

**Oral History Interview of  
Brian Jose Chavez**

**Interviewed by: Daniel Sanchez  
May 4, 2009  
Odessa, Texas**

**Part of the:  
*Sports History Initiative***

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## Interview Series Background:

### Sports History Initiative

The Sports History interviews encompass interviews conducted by members of the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library staff. They hope to document the evolution of sports and the role of sports in the social fabric of this region.

## Transcript Overview:

Brian Jose Chavez talks about his life, education, and career, but mainly about the period when he was on the Odessa Permian High School Football Team. Chavez was one of three players profiled in H. G. "Buzz" Bissinger's book *Friday Night Lights* and the subsequent movie by the same name.

**Length of Interview:** 01:25:14

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Transcript Page</b>	<b>Time Stamp</b>
Introduction and background information	05	00:00:00
His early years of education and experiencing racism in the schools	08	00:08:47
Brian's involvement in athletics	10	00:16:34
What is was like playing football during his first year at Permian High School	13	00:26:50
Balancing athletics and education	16	00:39:09
College years	19	00:47:35
Why he applied to Harvard	22	00:57:21
Learning about his cultural and ethnic background	25	01:11:41
Parallels between Lubbock and Odessa	27	01:18:46

### Keywords

Odessa, Texas; football; higher education; public schools; sports; family life and background; Mexican American identity

**Daniel Sanchez (DS):**

Today's date is May 4, 2009. I'm in Odessa, Texas, at the office of Brian Jose Chavez. Brian is a graduate of Texas Tech Law School, as is a lot of his family. And let's start there. First of all, Brian, thank you for agreeing to do this interview.

**Brian Chavez (BC):**

No problem.

DS:

And let's start off with you stating your complete legal name.

BC:

Okay. My name is Brian José Chavez.

DS:

Okay, and where and when were you born?

BC:

I was born in El Paso, Texas. September 24, 1970.

DS:

Okay, and give us some background on your parents—their names and where they were born and their dates.

BC:

Okay. My mom's name is Irma Margarita Chavez. She was born in El Paso, Texas, as well. And my father's name is José Antonio Chavez. And he was born in El Paso also. They were born in 1945, both of them.

DS:

Okay. Give us some information on your mother's parents.

BC:

My grandfather was born in Juarez. He was born—oh gosh—in the twenties. He's eighty-three, eighty-four now. Reynoldo Pareja. And then my grandmother, Margerita Pareja, she was actually born in El Paso, back in the 1920s as well.

DS:

Did your grandfather ever talk about when he came to the states?

BC:

Yes. My grandfather—I guess back then, you know immigration was a lot easier. It was kind of a free flow back and forth. There wasn't really the strict guidelines and procedures to cross back and forth like there was back then. So my grandmother lived in Juarez a lot—actually she was just born here, and really was raised in Juarez. So that's where they met when they were teenagers. So really, the core of my family—or my grandparents, were originated was out of Juarez—kind of like little ranchos, little pueblitos outside of Juarez. And that's kind of where my family began.

DS:

And how about on your father's side?

BC:

My father's side, my grandfather also was from Juarez and then my grandmother was from like a little pueblo outside of Chihuahua. So everyone comes from basically from the state of Chihuahua.

DS:

And when did they move into the El Paso area?

BC:

Probably my grandparents—I'd say probably sometime in the—probably when they were all entering their twenty years old. So I'd say that would've been sometime like in the forties—early forties late thirties is probably about the time that my grandparents all migrated to the United States.

DS:

And last time you had mentioned something about what your grandfather did for a living. So can you tell us about your grandparents on both sides?

BC:

Well when I was born in 1970, I was born into—was kind of like a one family home, where my grandparents—we lived with my grandparents. My parents lived with my grandparents. So I was born in my grandparents house, and they still live in the same house. I'm thirty-eight. so they've lived in the same house for thirty-eight years, and that house is like five—I think it's five houses from the border, from the Rio Grande. And I just remember my grandfather, what he's done his whole life, is he's driven a dump truck. And what I mentioned is, you know, it's kind of something that gave me a strong work ethic and something that gave me kind of an internal drive, seeing how hard my grandfather worked. I remember, you know, the rumbling of his dump truck every morning, at about four-thirty, five in the morning, you'd hear it. He'd have to

warm it up. You know, he'd have it out there running for thirty minutes or an hour, and that'd kind of be our alarm clock in the morning where once you heard grandpa's truck start growling and humming and hissing, you knew it was time to wake up. And that was something that always kind of stayed with me. You know, a man like that that's worked for sixty years of his life, sixty-five years of his life. He still works—you know every day that they call him and there's a job, he goes out there and works, and he gets mad if there isn't work. So it's something that I'm very proud of.

DS:

Let's talk a little bit about your parents, because I know you're a second-generation college student. So what influenced them into going to college, and—

BC:

My parents, you know, they're both very intelligent. They both have graduate, post-graduate degrees. My father has a doctorate of juris prudence. He got it from Texas Tech; he graduated in 1978. My mother also very intelligent. She was an educator. My father became an attorney. My mother became an assistant—or a principal here. She was actually the first Hispanic principal in Ector County, in Odessa, Texas. The way my parent's life kind of evolved is they evolved from my grandparents, and my parents were the first people in each of their family to attend college. My mom graduated from UTEP in 1970. She was actually—had already had my older brother and was pregnant as she walked across the stage. She graduated from UTEP in 1970, and she immediately became a teacher there in the El Paso school district, and then rose through the ranks and became an assistant principal, and then finally a principal here in Ector County. My father, when I was born, he was a police officer. He was a police officer for about nine years, and he worked a night shift, and from the night shift he'd go straight to UTEP, and take a full load. And he graduated in three years doing that, working the graveyard shift and going straight to school, and I guess come home and sleep, is what I remember. And after about nine years, he was either going to kind of be a—I can't think of the word—well he was going to get promoted, where it was basically going to be a lifetime profession, and he decided, "Well let me go to law school and see what I can do there." And he ended up getting into Texas Tech, and after he graduated, on his drive home, he stopped by here in Odessa, and they offered him the job right there on the spot before he even had his bar exam. We found out later the reason they did that is there had been a death in the jail, a Mexican inmate had died, and my father had ended up kind of being hired to kind of keep the peace, and kind of like for political correctness. And he took the job and he had the job for about a year or two as a prosecutor, and then he opened up his own practice, which is here in the building that we run our practice out of now.

DS:

What was it like as a child growing up and knowing that your parents were highly educated, probably unlike a lot of other people that you knew, even like in your own family or—

BC:

You know, I guess it's just—I guess you don't—you know, growing up you don't think of it as being different, because that's your family and that's what your exposed to. But many years later—I didn't mention my mom, once we moved to Odessa, she started taking summer school and night classes and ended up getting her master's from Stephen F. Austin in Nacogdoches. You know, I guess I was always exposed to their education and everything that they achieved and all their great accomplished. So it was almost a matter of faculty type of thing—like in my head it was like that's what you're supposed to do. I didn't see us as the exception. I saw us, in that way, as the rule. And I think that's why I was able to, you know, further my education further. Kind of like, I saw my grandfather—hey, you know, hard work is the way you get places in life. I saw from my parents not only the hard work but the education also. You know, I tip my hat to my grandparents and my parents definitely for anything I've ever accomplished, and every opportunity that they've allowed me to have.

DS:

Now I know you started your formal education in El Paso. Can you tell us about those first few years?

BC:

Right. I started off—as I've said before, you know El Paso, for people that aren't familiar with El Paso, it's a border town. And now there's a lot more differences I would say between El Paso and Juarez. But back in the day, there was a lot more similarities, there was a lot more of back and forth, migrating back and forth families for business, for leisure, for all sorts of stuff. So El Paso and Juarez, I mean it's the largest border in the world, population wise. So there's a unique culture there, and the Mexican influence is, I mean it's everywhere in El Paso, if you've never been to El Paso, if you go to the mall they speak. In American stores they speak to you in Spanish. If you go to a restaurant, they speak to you in Spanish. And so it has a very very strong Mexican culture, and strong Mexican influence. So there's a lot of people that are—even though they're US citizens and lived in the US their whole life, they're in El Paso, they don't even speak English. And they don't have to get by there in El Paso, which is something that I love about El Paso. So growing up, I spoke only Spanish. My grandparents only speak Spanish. My parents are perfectly bilingual. So when I entered the El Paso school district, I didn't know English. So I went into bilingual education. I spent kindergarten, first grade, and second grade there in El Paso, and you know it's probably 98, 99 percent Hispanic, the school that I attended. So there wasn't a lot of exposure to Anglo culture, white culture. Then I moved, as my parents were kind of moving up economically, social economically, we moved to Odessa, and Odessa was very segregated in those times, which would've been '78, '79, '80. So I went from a predominantly Hispanic, Mexican culture to a specifically [00:11:11] Anglo white culture, and I experienced quite a bit of culture shock. I went from being 98, 99 percent Mexican or Hispanic to being 98, 99 percent white—was my school. And I remember, I kind of jokingly say it, but when me and

my brother went to elementary school here in Odessa, we basically doubled the population of the Mexicans at our elementary school. So I saw some stark contrasts. You know, I talk about in El Paso, I was very popular, I was very outgoing, I had, you know, a bunch of friends. I was the most popular guy—one of the most popular guys in school. I remember having one or two or three different girlfriends, you know, I was Mr. Popular. And the day I arrived in Odessa, Texas, things changed. I was treated differently. People would pick on me. People would call me names. People would try to start fights with me. It took me, you know, five or six years later before I got my first girlfriend. And it took me about fifteen or twenty years to realize what was happening to me was racism. I was experiencing racism. People were looking at me different because my skin was a different color, because I talked a different way, because I looked a different way. I was being treated a different way. And I went to probably the most elite elementary in Odessa. We were living, at that time, in the nicest—we were living in apartments, but our apartment happened to be in the nicest part of town. And as I said, Odessa at that time was very, very segregated. Actually the federal government had to come in in 1983 and force desegregation and bussing on the Ector County school district. You know Brown versus Board [of Education] was passed in 1954, and thirty years later, Odessa still hadn't desegregated. So that'll show you the kind of culture that was here. Mexicans probably made up 10, 12, maybe 15 percent of the population. So I experienced this kind of transformation, or this being treated very differently, and at the time I didn't know what it was. And it took me many years later to find out.

DS:

Given that you didn't know what it was at that time, what was it like for you to go through that experience?

BC:

Well you know, I come from a strong—my parents have always been very supportive, and as I talk about, my grandfather gave me that drive, my parents have given me that drive to succeed in everything you do. And what I started noticing is I kind of started noticing, Hey I'm just as smart as these guys, or I'm smarter than them actually. And I barely learned the language two years ago. I started finding out, Hey, I'm just as good or better than every one of them at sports. And you know, I started—after I had to fight everyone, I started figuring out, Hey, I can beat them up too. And then I started realizing, just by getting to know people, started figuring out what their parents did, and I go, My parents are way more accomplished than these people, and I started thinking, what makes them think that they're better than me. If I had a score board and I had to write it down, I'd say I'm better than them. So I kind of took in this internal pride of basically showing—my mom always says “Kill them with your kindness.” So I just kind of didn't—quit sweating the way they were treating me, and I just kind of rose above it through kind of a self-confidence, and just kind of shake it off. And what I decided to do is—if they're not going to accept me, then I'm still going to try to be the smartest kid in class, the best athlete in the school, and accomplish the greatest things that I could. And I started to become accepted. Little by little.

Year by year. To where when I was finally in high school, boom, I saw myself back as that little kid in third grade in—or in second grade in El Paso that was Mr. Popular that everyone wanted to be with, that had girlfriends, that had friends. And it took me five, six, seven years to get back on top. And the way I got back on top was through just doing the best I could in everything I could, and showing them that I was a better person, and that kind of erased the stereotypes, I think that they had of what a Mexican was. I think they thought, as I had mentioned before, our city was and kind of still is very segregated. I think they envisioned what a Mexican was supposed to be, and I didn't fit in that criteria, and I think I probably ended up opening up a lot of people's eyes that, hey, this stereotype that we think of Mexicans is not necessarily true.

DS:

You know you mentioned the athletics, and athletics has always been one way to socialize minority groups, with all the racial barriers that have been broken because of that. When did you become involved in athletics, and how?

BC:

I guess I was always just loved to play sports, loved to be outside. I mean, I remember, me and my brother, we were always outside playing—you know whatever the sport was, basketball, baseball, football, whatever it was—just playground type of stuff. And my brother's two years older than me, I was always the tagalong with him and his friends. So obviously when there's a two year's gap in years—especially in elementary—there's a big talent drop off too. So I always had to try harder and try to be my best to keep up with my older brother and his friends. And I ended up being able to hang, but I think that's kind of what gave me my drive—I mean what gave me, I guess, my abilities to be a better athlete is I was always trying to keep up with my brother and his friends, and playing, I guess, outside of my age group. And then just started playing organized baseball. I remember I was a batboy for my brother's team. I was in kindergarten, and he was in second grade. And I ended up being about better than five or six of the guys on the team, so I went from bat boy to actually playing on the team halfway through the season, and I kind of developed into just loving sports and ended up playing all the sports: track, baseball, football, basketball, and that's what I always did. And obviously I think I was blessed with some natural gifts and size and stuff like that allowed me to be a good enough athlete. But I think that's when I started gaining the respect of people here in Odessa is when—I think athletics and team sports kind of tend to erase racial boundaries, because a coach is going to try to put the best team he can out on the field. And even when you're out on the playground, if I'm the best—you know when you're picking teams, if I'm the best athlete there, you're not going to not pick me because I'm Mexican. You're going to pick me because you want to win, and you want to have the best team. So I think athletics and sports in general just kind of have this way of erasing these racial boundaries, and I remember playing football at Permian, how well the football team gelled, and we were Mexicans, and we were blacks, and we were whites. And looking back, I mean, we really didn't have any racial friction. Yet outside of the school in general, everyone

was in their little cliques, the Mexicans here, the blacks here, the whites here. And in football, we were—it was harmony, it was racial harmony. We looked at each other as brothers. And basically, if one of them had—you know, we had each other's backs. And that's one thing that I love about sports is it erases those boundaries.

DS:

And when you were there at Odessa, was most of the guys you hung out with, did y'all go to the same junior high, come through that [peer] system. And come up together, knowing that y'all had a special group?

BC:

Well the way Permian works is there's two high schools here, there's six junior highs. Three of the junior highs go to Permian, three of the junior highs go to Odessa High. So, yeah, we grew up knowing that—the guys I ended playing with, a third of them I played with, the other two-thirds we played against. So there was always, when we finally got to high school, there was a little bit—not a little bit, there was a lot of the competition against the other junior highs. But we kind of in seventh grade is when junior high starts here. And football's big here. So they start following football in fourth grade, fifth grade, sixth grade. That's Pop Warner. And they already know if there's going to be a special class. And we were labeled early on as a special class, that we were supposed to do great things, that we had some good athletes—great athletes. And I was actually not able to play in elementary school for Pop Warner because I was over the weight limit. I was a really big kid growing up, and they had weight limits, and I wasn't even close to the weight limits [laughs]. So I never got to play organized tackle football until seventh grade, when it started in the school district in junior high. You know, the Permian coaches, even nowadays, they go out there on a Saturday afternoon, watch Pop Warner. They already know who the special kids are, which grade level are going to do something special, and they're lining them up. And the feeder schools are truly feeder schools. The Permian football coach, he hires and fires the junior high coaches, and the junior high coaches run the same plays, the same defenses, the same schemes and everything as the high school. So in seventh grade, you start running the same plays that you're going to be running as a senior at Permian.

DS:

So what's that like growing up, knowing that you're part of a class with those external expectations and then your own expectations?

BC:

Well growing up, you know, you don't really feel those expectations because you're just playing football. You're a kid playing football, and you're playing with your thirty or forty best friends. So we're just having a blast enjoying it. And I really never felt the pressure, saw the pressure. I would see the pressure that some parents would put on their kids like, "You're going to play

football,” even though the kid wouldn’t want to play football. And little by little those guys would drop off, you know. There were still some that stuck it through, a lot of just because of their parents. But I think as a whole we didn’t really feel that pressure. When you’re seventeen, eighteen years old, you’re bulletproof. You don’t think in those terms. You just think that you’re the strongest, fastest, best team there is, and you’re just trying to win every game and be the best that you can be. So even though those pressures, now looking back, were there, and those expectations were there, I don’t think we necessarily felt them. We were just playing football, and having fun, and a bunch of kids just having fun and having the time of our lives.

DS:

Can you just kind of walk us through from your sophomore year through your senior year of playing football—the highlights, maybe lowlights if you had some or whatever, and what it was like for you in general?

BC:

Well I remember, as I talked about earlier, there were three junior high feeder schools that go to Permian. High school here starts when you are a sophomore. So spring training, at the end of your freshman year, you actually get bussed up to Permian. The three junior highs are Nimitz, Bonham, and Hood. I went to Bonham. So the Permian coaches—you know, you go up and it’s basically JV spring training. You go up to Permian, you get the black and the white, you get your locker, and you’re basically trying out for Permian is what you’re doing. They had a depth chart and everything. And I remember those two weeks of spring training were the hardest hitting two weeks—every single day was like a tryout. And we were playing against—trying out against the other schools. I went to Bonham, so I was trying out against the middle linebacker from Hood, the middle linebacker from Nimitz. And I remember they told us what our—right before we went up there, our coaches told us the depth chart, and I was starting center. I’d never played center before in my life. I played guard and tackle. And they put me starting center, and I was third string middle linebacker. And I’d never—I’d always started both ways. And I remember, oh I was so mad that I was third string, and the two guys ahead of me that I knew I was better than, and I just fought every day in practice, and I think after the first or second day, I moved up to second string, and then by the end of spring training I was first string middle linebacker and first string center. But the hitting that we had, I mean, usually in practice you don’t necessarily go full full speed, every single person, every single play. But we were knocking each other’s heads. And that was kind of my introduction to Permian. And I remember one of the really stark, stark I guess episodes that really opened my eyes that, Hey, this isn’t just for fun anymore. This isn’t just kids playing the sport—is we had a practice. I think it was during that spring training, it was the second or third practice, and one of our friends, he went around the end, he was a full back, he went around the end and twisted his ankle and went down, and he was just yelling and withering in pain. The coaches didn’t even stop practice. They just said, “All right, move it over.” They sent the trainers over there to deal with him. We just moved the practice over, and

we kept on practicing. And I mean, you talk about a hundred kids, their eyes getting that big and their jaw dropping. I mean, because in junior high if someone gets hurt, everyone stops, you take a knee, and the coaches take care of them or whatever. Not anymore [laughs]. It was business, practice, and get it done. And I remember that—that kind of indoctrinated me to—this is Permian football, this is serious, this is kind of—it's not a game anymore. But it still was a game. It was still fun. But it showed us that it was business time now.

DS:

So what was that first year like?

BC:

The first year, you know, was hard. You know, I played on JV, started both ways. But it was the greatest feeling in the world. Kind of going back a little bit, when I moved here in third grade, I'd never heard what Permian was, I'd never heard of what Mojo was. I'd never heard what it was all about. You know, I'd heard of the Dallas Cowboys. I'd heard of UT Longhorns, you know, stuff like that. And then I remember going—and you never saw anyone at school wearing a high school, you know, t-shirt supporting the high school football team. And then when I got here to Odessa, I remember going to third grade and I saw people that would have black and white and it said "Mojo," and it said "Permian panthers." And I was like, "Who is it?" I thought it was a pro football team. I'm like, Who is this? Who do they play? And when I found out it was a high school, it still didn't register. I go, How come this high school football team is so popular to these people. And then they would talk about every Friday night going to the game. And they would sell student tickets at the elementary, and everyone would make a big fuss that, do you have your, whatever it was—three dollars—do you have your three dollars to go buy your ticket? We're going to the game, my parents are taking us to the game. And it just didn't register. And just little by little, year by year, I started going to the games. And you know, once you see a Permian football game and feel the electricity of the crowd, you're hooked. You're hooked. You're hooked on it. And then little by little, you know, I see all my friends want to be Permian football players. We didn't strive to be NFL football players or college football players, we struggled to be high school football players. And what I think is one of the most remarkable things, and what makes playing for Permian unique and special, is kids that have goals to go to the NFL, or go to the NBA, or go to the Major League Baseball, or even play division I football—it's 1 percent of 1 percent that actually get to experience that. Well here we were, our goal was to be Permian football players, and if you stuck with the program and did everything you're supposed to, and everything your coaches asked you to, it was 99 percent sure that you would become a Permian football player. So you can think of it in terms of, if you had aspirations to be a Dallas cowboys, and that was your athletic goal and you accomplished it, every kid here in Odessa can accomplish that goal of becoming a Permian football player. So it's like you're accomplishing that great of a dream. What to most people is—they envision, oh, how great it would be to be in the NFL or be in the NBA or be on the PGA tour, we get to experience

that feeling by playing for Permian, and you're treated, basically, like if you played for UT, if you played for the Dallas Cowboys, if you played for the New York Yankees. That's how you get treated in this town.

DS:

Well you know, it's interesting you say that, because your district was noted as the "Little Southwest Conference." I mean that talks about how ingrained into the culture, not just here but like Midland and San Angelo—

BC:

Yeah, and you know, Texas football is the elite of the elite. Texas high school football, I mean that's as good as it gets. Florida might be able to touch us, Ohio, California, but that's it. This is as good as it gets, and West Texas plays some of the best high school football there is. And it was just incredible to be able to experience that. And we got to experience something that seventeen year olds and eighteen year olds, that some people never get to experience in their life. Not just playing the high school football, but being treated like Roman gods, being treated like idols, being treated like NFL football players get treated now, where everybody knows you, where you're popular, where everyone wants to get to know you, where everyone wants to get to meet you. Where you're just walking down the street, walking down the mall, and people are like, "Hey, good game," or "Hey, get them this weekend!" And you don't even know who they are, but they know you. [Laughs] Signing autographs for elementary kids, I mean it's amazing what we got to experience.

DS:

What was it like your junior year playing varsity against Midland Lee and—

BC:

Oh, you know, we played JV and there's small crowds, and you don't have the nice uniforms, you know you play on a Thursday night or a Saturday during the day. Playing that Friday night, putting on the good uniform, the nice uniform, the "P" on the side. You know, you don't get to wear the "P" on the side on JV. You feel bulletproof and a thousand feet tall. And you come out of our tunnel there at Ratliff Stadium, our stadium seats twenty thousand people. You turn that corner and see that crowd, and as soon as the crowd sees you, they just start getting on their seat and cheering and yelling. The roar of the crowd, I mean, it makes the hair on your arms and your back of your neck just stand up. Just right now talking about it, I get goose bumps. I mean, it's indescribable how you feel, walking out of that stadium wearing that black and white. And when I was a senior, I was a team captain, and the three of us—as you see on the cover of the book and the cover of the movie, we walk out together holding hands. And the team's back, talking strategy and doing the pregame prayer. Well the three captains get to walk out by themselves, and we walk out of that tunnel hand in hand, the three captains, and the crowd sees you come

out, and I mean, oh my gosh, it's incredible. They announce your name over the loud speaker as a team captain, it's just breathtaking, I mean just thinking about it. I think that's why Buzz put that—Buzz Bissinger the one that wrote the book, and Peter Berg the director of the movie—I think that's the picture of the cover of the book and the cover of the movie. It's so intense, and I think that just captures, you know, the feeling of what Permian football is. But talking about my junior year, we had a strong class. So we had a lot of juniors that started. And after my sophomore year, same thing. A week after the season's over—when I was a sophomore, my brother actually was a senior, and they didn't make the playoffs. That was the only year in the eighties that didn't make the playoffs. Of course back then only two teams went to the playoffs. Now four do. But their game ended on Friday night, that Monday we started off-season practice. I mean we didn't get a day off. And obviously the coaches are pissed, because they didn't make the playoffs. They started that Monday. They had depth charts, I mean, as you see in the movie, when the last game ends, they take all the names off the depth chart, boom, move up the juniors and the sophomores up the depth chart. They moved me from starting center to starting tight end, another position I've never play before. So it was just—you know it was kind of the embodiment of ten or twelve years of expecting—it just met all my expectations, playing for Permian. All the wonderful things that you thought Permian football was going to be, it was. And playing in front of Ratliff, playing against Midland Lee, playing against crosstown rival OHS, playing against all these schools that you saw growing up. My junior year, we went to the playoffs, we lost to the eventual—we lost in the semi-finals to the eventual state champion Plano. And I mean it was just incredible. I mean, just, the total experience. We got to go far into the playoffs, lost a heartbreaker in the semifinals. I actually broke my ankle in the quarterfinals, towards the end of the game against Arlington High, and that game's actually in Dave Campbell's Texas Football, that Arlington High game in 1987 has been voted like the top two or three games ever in Texas high school football. It was a 35-35 tie, and I broke my ankle like about five minutes left in the game. And I ended up coming back the next week and played in the semi-finals with a broken ankle. I was on crutches the whole week, and ended up being able to play on—the game was on a Saturday, I remember, against Plano.

DS:

You know you said something earlier that made me think. You know you talked about how athletic you were, and then your work ethic. Do you think that was a combination of why the coaches knew they could put you in a new position, and you'd do extremely well.

BC:

Yeah, definitely. I think they saw how hard I worked. You know, I was salutatorian at Permian, and actually until the last semester, I was ranked number one in my class the whole time during high school. So I always got—not picked on—but you know when you're a jock, you know you're not supposed to be smart. So the coaches and the players would all—they all knew that I was not just the smartest ones on the team, I was one of the smartest kids in the school. So I

think they knew, hey, I can put Chavez at this position or that position, or we can change this scheme, change that scheme, and they knew I'd be able to figure it out. And they did, and they mixed me up in different types of schemes and stuff like that. And you know, Permian—one thing that I am proud of, that some of these old coaches always talk about is, Permian was, back in the day, Permian always ran the Wing T. and their big, most famous play is called Eighteen Pitch. It's basically—it's a pitch, a power pitch, sweep, you know they call it [through the body right?] and as a tight end, what the Wing T is, you have a flanker lined up behind you. And the way Permian ran it for twenty or thirty year before I got there is, the tight end, which would be me, and the flanker double team on the defensive end. And that's how the running back gets around the corner. Well I was—without bragging—I was good enough to handle the defensive end on my own. So they were able to move the flanker out or put him on the other side—kind of disguise our most famous play, or allow him to go pick up, scrape up and pick up a linebacker or something. So for twenty or thirty years, they had always run Eighteen Pitch out of the Wing T., and the flanker had to help the defensive end hook the defensive—help the tight end hook the defensive end. And I was able to do that on my own. So it kind of opened up our offense, to be able to show a lot of difference looks, and kind of keep teams off the balance. And then I still have coaches that talk about how great of a difference that was, that opened up our offense.

DS:

Did you receive any accolades, like all-district?

BC:

Yeah, I was all-district both years, my junior and my senior year. I was academic all-state my senior year. I was actually—it was a team academic all-state team, and I was actually the team captain. The people that gave the award, they elected a team captain, kind of like the ultimate student athlete. So I was basically the highest award you could get for a student athlete.

DS:

You know you kind of just glossed over it a little bit about how tough it was being one of the best students in the school and on the football team. But what was it like balancing athletics, especially at a program that is so driven by athletics like Odessa was?

BC:

Well, it was a challenge. It was kind of a social challenge too, because the type of kids that were in my classes were not the type of kid that I played football with. I think there were only one or two other football players that were in the honors classes. We didn't have AP then, but that were in the honors classes. And you know I just remember the types of classes my friends were taking were so much easier than the classes I was taking. So I had to work extra hard, you know, after practice where some of my friends probably wouldn't have homework. You know after practice I'd have to go do homework. And obviously my workload was harder. But I wouldn't have had it

any other way but to push myself to do the best I could, academically as well as athletically. And I think it just comes from that internal drive that was instilled in me all the way back from my grandfather and my parents—just seeing their work ethic—it just came naturally to me I think. But it was two different worlds. You know, the academic world—you know they didn't really mix with the jocks and stuff like that, and the jocks didn't mix with that academic world. But at the same time, it exposed me to two different sets of cultures and two different kind of sets of people.

DS:

I was about to say that—it was almost like you were in two cultures again.

—like your life started off that way.

BC:

Yeah, exactly.

DS:

Like your life started off that way.

BC:

Right, yeah. Exactly.

DS:

You know, the irony is—you talk about when you got here, the racial divide and all that, but the coaches would pick the best players for the team. And where you started off at was El Paso at UTEP there in '67, when they won their title.<sup>1</sup> They were the first all-black team to win the National Championship because Haskins might said you know the best athletes were going to play.

BC:

Right exactly. And you know, when I was playing, it was a little bit past that civil rights era, when it was just based totally—you know where it was overt racism. Where when I was growing up, it might be a little bit more covert type racism. But yeah, you know, I think coaches want to win first, and want to have the best athletes out there first. But yeah, that is kind of ironic because I came from El Paso, and UTEP has that history.

DS:

So as your high school career was winding down, what were you thinking about doing next?

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<sup>1</sup> March 19, 1966 UTEP win against the University of Kentucky in the National Championships.

BC:

I always knew that I wanted to go to college, but I was at a point where I didn't know—do I want to go play football in college, or what do I want to do in life? I was basically a lineman, six foot, 215, 220 pounds. I was pretty sure I wasn't quite tall enough to—I might've been able to play Division I. I would've had to walk on. I could have played some Division I AA, or some Division II, or JUCO—stuff like that. I could've done that. So I kind of made a decision in my head that—I knew I wasn't going to be—okay, if I go to college, I know I'm not going to be an NFL football player. So do I want to play football for football's sake, or is it time to hang them up and concentrate on sports—I mean on academics and what my career is going to be? So I kind of was weighing those options, and when I got into Harvard, Harvard's a school that I could've played college football at. So it kind of brought all those memories back to me—do I want to do this? And when I got to Harvard, I don't think my heart was in it. I went out for one day of practice, and it was just so different from Permian, and so different from what I was accustomed to. I went from the greatest high school football program at the time—or one of the top five at least—to probably one of the worst and the least supported in college football. And the differences were just incredible. And without me having all my heart in it, I wasn't able to want to stay in it. And it's something that I regret now, wish I would had kept with it just to have that experience. But at the same time I was also scared that I wouldn't be able to excel academically. Just the thought of it being Harvard. And I knew that at Permian, I was able to balance the academic and the athletic, but I was a little bit overwhelmed with Harvard, and didn't know if I was going to be able to do it. And looking back, I would've been able to do it. It wouldn't have been that hard, and I would have loved to experience Harvard football—to have that experience under my belt. And I ended up playing Rugby, which I liked—Harvard's really good at rugby, where football, they're not. So I guess I'm so competitive that I was happy to play football—I mean rugby at Harvard. And something that Harvard has that they since got rid of, but when we were sophomores, they had intermural tackle football with pads. And all we did—it was intermural. There were four teams because there's twelve dorms there. Well they call them houses, but there's twelve dorms. Each team was composed of three houses. And you would have a season—you would play each team twice. So you had a six game season. And then at the end of the year, the Harvard/Yale game is the big game at Harvard. And at the end of the year, the first place Harvard intermural team would play the first place Yale intermural team. And so I got to play that my sophomore year. And they quit having it after the junior because of too many injuries [DS laughs]. But that was—oh it was so fun. We didn't have practice. We'd have practice, you know, just to run through plays, but we wouldn't have practice where you hit and full contact and any of that stuff. The games were on Tuesday, and I remember just being the greatest. Just show up on Tuesday, play football for two or three hours, and go home. [Laughs] You know, all the fun parts of playing football.

DS:

You know, going to Harvard, you raised the bar on yourself academically. What was that like? I mean, was it as tough as you thought it was going to be when you got there?

BC:

Harvard's intimidating. Just the name Harvard, you know, especially if you've never had any exposure to it. A lot of kids, their parents went there, they have an uncle that went there. You know, I didn't have any kind of that exposure. So my idea of what Harvard was—is what—they think of it as—like it's not real, it's so high and so lofty. So I went in there with that. Just intimidated, scared. You know, I went to a public high school, where probably 80 percent of the kids there did not go to a public high school. They went to a boarding school, or went to a private school, or they went to some sort of magnate school. And so I was one of the few people that went to just the local high school. And so it was very intimidating. And then I'd hear stories of how hard these peoples' high schools were, and it put the fear of God in me. But once I started getting in the classes, I started going, Hey, I'm just as smart as these kids. I may not be quite as prepared, but I knew I was just as smart. And it didn't take me long to kind of get with the program and get to a situation where I was comfortable, and I was able to compete in every way with them.

DS:

You want to tell us something about your college years, what it was like?

BC:

Yeah, kind of getting back to the football thing—I missed—it took a while to get that Permian football out of my blood. It was hard to go to the games, it was hard to see. I guess you strive so long for something and then when our season ended, it was just kind of taken from us, and you know, kind of like breaking up with a girlfriend or having a divorce, you still have all those feelings, and you spent so much time and effort and energy, and blood and sweat and tears, and then one day, boom, it's just over. It took a long time to get over it and to kind of mend your heart and mend your mind that, hey, it's over, and hey, it's time to move on. And it was hard to—the next year, if you don't know the story, we lost in the state semi-finals to Dallas Carter. Well the next year they went undefeated and won the state championship, and I guess the mythical national championship, and it was hard.

DS:

I was going to ask what it was like to see what was going on?

BC:

Part of you was happy because it was Permian, but part of you hurt because you know, you didn't get to accomplish that, and they did accomplish that. And it was the guys that were our

bench. When we were seniors, they were juniors, so they were the guys that held our jock straps. And now they won a national title, and it was a bittersweet feeling. And I was there that championship game. And I had friends on the team, but at the same time—there's always been this competition amongst the years of Permian, where you don't want another year to be as good as you. Or you want your year to be the best year. So there's been three undefeated seasons—I think, '65, '72, and '89 they went undefeated. Well, and I think '93. So those are kind of the—the standards are the '72, the '89, and '93 team. There's kind of always been this debate of who was the best Permian team ever. And you always want to be better than the year behind you, the year before you, and all the years. So there's kind of this pride that Permian alum—Permian football alums have that, Hey, our running back was better than your running back. And our quarterback was better than your quarterback. We went to semi-finals, you only went to quarterfinals. And the team we played in the playoffs was harder than the team you played in the playoffs. And so there's always been this pride, and I kind of—amongst the years. And I'm talking about guys that are ten years older than me, ten years younger than me, twenty years older than me. Anytime you sit down and talk Permian football with guys that have played, eventually you start having these arguments of who was better, what positions were better, what players were better, and what competition was better. And I found it ironic that we never won the state championship—my year, my class never won the state championship. We lost two years in a row to the state champions, in the state semi-finals. But because of the book, and because of the movie, we have become the most famous Permian football year. So I think I've lost that envy—that I wanted to be the best, of not being the best Permian football team ever—because by losing and by having our story documented, we have become the most famous. And I think now, whether it's the '72 team, the '89 team, or the '93 team, they have that envy of “Why didn't they write the book about us? Why didn't they make the movie about us.” So I think our year is held up to the highest pedestal of any of the Permian years. And that's something I'm proud of, and something that now—I don't have any of that envy of the other years because of how special our year was because of the movie and because of the book.

DS:

Yeah, and I think what makes it so compelling is what you said, you know. Y'all had an incredible team that year, and yet the guy that was on the bench the next year that became the national champs.

BC:

Exactly. Yeah, and like I said, it was a bittersweet feeling. You're happy for the school, but deep down it hurts that you didn't do that. Or it hurts because you wanted to be out on that field—you wanted it to be you. Yeah definitely.

DS:

Okay I'm about a time where I'm running out of tape here. Mind if I switch tapes?

BC:

Yeah, yeah, that's fine.

[Tape break]

DS:

Having lived there, you know that.

BC:

Yeah, yeah, definitely.

DS:

Well, Brian, we were talking about the end of your high school football year, you coming back as an undergrad at Harvard and watching the next guys compete.

BC:

Right. Well kind of going back a little bit, I think one of the hardest things for me to swallow, playing for Permian, is that I never got to play in a state championship game. That's kind of your goal—obviously to win it. But, oh, I'd give anything to just been able to play in it. We lost in the state semifinals both years. When we were juniors, we were winning 21-0 in the semifinals and Plano came back to beat us 27-21 at our home stadium here in Odessa. And it was just—oh it was just heartbreaking. But as a junior, you kind of—I heard Dan Marino say this. He reached the super bowl the first year that he was—his rookie year with the Miami Dolphins. Never made it back to the Super Bowl. Because when you're young—you know, kind of like him—he said, "Oh I made it this year, I'll be back." Never came back. And as juniors you kind of like, well we've got next year, you know. And we had a lot of juniors starting when we were juniors. Our seniors class wasn't that that strong. So we kind of always assumed our senior year was going to be our big year. So actually getting to the semifinals when were juniors was pretty—we were overachievers. And shouldn't have even gone that far. So we were just glad to make it as far as we did, even though it was sad that we didn't make it to the state championship. But to be that close to the state championship, and then Plano went out and they blew out, I think it was Houston-Stratford. So basically our game was the state championship game. And then the next year, you know, the world famous game against Dallas Carter. We lose 14-9. A couple of bad calls, a couple of blown plays here and there, and we're that close again from going to the state championship. Dallas Carter ends up blowing out Converse Judson, and then later on, like four or five years later, they get stripped of their title for having an illegal player. And Converse Judson gets awarded that championship. And I remember—you know there was a lot of controversy because they had an ineligible player on their team—the Dallas Carter did. And I remember the first day we had practice, there was an injunction that said we were going to have to play the other team. I can't remember what the other team was. We actually on Monday

practiced for the other team. Then late Monday night, I guess the injunction didn't go through or they filed another injunction, and it was decided that we were going to play Dallas Carter. So we actually had to run plays for two teams, you know, because we didn't know. Until the day—until like the Friday before—we still didn't know if we were going to have to play—you know, which team we were going to have to play, because they were battling in court all week. Ended up, we played Dallas Carter. So that's something that always, I mean like right now, I'm an attorney, I have so many things that are important to me, but I would give a lot to have that memory of playing in the state championship game. So then when I go the next year, come from home from Harvard, and see these guys playing in Texas Stadium for the state championship game, it's something that I always wanted and wanted to experience. You know, I'd probably give up—as much as I love the book and I love the movie—if we could have a state championship game—I'd have preferred to have a state championship than to have all that recognition and all that. Which goes to show you how important [laughs] that is. [DS says something inaudible] yeah, I'd probably give up something important in my career to have a state championship.

DS:

Yeah, well you know you mentioned how Dallas Carter basically, y'all lost to the team shouldn't even been there, should have been ineligible.

BC:

Yeah, and you know, that just makes it even worse. [Laughs] Makes it worse, and you know that team was incredibly talented. All twenty-two players went Division I, and I mean they weren't necessarily that big, but they were fast—every single guy. I mean, I think every single guy ran under a 4.8, 4.7, something like that. They were so fast. They had five guy—I think five guys went to the NFL.

DS:

Let's talk a little bit more about your college years. You're up there, going to Harvard, and preparing for life. What was your—your dad was already in law school at the time?

BC:

No, that was—in third grade, my dad had already finished law school. Third or fourth grade. Third grade, I think is when my dad finished law school. [DS inaudible] So I always knew I was going to go to college, I didn't know where. Between my junior and my senior year, we kind of started thinking, talking with my parents of where to go. We'd kind of talked about Tulane, maybe Rice, UT was always on my mind. And maybe some small colleges like Austin College or some small kind of like liberal arts type of schools. I applied to a bunch of different places. And I don't know if you know the story of Buzz Bissinger, the guy that wrote the book about—the Friday Night Lights book. Well what he did is—I guess he got his book deal from the publishing company and they basically paid him a chunk of money and he moved down here to

Odessa, like July or August, of our senior year. And he basically took all—individually took like the different starters to lunch. And he kind of interviewed us. I guess he was trying to figure out who's he going to focus on. So he asked us deep personal questions, personal questions like you've never had when you're seventeen. Like a job interview was basically is what it was. And he was trying to figure out, okay who has a compelling story. Who am I going to write about? Who am I going to focus on? Who has something that, you know—and at the same time, looking I think for characteristics that different people from different walks of life could relate to. So he wanted stories that were intriguing, interesting, and at the same time, that were everyday types of stories. So he took me in and did my interview. And as he's interviewing me, I can see in him, he's like really shocked at all the different organizations I'm involved in. You know, the different leadership positions I was in, the classes I was taking, that I was in all the honors classes, my grade point average, my class rank, and all that stuff. And he just started—in his head, he was like, Wow this guy can go to Harvard. And he mentioned that to me. And his wife at the time, she had graduated from Harvard. And he had graduated from Penn. And he had actually gone to Harvard on a Nieman fellowship, which is a real prestigious fellowship. And he was a Pulitzer Prize winning author. So he saw all my credentials, and he basically thought, Wow all you got to do apply and you'll get in. I was like, yeah, whatever, you know. I never thought in those terms. My brother argues with me, and he says it was his suggestion [laughs], but I remember it different. But I'll at least give my brother credit. And he kept on pushing me—“Hey man, you need to apply.” And I just kind of like—yeah, yeah, yeah—kind of laughed it off, and yeah sure. And in the back of my mind, I'm like—could I really get in. And he invited me to dinner with his wife, and his wife kind of asked me the same type of questions. She's like, “Oh yeah, you'd be a lock to get in.” So that kind of started the process. And really, he kept on bugging me. He kept on bugging me. Buzz would go to every single one of our practices. He would go to all of our individual meetings. He would stay after and watch film with the coaches. He would go with the coaches meetings. I mean, he would go to class with us. He'd walk around in the halls with us. He'd interview our girlfriends, he'd interview our teachers. I mean, he's a Pulitzer Prize winning investigative journalist. I mean, that's what he does [laughs]. And I mean, he didn't leave a stone unturned in this town. He met with the city council, the county commissioner, the mayor, the judges. He met with everybody and found out everything, good, bad, ugly, pretty, about this town and about the community that he possibly could. And he just gave a true realistic feel of what this town was like back then. But anyway, so he kept on pushing me. Not pushing me, but every week or two he's like, “Hey, have you gotten those applications sent out? Hey, have you ordered the applications?” Little by little I'd order the application, and I started looking through them, and then finally, you know maybe a week before the deadline, I decided to go ahead—or I finished out my application maybe a week or two before. I told him, “Okay, I applied. Are you happy?” and I ended up getting into—I ended up getting waitlisted at Yale, and getting accepted into Harvard. And I remember the day they called me—no we got sent letters, and I got put on the waitlist at Yale, and Harvard I was accepted. And I remember sitting in class and they told me I had a phone call, and I had to go to the locker room—there in

the training room, there's a phone, and they said that I had a phone call. I didn't know what it was. It was a Yale football coach, the guy that was recruiting me, pissed off mad that I didn't get into Yale. He's like "I don't know how this happened. You were supposed to get in. You tell me right now if you want to come, you know, you'll get in. All you got to do is say the word." And I said, "Well I apologize. I don't want to waste somebody's spot. I got into Harvard, and I'm going to go to Harvard." And so that's kind of how I got into Harvard. And once again, like I talked about earlier, when I moved to Odessa, I kind of—I experienced that racism and being treated differently. Well by the time I'm a senior, I'm popular again, I'm prom king, I think I was runner up to Mr. PHS, I was popular, I was in the popular crowd, I was one of the smartest kids in the school. You know, I kind of elevated to the top of everything in the school. I was in all these organizations, I got along with, you know, the different—I got along with the Mexicans, I got along with the blacks, I got along with the whites. And I'd kind of elevated myself to back when I was in El Paso in second grade. I'd finally—after years and years of struggling to get back to the top, I was at the top. And then boom, I get into Harvard, and I'm shot back down to the bottom, and I'm just another number. And I remember people asking me, you know, what are you? And a lot of them would think I was Italian, because in the east coast, there's a lot of Italians. There's not very many Mexicans. We're starting to grow in numbers on the east coast, but there's Puerto Rican, there's Cuban, Columbian, a lot of central/south Americans, but there's not very many—and a lot of Puerto Ricans—but there's not very many Mexicans, or at that time there wasn't. And I remember them always thinking I was Italian. And then when they'd ask me, What are you, and I'd tell them Mexican. And they're like, "Oh you're from Mexico." There's a lot of international students at Harvard. And I'm like, "No no no. I'm from the United States." They're like, "Oh then you're American." And then I was like, "Well yeah, I mean I guess—yeah, kind of." And that question of what are you—I think most people, when you're asked what are you, you have an answer and you don't have to think about it. And that question triggered this whole self-identity kind of crisis. I'm like, Well what am I? Am I Mexican? Am I American? Am I Mexican-American? Am I Chicano? Am I Hispanic? What am I? And I remember on my typewriter—at that time I started calling myself Chicano, and I kind of got into this militant frame of mind, which I think a lot of people do in college. That's what college is about. And I remember writing a paper, and I had an old word processor. This was barely when computers were kind of coming out. And it would beep if you misspelled a word. And I remember it beeping when I put in "Chicano." It wouldn't beep on "Brian," but it would beep on "Chavez." And I remember writing my paper, and my paper was kind of like talking about where you're from, self-identity, stuff like that. And I remember writing my paper, you know, my computer doesn't even recognize what I am or where I'm from! It doesn't recognize my last name, and it doesn't recognize the word I use to describe myself. So I went through this big identity kind of crisis, of well what am I? And why was I popular at Permian, and why am I not at Harvard? And it made me realize—and that's at the point that I realized what was happening to me when I moved to Odessa in third grade—that what I'd experienced was racism and that I had risen above it through my athletic and my academic prowess, through my parent's

socioeconomic status. I kind of overcame those barriers through my hard work and my parents' hard work. Where I wasn't treated differently by my white, Anglo classmates, who were all my best friends by the time I graduated. But from third grade to my senior year, I had to fight a lot of battles, and I had to go through a lot to finally get back to where I had been in El Paso, where I was accepted for who I was, not for what I was. And you know, here I was thrown back to the bottom of the mix at Harvard, and it just brought back all those feeling, those ugly feelings that I had when I moved to Odessa in third grade of being labelled and being pigeon holed, and being stereotyped. Where Harvard prides itself on being the most liberal-minded university in the world for the last three hundred years—three hundred and fifty years. And here I was being stereotyped and treated just as I had in Odessa in third grade in a segregated south. I was being treated the same way at Harvard that prides itself on not being that way. And I got treated the same exact way. And I think that's so ironic, that I had the same experience moving from El Paso to Odessa as I did from Odessa to Harvard. And the same thing, here we go again. I had to kind of reinvent yourself, couldn't rest on your laurels anymore, had to work hard, had to strive to be better, you had to kind of prove yourself every single day that, hey, I belong here, and I'm not just here to fill a quota, I'm not just here because I'm Mexican, I'm not just here because I went to public school and I'm from a rural area. And you just felt that—not pressure—but I felt that drive again, kind of coming back from my grandparents, back from my parents that, hey, if they don't accept you for who you are, show them. Work your butt off, work your tail off and show them you're better than them. Show them you're just as good as them. Show them that they can't look down at you. And I just started that whole process again. And what it led me to—getting away a little bit from athletics—what it led me to is I kind of had this desire to find out more about my ethnic background, about being Tejano, being Chicano, being a Mexican American, about, you know, how Texas used to be Mexico and now it's the United States, and about border history and border issues. And I just—when you're in college, you know, and especially at Harvard, you kind of get this drive to learn more and to kind of push the barriers and kind of break down doors, break down barriers, and find out as much as you can. And I guess you tend to focus on a certain issue, and that became my focus. That kind of became my goal. I wanted to find out why did the U.S. decide to draw the line on the Rio Grande. What separates my grandfather who was born in Juarez, from someone who was born a stone's throw away in El Paso, and why are they treated differently? And I wanted to find out all these things. You know what's the difference between Mexicans in Texas and California? What's the difference between Mexicans in the United States and Mexicans in Mexico? And why is this dividing line so drastic and so defining in people's lives? I mean, I can live from here to across the street, if I live in Juarez and the other person lives in El Paso, and they look exactly the same, have the same color skin, talk the same way, may even be related, and their lives are so different because someone decided to draw a boundary when they purchased X amount of land from Mexico. So that became my desire. And Harvard had not one class on Mexican American culture. They had one class on Mexican government, but that was Mexico dealing with Mexico City, probably maybe had to do some stuff with the north with the revolution, but nothing that was like me. This

was when black studies and African American studies were becoming very popular in the mid-eighties. Women's studies programs were becoming popular. But Harvard didn't have anything to fit mine. If they had a Latin American studies class, and that Mexican Government class, and that was all non-American type of history. I wanted to learn the history of my people, the history of my ethnic background, the history of my ethnic background. So I decided to take a year off and go study Chicano studies or Mexican-American studies, and I went to UT, which at the time, had the best programs in the country. And I took a year off—I got Harvard credit. They're all still a registered Harvard student, but I actually took classes at UT. And I took Spanish, and I took like four or five of those—I took a Mexican American literature class, a history class, political science class, two history classes, and they were just incredible. They answered all those questions that I had. That self—that identity crisis that I was going through. It just answered all the questions, and it kind of told me, this is who you are, this is where you came from, and this is why you're here. And it allowed me to kind of be comfortable with who I am. And it allowed me to be able to answer that question, what are you? It allowed me to answer it to myself and for me to know who am I, where do I come from. And from that day on, I mean from those days that I took those classes, I've worn my Mexican-ness on my sleeve and have never regretted being Mexican, have never denied being Mexican, have always—I'll scream it from the rooftops what I am and where I come from. And I'm very proud of my culture, I'm very proud of my ancestry. And I hope future generations keep our culture alive, and we don't become so Americanized that our culture loses its strength in this country because I think our culture is beautiful, and I think it offers Americans kind of an insight into another country, another culture, and I love our culture and I think it's beautiful.

DS:

I find it interesting you're talking about this, given that tomorrow's Cinco de Mayo.

BC:

Yeah that's true. Tomorrow is. [Laughs] And you know, I went to the fiesta this weekend, just had a great time. I mean, I ate four big ole gorditas yesterday. You know, our culture is a beautiful culture, and I just hope that it stays strong in this country, and our influence stays strong, like it is. But getting back to the UT thing. It was great to be at a regular school, because Harvard is so hard, and it's just so driven. And it was nice to just be with my regular friends, in a more laidback atmosphere, attend a regular college, and kind of have that whole experience. And I played rugby at UT also. It was kind of funny, me and one of my buddies from high school, we were walking down—it was the first or second day classes, and you know all the student organizations have their tables set up, and the rugby team was there. And you know, I was a big old built guy, my buddy was a pretty built black guy. They see me and him, and they're like—oh man, let's talk to these guys and try to get them on the team. And they start talking to me, and I told them I played rugby at Harvard. And you know, Harvard's really good at rugby, and UT's pretty down low on the totem pole. And then my friend, I mean he's fast. He ran like a 4.6. and

we started telling them that we played at Permian. Man these guys' eyes got that big, and they're like, please please, y'all gotta come out. And so we ended up playing rugby there at UT and had a great time. But anyhow I went back to Harvard and graduated, and I ended up—I went through a time where I couldn't decide if I wanted to become a lawyer and go law school, or if I wanted to go down the PhD road and become a professor and concentrate in that Mexican-American studies part. And I ended up making the decision to go to law school, and it's a decision I don't regret at all. I love being a lawyer, I love the practice. I love being back home, and I love kind of everything about what I do here.

DS:

What do you think it is about your family that everybody—I mean, all the brothers chose to follow their dad's footsteps?

BC:

You know, I think it's a West Texas thing. I think Texas Tech—if you're from West Texas, Texas Tech's kind of like, that's the place you go. It's the local big university. And I know my dad didn't have a whole lot of options, but I think back then Texas Tech was the closest law school to El Paso. And it's far. It still is the closest law school. You know, they grew up in a more closed society where people didn't really leave the close-knit family. And so for him to leave to go to Lubbock, I think it was a big huge step. You know, my brother, he went there because that's where my dad went. I ended up going—you know, my brother was there when I was there. And I actually ended up getting a scholarship to Tech to the law school. UT wouldn't give me a scholarship, or they wouldn't tell me if I got a scholarship. [Laughs] so I was like, well I want to go to Tech, where they already told me I got a scholarship. And you know, I don't know what it is that drew us to Texas Tech, other than it's close to home, it feels like home, and just like I said, West Texas, that's kind of our Harvard, that's our home, it's our Permian, it's our Harvard, it's home for me.

DS:

Can you draw some parallels and then some differences between Lubbock and Odessa from your time at both places?

BC:

I see a lot of similarities between Odessa and Lubbock. You know, I think the towns are kind of equally segregated, but I think more recently they're becoming a little less segregated. To me it always seemed to me like Odessa actually experiences less racism, or less segregation than Lubbock. I think, just sheer numbers, I think now Odessa is almost 50 percent Mexican. I don't think Lubbock is quite that. I think about thirty or something like that. Where I think Odessa is forty-five to—the public schools are over 50 percent Mexican. What I noticed when I was in Lubbock, well one thing that my mom always cracks up about it—in Lubbock, I always notice

that when I go to a restaurant, they would always walk us through the whole restaurant and sit us towards the back—like back in the kitchen or the farthest way from view. And I don't think it was coincidental. I think there was some racism involved. And I don't know if I'm paranoid or not, but I always felt that. And just seemed to me—and you know, I haven't lived in Lubbock in twelve years—it just seemed to me like socially, in Odessa, the Mexicanos they feel a little more empowered. They feel a little—they don't walk around like—it seemed to me like in Lubbock the Mexicanos maybe walked around a little more on egg shells. Or they only went to stores that Mexicans went to. They didn't go to stores that Anglos went to. Where here in Odessa, I didn't see that as much. It seemed to me like the Mexicanos were a little bit more empowered. And I don't know if that was just because in Lubbock I was an outsider looking in, and didn't really know the ins and the outs of the city, but that was kind of the little bit of a feeling that I had. But I think as far as—just in general—I think the similarities are very similar. The ethnic breakdown, the social-economic breakdown, there's a lot of similarities.

DS:

Similar to the shape about the football.

BC:

Yeah, [laughs], well this year Tech had some great football.

DS:

Well at Tech they did. So let's talk a little bit about your family and your dad and your brother. And the family practice, how this came about and was about.

BC:

Well, my dad, he graduated Texas Tech in 1978. As I said earlier, he got hired on as a district attorney here. Well in '80, the DA that he got hired by lost the election. So my dad, he started partnering up with a guy here in this office. And that partner of his died like in '83 or '84 from an aneurism. So my dad just took over the practice. And he did really well. As the Mexican population was growing, he got that clientele immediately by—I think there's a tendency of Mexicanos wanting to give business to Mexicanos, or trusting Mexicanos, or wanting to have a lawyer that speaks their language. And you know, it's something I'm grateful for, and it's something—it's kind of like free advertisement. You don't have to advertise—your last name is your advertisement really in this business. But my dad started building a big criminal defense practice on his own, really successful, did really well. Then my brother graduated from Texas Tech in '94. He came to join the firm, and he's done really well. He's a really good trial attorney. And then I came in '96. And my intention was never really to stay here in Odessa. My plan was to come here, maybe for a year or two, get my feet wet, kind of get some experience, figure out what I want to do. You know, I had always planned to go to Dallas or Austin or San Antonio or maybe back to El Paso. And I just kind of started building my practice here, we built a little

niche here, and I started enjoying being back home, being close to my family. And just really enjoyed practicing law here. You know, it's a lot more laid back than in the bigger city, and the lawyers are actually nice to each other. And you know all the lawyers and you know what to expect from the other lawyers. So it's a really nice place to practice law, and I just started building my practice and doing well and you know I decided to stay here. And I kind of started seeing friends of mine that went to Harvard or went to law school and kind of saw what they were doing, and they were working way way more hours and getting way way less pay than I was. So I was like, well I think I can stick it out here, and it's worked out well. It's really been fun, and its great working with my family. And now my younger brother, he graduated Tech in 2002, and he works here. He's a legal assistance. He went to undergrad. So me, my dad, and my brother, we went to law school. And then my younger brother went to undergrad. And he's kind of like a legal assistant, helps talk with clients, deal with clients, stuff like that.

DS:

Is he thinking about going to law school?

BC:

No, I think he's kind of happy and set where he's at [laughs].

DS:

Well we've talked for probably about an hour and a half. Is there anything you'd want to talk about?

BC:

No I think I've kind of covered everything. I can't think of anything else. Yeah, I think that's about it.

DS:

Okay, well Brian thank you so much.

BC:

Oh yeah, no problem. Thank you. [Laughs]

DS:

Thank you, man.

BC:

Oh yeah, thanks a lot.

***End of Recording***