idea who started that. I have no idea. I don't even...I've had a number of people take credit for it, but I don't know who the first one that started that and I don't think it was because of Delaware. I think the best that I can trace it is that when I left Pompano Park in 1975 and went to the Meadows in 76. I think the publicity director at that time in a story "the voice of winter capital harness racing is moving to western Pennsylvania" or something like that. I think that's the way it happened but I was not responsible for that one.

Leavy: You mentioned earlier in the interview that there were different styles of announcing, how would you describe your own?

Huston: Well, my style is probably a mixture of two, my uncle and Charlie Hinkle. Don was more of a slow, deliberate and when I started out I was a more fast-paced, singing, sway or swing and sway style. I always called it 'swing and sway' was Sammy K or something you know. So, I had a singsong type to it. It's changed over the years but that's the way I started out. I can remember Uncle Don always telling me slow down, slow down, but I never did. I just went right on and I know I've slowed down over the years for obvious reasons, but it's still pretty much like it was in the beginning. Only older.

Leavy: Aren't we all? Are there any other topics or stories that that you think we should hear?

Huston: Well, I'm trying to think of...as far as Delaware is concerned. Oh, I drove here. I had a driving career at Delaware Ohio. I drove in what's called the Billings amateur races for amateur drivers and I think for our first drive here was in 1984 and my last one was in 1995 and in that period of time I think I won five or six races, driving one race a year, so that was a heck of a percentage. There's no bigger thrill than winning a race and going back in front of the crowd. People yelling at you 'way to go Roger, way to go' or something like that. In those days, I would even sometimes bring my son's horse or somebody else's horse. I had to have a camper parked next to the old log cabin, the old one, not the new one and stay all night in that camper. They always gave me a stall on the barn right next to the old log cabin and there was no greater feeling than to get up in the morning take your horse out on track, jog it around the racetrack. Nobody around, just you and the horse. Empty grandstand. Just a great feeling and pure enjoyment and I miss those days. I haven't driven since 95, but my record at Delaware and I think I drove

every year and that 11-year span. We got disqualified one year, so we had the thrill the victory and the agony of defeat. The friendships that have developed over the years. Phil Terry of course who was marketing director and fair manager and time and everything but he started out working in security. We'd always have a party at Hank's house the night before the Jug and one night I went to the party and I came back and I didn't have my badge and security wouldn't let me in the back gate back by where the cow barns are. Not the horseman gate because all the gates closed at a certain time at night and only have this one gate open. He wasn't gonna let me in, so I guess he called his boss who happened to be Phil Terry and Phil Terry got me in it. Thank goodness. So Phil's been a good friend over the years from Tom Thomson to Tom Wright the whole Thomson family. Who else? Bill Lowe. I was sports information director at Wilmington College and when I graduated college, of course no longer was sports information director I was replaced by Bill Lowe and then here we hook up in Delaware, Ohio again. We didn't know each other back in college and I didn't know who replaced me until Bill told me one day over here at Delaware. Chip Hastings is a good friend over the years and it's those friendships that means much. The wildest friendship that I've had is with Butch Green. Butch Green is, he doesn't do it anymore because of age, his grandsons do it, but they sweep the racetrack between each race. Butch now is in charge of the staff in the Log Cabin. Hires the people that work the fair and do all the odd jobs and thing like that. Butch and I go back to when I was in high school and I was carrying out groceries at a grocery store and he was driving a taxicab. I like to tell the story that Butch would offer to give me 25 cents for every customer I could get him. He never paid me, but it makes a good story. Well when I first come to Delaware in 1967 was his first year too- and we've been yeah we've been together ever since.

Leavy: The Green's still live in the in Xenia?

Huston: Yeah, he still lives in Xenia. Of course, I live in Pennsylvania but I see him every year and it's a tradition, he takes me by the golf cart every morning there's racing over to the grandstand entrance and I get out of the golf cart and walk through the grandstand and cross this racetrack. Butch Green always takes me. His real name is Charles, but I know him only as Butch. The other thing is my nickname in high school, Butch. The other story. I'm sorry, did I mentioned he's a black individual, but one of my closest friends. I don't want to emphasize that he's black or anything like that, but we've been friends for, oh my gosh, that would go back to the 57, 58 range and it's just something that I'm proud of. Two guys from Xenia, Ohio end up working the same place and we were talking about this morning. About it and how it all started and everything and here we are still going at it strong. I'll be 76 tomorrow and I think he's a couple years older. I know he's a couple years older than I am, because he had a driver's license and I didn't have a driver's license when we first met. So he's got to be zeroing in on 80, you know? That's it and unless you have more questions.

Leavy: I guess the only other one well the other one is in order to make this oral history complete mm-hmm I mean you've named some people who we plan to interview. Are there any other folks that you think who go way back and who really need to be included in the oral history?

Huston: When you use the term 'way back,' we are going way back. Sorry to say, the vast majority have passed on and there's just not that many of those now. Even the older generation today, I'm older than they are so it's hard to think of anybody outside of Butch Green it's been around here as long as I have. There just isn't. Sherry Thomson would come close because I think Sherry's a little older but she I'm not sure exactly when she...she used to be the babysitter for Tom Thomson and his first wife. She took care of the kids a lot of times - Cheryl and Chris and T and Chip - and everything and then they eventually got married after Tommy's wife passed. But sherry would probably be the only other person that goes back as far, but I don't know how close her involvement was to the Jug in those early years, but she's involved now. I don't know how far back to the actual Jug she went, except being a fan and knowing the family and stuff. Just not that many of still around, you know? One of the people that I loved so much was old Bob Davenport. I don't know if you remember him, but he was on the fair

board and Jug Society director and stuff. He drove and trained horses and everything, but he's passed on. I can't come up with a name but another gentleman of the past, he just died in November or December. Now, Hank's second wife, Hank Thomson's second wife is still alive and she lives, I believe in Pinehurst, North Carolina. I'm having trouble coming up with a name but I'm pretty sure she's still alive. She's got to be 90 some. Plays golf and everything. I mean I know somebody would have a contact with her, but that's the only other person I can think of really. To go back, I mean as far as you want to go back, you know.

Leavy: Well, you know one of the reasons that we're doing this is because we want to capture the stories and the voices of people and have a celebration you know for the 75th and so we're really thankful that you were willing to do this interview.

Huston: I don't want it to be the Roger Houston story.

Leavy: Well you're one big part of it.

Huston: Well, I want to be part of it of course, but I don't want to be in the main part of it. But, like I say there's just nobody left anymore and for that....I'm...I miss them, but nothing you can do about it. Time goes on. I hope I still got a few more years. I made a statement of somebody the other day that I think I can probably announce for another 10 years without ever batting an eye, but I don't know if my body will let me, because it gets harder and harder to get around. Just like when I found out you couldn't go in the other side of the thing, oh my god, I can't drive, I can't walk around this building. I got in the car and come around and parking they parked in the handicapped spot. That's the hard part for me anymore, it's getting around. Most of these county fairs that I go to, at least 75 steps up to the announcer's booth, maybe? I'll try to keep same schedule I've had for years and we're up to one hundred and seventy seven thousand five hundred races, one hundred and forty two different tracks, eight countries, thirty-seven county fairs and I added two racetracks this year that I've never been at. The month of August, 14 different racetracks, fourteen different racetracks.

Leavy: There are only 31 days.

Huston: You know of course a lot of them were just one day guest appearance type things, you know? Urbana, I went back to Urbana for one day. Greenville, went back for one day. The three tracks in Canada for each, for one day. The one in Dublin, Ireland was two days. The rest of the others are at the Meadows or two or three day county fairs or stuff like that.

Leavy: You make me tired just hearing this.

Huston: How do you think I feel? I am wore out this year. I don't think I've ever been as tired coming into a Jug week as I am right now. It's all because of way too much in August. I got to back off to some degree. I gotta, I gotta learn to say 'no' and that's not a word in my vocabulary, yet. So time will tell.

Leavy: So, thank you for saying 'yes' to us.

Huston: No problem.