Nelson Griffin contacted Ed Dye about being interviewed and set up an afternoon appointment for Monday, May 21, 2007. The interview was to take place in Ed Dye’s home in Coonlanding, located just outside of Oxford, Mississippi and near Sardis Lake. Nelson and I left for Ed’s house around 1:30 and drove out to the rural area of Coonlanding. We arrived a bit early and to kill a few more minutes of time, we drove past Ed’s house and continued down the county road for a few miles.

At 2:00 we pulled into Ed Dye’s driveway. Ed had told Nelson earlier that he had five dogs, and we were somewhat anxious about what kind he may have. When Nelson shut-off his pickup truck motor, we saw Ed peering over a tall, unpainted wooden fence. The dogs barked, and Ed opened the tall gate door just enough to let himself out while keeping the dogs in. Ed was in his early 70s, but he looked older. A skinny man, his hair and beard were white. Ed spoke to us, and was curious why we drove in from the wrong direction. Nelson explained that we were early and drove past his house to kill time. This made no sense to Ed, who thought we should just have been early. We all squeezed through the tall gate, not letting the dogs out, and entered his home. I saw only two dogs, and they were a mixed lot. The first barked a lot; it was a squatty, short-haired black and white dog with a narrow snout. The second dog was a medium sized, shaggy-haired black and white dog; Ed explained that he thought it must be some kind of a sheep dog. The “sheep dog” had been groomed and all the hair was cut tightly except for the dog’s head where the long strands of hair concealed the eyes.

Ed’s home is a small structure with surrounded by a tall privacy fence. The yard was small and a number of planted bushes grew haphazardly around the fence. On the side of the house was a large screened-in porch. Nelson and I followed Ed and his dogs into the house. Apparently, while the dogs were forbidden to exit the fence gates, they had absolute freedom to enter the house. Ed apologized for the messy house and came up with an excuse as to why it was messy today. I suspect, however, the house normally looks just as we saw it – which was not terribly messy. The dogs trotted through the living room and entered the kitchen a head of us. Ed spent little time in the living room, and he took the same path the dogs did and entered the kitchen. On a small table beside a wall was a tiny CD player playing an old acoustic blues artist. Scattered around this table and others around the house were other CDs. It seemed clear that he played these CDs often but didn’t bother to organize them in a single location. He had some coffee brewing and offered us either coffee or Ginger Ale. After pouring us all some drinks, Ed explained that he was out of beer.
Ed took us to a breakfast table located in the small dining room. He had placed a small number of photos and magazines around the table for us to look at. He also handed Nelson and me two CDs of the Nashville Jug Band.¹ “These are for you,” he said. Turning his attention to the memorabilia, he picked up a couple of copies of Moon Shine magazine. “I’m real big in Japan.” Ed said as he turned through the magazine to a page with a photo of him on it. The magazine was written in Japanese text except for the titles of songs, albums, or musical groups.

Nelson and Ed began talking about music while I hurriedly set up the audio equipment on the small kitchen table. We began recording the interview. Ed’s chair creaked when he moved, and he moved often. The dogs – especially the sheep dog – moved in and out of the room freely. On the audio tape, one can hear a dog lapping from his water bowl and the occasional panting of the dogs as they came up to our laps to be petted on the head. The sheep dog was the most persistent. During the interview, he would come over and insist on being petted. Once when I refused him, he jumped in my lap. Ed never acted as if this were unusual; the cadence of his voice never changed as I lifted the dog from my lap. I leaned forward with my elbows on the table for the remainder of the interview.

After the interview, we stepped out on the porch. Ed liked talking in a conversation more than talking in an interview. We spoke on the porch for another thirty minutes or more. Nelson asked Ed to sign a consent form, and he did without interest. Nelson offered to give Ed a copy of the document and a copy of the interview tape; Ed declined both. Ed walked us out through the tall wooden gate towards Nelson’s truck. As we passed Ed’s green truck with a white camper shell over the truck bed, he directed our attention to the sign on the passenger door. It read, “Live Music Is Best” in two-inch white letters. Written also on his tailgate, this phrase reinforces Ed’s dislike of electric music. For Ed Dye, acoustic music performed live should be revered. And when performed, the audience should listen. I remembered Ed complaining that when he played on the square in Oxford, many of the bars continued to serve drinks and patrons treated the live performance like ambient music – still carrying on conversations and largely ignoring the artists.

¹ The Nashville Jug Band had 12 members including: Sam Bush David Olney, Roy Huskey, Ed Dye, Jill Klein, Brent Truitt and Tommy Goldsmith. The album was originally released in 1987 by Rounder Records Corporation and re-released in 2005. The music is performed acoustically and includes the following tracks:

1. Pretend
2. Crazy Blues
3. Titanic
4. Dallas Rag
5. Racetrack Blues
6. Shortnin’ Bread
7. The Women Make A Fool Out of Me
8. You Done Me Wrong
9. K.C. Moan
10. Mound Bayou
11. Don’t You Love Your Daddy No More
12. Blue Moon of Kentucky
13. What’s the Matter with the Mill?
14. Empty Boudoir Blues