

Oral History Interview of William Curry Holden

**Interviewed by: Jimmy M. Skaggs
May 3, and 6, 1968
Lubbock, Texas**

“REEL SEVEN”

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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 primarily discusses J. Evertts Haley in this interview. As such, Holden talks about Haley's personality, his politics, his writings, and his time at Texas Tech's Institute for Americanism. Holden also begins discussing Clifford Jones and Jones' work with the Swensons and the Spur Ranch.

Length of Interview: 01:23:32

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Jimmy M. Skaggs (JS):

This is Skaggs—Holden interview, May 3, 1968—reel eight, side one.¹ Dr. Holden, you were going to talk about some of the many people you have known over your life, and I believe the first on our list was Mr. J. Evetts Haley—is it John or James—which is it, I can never recall?

William Holden (WH):

It's John, I think.

JS:

I believe his father was James, and he was John—or vice versa—²

WH:

Vice versa. The Evetts is for his mother. His mother's family name is Evetts. In other words, John Haley married whatever-her-name-was Evetts. Well, I've been trying to think about when I first met Evetts, but it doesn't come back. I'll just take up a few of the early times I remember, and then I'll try to elaborate more on him and on our relationship, our friendship, and so on. I do—I think, perhaps, I may have seen him as far back as the summer of 1917 or '18. I do know he was a student at West Texas State at Canyon at that time, but I was there in the summer, and I'm not too sure that—at least I think I heard about him. I associate something with that. Then, later, I do know that he went to the University of Texas after he got his degree at Canyon, and did his master's work, I presume, with Dr. [Eugene C.] Barker. I used to know what he wrote his thesis on; it had something to do with—

JS:

He did it on the survey of Texas cattle trails, I believe it was.³

WH:

Survey of cattle trails—I knew it had to do with cattle. Then we must have had a casual acquaintance, because I do recall that the last year we were at McMurry College—which was the year of '28-'29—he came by and spent the night with us. I know we had a—he's always exciting and there's just something almost electric in the air when you're around him. A visit by him is a thing that you'll always remember and look forward to—there's something extraordinary about his character, his personality. I do know we had a very delightful time.

Then—

JS:

Can you describe him about 1929?

¹ Though Skaggs calls this Reel Eight, this is Reel Seven in the series.

² John Evetts Haley

³ "Survey of Texas Cattle Drives to the North, 1866-1915" (1926)

JS:

Well, he looked then just like he does now, only he was a little more slender, and his forehead was not quite so high as it is now. He wore boots all the time, and he had that quick walk, very energetic, and he was always very prim, very square, very straight—always held his shoulders up and his head up, always wore a big hat. Always—never lost—he's most articulate, wonderful vocabulary, and ever since I've known him, he's always been a rather sage philosopher sort of a person, and always full of stories—good, homespun, ranch-spun stories. He can always dig up a story to illustrate a point—and a wonderful sense of humor, and he's thoroughly capable of laughing at himself. He can laugh with you or laugh at you, either one, either way. Personally, he is a very congenial and a very stimulating person to be around, and I count him among my most cherished people that I love to be with. I spoke earlier about our first archaeological expedition, back in the spring of 1929, I believe it was, up to the Canadian River—and we went through Canyon on the way up, and I know I knew Evertts well enough then that I wouldn't have thought of going through Canyon without stopping to see him—and they had just finished the first unit of that museum—

JS:

Panhandle Plains?

WH:

The Panhandle Plains Museum, the original building—what's now the front of it. They had raised, I think, fifty thousand dollars from private sources and had just finished it, and we didn't know it, but we bumped right in to their annual meeting.⁴ We'd stopped there and I was inquiring—I found the museum and I was inquiring for Evertts Haley and found out that he was at a meeting inside—I didn't know what it was—and word was passed in, and directly he came out and we visited a little bit, and he told me they had the meeting on, but he was in no hurry to get back in, and then he said "Wait a minute, I've got something for you." He disappeared and came back in a few minutes with one of the advanced copies of the *XIT Ranch*.⁵ He had just received his advanced copies that day, and says, "I want to give this to you," and I've still got it up there somewhere, I hope, which he inscribed. So that was in 1929—along in March, 1929. We, of course—

JS:

Let's see, that's the book he got into a controversy over.

WH:

Yes, that's the one that created the lawsuit—the big lawsuit.

⁴ Corrects to \$25,000.

⁵ *The XIT Ranch of Texas and the Early Days of the Llano Estacado*

JS:

The second edition of that is the expunged version, where—

WH:

Yes, where they took out all reference to the Spikes Family.

JS:

Yes.

WH:

But I—it's still in my copy up there.

JS:

Yes, you have the original.

WH:

Yes, that's a story unto itself. Then we began to see each other much more—after we moved up here to Lubbock—much more often, going and coming. He [Haley] would often come by and spend the night back in those days. He knew some of the other people here—Judge [Clark M.] Mulligan and Walter Posey and Clifford Jones and Judge [James D.] Hamlin, when he [Hamlin] was down here—

JS:

Holding court?

WH:

Holding court—and we would—when Evetts would come to town, well, we'd—if he could stay overnight, well, we would usually have an assemblage on the back porch—and somebody would produce a bottle of bourbon, and by midnight, the bourbon would all be gone, but the effects wouldn't, and everybody'd be mellow. Evetts could keep us absolutely entranced for hours with his stories. He seems to be inexhaustible—and he tells them with such verve. He'll start a story, sitting back like this in his chair, and as he works up to it, he gets more out like this, and like this, and when he ends, he's just practically not sitting on his chair, just on the very edge, and you're right with him.

JS:

Entranced, ready to go.

WH:

Yes. You're just set and ready to go. Incidentally, in those sessions, Evetts has a different

personality from what he is when he's trying to save the world. In his political philosophy and his economic philosophy, we often say that he's living about a hundred and forty years out of his time—and I suppose there's nobody in Lubbock that loves Evetts Haley more than we do, except one other person, and that's Clifford Jones.

JS:

Ike Connor likes him.

WH:

—and Ike, I would include Ike, too. Clifford and I, between ourselves, never referred to him as J. Evetts Haley; we always called him Andrew Jackson, because he has a disposition and a point of view and a philosophy and pretty much the temperament of ole Andrew Jackson.

JS:

I can imagine that.

WH:

And had he lived back in Andrew Jackson's day, he'd either been Andrew Jackson's second-in-command, or they would have fought a duel before now.

JS:

That sounds just a little bit like Thomas Hart Benton, perhaps.

WH:

Evetts, he'd always get in causes, and he's utterly sincere in this: he thinks it's possible to turn the clock back. That's why he's always leading crusades. He wants to get back to the good old days of the 1830s. Nobody understood him better than his wife, Nita. Have I related before about Nita?

JS:

No, you haven't. I was going to ask you about his wife.

WH:

Well, she was a wonderful person, and she was a very good counterbalance for Evetts—because Evetts needed somebody to kind of hold him down and to stabilize him, because he could just take off after this buffalo, and before he gets him caught, he's off after another one. Nita, bless her heart, she got cancer in her insides somewhere. He brought her down here—the vets up there couldn't figure her out—and he brought her down here, and she was at the Methodist hospital, the Methodist clinic here, and I think they discovered it and told her and she knew about it. She stayed here about a month, and Evetts, extremely busy, would go and come—and he would have

to go to this ranch and to that ranch. And I went up—I made a job where I'd see Nita every day—and she was—had tremendous courage for forty-two, and bravery—never alluded to this trouble, which I know that she knew about, and she knew it was terminal. I went up one day, and she had been reading *Don Quixote*, and she was just chuckling when I went in. She said, "You know, I've been reading about Don Quixote—always going up and down the country chasing—attacking windmills—chasing windmills. That's Evetts. He's done it all of his life. He does just about as much good as ole Don Quixote, because he's after things that there's no hope for." For two or three days, while she was reading on that, well, we would talk about it when I'd go up to see her. Well, when Evetts is off on his political business—you know he ran for governor of Texas [in 1956], and incidentally [he] got a hundred thousand votes, to everybody's surprise, including his—

JS:

Really?

WH:

We voted for him. He knew he couldn't get elected, but he just thought somebody ought to run, and he wanted to tell a story and he wanted an audience—and he did—he got some of it out of his system, I think. We were very much surprised that he showed up that well.

JS:

You indicated that he was also surprised.

WH:

Yes. I don't think he thought he was going to get that many votes. He was wonderfully pleased that there was that many people in Texas agreed with him—he didn't think but about ten or twelve. So when he is trying to save the country he becomes very intense, and also, he becomes intolerant. He just—people don't agree with him, he doesn't want to give them [any credit]—every man to have the benefit of his own business; he wants everybody to think like he thinks—and if they don't, he wants to shake them into it, you know. Well, he has that personality when he's trying to save the country—but when you bring him in among friends, and with a toddy or two, he's a completely different personality altogether—charming—absolutely charming. He can be provocative and he can be antagonistic, you know, when he's out saving the country. He doesn't want people to take issue with him—he wants to just squelch them. But when you bring him in to a social business with good friends, where everybody loves everybody, I have never known a person with more charm—and more entertaining than Evetts Haley.

JS:

This is what Dr. Connor just told me.

WH:

I don't—basically, I agree with Evetts, but I also realize you can't turn the clock back, and he's never realized that yet. I think he would be quite outdone with me if I ever just told him that frankly, "Evetts, yes, all of this is true, but you can't turn the clock back. We've got to live with these things. Of course we are becoming more and more of a socialistic state—we've got more people living on the same land; we have to go together to build the schools and build the roads, and we have to have a lot of these of things that you couldn't do back there in the frontier days, where every man could have his own road and his own fence and so on." I think he'd be very outdone with me if I would tell him that, so we just don't discuss these things—that is, I don't get into arguments with him.

JS:

That doesn't do any good, anyway.

WH:

Doesn't do any good, no. But I love ole Evetts.

JS:

Could you perhaps tell a little bit about what you know in regard to Evetts' job at the University of Texas, when he was collecting archival material? He probably collected more than any other man, with the exception of [Earl] Van Dale, didn't he?

WH:

Oh yes, and Van Dale sold—they sold his collection *en masse*. Van Dale collected his—

JS:

—privately—

WH:

—very private collection. I believe he still had it—I believe his estate sold it, but I believe it was his wish that it should be sold. It should go on in total. They paid a good big price for it—though not near as much as it would have cost them if they had went out and collected it themselves, I'm sure. Well, to get back to Evetts' collecting days—Evetts, you know, somehow came under the influence of Colonel [Charles] Goodnight when Evetts was a student and the Colonel was still strong and going good and living down at Claude [Goodnight]. Evetts sort of became the colonel's adopted boy, you might say—the Colonel liked him. One thing for sure, I think he [Haley] got a lot of his [Goodnight] philosophy—

JS:

—from the Colonel?

WH:

—from the colonel. The colonel belonged back to the old freewheeling days.

JS:

Oh, he was certainly a freewheeler.

WH:

Evetts got a lot of his philosophy there, and then he got a lot of his theoretical philosophy from Dr. [E.C.] Barker. Evetts is both out at the soil, and also, he has an academic side to him—so those two men, I'm sure, helped fashion him more than everybody else put together. The colonel had—he had been sort of a collector of historical objects, and I think, perhaps, Evetts had something to do with interesting the colonel to put his stuff at Canyon [**in the Panhandle-Plains Museum**]—to let them have it. It may be an error, but I'm of the opinion—I have the impression—that Evetts hauled that stuff up to Canyon in an old Model T Ford, and that was the beginning of that museum collection—and they had nowhere to put it, so they stacked it up in the corner and on shelves right in the room where they taught history. Then that kind of got Evetts on the collecting spree, and then they organized the Panhandle Plains Historical Society, and Evetts was in on the—he was one of the prime movers on that, and as a result, they elected him the secretary of it. Then, Evetts promoted the idea that they needed a field man to get out and begin to gather up historical material, objects, and documents and things, so they finally elected him—paid him seventy-five dollars a month—and I don't know whether he furnished his car and gas, or whether they paid for his gas, but anyway, he became their field man, and he went out and just literally began to haul stuff in—pile it everywhere. Then he got such a big pile that they got a lot of those old ranching cokleburrs up there in and said "Look here, we've just got to build a building to put this in," and they got enough interest to get enough money—they got fifty thousand dollars together—and built that first building. And then Evetts continued on as their secretary, and bringing in the stuff, and incidentally, he latched on to the XIT records, which is the basis of their archival business up there—the big end of it. Then Evetts got married—

JS:

Did he get those through Hamlin, you think?

WH:

Yes, Judge Hamlin—Evetts, he had a genius for ferreting out the influential people and cultivating them and bringing them under his spell—and so he brought Judge Hamlin into this deal—the judge was one of the charter members of it. So Evetts continued there, and he was still in that capacity when I went by to see him, when he gave me the book.⁶ That was 1929. Then, when they got the thing built and fairly well stocked in cases and things fairly well displayed, he'd done such a good job there that—I believe Dean [H.Y.] Benedict had become president—

⁶ *The XIT Ranch*

Dean Benedict was my old dean of arts and sciences when I was a student—and he became president. He was a character—a great humorist, a wonderful wit, everything—he was really a character. He knew Evetts, and he—I think it was Benedict—and Barker who thought that the University of Texas needed a man, so they finagled around and brought him down there on a four thousand dollar salary—quite a jump up from nine hundred a year.⁷ They'd raised a little up here. So he gave up the Canyon thing and went down there on that job. Then Benedict, I guess was succeeded by [Homer] Rainey—or was it the other way around?

JS:

No, Rainey was last.

WH:

Well, Rainey.

JS:

Because he became embroiled in controversy and—

WH:

Yes, and Evetts was one of the big factors—

JS:

—in the controversy?

WH:

—embroiling him. Evetts was really in there slugging, and—now, I can't think, though, just why the board—the board of regents, though—some twist came in the board of regents, and the board of regents fired Evetts.

JS:

I don't know that story.

WH:

Well I have forgotten it—I used to know it, but I'm a little mixed up.

JS:

I know that Rainey was fighting the board and state politics, and he was crosswise with—

⁷ Corrects to \$1000 a year.

WH:

Ferguson—and [Miriam A.] “Ma” Ferguson, and incidentally, the Haleys, who are very close to the Fergusons.⁸

JS:

John Lee Smith was involved.

WH:

Incidentally, I went to school with John Lee Smith.

JS:

Is that right?

WH:

Yeah, at Stamford [Texas] one summer. We had some switches back and forth—you know, Jim Ferguson was from—

JS:

—Belton—

WH:

—Belton, and the Haleys came from down there—and the Fergusons and the Haleys were very good friends. Then Jim was impeached, and then, let's see—by the way, Jim carried on a war, when he was governor, with the University of Texas, and he vetoed the appropriations—that's the reason they impeached him. When he vetoed the—he took issue with the legislature and vetoed the university appropriation, I believe in total. So the legislature came together and impeached him on some drummed up things—or maybe they weren't drummed up—ole Jim, I think, was guilty of a lot of things, but he was also a very smart politician, and on the whole, a pretty good governor. I think they finally got something on him—mishandling highway funds or something—and impeached him on misconduct in office. Somewhere in here Evetts got caught in the crossfire, and when—maybe it was the Rainey regents that fired Evetts—but anyway, it went like this—Evetts was against Rainey, I know that, because he thought Rainey was a Communist. Rainey was a liberal, but Evetts, in his ardor, would say, “A liberal is a Communist, no difference.”

JS:

Anyone to the left of Evetts is a Communist, just about.

⁸ Holden adds “They had been neighbors in Bell County.

WH:

Yes. As I often say about Evetts, Evetts is so far over to the right, that he—I never did ask him—but I think he thought that Goldwater was pink. But then Jim got his wife elected governor—and Jim was really the governor, and Ma was the—stayed in her office—and Ma appointed Evetts' mother, Mrs. [John A.] Haley, to the board here. And incidentally, Clifford Jones, who was chairman of the board in all that time, told me that she turned out to be one of the best directors Tech ever had—that she was a woman of—she was a rather large woman in a way—a well-proportioned woman, but taller than Evetts—and a good-looking woman. But Clifford Jones and Tom Gaston, both, have told me more than once that Mrs. Haley was one of the—had the levelist head, and if they were going to rate the great directors—they'd pick out three of the greatest Tech ever had, they'd put her among it. It's a pity that there hasn't been a dormitory or something named for her on this campus because she made a great contribution to it. Well anyway, Evetts—they [**the university**] fired him, and Evetts then got this job with Jim West, managing his ranches. He was exceedingly wealthy oil man—had about three or four ranches—and Evetts, for three or four years, became his manager. In the meanwhile, Evetts had wrestled around some way and gotten three ranches of his own. I don't know what happened with his relationship with West—they sure [**were**]—just like that (**fingers together**) politically—but anyway, Evetts divested himself of that job and began to devote all of his time to his own ranches—and still trying to save the country.

JS:

And his political bent came as early as his association with Charles Goodnight.

WH:

Yes. I'm pretty sure that's when his political outlook was fashioned—was by Charles Goodnight. Evetts, I think, is one of the greatest writers that Texas has ever had. I think he's a great stylist. I heard Dr. Barker say one time that *The XIT Ranch* would live as literature as well as history. He thought it was one of the most beautifully written books that ever had come out of Texas.

JS:

It's certainly one of the most enduring.

WH:

And I quite agree. I've often said that Evetts has really gotten nowhere, hardly, with his political campaigns unless it's inner satisfaction. He's always been on the losing end of the thing, and I'm not so sure but what—probably, he has defeated his own ends more than he has gained them. I'm inclined to think his book about Lyndon—

JS:

*A Texan Looks at Lyndon.*⁹

WH:

—backfired on him [**Haley**]. It may have made a few votes against Lyndon in Texas, but over the nation, I've gotten many reports that it was overdone. If he had been more restrained and told the same story, he'd have been far more effective, but he was just—you know—and they're wanting to nail him to the cross. If Everts had restrained himself on all of these political crusades he's made, and would have devoted himself to history, he would have had an output that would—probably would not have been equaled within the century. He's just a genius when it comes to ferreting out—collecting material—associating it—

JS:

—assembling it—

WH:

—assembling it, putting it into its categories, and assimilating it and writing it. He could have had a ship as long as that. What writing he has done he's done under great stress and strain. When he's got a lot of—all kind of things to intervene and to interfere with his thought habits and his—writing is a thing you kind of have to—you can't be doing—[can't] have a lot of divided interest if you expect to do a good job of writing. He's done remarkably well with all of these things to interfere, but I think how much better he might have done, had he devoted himself to it—and that's his forte. That's what he's really good at, and that's what he's going to—that's what's going to live. That's what he's going to be known for a hundred years from now.

JS:

Well, he still has a pretty impressive bibliography.

WH:

It's unusual for a man who's done all that he has, and yet—

JS:

Especially not to be a pure academician.

WH:

There's hardly a time when you can find him absolute working on a piece of writing. Right this minute, I'll bet you he's off trying to organize Texas for [**Ronald**] Reagan—something like that—and at his own expense, going here and going yonder, and going—and so on.

⁹ *A Texas Looks at Lyndon: A Study in Illegitimate Power*

JS:

What about his years here at Tech?

WH:

Well, the thing here—he was really brought here by Clifford Jones. Clifford became quite friendly with Mr. [C. E.] Maedgen of the Lubbock National Bank, and Mr. Maedgen had prospered very well, and Clifford found out that he was interested in doing things educational with some of his money—and [he wished to] do two things—one, he wanted to be remembered, I think, as a philanthropist, and secondly, he was a man that spent a lot of time studying how to beat the tax situation and let the government help pay for some of these things that he would like to see done. I think he was kind of floundering around, looking for something. I think he had in mind something more to help with church school. I know later he took quite an interest in McMurry College and built a dormitory down there, and left quite a bit of property to them—even his home place here, on Broadway [Avenue]—and built a dormitory, which is the Maedgen dormitory down there. But anyway, he was talking to Clifford Jones, and Cliff at that time was greatly concerned about the trend of the times. Cliff, down under his hide, is right with Evetts in every way. I think he's a little more realistic than Evetts, who knows you can't turn the clock back, but he wants to do everything to keep from setting it up. Cliff wants to, at least try to hold the boat steady. Evetts would like, of course, to turn it back. In conferring with Ernest Maedgen, Cliff sold him on the idea of starting an institute, here, of Americanism—the idea being to have something connected with the college that would emphasize the old-fashioned favoritism, and get back to the old philosophies as far as you can, and all of that kind of thing. And Maedgen bought it—and [Judge] Hamlin bought it—and then he depended on Cliff to tell him how to do it. Cliff said, "I've got just the man for you," and so he brought Evetts in, and they employed Evetts to organize [in 1952] the Institute of Americanism. And so, Evetts was brought in at a pretty good salary—I think, at that time about eight thousand—he was getting more than pro professors got, I know, at the time. And the first thing that took place was a fight between Evetts and President E. N. Jones over the management of this institute. It was to be set up—at this time, now, Cliff was off the board—I mean off the board and out of the college as president emeritus, and he had no official connection with the college as far as the administration was concerned—and E. N. Jones was the president. And Evetts—E. N. Jones wanted—if it was going to be attached to the college, he wanted the thing to be set up and for the funds to flow through channels, and for this to be a department, and it would be treated as any other department. Well Evetts balked on that. He said he wasn't going to have—he wanted this thing to be direct, he was going to be the head of it, and he didn't want anybody to tell him what he's going to do or not do, and so they just went to the mat. I don't know, unfortunately or fortunately—anyway, I was president when this controversy started. It was out in the parking lot. Evetts and I were coming in or going out, and met Jones, who was going out to his car—and Jones, perfectly friendly, stopped and said, "Now, we want to see you and set this up," and so forth, and Evetts found out right away—he got the trend right quick that Jones wanted to have some control over what he

would do and what he say, and whom he'd bring to the campus and that kind of thing. So Evetts got pretty hot in the collar and told him off right there. Well that alienated Jones completely, and Jones just washed his hands of the whole thing. Well, Evetts, when he did that, almost isolated himself completely on the campus. They [**the college**] just furnished him an office and let him go—they didn't schedule him, there was no give and take, no cooperation.

JS:

No rapport whatsoever.

WH:

No rapport. And so Evetts decided that all of the faculty were a little pink, and so he would have nothing to do with them. And what he did was try to run this thing—strictly trying to get access to the students and bypass the administration and the faculty. So he set up a lecture thing [**series**]—it was Clifford Jones's thought that Evetts would come and teach—have regular classes, be scheduled, and there would be classes of Americanism. Well Evetts [**said**] that he didn't intend to do any teaching. Then, when he isolated himself from the administration—then about all he could do would be to set up some lectures, and so he got the most conservative type of lecturers, he'd get—oh, let me see if I can think of one or two he brought in—you know this fella that does "Life Line"¹⁰ on—

JS:

H. L. Hunt?

WH:

Well, Hunt pays for it, but the man the does the ballyhoo [**Melvin Munn**]—he didn't have him, but it was that type of thing that Evetts brought in.¹¹

JS:

Yeah, I know who you're talking about—

WH:

He would schedule these things, and we had the museum auditorium, and I put the auditorium at his disposal, and he'd bring one of these high-powered men in there, and there wouldn't be even fifty people there to listen to him—and they'd be people of the town—wasn't touching the college at all because Evetts had no contact with the students or the faculty—oh, maybe out of the faculty of, at that time, I don't know how many—maybe four hundred—there may have been three or four who had been very simpatico with him, but the most of them are suspicious of him.

¹⁰ Right-wing radio program.

¹¹ Melvin Munn was interviewed by the Southwest Collection (David Murrah and Richard Mason) on October 21 and November 19, 1981.

They thought he was sort of a fascist or a Nazi or something, and so he just became completely isolated. And he was partially to blame because he kind of built the web around himself. Evetts is a loner—he never works in a team very well, and I don't think he ever would very well. And so Mr. Maedgen, after one or two years of that, he came out here—did a lot of sampling around, and he decided that his money was not getting any results, and so he just withdrew the whole thing completely, and gave the foundation to McMurry College. He'd set this up, and he couldn't take it back.

End of Side A

JS:

Holden interview—reel eight, side two.¹² Dr. Holden, I believe you just got through saying that—

Break in recording

JS:

[Maedgen became dissatisfied with the foundation and]—took the funds away—would you care to go back over that?

WH:

Yes, yes. Mr. Maedgen watched this thing—he was a very shrewd, prudent man—and although he agreed with the overall philosophy, he saw it wasn't getting anywhere; it wasn't reaching anybody. And so he made a number of trips out here and interviewed a lot of people—I know he talked to me about it—and he decided that no results were coming from this, and so he withdrew it from the college—he obviously had had that contingency in his contract with the college—and gave the endowment—turned it over to McMurry College, and they still have it.

JS:

And let's see, that would have been about when, 1954, '55?

WH:

Yes, it was in the early fifties.¹³

JS:

And then, let's see, following that, wasn't Evetts made a member of the board?

¹² This is the second half of Reel Seven.

¹³ Holden corrects early to middle.

WH:

Yes, uh—

JS:

Would you care to go into that a little bit, how that came about?

WH:

Well, it was the biggest surprise that I knew nothing about it. Evetts was sort of—he became sort of soured on Tech as a result of Maedgen withdrawing this thing, and he associated the whole atmosphere at Tech with a sort of failure, I suppose, and so he just stopped coming around Lubbock very much. And then, I was never more surprised, one afternoon I picked up the paper and saw that Evetts Haley and Tom Linebery and some other man from Sweetwater or somewhere had been appointed to the board to replace three men going off. I never did find out just how that came about—I never did think to ask Evetts; he would have told me, I'm sure.

JS:

Well, see, Allan Shivers was governor at the time, wasn't he?

WH:

Yes, I believe—that was it, Shivers was—

JS:

Wasn't Allan Shivers a good friend of Evetts Haley?

WH:

Yes, he was. That's it. Shivers did make the appointment, and Shivers was an arch-conservative and thought well of Haley's philosophy in general—probably was much more realistic about it than Evetts was. So Evetts—I think he wanted it—I'm sure he promoted it—and I have an idea that he—

JS:

—intended to get rid of some of the pink?

WH:

Yes, he did get rid of a lot of pink on the campus, and also, it was brought about through Allan Shivers and Dorsey Hardeman—

JS:

Uh-huh, down at Angelo.

WH:

He was a great friend of Dorsey—and Dorsey's always been pretty powerful in the senate. Incidentally, if I may put in a little quick parenthesis, have I ever told you how we got American History as a required course in all state colleges?

JS:

Yes, and you restricted that bit of information.

WH:

Well, it was Evetts and myself and Dorsey who got that fixed up.

JS:

Well you said there was someone else, if I recall correctly, and you couldn't recall who it was.

WH:

Well, there was Dorsey—

JS:

Well, we now know who it was.

WH:

I was trying to think of his name. It was Dorsey Hardeman who introduced the bill and got it through the senate and helped Evetts to finagle it around with the house, and they got it through, and they kind of slipped it through when there was nobody looking—there was no opposition to it, much. The big opposition came later when we heard the squawks on the campus, here. They're still squawking.

JS:

Yes, the students do, particularly.

WH:

Well, Evetts—and Tom Linebery is a person from down at Midland that Evetts had known—grown up with him—and who had married one of the Scarborough girls—old George Scarborough—S-c-a-r-b-r-o-u-g-h [Scarborough]—

JS:

Yes, the ranching family.

WH:

Yes, there're two Scarburgoughs down there, one is spelled with a German spelling and the other

one is an English spelling—well this is the English Spelling. So they [Haley and Linebery] were very much alike in their political beliefs—well, they came onto the board, and it wasn't very long until every board meeting was a battleground. Evetts—they didn't see eye-to-eye with the other board members about most of the things that came along—and Evetts was always very pronounced and emphatic—and emphasized his points with a great deal of profanity, at which he was a master. He didn't pull any punches in the board meetings—I've been in a few board meetings when he was in operation, and—

JS:

He said what he thought.

WH:

He said what he thought, and nobody dared to object. I remember E. N. Jones used to sit there—he was a goody-goody, and kind of a mama's boy, and he'd just sit there and just didn't know what to do—Evetts had him intimidated.

JS:

Wasn't it kind of ironic that E. N. Jones would have been alienated from the Americanism project and then turned right around to find Evetts Haley [as] one of his bosses?

WH:

I don't know but that's one of the reasons Evetts wanted to get on the board. I think it had something to do with it. Well, anyway, Evetts fought his battles, and I know one day they'd had a board meeting, and I hadn't paid attention to it—about five o'clock the phone rang, and it was Evetts. He says "What are you doing?" and I says "Well, I'm"—I don't know what I was doing—but anyway, he says "Come on down here; we're at the Hilton. It's Tom Linebery and I down here in room so-and-so. Come on down, I want to see you." So I went on down there and went up to this room, and there they were—they had a bottle of bourbon between them and they each had a glass—and they were on the bed, propped up against the headboard. Evetts said "Well, we want you to just look at us. You're looking at two of the most beat-up, beat-down bastards you ever saw in your life." And then he began to tell me what they'd done that day, and said, "We just wanted you to come down here and have a drink with us because we want somebody that we can talk to." And so we sat around and they blew off their steam for about an hour or two and we went out and had some steaks. Well, that was a typical day at a board meeting, I would say. Evetts did something, though, to his everlasting credit. At one of the more mellow board meetings, before they started throwing pitchforks at each other, he took up the cudgels and got the Southwest Collection really on the budget and got it set up as a separate department, apart from the library. Now, I believe we're going to have a session on the Southwest Collection later; I won't get into this very much here—

JS:

You've talked about it some already.

WH:

But Evetts got it set up as a separate department—a byline with a separate appropriation, with a separate director, and with a substantial budget—and that alone, I think, will go down to his immortality, as far as his contributions to Texas Tech **[are concerned]**.

JS:

Was Evetts Haley in any way responsible for the fact that Ike Connor was hired as the director?

WH:

Yes, he was. Ike, you know, spent a year up at Canyon, and that's where he came to know Evetts—I don't know whether he'd known him before then or not. But anyway, they had a very close association, and I imagine that Evetts helped to fashion Ike's political-economic outlook on life quite a bit during those years—and Evetts had occasion to realize the brilliant mind that Ike has. He does have one of the most penetrating, brilliant minds of any person I've ever known.

JS:

Yes he does.

WH:

And Evetts realized that. I was sort of the local—I suppose patron of the thing—and when the time came to find a director, Evetts looked to me—and they sort of let Evetts—the board, I mean, sort of assumed from the beginning that this was Evetts' baby. So Evetts showed up here one day with Ike, and brought him to me because he wanted my blessing. And we left Ike up on the sun porch, and Evetts and I came down here and Evetts told me about him, and Evetts wanted me to recommend him—his appointment—to, I guess, Jones—E. N. Jones, which I did, and there was no objection, it went right through. And then there was nowhere to put it except the old library, and that's what we were trying to do to get it away from over there, because they just locked it up and boxed up the door—what we collected—and we wanted to get it away from them.

JS:

Get it used.

WH:

And so I said, "Well, we'll clean out a room in the museum and start it there," and so we moved him in that room there, just off the rotunda, and built some shelves in there and started it.

JS:

Anything else on Evetts' board career that—

WH:

No, towards the end of his term, Evetts got to where he had been beat down so many times—and let me say that in the most of these battles, Evetts, according to my thinking, was on the right side. I think he was more fundamental—more basically fundamental—in where the emphasis should be put than the board has ever been—administration, either. For instance, he wanted to spend money—he wanted to build a library, but he didn't want to spend all the money to build it. He wanted to have a lot of cubic feet in there, but he wanted books to go in it. Evetts had no use for all the money being spent on athletics—many a battle took place over that. He wanted the money spent for outstanding professors. Basically, Evetts was very sound in his policies—the things that he fought for and lost—but I suppose you'd lose them in any segment of our society, the way it is today.

JS:

What was the relationship between Evetts and Carl Coke Rister? I know that Rister was on campus during the period that Haley had the Institute of Americanism—some of Rister's correspondence is with Evetts, over in the Administration Building.

WH:

Frankly, I can't remember.

JS:

Probably nothing of any major consequence.

WH:

I don't think anything of any importance. I think Evetts regarded Rister as a sound, middle-of-the-road, plugging historian. He liked Evetts' brilliance and verve—he was very placid—but I think that Evetts regarded him as a good, sound plodder—that's my recollection.

JS:

Let's see, about the time that Evetts was leaving the board, I believe the AAUP censure came along, didn't it? Right at the tail end of his term?

WH:

That I do not remember.

JS:

I can't remember precisely—

WH:

I think, perhaps, that took place a little later.

JS:

Did it?

WH:

Yes.¹⁴

JS:

He was on the board until about '60 or so.

WH:

I can't remember whether Evetts overlapped with Harold Hinn or not—and I know Harold Hinn was on the board when that took place. I think Harold Hinn helped to engineer that, to tell you the truth—which got him in touch with the association of trade—the union—and, incidentally, it had harmful repercussions because it interfered with recruiting [**faculty**] later. All of those things may be artificial, but they were things you had to deal with.

JS:

That's right.

WH:

I know that Harold Hinn always—Harold Hinn is—he's a dogged sort of a person, and he helped institute that [**censure**], and he said, "By blankety-blank, we will never repeal that as long as I'm on the board." But he finally—they had a lot of trouble ever bringing him around, but finally he swallowed it and said well, he would accept the apology that they had to make—you know the board had to make an apology or something—

JS:

—and offer the job—

WH:

—and offer to reinstate these men. There are two of those fellas that should have been fired for moral [**grounds**]—they were just no good. They were—wonder they weren't in jail, really—but Abernathy was simply a case of academic freedom with him—I didn't like Abernathy, personally, I had two or three run-ins with him on committee meetings—graduate—be having graduate—

¹⁴ The AAUP vote of censure happened on April 25, 1958 in response to the decisions made at a meeting that took place on July 13, 1957, when J. Evertts Haley was still a board member.

JS:

—exams—

WH:

Committee—yes—examinations, the oral examinations, and I had one bad run-in with him one time, and I didn't like him personally, but it was simply a matter of opinion—he had some grounds, I think. I think the board was a little hasty including him—they should have fired the other two. One was a practicing homo—I think practicing on some of the boys, or trying to, around on the campus. I've forgotten what the other one was.

JS:

It's a sad situation all the way around. Can you think of anything else on Evetts Haley that you would like to include? I know I've opened up the dike, so to speak.

WH:

The only thing that I can think of at the moment is I haven't seen him in about two or three years, and I'd sure like to see him.

JS:

Well, I'll tell you what, Ike and I were talking about going up to Canyon some time; I've wanted to meet him for a long time, and had some correspondence—maybe we can get you to go with us.

WH:

Well, if I ever had a chance, I would love to do so. Evetts, somehow, has taken a great dislike to Lubbock for some reason, and when he goes through here, he won't stop. He won't even buy any gasoline here; he always goes outside of town and buys it from this Shamrock Oil Company. He's one of their retainers, you know. Last time I heard from him, he called me. He was going through, and he'd stopped out at the edge of town to fill up, and I said, "Evetts, where are you?" and he said, "I'm out here on the edge of town." I said "Well, get yourself over here in a hurry, and I'll meet you at the front door with a copita," and he begged off. He said he was just under whip; he had to get somewhere before dark, and so forth. And that must have been two years ago—and I hadn't seen him for a year, then. I understand that—I tried to get up to meeting this last spring—

JS:

Panhandle Plains?

WH:

Yeah, it won't be long until they'll be having it again.

JS:

Uh-huh—in May, I think.

WH:

I guess it's—it's the second week in May—it'll be this weekend. No, next weekend—it'll be next weekend, but I have to be in Santa Fe. But if I went, it'd primarily to see Evetts. He always keeps open house to his friends. They have an afternoon session up there—I think the executive committee meets, or something—they get through about four o'clock and then they all repair over to Evetts' house, where he keeps—where he has a bar and good fellowship.

JS:

Convivial friends

WH:

And that is when the interesting things take place. And then about six thirty, they all tromp over to the cafeteria and have a served, and then they have their program—which apt as not is sort of boring.

JS:

That sounds pretty good, anyway.

WH:

Well, I guess, perhaps, that's about all we better do today.

JS:

All right, sir.

Break in recording

JS:

This is Skaggs, Holden interview—May 6, 1968.

Break in recording

WH:

In regard to Dr. Clifford B. Jones, he's a man of so many angles, and so many faces, and has worn so many hats, it's a little difficult to know just where to begin with him. I think one can say, though, that he's been identified with practically every movement—whether economic, or political, or social, or educational—that's been in West Texas, both regional and local, since my earliest recollections of knowing about him, which dates back to the twenties. He's a man of

unusual polish and dignity. He's very articulate. He writes a beautiful letter. His wordage in a letter is something that you will be most conscious of any time you read a letter from him about anything whatsoever—it may be about the most humdrum thing, but when you read his letter, well you will think you've just received a letter from—let us say some outstanding statesman or diplomat, or something like that. When I first knew him, he was the resident manager for the Swenson interest in the Spur Ranch and all of the Spur properties. That included the—at that time, the Spur Ranch was being colonized, or—he objects to that word, "colonized," by the way, although that's what it was. He likes to say "developed." He thinks of colonization of the great ranches—to him, colonization means that people that did like Soash did, [the ones] that ran great trains—excursions trains—from the east and had hundreds of prospectors and—forty or fifty—had old chain-drive Buicks, and took them helter-skelter around over the land, and put them up and fed them and dined them and sign them up and put them on the train and sent them away.

JS:

Same thing that happened over at Littlefield and some—

WH:

Yes, to him—somehow or other, that strikes a discord with him, because that wasn't the way they did it on the Spur Ranch. When they decided—when the Swensons and Associates—as they were called—incidentally, it was never a corporation at all; it was just a loose partnership of these men, headed by the Swensons—and by "the Swensons," we mean S. M. Swenson and his sons, Al and—oh, there were two of them and a daughter¹⁵—and they already had extensive ranching operations in Texas, and also, they had—one of the big banks in New York was one of their family banks—and New York was really their operating center. Among other things, the Swensons had owned the sulfur development at—down on the coast—where is that sulfur—Port Aransas?¹⁶

JS:

Yes, right in that area, I believe.

WH:

In that region, there—and I don't know just how they—the Swensons, after they bought—they bought out the English—Espuela Land and Cattle Company Limited of London—after they bought that, I'm not quite sure how the Swensons and their associates—this loose partnership—why they got Clifford Jones' father, Charles A. Jones, who had been with Armour and Company for a good long while. I suppose, probably, they knew him, maybe, through the cattle business. But anyway, they got him to come down from Kansas City and take over the development of the

¹⁵ [Sven Magnus Swenson had two sons and two daughters that survived infancy. They are Greta Swenson, Eric Pierson Swenson, Swen Albin Swenson, and Nora Swenson]

¹⁶ Freeport

property. They bought it with the idea of selling the land out and making a profit, and in order to sell the land out, well of course they first had to get a railroad up there—the nearest railroad at that time, in 1909, was Plainview to the west, and I suppose Quanah to the northeast and Colorado City to the south. And up to 1909, all of their commercial dealings—buying of supplies, banking, and everything—was at Colorado City. But they knew they would have to get transportation, and so the Swensons organized some kind of a local company, and they built the Stamford and Northwestern Railroad up from Stamford to Spur—and it took them about a year to get that done. And then Charles A. Jones was directed to locate a town somewhere near the middle of the ranch and the good farming country, and in the meanwhile, since 1907, Charles A. Jones had been living at the old Spur headquarters. But he got a buggy and a buggy team and drove all over the ranch looking for a good place—and he had the map of the ranch—and finally decided to locate it at the present site because it was right close to Duck Creek for one reason, where there was nearly always running water—and where they knew there was plenty of well water—and because there was a gravel hill close by, and he had the idea they'd need a lot of gravel to make concrete in the future. And so they located it at that place, and then they brought the railroad to that site—and then all they did, all the company did, was to build a little office about sixteen by sixteen feet with a little false front on it, and put on it "Spur Lands," and I don't know when the—Mr. C. A. Jones built a house over there—pretty soon, though, they built the Spur Inn, which was modeled on the old Stamford Inn—duplicate of the old Stamford Inn, which the Swensons had built down there, by the way. They just opened up an office and let it be known that the lands were for sale, and the first day they opened up they sold town lots—and I think they sold a lot a minute for two or three hours during the day—they dispatched them in a hurry—and then they began to sell the farmlands. The people just came there and went out and looked—looked at the map, saw what was available and all the business transacted in this little ole sixteen by sixteen office. So they didn't need all of this [promotion] business, and so I think Clifford Jones has always felt superior that they could do that and get everything accomplished, wherein these other people went to vast expense and trouble—like motive for the XIT and other ranches.

JS:

Yes—bringing in prospectors and all this—

WH:

—bring in prospectors and all of that. And so Clifford has always had disdain at that kind of thing—well, C. A. Jones remained there until 1913—from 1907 to 1913, six years, I guess, maybe seven—and then the Swenson interest sent him to Gulfport¹⁷—

JS:

He took over—yeah, I started to say, he took over the sulfur interest.

¹⁷ Corrects Gulfport to Freeport.

WH:

Yes, he went to take over the sulfur interest, and Clifford—who had come down, by the way, early in the game as the assistant manager. He'd been there at least six years as assistant manager and knew everything that had happened—he got to Spur when the—I suppose when they just had a few shacks up there, early in the game.

JS:

Uh-huh, first development.

WH:

Yes. Well, then he became the manager. Now, they kept part of the ranch lands—they continued to operate, I suppose, during this period—the early period, when he was there, they probably—Swenson and Associates probably still had seventy-five percent of the almost half million acres on hand. But they leased out great slugs of it to cattle people, and they did retain the headquarters over there. I know that Clifford built a bungalow over there—kind of—and furnished it, and he'd stay over there part time and at the Spur Inn part of the time. And all of that was still intact the first time that I came into the picture—he was still living at the Spur Inn, the old headquarters was still intact, and they still had their—the family bungalow over there at the headquarters. So he was the last, you might say, of the managers. He stayed on with the company until practically all the lands that they intended to—well, they sold them all out and finally ended up—the rest of it was divided up agreeably among the associates. Some of them took lands over there and so on. One of the Swenson sons, Al, took part of the residue—and meanwhile, S. M. had died, and I believe the older brother—his [Al's] older brother, who was really the ringleader of the second generation—I believe he had died, too.¹⁸ And Al took about sixteen, maybe twenty sections and the old headquarters—he got it, personally, in some way. Al is still living, and he has given that land to his only daughter, Nora who married an old Tech boy, and they're living over there and raising a family. They still have the old headquarters, and what is his name? Jim [O. J. Barron]—it doesn't come at the moment—but they're still running this little remnant, you might say, that was retained. [The Tongue River Ranch].

JS:

By the way, do you know a fellow by the name of [J. Fike] Godfrey over there?

WH:

Yes, he's—has a Ford agency, I think.

JS:

Yes—or, did—I think he's closed it out, now.

¹⁸ [The older brother, E.P. outlived the younger brother, Al, by eighteen years. Al had a son named Albin, however]

WH:

Yes, I believe so. Yes, he's trying to give us one of the houses for this ranch complex. It's a good house and everything, but it really has no history and no tradition. It was built by one of the four section men who came in on the strip over there and homesteaded.

JS:

Yeah, if you recall, I went over there to pick up some material from him and came back and told you—

WH:

Yeah, you were the one that told us. Well, we later formed contact, and the committee went down and met him, and we all went down to this house. It's a dandy if it just had a tradition behind it. But we're very interested, you know, in everything we get, having a real ranch tradition because that's what makes it worthwhile. But it's a good ole house—did you ever go to it?

JS:

Yes, sir. I went and I even went up in the attic to see if any papers were up there.

WH:

Yes, we climbed up there. It's a good fireplace there; we all had—we decided we'd latch onto that fireplace if—

JS:

If nothing else.

WH:

If nothing else, yes. And there's a possibility we might latch onto it yet, but that was our objection to it. It's better than some of the houses that we may bring in, but you take the west camp of the old CC Slaughter thing—this is a far better house than that, but that west camp was an operating point for a half million acres of land.

JS:

That's right, and the name CC Slaughter means something.

WH:

Yes, and it goes back. It's the only thing that goes—that we can latch onto that goes back to CC Slaughter except a two-story dugout over here on the Silver Lake Ranch.

JS:

Oh, is that right?

WH:

Yeah, and we're going to latch onto that, we think.

JS:

Godfrey also showed me a couple, three dugouts—an old buffalo hunter campsite down there—we were riding along the road—

WH:

Are these just kind of sinks in the ground, though?

JS:

Yes sir.

WH:

Yes, we know where a number of those—

JS:

Just as we crossed Dove Creek, I think it was—or just the other side, rather.

WH:

Now Clifford stayed on with the Spurs—they started the bank—the company did, and he was president of the bank. Clifford stayed on with them until—as manager—until he was selected president of Texas Tech. By that time, the whole thing was so closed out that the Swenson interest decided there was no need of having a manager there anymore, so they closed the office and took the records to Stamford. It's always been a sore spot with Clifford—you see, he saw to it that we got the old—

JS:

—Spur Ranch records—

WH:

The old London records—that is, the Espuela records. He just—he didn't ask nobody; he just brought them over here—and they were here when I came here in 1929. He'd just brought them over here and turned them over to Ms. West, the librarian. But these other records were live records, and there were oh, a tremendous room, twice as big as this, filled with filing drawers, and the—ole Andrew Swenson, who was a cousin of S. M., and always sort of a hired hand for S. M.—was in charge of the Stamford office, where all the other Swenson Ranch is headed up.

And it's always been, I think, a sore spot with Clifford because those records recorded all—and that when they got down there—the Swenson boys all went to the University of Texas, and they all majored in history—ole Andrew's boys. Incidentally, I went to school with two of them—in some classes with them—Big Swede, who was the captain of the football team and All-Southwestern—and his younger brother Rudolph, who later became manager of the Pitchfork Ranch and was killed in a collision of his car with a train at Benjamin. Well, ole Swede, of course, was in the office—he was assistant manager of the Swenson ranches—and his older brother, Bill, was the manager, and only a short time ago, Bill retired, and Swede is now the manager of the whole thing. But Swede, in a patriotic tantrum one day, promised all of that stuff to the University of Texas.

JS:

Oh, my goodness.

WH:

And that's a sore spot with Clifford, that that did not come here.

JS:

I bet it is.

WH:

Now, as to how ole Clifford became president of Texas Tech—and again, this is restricted—

JS:

Yes sir. All of these are.

WH:

Sore spots about this, too.

JS:

Whoops, go ahead, I'm just counting these tapes.

WH:

Clifford was appointed by the governor—I've forgotten which governor it was [**Pat Neff**]—on the first board of directors of the college when it was organized in 1923. He has a picture, by the way, of the governor and all of this first board. I remember Amon Carter, I believe, was the chairman of that first board, and he [**Clifford**] was a continuous member of the board of directors on down until the day he resigned to become president.

JS:

Yes, I knew that.

WH:

And then he was president for—I believe it was six years—and then he's been president emeritus ever since, so you can see he has—

JS:

He's never been disassociated—

WH:

He never has been disassociated with it—from the beginning to the end.

JS:

You were going to say something about the way he became president.

WH:

Yes, I'm trying to get my chronology right. Is that about ready to change?

JS:

I think so. Do you want me to go ahead and change it?

WH:

The—oops—well, I can get another lick or two in, I guess.

JS:

Go ahead.

WH:

It was when Dr. [Bardford] Knapp died that—the board of directors, at that time, had become kind of fragmented, or divided in opinion.

End of recording