

**Oral History Interview of
William Curry Holden**

**Interviewed by: Jimmy M. Skaggs
January 8, 1968 and May 3, 1968
Lubbock, Texas**

“REEL SIX”

**Part of the:
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Interview Series Background:

In the process of conservation and digitization, our Audio/Visual department transcribes existing interviews in the Southwest Collection's holdings for a new generation of listeners to rediscover. Such interviews frequently cover topics relating to the founding of Texas Tech and the settlement of Lubbock.

Transcript Overview:

This interview features Dr. William Curry Holden. Holden discusses his work in developing the International Center for Arid and Semi-Arid Land Studies (ICASALS). To this end, Holden talks about fundraising, planning exhibits, writing a manuscript on water, and working with Dr. Grover Murray to refine the idea. Holden also discusses challenges with the project regarding funding.

Length of Interview: 01:29:30

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ICASALS, ranching, Texas Tech University, water conservation

Jimmy M. Skaggs (JS):

Reel six, side one—Dr. Holden interview.

William Holden (WH):

You ought to get the date.

JS:

Oh, yes, January 8, 1968, continuing with the same interview.

WH:

Well, in regard to the—what we may be doing, and the ranch complex that we've been working on, we had just made mention of the fact that it's going to cost quite a bit of money. Our committee is quietly trying to see if we can't raise the money, but it's going to be tough. We had thought that we had a good start made, but it hasn't quite materialized yet—it may not. I might make this statement just for the record. In the financial drive that has been made during the past year to expand the museum and to build the new ICASALS museum complex, there's it's been a great deal of—a lot of emotion, I think, in this drive. The Museum Association has spent quite a bit of money getting—employing some experts from New York, and a firm of designers and councilors on this kind of thing, and then they also have employed some professional money raisers from Dallas to come in and work on the thing. I've never known how much they paid this Dallas firm—and they came in—their approach is the same group that went on the drive for the Catholic hospital, I suppose using the same technique. It was announced that they were going to try to raise two million dollars—and it was never quite clear to me whether that much new money, or that much money including the five hundred thousand which the college is going to give in return—or exchange—for the present building—or whether that included the two hundred and fifty thousand dollar appropriation that the legislature made for this building fund. It was assumed that—they thought they were going to be able to go out and pass the hat and get two million. Well, they set up their big organization here in town—which has been published in the newspapers two or three times. I don't know what's happened, but they succeeded—the organization and the—the town organization, with the aid of these professional people came up here in December with about three hundred and eighty-one or –two thousand dollars. The ironical part of this whole thing is that my wife and I—largely through her efforts more than mine—we have quietly been responsible for raising six hundred and fifty thousand with no—without even a penny of expense money.

JS:

—advertising?

WH:

Without anything. We raised about twice as much as the professionals plus this entire big

organization all put together. This fact is not known to very many—for sure, quite a number of people may suspect it, but probably not over six people in Lubbock know for sure, exactly what's happened on this. Without portfolio or even a student assistant—or without one penny worth of gasoline, or anything, this has been done.

JS:

That's tremendous. That's something you can well be proud of, and ICASALS should give you due credit for it when the building is finally erected.

WH:

Well, you can never tell what's going to happen—however, it's not a factor— never has been a factor.

JS:

No, I'm sure it hasn't. I was just commenting.

WH:

I want to mention this to make it a part of the record—

JS:

I'm glad you did.

WH:

But Frances Mayhugh Holden has done. She's really a whirlwind.

JS:

That's commendable.

WH:

This is only a part of what she does. She's devoted a tremendous amount of time to the governor's art commission, and she's pretty much the spark plug in my tank, too. It is a thing, I suppose, to be proud of—at the same time, it's going to present a problem that I'm going to have to face pretty soon—can't keep it up.

JS:

Well, that's rather sad that on your own, you and your wife have raised twice—almost twice as much money, getting it over the million mark—surely over the million mark—

WH:

Yes, it's over now, counting the Ms. Jones—the two people responsible to getting Ms. Jones interested in that are my wife—

JS:

That's Mrs. Clifford?

WH:

No, Ms. Helen Jones.

JS:

Helen, yes.

WH:

My wife—and second honors there go to the little girl next door—Mrs. Isabella Howe. Frances and Isabella took Helen just kind of under their wing and showed her the possibilities and so on, and led her along until she got to the point that she made the proposal herself.

JS:

That's the way it should be done.

WH:

And this whole thing—the history of this whole movement is—of how it's happened, and all of the pitfalls that's been in it, and how we've had to circumnavigate—it would make almost an unbelievable story. If I ever get around, I'm going to—I'll either dictate it or write it. We won't attempt to get it at this time.

JS:

Okay. Well, when you get ready, let us know. We'll be happy to have it for the record. Have you had very much luck on selling the ranch complex to—as far as fundraising to area ranchers, statewide, such as the—

WH:

The whole plan—the scheme—has been wonderfully received. It's been one of the—almost a joy to work on this thing. It's been the only thing I think I've ever been connected with where everybody is for it. It's like mother, home, and heaven—everybody is against sin, everybody's for mother, and for home, and for heaven—and say, well, this is absolutely the ranch people—it's been a joy to work with these people. They're enthusiastic, and we're having no trouble at all getting things donated to buildings. I think we'd have no trouble getting the equipment and everything, if we ever get it off the ground. The rub is going to come in about—it's going to

take, we figure, at least four hundred thousand—some of our committee says five hundred thousand would be conservative—dollars, though, to bring all of this stuff together, because money just doesn't go far anymore.

JS:

No, it doesn't.

WH:

Today, it would take—I told you we built that house there for five thousand dollars. You could not replace that over there today for sixty—couldn't even begin to. So money—five hundred thousand dollars today wouldn't go as far as a hundred thousand would have gone twenty years ago. I'm not sure where we're going to raise that much money. The ranch people, really, are not—unless they have oil—they're not very prosperous. Frank Chappell—have you ever met Frank?

JS:

I've heard the name—I don't—

WH:

Well, he's the grandson of W. L. Ellwood.

JS:

Yes, the Ellwood estate.

WH:

Yes. And he has inherited, of course—he and his—W. L. had two daughters, a Mrs. Chappell and a Mrs. Keeney. They inherited the Ellwood fortune, which consisted of two big ranches and bank stock and I suppose still stock in the Ellwood Water Company and all that. Mrs. Chappell got half of that, and she only had—she had a son and a daughter. Mrs. Keeney, I think, has six children, so she had to divide hers six ways. So Frank and his sister have inherited half of the Ellwood properties, and Frank, I think, got the Renderbrook Ranch, which is almost a storybook ranch, the size of Colorado City.

JS:

Isn't that the one, you told me, that's named for Captain Renderbrook?

WH:

Yes, we—you know, we were running that down. I think there's something like two hundred and fifty, three hundred thousand acres of that—and they have oil on it—some oil. But Frank told me not long ago, he said that he had made a special effort to keep an accurate check on outgoing

income as a ranching operation—and appraising the ranch at its present valuation, what he could sell it for, take the money and put it into revenue bonds of some kind. That in these last ten years, he has averaged one percent return on that investment—

JS:

Oh, that's great.

WH:

—and he's been using good scientific methods better than most. That's pretty much the condition of the ranch people. Now, he's not quite as bad off as that would sound, because they do have twenty or thirty oil wells on the far end of the ranch, which he kind of puts into a special category. He told me that he has hired a PhD from [Texas] A&M. He has that ranch, and he's bought a part of the old Bell Ranch, and he has about—

JS:

New Mexico.

WH:

—sixty thousand acres up there. And he's put him in charge of these two ranches, with a superintendent at each place to actually run the cattle, and he's to run these ranches scientifically for ten years. And if he can't make three percent on this thing at present valuations, he's going to sell the whole thing and put his money in stocks and things like that.

Pause in recording

WH:

Well, to get back to the [fund] drive. We are now trying to interest some of the big historic ranches—we've gotten some interest on the part of the Klebergs—one of the Kleberg boys here in school—and the Mastersons and the Halsells—

JS:

I was going to ask about the Beaumont Stinnett. Isn't he involved in the Masterson family?

WH:

Stinnett? I don't know.

JS:

Didn't he marry one of the Mastersons?

WH:

The Mastersons are quite interlocked with several of these big families. The Weymouths, the Quichners [? 14:44], and the Quichners [?] by the way are interested—the 6666s, the Pitchforks—we were getting quite a bit of interest. Now, as to—if we had the proper person to take this and work with it—with a good personality and plenty of—ought to be a fairly young person with a lot of vigor and vim and vinegar—

JS:

—vitality—

WH:

—vitality, and knowledge, and everything, there's no doubt this thing would go big. The idea is wonderful, and it's too good not to go. Now, as to whether or not we're going to be able to get it off the ground, I don't know. What we need more than anything else—it's [The Complex] got to be a part of the museum. We need—I don't know who they're going to get to head up this museum. Earl Green is a wonderful technical person, but he's not a public relations person at all. He's not a person to—he's not a promoting person, and a little bit of this is going to depend on what happens. Earl can do the very best job that he's fitted for—he's the person to develop this Lubbock Lake Site, which is one of the major opportunities in the United States today.

JS:

Archaeological?

WH:

Archaeological—and I was so disappointed when this bond thing failed in Lubbock, because that was to be a part of that. And I have been plugging for Earl to be made—put in charge of that development—and there, he would—you couldn't beat him for that, because that's a thing where technical knowhow and—the thing that he possesses to very extended extent would come in most useful.

JS:

Who do you think will head up the ranch complex?

WH:

I have no idea. I have absolutely no idea. That's going to be up to Grover Murray—and had he made that decision before this campaign started, we'd have two million dollars instead of one, now.

JS:

A little coordination?

WH:

Because this thing went without direction all of this last year—there was nobody to beat the drums and keep the fire burning.

JS:

Talk to people, go see people, write letters—

WH:

Talk to the Rotary Club, talk to everybody, talk—you know, somebody that has a flare for these things. I know I've put this in the record—Helen Jones understood that, and she offered to put up thirty thousand dollars last—a year ago to get that person—

JS:

Salary?

WH:

Uh-huh—and Dr. Murray didn't do one thing about it. Now, had he—he's capable, himself—if he would do it, himself, it'd be fine. But I think he's made a tremendous mistake—when he had the means and the wherewith to do a thing, and then he didn't do it.

JS:

Perhaps that's part of the problem of Traveling Murray.

WH:

Yeah, I'm afraid that's it. Unfortunately, he's contracted, in all of these jaunts, and it's understandable—chronic diarrhea, bad liver, and several things. And when he's here, he's nearly always sick. When he's in town, he just comes back to recuperate enough to—then he gets on his feet again, he's—another one of his trips comes up that he's committed to take. So while he's here, he's physically not able to—

JS:

—tend to—

WH:

Yeah. I don't want to sell him short; he has ability.

JS:

He seems to have—very—

WH:

He has the personality, but he's spread too thin—too thin. He hasn't made decisions when he should have. You see why I would want that restricted.

JS:

Yes I do—and like I said before, you may restrict it for whatever length of time you so desire. It's entirely your decision.

Pause in recording

WH:

With all of the mismanagement and drawbacks with the program, we are going to come out of this with pretty good museum equipment because all of this money is really going into physical property, and when the whole story is told and the last song is sung on this thing, we're going to have perhaps three times as big a museum as we would have had, had we never had the ICASALS concept—

JS:

—or complex—

WH:

Yes. The whole ICASALS concept is an excellent one, and again, it's too good not to succeed. But at this stage, it's still a pipedream. So far as I know, ICASALS, per se, doesn't have a dollar, and to succeed, it's going to have to become a highly endowed institution.

JS:

Fulbright Grant, or something of that nature.

WH:

Yes, it's going to have to have a big endowment—if it ever gets off the ground, it will naturally attract big endowments—it's of that very nature. And I can conceive of, in fifty years, that they may have a half billion dollars in endowment—like the Harvard Endowment, and the Ford—and these big foundations. Well, it'd be better to compare it, I think, with the Harvard Endowments or the Yale Endowments—and this is an institution—institute sort of thing—but it will kind of snowball, and it's never going to make a very big splash until they get the wherewith to splash—until they get the wherewith to go out and get the talent necessary. You see what they had to put together to build an atomic bomb, or to start exploring space—this is in the category of these big operations. It has the possibility of, I think, realization, but it's going to take awfully good leadership, it's going to take a lot of concentrated thought, and therein, Grover has, I don't think, ever thought through this thing. He got a concept, but to break it down and so on—

JS:

—to workable sizes—

WH:

—to workable things—I don't think he's ever really made much headway on that, until someone really with the capabilities, and with the talent, and with an organized staff—they can get a little help by bleeding the academic budget—bringing in some big men here, into the departments, and paying them out of the budgeted salary program. You can begin to get the—get a team together that way—and little by little, selling it to the legislature and so on. But it's going to require even more than that—a lot more than that—

JS:

Yeah, you've got to learn how to sell that to the public—

WH:

—and the public, yes, and so on. So it's to whether or not Grover Murray ever settles down and digs in, and brings together a nucleus of first-class talent to start building this thing, it's not going to get off the ground—it's just going to remain a nice thing to make speeches to the Rotary Club about and so on. Again, I want to say, it's a thing that's too big and too good to die. By the way, there's been some confusion, I think, that we might make record of this—about where the concept for this thing originated. A few people have told me—says, “Oh, I know where Grover Murray got his idea. He got it from you.” I've heard the thing discussed quite a bit, back and forth, and I'd just like to make a statement for the record on this. He didn't get it from me. His idea was independent with him, but when he came here with this idea, it coincided very much with another idea which I had had, and it was just a natural, then, for these two things to blend. So I will first tell how he got his idea. One of the first things that the—what is this committee in Austin? The correlation committee? The big super-committee that we have down there—

JS:

Oh, coordinating committee?

WH:

Coordinating committee. About the time that Grover took the job, that committee sent around to each college president a request for the president to supply them with a statement of the role of scope that they considered their institution should have in the public—in the framework. So Grover was trumped with that one, and he thought about it and kept it on his subconscious and thought and thought—other than the more or less conventional thing that you could think of—

JS:

Educate, and—

WH:

All of that, well—and he’s reasonable enough to know that you should have a fresh point of view and something with a punch to it and all of that. He’s clever. So he was mulling over this thing, and then he took one of his—he’s with the Magnolia Oil Company. He’s one of their world consultants. He was scheduled to take a trip with them over to northern Africa and into Iran, and he was flying over the Sahara Desert—a beautiful clear day—and he was looking down at these rolling sands, and occasionally here would be the ruins of a city—ancient city—and he saw one place where there must have been a lot of population there. And then he thought he could detect the ruins or the framework of a great irrigation canal, there, now just in the rolling desert. All of this intrigued him—he’d seen it before, but it never had intrigued him like it did on this trip. He was wondering, Well, what happened here? Here, we apparently had a flourishing civilization; now it’s nothing but rolling sand dunes, hundreds of miles.” This kind of thing got into his subconscious, and here, the desert had invaded, apparently, an area of fertility. These are some of the changes of time, and aridity had replaced semi-aridity, and so on. Then, I think it was that very night, he couldn’t sleep, and he had a book with him. It happened to be on this same subject, and he was reading away in this book—woke up about two o’clock in the morning, reading away about—it had to do with what had happened in the Sahara Desert. Then he thought about the great economic aspects of this thing, and the meteorological changes. He began to see things in a big way, and then it flashed into his mind just like that—the role and scope of Texas Tech could be the studies of arid and semi-arid lands—and since he’d flown over so much of the Earth, he knew how much of it was arid and how much was semi-arid. He knew he was talking about one half of the surface of the Earth. Then, he said, “That’s it,” so he started trying that out on people—tried that on a few. So he tried it out, then—I think he told—tried this out on Bill Parsley, the executive vice president. Bill had, perhaps, more to do with bringing him there than anybody else. I don’t know how Bill got on to him. Bill told him, he said, “Well, you know, that sounds a whole lot about the thing that they’re working on—an idea that the museum is working on at Texas Tech,” and he wanted to know more about it, and Bill didn’t know much about it, but the next time that he said well, he wanted to know more about it—and Bill said, “Well, the next time you come, I’m going to get you together with Curry Holden, and y’all compare notes. I think you’ve got something pretty close together.” And so he made a special trip out here to see me, and he came and put up downtown—no, he put up with Bill Parsley—and I don’t think he saw anybody except the Parsleys and us, and that’s when I first met him—the first time I met him was over there, evening. Bill had told me what he’d done—well, I had just finished the water manuscript—and I took it with me over there to him so I could show it to him. Well, I’ll go back, now, to the water manuscript where we got our idea. About three years ago, when we were talking about trying to get the water from the Canadian dam down here in the summer of 1967, we thought well, the museum needs to do something to promote this thing and to exploit it. It’s a matter of major interest. And so we mentioned this to two or three people—I believe, among others, to John Meigs—you know, the artist—and John has a good imagination, he said, “Wonderful. I know one thing you can do; let’s get a bigger art exhibit that has to do with

water.” Well, he’s been working with that Peter Hurd, and water is Peter Hurd’s—that’s his text for every sermon he preaches. He’s got water in every picture. He’s tremendously interested in the role of water. He said, “We’ll just get up a big art exhibit, you know, everybody we can find—a big exhibit.” So that sounded awfully good, and we mentioned that—Mitch Wilder, the present director of the Amon Carter Museum—have you ever been in it?

JS:

Yes, sir, I’ve met him, as well.

WH:

Well, the main thing about Mitch—he cut his teeth, by the way, out here in Santa Fe—

JS:

Along with his friend, the bearded author—art—oh, what is his name?

WH:

I know who you’re talking about; I can’t think of his name. Yes.

JS:

I’m sorry, Dr. Holden.

WH:

Well, anyway, Mitch had then gone to the Colorado Springs art—after he’d served a hitch out here—

JS:

—Woodward—

WH:

He’d gone to Colorado Springs, and then—where he was getting, I don’t know, maybe a three thousand dollar salary—and then, when they organized the Amon Carter Museum, they gave him a big promotion to come down and take that over—and he has lots of money to work with and has a good big budget. Well, Mitch just came through here, and—he usually came to see us—and we were telling him about it. “Well,” he said, “it’s wonderful. We want in on it. We’d like to go in with you on assembling this thing. We’ll use—we can stow it away in our budget and get together a tremendous thing here. We’ll show it at Fort Worth and you can show it here.” Then it was thought that we ought to more than just have an art exhibit, so we asked Bill Pearce—at that time he was the academic vice president—if he would call up a meeting of people on the faculty who ought to be interested in promoting something big about water. So he picked out about ten or twelve people—including, I think, three of the deans and somebody in geology, and several

people—and then we invited the main man—the big boss—the engineer of the Canadian [Dam]—installing the thing of the—

JS:

Chief engineer?

WH:

Yes—and the local highway engineer, here, and so on. Mitch Wilder came out and we had a meeting—and everybody had been enthusiastic about doing something really big—and we'd center it in the museum, and they thought we ought to have a lot more than just art. That ought to be one thing, but we ought to have dioramas; we ought to have just a lot of things showing the role that water has had in civilization. Then it was Mitch Wilder who spoke up and said, "Well, for a thing this big, we need something to tie it all together. We need somebody to write a book—at least a manuscript—showing the whole role of water, and it will be the thing that we can use, then, to plan the whole thing. The Amon Carter will undertake—get together the art collection telling the story if the local museum here will get together the objects and the dioramas and the things from the scientific and historic points of view, where you can tell the story graphically with dioramas, plaques, objects, and so on." Everyone thought that was wonderful. So the question, then, if the whole plan was presented to the Tech board—

Phone ringing

Pause in recording

WH:

Well, the—it was presented to the board. The matter came up, well, who's going to write the manuscript, or write the book? The chairman of the board looked over at me—I was attending with the delegation that was presenting it to the board—and he said, "You're elected," and then he turned to Dr. Goodwin, and he said, "Dr. Goodwin, you fix his schedule every which way it needs to be fixed, so he'll have plenty of time to work on this," and Dr. Goodwin says, "Yes, sir." Thereupon, Dr. Goodwin took counsel with himself as to what the minimum amount of teaching he could expect of me and still not get in the penitentiary—because you know the Texas law does not provide for anything of this type—the instructional budget is for instruction—and he finally decided that if I would actually teach—be in charge of not three hours each semester—and then they have some way of robbing Peter to pay Paul, you know, signing these dissertation, which are mythical numbers—

JS:

Yes.

WH:

—for another six hours. That'd make nine hours, and they could defend this thing against the state auditors. And so that's what they've been doing ever since, as far as I'm concerned. At the end of the year—well, we worked two years on that basis, and it took that much to get the manuscript written. So I had just gotten the thing bound when Grover Murray showed up here. It's the story of water. Well, the absence of water is aridity.

JS:

Right, semi or arid, or semi-arid land.

WH:

So that was how these two things coincided. Coming back, now, to the meeting over at Bill Parsley's, he asked if he might take the thing and read it. I told him I'd be delighted. So he took it and read it—the next time he came, he brought it with him. He says, "Yes, I can see that this thing—this book ought to be published. I think we've got the thing here to tell the story." In that way, you see, the thought, I suppose, really had two origins that kind of got wedded somewhere.

JS:

—and broadened it in the process.

WH:

Yes. In broadening it—in bringing in this aridity business, we are going to come out of this thing with about three times—or four times—as much museum as we would have. If this thing had not all come about, we would have ended up with a little half-million-dollar thing over there, which would have been the end of it. When it became attached to this much larger concept—

JS:

—with Amon Carter, as well—

WH:

—it has enabled us to raise this million dollars which I spoke of because this thing appealed to these people. We had something to sell, something more than just a little small, local museum. The museum, I think, in the future will cease to be a regional museum; it's going to become an international museum.

JS:

And a major one.

WH:

With the proper direction, it has a great future.

JS:

That's what we need right now, is direction.

WH:

Yes, it needs the direction. I just wish I were twenty years younger.

JS:

I rather doubt that that's going to slow you too much, Dr. Holden.

WH:

Well, I've given up the control of it, though. I probably made a mistake there, though at the time that I gave it up, I thought it was a good thing to do. We never dreamed of this thing taking this chance—this turn—this almost quirky turn.

JS:

To become not large, but huge—gargantuan.

WH:

Yes. We could have—it would have been a different story, I think, had we realized the potential at the right time. Well, I guess that's enough for today.

JS:

All right.

End of Side A recording

JS:

This is Skaggs—Dr. Holden interview, reel seven, side two—May 3, 1968. Dr. Holden, you were going to expound on the ICASALS concept here at Tech.¹

William Holden (WH):

Yes. The last time we had a session on this, I believe we had got into the museum aspect of this. I might add, now, a little bit about the ICASALS—the origin of the term “ICASALS” and the ICASALS concept. As we indicated above, it really had two independent origins—neither, of course, knowing of the other. I believe we have explained our part here that grew out of the prospect of bringing the water from the Canadian dam. By the way, to add to that a little further, it was, I think, the museum people missed a big bet when they didn't carry it through with that plan. This last year—last summer—they did bring the water in, on schedule, and it was also right

¹ Though Skaggs lists this as Reel Seven, it is in fact Reel Six, Side Two. Holden explains that in this May 3 session they rehashed information discussed on January 8, adding additional material.

in the middle of the campaign to raise this money for the building—the big city drive—and the whole campaign was stymied because of lack of leadership. There seemed to be a great vacuum right where they should have had the most vigorous and aggressive leadership. The museum people completely missed the greatest opportunity that they could have—they couldn't have wanted for a better opportunity to have made a tremendous showing for the museum, and demonstrated the value of it, and to have made a big to-do about that water when it came in—and to have gone through with the art exhibit and planned this other thing. But as it was, nothing happened. There wasn't—nothing happened in the museum; there was no mention. The water came to town, three or four people went out there and the officials, and the whole opportunity was completely lost.

JS:

Can you explain why the—was a lack of direction?

WH:

No, I can't. I wish I could. The only thing I can say is, it lacked the leadership. But to get back, now, to the other side of the coin, the—Dr. Murray had an independent concept, which, you might think of this thing as being a positive and a negative thing—two things fit together. Aridity is the negative side—or positive side, I don't know which—of lack of water. Water is an essential thing—if you've got the water, you don't have aridity. If you don't have the water, you're going to have aridity.

JS:

A reverse side of the coin, either way.

WH:

Yes, you take your choices to which it is. Well, Dr. Murray, after he was elected president—at the time he was elected president, as you know, he was the field consultant, among other things, of the Magnolia Company—and he had—going all over the world looking for new locations, new possibilities for discovering oil. And I understand that he did discover a vast oilfield for the company in Australia. But he had had a great deal of experience in all the desert regions—in Iran, Australia, which is almost entirely arid and semi-arid—in north Africa, and in South America, and all around. In fact, most of his field exploratory work and his consulting work had been in a strictly-arid environment, so that led him, I think, to be aridity-minded a great deal. After he was elected here, he had quite a number of these commitments with the company—and I understand that it was understood between him and the board that he would have to comply with those and finish them off. I do know he was gone about half the time the first year that he was in service here—and even before he came. After he was elected president, and before he'd been out here but just one or two or three times—usually nobody knew it, he just came out, you

know, to look things over and that kind of thing—the—what do you call this board down at Austin—the correlation board?

JS:

No, Coordinating Board.

WH:

Coordination board for Higher Education—somebody on that board had a brainstorm that they should ask each university and college supported by the state to submit to them a statement as to the role and scope that they intended to strive for in their particular institution. I presume behind this thought was the fact that if they found two of them striving for the same thing—and especially in the future—they'd better head one of them off and start them off after another rabbit or something like that. But anyway, they—Dr. Murray received a request for that before he came here, and he was quite stumped about it for a while, not knowing much about the institution, and he kept putting it on the rear burner, not knowing what to say, but it was on his subconscious a great deal. While this was going on, he went on one of these trips across North Africa—and he flew over the Sahara Desert, and it must have been a very clear day, where the visibility was exceedingly good. Perhaps they were flying a little low, I presume, in a company plane, so that he could observe the structures and that kind of thing. He noticed a great many vast ruins of cities, and he could detect irrigation systems and water systems in a region now, where there's no living thing within a hundred or two hundred miles—nothing but drifting sand, now, in most places. So he asked himself, "What happened here?" Obviously there had been a rather lush climate there at one time—and highly populated with a rather intensive agricultural setup and so on. That was on his mind, about what had happened, and then, after having observed that and being—that seems to have been kind of new to him; he hadn't bumped into that before, at least—that night, or maybe the next night, he had a book with him, pretty much on that subject. He was very interested in this book, having seen where this had been, and this book, of course, dealt with the archaeology and these people who had been there, and I presume it gave forth guesses as to what had happened—climatic changes or improper conservation, or maybe a combination of things. So he went to sleep, and then he woke up after a while in the night, he couldn't go to sleep, and he got to pondering and thinking about the role and scope and thinking about this vanished culture, and thinking about the desert. Suddenly it hit him, he said, just like Webb's idea hit him about the concept for the Great Plains—he said it just hit him like something had—somebody had thrown a rock at him. There it is. that would be something that would be new—he couldn't think of any other university that had ever tried it, and our region here is semi-arid, and we're very close to arid country—some extremely arid right here in Texas—very vast stretches bigger than New England—strictly arid. So he was just intrigued with this idea; he couldn't go to sleep, then, for thinking about what a wonderful idea he had had. So that was the origin of his side of this thing—where he got the idea. Then he began to talk to people about the idea, and especially make inquiry of academic circles to see if anybody else had

ever heard of another institution that had tackled this thing, and he couldn't find out about it—well, there had, he didn't find out all about it because California tried just, well, not fifteen years ago and it fizzled. They thought they had a wonderful idea. Arizona has also done a great deal in it, and still are, but it's in a quiet way—they're not making a great deal of noise about it, but they are making quite a lot of studies that will help under arid conditions, and so on. But, anyway, he came back, then, and got to talking to some of the local people, and then they knew about what we were doing with the water business. They told him that we had had the other side of the coin—we'd already written this manuscript—and so he made a special trip out here from Louisiana, up to see me and see what I'd done, talk about it. Well, we met over at Bill Parsley's—nobody knew he was in town; he just slipped in, he didn't want to meet anybody else because he didn't want to get involved. He wanted to slip in and get this information and get out. I showed him—as a matter of fact, I came over and—I came—ran home and got the manuscript—I have two bound copies—and showed it—told him to take one and read it. And he did, and the next trip he brought it back, about two weeks later. I think I mentioned his reaction to that in the earlier—on the other side of the reel. Stop it just a minute.

Pause in recording

WH:

About the third trip that he made out after—out here—and all of this, now, sometime before he moved—he was wanting to get down and—with a recommendation for the Tech board and get the board to approve his concept here as the role and scope to present to the state commission. So he came out this time, and I don't know whether you know Dr. Murray or not, but he's a very personable man, very easy to know, very easy to talk to, and he's completely without any pomposity or—he likes to be on a first-name basis with nearly everybody. I know when we first met him, within five minutes after we'd met him—that'd be our first night out at Bill Parsley's house—everybody had had—by that time I was sucking bourbon and feeling no pain—and so he instructed us to call him Grover, and so from then on, we were all on a first name basis and so on. He's very easy—and he's disarmingly so, to speak the truth about him. You can get off and get to thinking about something he's done and get mad at him, want to kill him, and go and see him about it, and in five minutes, you've forgotten all about it—he can just completely disarm you. He's good at that.

JS:

Sounds like a so-called Lyndon Johnson technique.

WH:

Well, he's pretty good. Anyway, the third trip he came back out, he was really getting down to trying to get some semblance of *modus operandi*, and get the thing started. So he was out here—and I've forgotten who was with him—maybe it was Harold Hinn, Bill Parsley's along, I've

forgotten—but anyway, in talking about this, he brought up the subject—by the way, after he got the thing going, I saw, after he began to—we began to see the potential of this thing that here's a thing—you see, we had—the purpose of the book was to prepare a theme for the future installations of the new museum. That's what the book was for. The college has two years of my time invested in that, and there it is. The theme is there. You could play in gallery after gallery if you show how water has influenced literature and art and economics and politics and social organization—it's all there. You can have a dozen galleries, and it's all there in the book. So I immediately saw that here's a chance to just extend this much further and tie this thing together and let this new museum plan—we're going to have a tremendous basement—becomes the headquarters for the—I could tell he was thinking in terms of an institute integrated with the college and the college faculty. But it would have to have a headquarters, it would have to have laboratories, it would have to have a depository for the records and all of these kind of things—and I saw an opportunity here to greatly enlarge the whole museum program—and told him so. He had accepted that and said it sounded like it's logical, and so on. That was on the second trip. On the third trip, when he came back, he had obviously had some change of thoughts. And so he rather suddenly brought the question around that he had decided that this thing should not be attached to the museum, but to the library—and they should be building a library—after all, the most of the things that you'd bring in here of permeant worth would be archival material and documentary material, and you could gather in there the knowledge of the world on this subject—all of which is true—and so he worked around and made it pretty clear that he thought it ought to **[be in the library.]** But in the meanwhile, we had the museum campaign going. Frances and the little girl next door—Isabella Howe—had decided that they would promote Mrs. Jones—Helen Jones—to give a half million dollars to start this campaign off in a big way—and they were entirely responsible for that donation. It never would have happened, and it was a great surprise to everybody when we announced it. We had already announced that before all of this happened, where he came out here the first time—we were that far along. Well, what he had in mind, I could soon tell was that he would wade in and take over that Helen Jones grant and just switch it from the museum to the library. Well, with my lifelong interest in the museum notwithstanding, I was out of the organization. That didn't sit too well with me.

JS:

I can see why.

WH:

And so I quizzed him a little further on it and I could see that that was definitely his plan. Then I lowered the boon on him, and I said, “All right, Grover, you can organize this ICASALS any way you wish, but if you do, you've got to start from scratch. We've got this museum program going, and we have this Helen Jones grant as bait, and we're going to be assured of a million and a half dollars at the very least. That is going to stay put. There's no way you can change it,” and it knocked him back on his heels—especially when I told him he was going to start from scratch.

So he stammered around, said well, he'd sleep over it. And I don't know—he went away—and I don't know whether he slept very good or not. The next morning about eight o'clock he called me, and said, "Would it be convenient if I come out?" and I said "Oh, yes, come right along. I'll have the coffee ready." So he came out, and perfectly affable and everything again, and he said, "You know, I've been thinking over this thing during the night. I agree with you. I am convinced that it ought to stay attached to the museum." So that [episode] is not generally known—not over four or five people know that.

JS:

And you don't particularly care if anybody more knows it right now?

WH:

Well not at the moment, but I do want it in the record.

JS:

Yes sir. Could I ask you a question in this regard?

WH:

Yes, any you'd like.

JS:

Do you know whether or not there was any influence on the part of Ray Janeway in regards to Dr. Murray's original idea?

WH:

I don't think so. I don't think Ray even knew about it.

JS:

Or how in the world that Dr. Murray came to this point of view, that it should be totally dependent upon the library?

WH:

I don't think Ray even knew that this was brewing, and I doubt that he knows, to this day that Murray had in mind building this thing—attaching it to the library—I doubt it very much because all of this is very close here, and I know that they have not conferred about it. No, Murray had—he'd never had any experience with the museum, in fact he knew very little about museums.

JS:

Probably the stereotype idea—

WH:

Very stereotype, yes. Very stereotype. Just a place—sort of a graveyard-kind of a thing. He did know about libraries, and I think he had taken quite an interest in the library down there at Louisiana, and helping them—he was the—I believe he was the academic vice president down there. The library—well, we all are interested in libraries, heavens knows—

JS:

We've got to have them.

WH:

Our library in our Southwest Collection has no more ardent supporter than I am. But you can get money from the state for that, and Janeway was getting all [**the money**] he can use and more. He's overstaffed and can hardly spend the money that he gets for books. He's not hurting.

JS:

No. But museums don't work that way?

WH:

Museums don't work that way. But I could see this thing as the museum being the showcase for ICASALS—the visible thing—and you've got to have something visible, you just can't promote a big concept just in the thin air, you've got to have a headquarters, you've got to have some kind of staff, you've got to have something—offices, laboratories—

JS:

You have to have a physical central location.

WH:

You have to have something physical, and I could see that we could put it all together at— great economy by combining the two and so on.

JS:

Did Dr. Murray's point of view waver after that?

WH:

No, it hasn't. I must say, far in, that he has gone right down the line, and he has taken the museum, and he has been the big champion of it, and he's fought its battles. Incidentally, the biggest battle he's had to fight is against the museum association.

JS:

My goodness.

WH:

They have driven their—drug their heels; they've done all kinds of sniping. They say, "This foreigner is coming here and he's ruining our little West Texas museum, and he wants to turn it into a great big international something that we're not interested in." It's ridiculous, the things that I have heard. Although I'm kind of not in the center of the thing, I am on the periphery, and I do get these backlashes, you know.

JS:

Well I understand that now, the museum is over the top on its fundraising.

WH:

Well, it's just over the top of the first phase.

JS:

The first phase.

WH:

Yes.

JS:

Well that's good, at least. You were also—when we started this, Dr. Holden, you were going to comment on how the term ICASALS was coined—International Center for Arid and Semi-Arid Land Studies.

WH:

Uh, yes. That was worked out entirely by Dr. Murray. He wanted to get a symbol or a short word. See, that's a mouthful.

JS:

Yes.

WH:

And I know we sat around here several times with pencils, all of us, thinking, throwing him words—various things that would shorten. And we got mighty close to it, and well, we didn't quite have it. The next time he came back, he had it. He had the International Center—what it spells out. And he had found that this taking the first digits of the whole thing, that it said ICASALS, and so that was it. He worked that out, though, but we had all thrown ideas into it in trying to arrive at that, but we hadn't quite worked it out. We had several alternatives.

JS:

What about the symbol for ICASALS—the darkened sun?

WH:

That was worked out by Wittenburg and Williams—did you see the Lowther Wittenburg that was here—the big, tall fellow that had the mustache, long face and everything?

JS:

No sir.

WH:

Well, they brought him in on the deal as a consultant. He has a private—he and his partner have a designing company in New York, and they have made the design and designed installations of several museums in the north—and they're commercial; they do it for commercial people, too. So that was part of—they employed him as a consultant, and he worked that out—I know he kept it a secret for a while, and I don't know just what kind of a deal they made—whether he made them pay extra for that thing, or not. But anyway, he was the one that designed it, thought it out, presented it, and they adopted it. I don't know whether it's a good one or not.

JS:

Well, everyone in this part of the country recognizes it, anyway.

WH:

Yeah. After it's used enough, one thing is about as good another, I guess.

JS:

Certainly the term ICASALS is well familiar.

WH:

Yes, it's quite well. Incidentally, what had been your—what have you heard about the—what the faculty think about it?

JS:

Well—

WH:

For a while, there sure was a lot of heel dragging.

JS:

I think the reaction has been largely mixed. At least in the beginning, a lot felt that it was—well,

the concept was a little bit larger than Texas Tech. I think, now, that the opinion is going quite the other way. I know in the history department that the majority of the fulltime faculty are in support with ICASALS—and of course, Sylvan Dunn is—that's right down his line, with his interest in drought—and I know that Van Mitchell Smith made an amazing turnabout after he received an ICASALS grant. He was one of those I heard saying some rather disparaging words concerning the concept, and he seems to feel that it's quite a good idea, now—or, the last time I talked to him, he did.

WH:

Well we had—the same happened. Dave Howe, of course, is in the physics department—living in that big house, there—Dr. David Howe. And I know when it first hit, his department were just—they were appalled, and they were against it. They thought that here was a thing that was going to be an applied thing, and all of the research money would be syphoned off to this, and there wouldn't be anything for the pure scientists to have to work with. I know they drug their feet for months and months and months about it—most skeptical—and I take it that that was more or less general of everybody, unless it's geologists—maybe the geographers. But I don't know if something happened. Murray must have really sold them something, because now, they are very much behind it, and there's no question as far as they're concerned.

JS:

Uh-huh. My sources in the department of economics indicate much the same thing. They thought it was a pretty good idea, but they felt that the people in the Ag-Eco, in agriculture, could do better than anything that they could do, and so far as theory was concerned—that they could supply the theory, but the ag-economists would come up with more practical ideas. However, I think such people as Vernon Clover have demonstrated that the economists over there can make a contribution. And, you know, William Hendon, who was here last year, was involved in this park survey, and he showed how the arid lands can be developed insofar as park utilization, and apparently the economists—even the theoretical economists—are coming around now, from what I understand.

WH:

Well, it's—I might say that at this juncture, the ICASALS is still a concept. The museum part—program has gone over. The local drive was a dismal failure. The museum people—the Museum Association hired a bunch of professional money raisers from Dallas—came up. I've never found out what they paid them, but a tremendous amount. I would guess somewhere between thirty-five and fifty thousand dollars. I doubt they raised a dollar, themselves. They were supposed to get everything organized, and they were—thought that they were going to be able to raise at least a million and a half or two million dollars. Well, as I said a while ago, the whole movement, when it got going—and the campaign got going, there was a vacuum of leadership, and this million and a half drive dribbled down to three hundred and eighty thousand dollars. Now,

alongside of that, my wife and Isabella were entirely responsible—they called in a little help when they needed it, but without them, it would never have happened. Altogether, they have raised one million, one hundred and fifty thousand dollars without script, without purse—even paid for their own long-distance telephone calls when they had to make them.

JS:

My goodness, and they've only raised about a million and a half, haven't they?

WH:

Altogether. Helen Jones, and this is on the record, too, is now ready to give another half million.

JS:

Oh, great.

WH:

Not to the plans, but set it aside—the money to be used to expedite the thing, which is where you need money. My wife's completely responsible for that because she got that without Isabelle helping her much. And also, Christine DeVitt's hundred and fifty thousand. She's responsible for that. Well, it goes to show—that's what I mean when I say all of the big organization they had in the town—all of these paid people—raised just a little over a third of a million, but these two girls here raised, let me see—one million—altogether one million, one hundred and fifty thousand.

JS:

Plus another half a million?

WH:

No, I'm including that.

JS:

Well, that says a great deal about the professional money raisers, doesn't it?

WH:

It does. It really does. And that's not known.

JS:

Someday it will be.

WH:

That's the reason I want it on the record.

JS:

Someday it will be, when you get ready for it to be known.

WH:

Yeah, I want it in the record. We're not concerned about it, ourselves, but—

JS:

Well, as historians, we should be concerned with—we're concerned with the truth.

WH:

As far as the historians are concerned, I want them to have the correct dope.

JS:

Good. Can you think of anything else concerning the ICASALS program that we should get on the record?

WH:

Oh, yes, to go on from—I started to say a moment ago, the museum part—we're going to have a museum. It's not going to be as big [**as we anticipated**]
—I think the whole thing has been handled unwisely. They've dissipated—they've had the plans, the architects—I don't know how much money, perhaps seventy-five hundred thousand dollars going to the architects. They've had those plans done over three times, and paying for them every time. And then, they have put a lot of things into it—they're even now talking about sinking the parking lot—and why on Earth you would want to sink it, I don't know—and when you do sink it, you create all kinds of problems that—

JS:

Drainage

WH:

You've got problems with drainage—keeping these great [**pumping**] motors there. They have to be serviced in order to pump that out when you have a flash flood, and all that kind of thing.

JS:

We have those things in this part of the country.

WH:

We do. The result is this Helen Jones wing is going to be only one third what it would have been had they used the money wisely. All of that, I think, should be in the record. So there's been a

great deal of mismanagement about it all. But we are going to come out with, I think, probably a very good-looking, although too-small a plant over there.

JS:

Could—excuse me—could one generalize in regard to this, and compare the new museum complex with the old one, and assume that the problem is largely because there have been too many fingers in the pot?

WH:

That's exactly it; you've put your finger right on it. It really has. I want one of these sessions that we have—I want a lot of time to think about it, but I want to devote one of these to the history of the museum, which—

JS:

Now, we have part of that story—I doubt that we have the whole thing.

WH:

Well, I would like to go back to the very beginning and do the whole thing as one—right on through to the present. At that time, I think we can bring out a lot of these things for the record. Now, coming back to ICASALS—so far as I know, ICASALS doesn't have a dollar, per se. They are siphoning off—they've got a little staff over there with Thad Box, who is a good fella, highly capable, but when all is said and done with Thad Box, he's still an aggie with limitations. He can move beautifully in certain circles, but he cannot move in other circles. He's an unusual aggie, I'll grant that, he's a rather super aggie, but I think he's miscast as he is. I think it would be wonderful to have him in the range—this is going to have to be departmentalized—in the range management aspects of it, I don't believe you could beat him anywhere in the world, but I think he's miscast as he is. Idris Traylor is the type who needs to be in control, you know, the one that has the broad base—

JS:

He's a very bright young man.

WH:

He's very bright and very smooth, and those things really ought to just be reversed. Idris, with some help and some good backing could build into, I think, a very wonderful administrator for this thing. But Murray started the thing off the other way, and I think he's going to—the whole thing is going to suffer until he finally changes it, because he's got the—what's the old saying, you can't make—

JS:

Cart?

WH:

No, not the old cart—the old—

JS:

Can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear?

WH:

Sow's ear, yeah, that's what I mean. The finances for that is coming out of the instructional budget.

JS:

I didn't know that.

WH:

Yes. And so far, they may get something in the next bill, certainly. They couldn't get anything in the last bill for it—not a dollar, per se. Bill Parsley tells me that in the campaign to raise funds for it—what they need is about a billion-dollar endowment, and then they could really get off the ground. But they're not going to get any endowment until they get the thing going and begin to show results. It's kind of—you've got to have the chicken almost before you have the egg on this thing.

JS:

It's going to take time.

WH:

And Bill Parsley tells me that this campaign is just being a miserable failure, because you're just talking about something that doesn't exist yet. People can't understand this, this complex. And it's going to have its troubles, but I think, by the—I think if Murray stays here, and if he'll take the proper counsel and the proper action—and if he'll take time out to commune with himself and try to understand what he's trying to do—he's never thought through this thing. He has the concept, but—**[it is a]** sort of a skeleton—but he has never thought about putting the flesh on it. When you ask him, "Well, what're you going to do?" he can't tell you. Until he communes with himself and works out where he's going—establishes a goal and phases and all of these kinds of things—and then, having done that, he's got to assemble some very able men. Now he can do that with his instructional budget. He needs to go out and bring in about five or six men, any one of which would be eligible for a Nobel Prize in the various fields. Bring those men in on the instructional budget, have them teach some seminars, give them a lot of latitude, and what they

need in the way of laboratories and collecting and so on, and start—and use the resources at hand to get some good graduate—A-1 graduate talent in here—graduate students. And then these men will slowly begin to establish a publication program—

JS:

—which we don't have.

WH:

—which we don't have—and until you get that and get it going—it's going to take years to do that—until you get that done, you don't have anything to sell. So you see what I mean when I say ICASALS has a lot of trouble ahead.

JS:

It sure does.

WH:

And if anything happens to Murray, I think the whole thing will fall through. If he should leave here in a year or two years, I think five years, ICASALS will be a thing of the past.

JS:

It's a sad thought.

WH:

We'll have the museum, and I hope they will exploit the water theme. That'll make them completely unique, if they will about a terrifically important subject.

JS:

Yes it is. I can't think of one more important.

WH:

If we could say a few more things about ICASALS, we'd have a whole spool-full there, wouldn't we?

JS:

Yes we would. Do you think that the research funds are going to be more available in the future if Murray's does stay here?

WH:

I think they will so far as his ability to put them there, but—

JS:

I mean in terms of the legislature—that's my concern—

WH:

He's still of unproven quality for getting money, and the persons who talk most and smoothest and everything like that are sometimes the worst money-getters. The man who has gotten more money from the legislature than any other president we've ever had was the president which is most unappreciated.

JS:

Whyburn?

WH:

Yeah, Dr. Whyburn. He didn't have a smooth exterior—he was no good at making a speech, much, but Mr. Gaston, the business manager who always went with him, told me one time that he had “worked with every president, but none of them that had the magic across the table that William Whyburn had,” and he really brought in the money. Not only did he bring it in from the state appropriations, but he finagled around these contracts with the federal government during the war and left six million dollars in the treasury when he left here. It was that six million dollars that—he didn't spend a dollar of it—that Dr. Wiggins came in and spent on all these new buildings, and I'll bet there are not six people in Lubbock that know where that money came from or who got it, and Wiggins got the complete credit for the whole business.

JS:

Whyburn got, more or less, the axe.

WH:

He got the axe. So I would not predict how he—Murray—will come out with the legislature. We had him speak to the Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association on the ranch complex, and he didn't do too well with it. How he is across the table, I wouldn't know. Bill Parsley is pretty good at that. Bill Parsley is pretty good at—

JS:

—negotiations?

WH:

Yeah—and he did real well with the appropriations last semester. But Bill really has his limitations as to the functions, really, of a university—research—he just has a sort of a gloss, but if you can ever get it through his skull, what you want, well he'll—

JS:

He'll get it.

WH:

He'll go after it.

JS:

Well, it takes those—that type, too, on a university campus.

WH:

Well, let's see, I wonder what else we could include today without—

End of recording



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