

Interview Date: 8/10/06  
Interviewer: Andi Holland  
Subject: **Garber Family with Martin Garber, Jr., Vicki Garber,  
Christianne Chase**  
Length of Video: 83 minutes - 2 tapes  
Written Summary: Andi Holland

#### Tape 1

:04 Interview took place at the Martin Garber, Sr. home that was built in 1920. Martin Garber, Jr. started interview with a historical review of the Garber Family beginning with the land run in 1893. Great Granddad, Martin Garber, a State Senator from Iowa decided to come to Guthrie a few months before the land run to start a mercantile business.

2:00 Great Granddad Garber planned to get six allotments for the land run between him and his wife, his two sons, M. C. and Burton, and their three daughters. When the shot fired they ran north 18 miles where they decided they had gone far enough.

2:30 They built the mercantile store, which was the first store in Garfield County in 1893. The place they stopped became the City of Garber. In those days towns got their names based on who made application to the Post Office. Garber was 21 miles east of Enid. They chose that place because railroads ran through there, the Santa Fe and Rock Island. Later another railroad came through and the town was moved one mile south.

4:40 In 1911 Grandpapa, M.C. Garber, moved to Enid after meeting with President Teddy Roosevelt and being elected a Territorial Judge. The hearings were held in Enid so it was easier to move the family to Enid. M.C. and wife had five children, Ruth, Martin W., Martha, Milton and Lucy Ann. Martha is the only sibling still living and is 96 and sharp as a tack. She lives in San Diego. The girls all married and went their separate ways. The two sons carried on the legacy in the Enid area.

8:00 In Enid in 1911 Milton and his sweetheart Mary Lou were married in the First Presbyterian Church. The Garber family was devoted disciples of Christ attending the Central Christian Church and very active in the Republican Party. Mary Lou was a Democrat. It was more important to Grandpapa Garber to have a Republican daughter-in-law than religion so Milton changed his religion and Mary Lou changed her politics.

10:00 In the early 1920s M.C. and Milton owned the KCRC Radio station and bought Enid Morning News and Enid News and Eagle. Sold the papers in 1988.

11:00 M.C. Garber died in 1948. What is amazing about the Garber family is the strong women in the family. Grandmother Garber, Lucy, came with her father's harvesting team from Moberly, Missouri. The story of how they met - Lucy came into the Garber General Store one day and asked M.C., "In what department does one keep the cylinder oil?" M.C. was so smitten that he asked her to go buggy riding. Grandmother Garber

taught school for \$35 a month with room and board in Enid. She worked all her life. She was involved in proving claims after the land run.

12:30 M.C. and his father started a law office in Garber. Lucy was the clerk in the office. She had the only typewriter in Garfield County. Great Grandfather, Martin Garber was an attorney and the land commissioner. He and Lucy kept the office running when M.C. was appointed Probate Judge in Enid. In 1904 Lucy was the first female land commissioner in Garfield County.

14:30 Her job was to prove up all the land run claims for Garfield County. She started a poultry business north of Enid raising poultry and researching ways to produce better poultry on the farm. She was the only female delegate to attend the 1930 World Poultry Congress in London. She took Milton with her for company.

15:30 She founded the Enid YWCA and was its first President and was involved in many other community organizations.

16:30 In 1922 she was the first women in the State of Oklahoma to be appointed to the Republican National Committee. After M.C.'s death she took over the newspaper. Grandmother continued as a member of the newspaper's board of directors until she died in 1971.

18:00 Discussion of the character it took to persevere and thrive in a new land.

19:30 Grandmother Garber, Lucy, wanted off the farm as a young girl so she borrowed money from her parents for an education. She stayed with an aunt in Missouri while attending college. She almost put off her marriage to M.C. for a year because she wanted to pay off her debt to her parents first. Martin Garber raised her salary as a teacher so she could pay off her debt to her parents and marry M.C.

22:00 Family has always been involved in wanting to make improvements in the country. The family originally came from Switzerland. It was inbred in the family to be involved in government as it is the foundation of a good society. Instilled in family is a commitment to make things better. Family was raised to give back to the community.

25:00 Vicki recalls her father, Martin W. managing the Oxford Hotel in Enid. As a child she enjoyed riding up and down the elevator and enjoyed the meals served at the hotel. Sunday lunch in Enid, the Oxford Hotel was the place to be on the corner of Independence and Grand. Everyone was dressed in formal dress for Sunday lunch. In the early 1920s Grandpapa had to hire two more policemen to take care of the gambling problem.

26:00 As the family got older Sunday lunch for the Garber family was at Grandmother Garber's house. Everyone dressed for lunch and no one dared miss it.

29:00 Family was very important to the Garber's. Sunday lunch was held at M.C. and Lucy Garber's home, Elmstead.

30:00 Food was also an important part of the Garber family. The Garbers raised wheat, cattle and there were hundreds of fruit trees on both farms north of Enid.

31:00 Martin Jr. moved to the farm when he was 4 years old. The family had just returned from Washington DC and lived at Elmstead with their Grandparents for a year while their home was being built across the road on the other farm.

32:00 The businesses were always family businesses. Milton oversaw the newspapers and radio stations and Martin W. oversaw the farms and the hotel.

33:00 How the businesses all started – In the early teens there was great movement with the discovery of oil. There were leases available in Garfield County and Bert and M.C. bought some together in 1916. The Chanute Oil Company drilled the first well on Garber leases. They had a bit of success and really got their interest going. They bought the Hoy lease. In September of 1917 the Chanute Oil Company hit a gusher on the Hoy lease. It was a very successful well. Lucy wasn't comfortable with the amount of money the men were spending on leases and wanted them to get back into ventures that she knew something about such as farming. The rights of the leases were sold to Sinclair and Bert and M. C. split about \$3 million. They were rich men then. The gusher produced the funding for all the other Garber business ventures.

37:00 M.C. had a bit of an income tax situation. He owed the government \$400,000 from the successful gushers but was able to get the amount down to \$75,000. The tax rate was 66%. That was a great deal of money and during the depression years banks wouldn't make loans, not even to congressmen. He was in Congress at the time and didn't want a tax scandal so in order to pay the tax debt he sold one half of the newspaper stock to the Taylor family in 1929. That is how the Taylor's got involved in the newspaper business

40:00 Back at Elmstead, M.C. purchased 2,000 fruit trees to plant on the farm. Lucy planted many Elm trees up and down Highway 81 and lots of tulip bulbs. The gardens were beautiful.

42:00 Grandpapa Garber had bought Grandmother Garber a new Lincoln and she liked to be driven through the country. She liked the area north of Enid and chose it for Elmstead because of the creek and the cottonwood trees.

43:00 In 1955 when Elmstead was sold most all the furnishings were sold with it.

44:00 Family dinners at Elmstead were fun and exciting. The Family played parlor games; Gin Rummy, Canasta or Bridge and memory games after dinner.

46:00 Grandmother Garber was a very good cook and she made great pies. As the family grew the dinners just got bigger. You were expected to be at Sunday lunch. Great believers in conversation and asking lots of questions. You were expected to participate in the conversation.

50:00 Going back to 1911. The Garber family moved to Enid and lived on West Maple then moved to 504 W. Maine until 1922. That was downtown Enid about where the Presbyterian Church stands today. M.C. kept a milk cow and wouldn't get rid of it until Lucy was able to show him from keeping the books how much money he was losing every day on the cost of feed compared to the price of milk. He got rid of the cow. After they moved to Elmstead the house on Maine was moved piece by piece to Kansas. When Elmstead sold Grandmother Garber had the house moved back from Kansas to South Johnson Street where she lived until her death.

54:00 A bit of history from the hotel days that the oil men will enjoy – back in the depression in the late 20s people would come stay at the hotel and couldn't pay their hotel bills. So Martin W. would take their royalty leases as payment. Still today some royalties come in from those old leases.

56:00 Martin W. managed the Oxford Hotel and the farms. Eventually President Eisenhower appointed him as an Assistant Secretary of Agriculture so the Martin W. Garber family was in Washington D.C. for eight years. He was instrumental in starting the school lunch program and other important initiatives. He also managed President Nixon's campaign for the State of Oklahoma. He later became the Regional Agriculture Director for the Department of Agriculture in Dallas, Texas. He was awarded one of the highest medals of service during that period. He was a State Representative and served as Chairman of the State of Oklahoma Highway Commission for six years. After his first wife died he remarried at age 70 and lived at the farm in north Enid until his death at age 75.

## Tape 2

:02 Milton's life was devoted to journalism. Although in the early years they were living in Washington DC while M.C. was serving in Congress, Milton finished Page school.

1:50 In 1948 they had the newspaper business. They set the type in hot lead and the editors wore green eyeshades. They owned two daily papers.

2:15 Many changes took place. The paper changed from its original location at Washington and Broadway to where it is today and in the early 1970s it expanded to the east and converted to an offset press. Milton was active in the Oklahoma Press Association.

3:00 Milton had three children, two sons and the youngest was a daughter. Christie traveled with her parents a great deal to newspaper and political conventions and during a

political campaign she was the only child around and Nixon, Wallace and Humphrey all shook her hand.

4:20 1972 was the Enid Flood. The newsprint was stored offsite in a warehouse. The warehouse was flooded and the problem of how to print the newspaper was solved by the generosity of Eddie Gaylord.

5:30 Both M.C. and Milton Garber were inducted posthumously into the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame.

5:45 Neither of Milton's sons were interested in the family business. The oldest of Milton's sons graduated from MIT and later became a lawyer and then later in life got into publishing.

6:40 The middle son, Todd went to Montana then came back to be groomed for the newspaper business.

7:20 Christie was being groomed for the radio business. Then in 1982 the station was sold. Christie started Heritage Travel with her father's help.

8:00 In 1988 the newspaper was sold. It won lots of awards over the years.

10:00 M.C. Garber was also inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame.

10:15 Martin Jr. serves on the Oklahoma Heritage Association Board of Directors. Discussion of future exhibits and an exhibit of M.C. Garber telling his own history is in the works.

11:15 M.C. Garber loved to hunt and fish and was always looking for good hunting grounds. In his search to escape the heat he purchased some cottages in Alexandria, Minnesota. Great family tradition going up to the cottages.

13:00 Martin Jr. graduated from OU and was on the golf team. He served in the army during the Vietnam War. Worked for Phillips Petroleum for 44 years. The last 20 years he was the Critical Affairs Officer for the company so he has been involved in politics all those years. He attended every political convention representing Phillips Petroleum - both Republican and Democrat. He has visited the White House many times and met most of the Presidents. For 22 years he has served on the Tourism Commission Board and at the urging of Henry Bellman he became a Regent of Tulsa Community College.

17:45 A few last stories – Milton was covering one of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's inauguration ceremonies. He ended up playing poker with Harry Truman and Truman shared his sandwich with Milton.

19:00 Milton and Grandma Garber flew with Charles Lindbergh as part of Lindbergh's efforts to start an Air Force. A few days later M.C. finally gave in and flew with

Lindbergh too. M.C. brought his daughter Lucy Ann along but the whole time told her not to look down.

19:45 M.C. wrote many letters to Martin W. while he was at Culver advising him to give up on Aviation, it was too dangerous.

21:00 M.C. was always writing proverbs in the letters and would tell Martin to say a particular phrase 10 times a day, 12 times at night and 10 times before a test "Everyday in every way I grow better and better." Also he was found of saying, "Don't let the hounds catch you."

22:40 One of M.C. and Milton's favorite sayings was a stanza from the poem, *Song of Life* by Henry Wadesworth Longfellow. "Let us then be up and doing with a heart for any fate still achieving, still pursuing, here to labor and to wait."

23:10 End of Tape 2