

**Oral History Interview of
Duane Hale**

**Interviewed by: Elissa Stroman
June 26, 2017
Cisco, Texas**

**Part of the:
*General Southwest Collection Interviews***

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

**Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library**

15th and Detroit | 806.742.3749 | <http://swco.ttu.edu>

Copyright and Usage Information:

An oral history release form was signed by Duane Hale on June 26, 2017. This transfers all rights of this interview to the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University.

This oral history transcript is protected by U.S. copyright law. By viewing this document, the researcher agrees to abide by the fair use standards of U.S. Copyright Law (1976) and its amendments. This interview may be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes only. Any reproduction or transmission of this protected item beyond fair use requires the written and explicit permission of the Southwest Collection. Please contact Southwest Collection Reference staff for further information.

Preferred Citation for this Document:

Hale, Duane Oral History Interview, June 26, 2017. Interview by Elissa Stroman, Online Transcription, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library. URL of PDF, date accessed.

The Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library houses almost 6000 oral history interviews dating back to the late 1940s. The historians who conduct these interviews seek to uncover the personal narratives of individuals living on the South Plains and beyond. These interviews should be considered a primary source document that does not implicate the final verified narrative of any event. These are recollections dependent upon an individual's memory and experiences. The views expressed in these interviews are those only of the people speaking and do not reflect the views of the Southwest Collection or Texas Tech University.

Technical Processing Information:

The Audio/Visual Department of the Southwest Collection is the curator of this ever-growing oral history collection and is in the process of digitizing all interviews. While all of our interviews will have an abbreviated abstract available online, we are continually transcribing and adding information for each interview. Audio recordings of these interviews can be listened to in the Reading Room of the Southwest Collection. Please contact our Reference Staff for policies and procedures. Family members may request digitized copies directly from Reference Staff.

Consult the Southwest Collection website for more information.

<http://swco.ttu.edu/Reference/policies.php>

Recording Notes:

Original Format: Born Digital Audio

Digitization Details: N/A

Audio Metadata: 96kHz/ 24bit WAV file

Further Access Restrictions: N/A

Related Interviews:

Transcription Notes:

Interviewer: Elissa Stroman

Audio Editor: N/A

Transcription: Elissa Stroman

Editor(s): Katelin Dixon

Transcript Overview:

This oral history interview features Dr. Duane Hale. Hale discusses his Big Country Oral History Archive, a student project that began in 1995 and continues into 2017. Hale explains his pedagogical approach to the project and the project's historical impetus. Hale also gives background on his Cisco Junior College history classes. Hale further discusses his interest in researching Spanish mines in Texas and local history of the Cisco area.

Length of Interview: 02:06:03

Subject	Transcript Page	Time Stamp
How oral history project came to be	4	00:00:00
Changes to interviews, grading, and structure	6	00:06:33
Notable interviews	8	00:09:51
Dr. Hale's background	12	00:25:15
Prepping students for interviews	16	00:34:27
Starting the project, format changes, release forms	18	00:40:17
Hale's research background, OU research grant	22	00:47:29
Interview questions, evolution of the project, inspiration	26	00:55:38
The American dream narrative	29	01:05:43
General student body make up	32	01:13:48
Pedagogical changes, technology	33	01:18:45
The field of oral history, Hale's personal research	35	01:24:00
Discussion of his oral history tapes, family	40	01:40:15
Cisco football and Cisco historians generally	43	01:46:45
Return to oral history project themes	48	02:00:32

Keywords

Oral history, Big Country, West Texas, Cisco Texas, memory

Elissa Stroman (ES):

I'll start recording, and I'll preface this recording saying that it's June 26, 2017, and I am in the home of Dr. Duane Hale in Cisco, Texas, and we're going to talk about your interviews that we now have in the archive, talk about how they got here and everything.

Duane Hale (DH):

Well, let me tell you a little bit about the oral history. I spent a year, and I covered twenty-three counties of the Big Country when I did my master's thesis. I took a year off, and I interviewed hundreds of people. And the topic was evidence of Spanish mining in the Big Country of West Texas. Well, I have about a hundred of those cassette interviews, I've had some of them transferred to CDs, but all those people are dead now, and I still have those. But that started this because I realized there's a lot of history out there that's not in the books. And what I did—I would go to somebody that lived on a place for fifty years, and "Tell me what you've seen out there," instead of going to a professor or a librarian or something. And then when I was in Oklahoma—I lived in Oklahoma fourteen years. I worked with twelve different Indian tribes, and I contracted with tribes to write their histories. And I'd go through the oral history. The Chickasaws provided a three-quarter inch video camera person; she was a weight lifter, an Indian weightlifter. And we went all over southeast Oklahoma, interviewing people. And then we wrote two grants to the National Endowment for the Humanities, and they were both funded for Indian tribes. I worked with those. I worked with the Delaware, and I worked with the citizen band Potawatomi. And then I worked with the Chickasaws. I wrote three books on the Delaware, and I had the opportunity to interview the last four fluent speakers of the language twice a week for a year, and that all kind of mushroomed. And then I came down and I started in 1993 in the fall at Cisco Junior College. It's called Cisco College now, in Abilene, and I began to realize that these pioneers were dying, right before our eyes, you know. It was kind of like those Indian elders. See most of the people teaching Indian history, they really don't require Indian history in the public school in Oklahoma. They have Oklahoma history, but most of the professors that were involved in Indian history, they had to go out of state to get a job as a professor of Indian history somewhere. So I was there; I was working as a consultant, and I'm trying to grab what's left, and then I came down here, and I was facing the same thing. These pioneers were dying right before my eyes, and they remember the horse and buggy all the way to the space age. I said, Well we're a commuter campus, up at Abilene. They're coming from Knox City, they're coming from Brownwood, they're coming Sweetwater, Winters, all points in between—the Big Country. I have an automatic workforce. Why don't I get these students to do something important? Interview a senior citizen for an hour, somebody over sixty-five, video, audio, and transcribe it to written form. And I wanted this to be the Big Country Oral History Archive, and since it was generated in Abilene, I felt like it should be housed in a library in Abilene. So I made an arrangement with McMurry. They had these interviews for five years, and what they basically did, I had them in envelopes where the tape and transcription could stay together—they separated the tape from the—they had a whole big box of tapes all these things, and McWhiney

Foundation—McWhiney is a big benefactor of McMurry, and he finances their press and helped them buy Buffalo Gap Village. Well, he died. And they're going to house his collection at their little library. And they said basically that we don't have room for your collection anymore. And so it took two pickup loads to carry them down here to the Cisco campus. And so they had a couple of student assistants, and they worked on them for a couple of summers, and then lo and behold, I had them in a room, a separate storage room there, and the English department said, "We want to start a writing center, and we need you to get those interviews out of the library." And I had to move them myself, and I moved them over to the freight depot. I had them there a few months, and I was really worried about what's going to happen to these. And I know the Southwest Collection is really a reliable collection and is a pretty big collection, and it's interested in West Texas. And so I thought, Well, you know, McMurry doesn't want them. Cisco College doesn't want them. I don't have the ability to house them even though I have a museum. And these become more and more valuable because a year or two or maybe three after somebody's interviewed their grandparents, they'll get back in touch with me and say, "Can we have a copy of that tape? They just died." So I tell them upfront, keep a copy for yourself, and it might be wise to give a copy to the person that you interview. It would be courteous. But these things, they become more valuable as they go along. But unfortunately, some of these people don't format them very well, and they misspell word after word after word, especially if it's kind of a local town or something like that, and you have to really read carefully to figure out what they're talking about. So I don't know—that's kind of the basic situation.

ES:

Yeah, that actually—that kind of dovetails into—well a lot of questions. But we're noticing, one of the things I wanted to talk to you about was kind of your mindset when you first started this project, which you've already said, you've got these boots on the ground people to interview, but then how your perception of the project's changed, now that we're twenty plus years into it. For instance, I noticed that when you first started these interviews, the very earliest—like the first two semesters, you were actually going in and correcting grammar.

DH:

That's right.

ES:

(laughs) And at this point—and then we noticed the ones, like after a couple years—it was almost like I could hear your mindset, like no we're not going to be able to do this anymore.

DH:

Well, that's right.

ES:

Because there's just so many of them.

DH:

Well plus—you know to grade these is a little difficult because how can you say somebody's grandmother's story is more important than somebody else's grandmother, or your genealogy is more important than theirs.

ES:

So tell me about your grading.

DH:

So I began to grade them on length and format. You know, if they had the basic format, and since it was kind of on length—they started fudging. I said the margins have to be one inch, and you have to double space and you have to use number twelve font. And it'll be ten points off if you triple space or if you have more than one inch margins and all these kinds of things. Well, I even became more lenient on that after a while, but you know, I just didn't grade them as carefully. And then I also thought if somebody's going to scan these things into a format they correct it more easily on a computer. And plus with my markings on those pages will cause some problems.

ES:

Yeah, I hadn't thought of that part, about our scanning of it.

DH:

So I should—maybe I should tell you a little bit about what we're doing, that would also help. So essentially we're doing kind of a basic cursory data entry at this point in time. So we'll get an envelope, we're making a copy of the envelope, we're putting a little sticky note kind of on the grade because we want to redact that. But we're keeping the grade information—we're putting that in our database. So we'll have that, but it's not available to researchers for privacy concerns. So then we'll take everything out of the envelope and we input it into a database, so you know interviewee, interviewer, date, class name, semester, class time, all of that. We input that. The only thing we're not doing right now—we're not digitizing the audio and we're not scanning the transcript. I am skimming it, though. And I'm trying to derive just—

DH:

What the basic is?

ES:

The basic gist of it.

DH:

Subject? Yeah.

ES:

Yeah, and so, a lot of times, it's just—because you gave them kind of a set list of questions of just recall this for me. A lot of times it'll say just general recollections, but it's those interviews, and maybe you can talk to these a little bit more, there's a lot of interviews where they deep dive into something. And it seems like those are even greater of historical interest. They're like, We're going to talk just about World War II. Or we're going to talk just about my remembrances of this one town or this one ranch. Do you have some that you remember that you thought were really good?

DH:

Well see another thing, I had students coming in from these little towns, or they had grandparents living in these little towns like Hodges and Sylvester and Droopy Mound [?] [10:05] and so forth, and they're becoming ghost towns. And they had grandparents living there that could still remember the families and how they were interrelated and what the businesses were, so I was trying to capture the last of these little towns, too, through those people indirectly. And anyway, that's—you'll find out that a lot of these interviews are basically just genealogy—the family genealogy. But what I—what they didn't really get—some people haven't interviewed. I said it's like carrying on a good conversation, you know. And I said, it's not really proper to interrupt an elder when they're talking. And I said, some of these people won't follow a list of questions. Certain ethnic groups will not follow a list of questions like American Indians and some Mexican American groups—they think kind of in a circular fashion, and you think they're not answering the question, but they'll come around through the back door and answer it, but they end up telling you more information than you would have gotten—and another thing, they like to ask questions, yes and no. yes and no is all you get as an answer. You've got to have an open ended question. I said, If you want a follow up question when you're interviewing, please have a note and a pad—a pad and a pen where you can right down the follow up question, and when they take a breath, you can ask it later. And I said, it's probably proper to take a gift, it might just be a loaf of bread or a six pack of coke or something—to take a gift to these people. And don't expect somebody that's eighty years old or older, even though they're willing to give you the information, to be able to recall all this just instantaneously. I said, you're going to feel funny if you're sitting there staring at each other. They want to give you information, and you're asking, but they don't know what you want. So basically, those questions, I said, you can make up your own questions. And it's like your saying. Some people are sitting there, waiting for a victim, you know, on their porch. And they have a story they're going to tell in spite of hell and high water. And sometimes you'll get a lot more, like you say, from that kind of interview, than you would on these little questions you're asking.

ES:

Well and it seems like—well it's just—however much the student is engaged. Because you see some students that they just—they want to ask the tell me about this event in your life, tell me about this event. They don't elaborate on it, they don't move on. And those are the ones that, you know, are five pages and end pretty quickly. But yeah, there are some that do let them just talk and they get ten pages of just them telling about their childhood.

DH:

But you asked about some of the interviews—they interviewed Goldie Malone from Merkel. She was ninety-two; she was inducted into the Cowgirl Hall of Fame. They interviewed Guy Weeks in Abilene. He was inducted into the Cowboy Hall of Fame. They interviewed Bob Estes in Baird; he was in the Cowboy Hall of Fame, and he took cowboys and they did rodeos and things in Europe—travelled around Europe in the 1930s. And then of course, there was Bransford Eubank. Dr. Eubank was an ag professor, retired, at Howard Payne in Brownwood. And he went to China, and he taught them different things about agriculture. He was about ninety-eight or ninety-nine years old when they interviewed him. And I remember Elmo Rash—he was in the rest home at Aspermont—he was ninety-eight—and I was the one that interviewed him. He said, “You're going to have to talk a little louder because I can't hear.” And I said, “When did you lose your hearing?” He said, “When I was nineteen.” I said, “How did you lose it?” He said, “Shooting the anvil.” And I didn't know what he meant. You know, I thought he meant shooting it with a rifle, but the anvil, the blacksmith anvil has a hole in it, and they would pack it with gunpowder and set it off on the fourth of July. And I said, “Could you hear it very far?” and he said, “Yeah, for eight miles.” (Both laugh) He lost his hearing when he was nineteen.

ES:

Oh wow.

DH:

And then Mrs. Job. Sam Job, down at Baird, she was 109. And when—she had a roommate that was senile, that was a lot younger, and the roommate said, “Mrs. Job said when she was 106 she felt like she was 104.” In other words, she felt real young. But they kept interviewing—this lady was something else. See, I had a list to start with; I had a list of people to interview. And the next thing you know, after a few years, they'd either interviewed these people or they were dead. And I said, “Since I have a list, I don't want more than one person going to the same one. It might, you know, upset them.” And this—Ella Mae Davis—this old battle axe down at Menard. She had a museum in her home. And I went down there on spring break, and she said, “If you don't quit sending your students down here, I'm going to get mad. I don't let anybody interview me, even from Menard High School because they come in my museum and steal things.” And I had a little mini-cassette in my pocket, and I thought, I'll just show her I can get a tape on her. And I turned it on, and we walked down the hallway, and she said, “See that elk head? I shot that in Colorado

with a 30/30. I shot both ends of it off.” And I thought, Boy if this things squeaks or something, I’m dead on the spot. So I clicked it off. But she died at 104, about two years ago. But she was an interesting personality. And so they interviewed Bill Sublet [?], down at Ballinger, he was a Japanese prisoner of war in World War II. And actually, he lived out here west of Cisco where my uncles and aunts lived. My mother had four brothers in World War II at the same time, and her name was Dunaway. And the Sublet farm was right next, and they had a bunch of boys, and they were all in World War II. And so my uncle—he died two years ago out at Odessa, Harland Dunaway D-u-n-a-w-a-y. He said Bill Sublet won’t talk about being a prisoner of war. And guess what? Fifty years after the fact, he would talk about it. And my student went down and got a great interview from him down at Ballinger. And then they interviewed this guy over at Albany—that he graduated from Princeton in 1920, and he used to have his class reunions—he had an airport on his ranch. He’d fly them in from back east and everything. He was really an interesting personality. He was ninety-eight =. And I kept telling him, I said, “You know it’s not necessary—if there’s just two of you in the interview, bold face the question, regular face the answer. But if there’s more than one in the interview, I want you to put your name out there and a colon and their name. I want to know who’s talking.” So his nurse was involved. And he—anyway—he was Watt Matthews. W-a-t-t, Watt Matthews. He’s dead now, but talk about a historian. He had the old Comanche Indian reservation on his ranch, and he had—that they had in the 1850s, and he’d restored most of the buildings. And there’s a school house, a country school house, on his—he restored it. He restored several of the early ranch houses there, and it was like going through a state park. You drive through there, and he’d tell you what this was, and I’ve got a video of him telling of this—I don’t think he was telling it, somebody later was telling, and we went to those sites. But I went through there with him before then. But anyway, there’s a lot of interesting personalities, and it’s the largest Mexican American, or Hispanic collection of West Texas oral history because a lot of my students interviewed their grandparents, and I said, “If they don’t feel comfortable being interviewed in English, interview them in Spanish, but please in the transcription, translate it to English.” So there’s a lot of that. But see, I had students from the Air Force Base—Dyess Air Force Base, and I had students that had lived in a lot of different places. And some of them, and even in Texas, their parents weren’t living in the Big Country. They lived in Austin or Houston or somewhere like that. So there are a lot of interviews in towns from other places in Texas, there’s interviews from some people that came over here from foreign countries, and you know settled here, and then they’re interviewed by their grandson or granddaughter. And I had one girl this last semester from Connecticut, and she was Pequot Indian, and I’d been teaching in my class that we’d had the Pequot War in 1637, and the Mohicans and the Pilgrims killed 500 Pequots. Said there’s no more Pequots today. And this girl shows up just this spring and she’s part Pequot, and come to find out there are a few of them left. And they have a casino, naturally, out on their reservation in Connecticut. But anyway, go ahead and ask me a question.

ES:

Well, so you had this idea that—you had an initial list of names you said.

DH:

Yes I did.

ES:

So these were people you thought were of high importance but pretty soon, everybody had covered them. I noticed—another name you didn't mention was somebody I knew, who was Opal Hunt, down in Bradshaw.

DH:

Yeah, I know. I knew her too.

ES:

And she's an old family friend, and we would go to the Audra Mercantile occasionally. So I thought it was really great also, even though, you know, after a couple year it probably was getting annoying for these people, it was also kind of interesting to see how they answered questions differently for different students, and how their memory of things—just these slight changes over the years. But I was just wondering, what have you done in more recent years—you don't necessarily give out a list of names. Do you just—if someone's really desperate for somebody, you'll lead them on—

DH:

I'll find somebody.

ES:

Okay.

DH:

Like here in Cisco, this lady's a walking encyclopedia, and she looks like she's about sixty and she's about eighty-eight. And she did the genealogy of most people in the cemetery here.

ES:

Oh wow.

DH:

And her name is Emma Wallace—and I had this girl from Merkel, and I said, “What ethnic group do you identify with?” She's part Puerto Rican, part Spanish, part Indian, part this and that. She said, “I guess Hispanic.” But she was really interested in things. She was a member of

the meat judging team, and they were gone a lot. And I said, "What did you do in high school? Do you have any friends?" "Well I raised pigs, and I didn't have time to associate with people and all this." And I said, "How are you going to get a boyfriend?" "Well I'm going to Texas A&M when I finish here and get me a husband," she said. But anyway, I had her interview Emma Wallace, and that was a great interview. And so I knew a lot of older people here. I've been around Abilene quite a bit. I got them to interview most of the people there that were outstanding people, like Oliver Jackson. They had these world championship track teams there in the fifties and the sixties, and they set several world records, the college relay teams did. Oliver Jackson was the great track coach. Well guess what? I had his grandson in my class. And Oliver Jackson was in a rest home at that time, and they interviewed him.

ES:

Was this Abilene Christian or Hardin Simmons?

DH:

Abilene Christian. But yeah, I had interviews of—this professor at McMurry—he's an outstanding teacher or professor in Texas one year. They interviewed him, they interviewed the president of McMurry. They interviewed several people from Hardin Simmons, and this—Abilene High won state in 1923, they won it in '28, they won it in '31, and then they won it under Chuck Moesser about three times, they won it again here a few years ago, 2013 or '11, or 2009. But anyway, they interviewed—somebody interviewed that guy that made all-state on that 1923 football team. He was really old, and they interviewed him, and got some things from it. They interviewed several of these people that these ranches around. And then I tried to get them to get different vocations. They interviewed some spur makers, some saddle makers, some people like that, you know around, some oilfield workers, get a little bit of the history of the oil field in that area. But I probably kind of lost control of it a little bit the last couple of years because we're running out of people.

ES:

Well that's what I was going to ask you. Do you feel like you've finally, you know you started this saying this history of the big country really wasn't chronicled as much. Do you feel like it's finally getting covered a little better?

DH:

Well, just let me interject this. I try to stay away from this, I don't want people to know how crazy I am. I have a bachelor's in mathematics, and I taught math for about seven or eight years in public school. And I went out to Andrews, Texas, because I was twenty-two years old, and it was the highest paid school district in the state. And I was out there in the late sixties, and I came in—a friend of mine was teaching seventh grade Texas history, and on a ranch out here they'd found a big rock with eight mule shoes and a snake cut on a rock. And eventually it led to some

letters of the alphabet and I said, "I'm going back to college and change my major to history." It profoundly affected me. And I moved to Abilene and taught middle school math for three years and I went to summer school four summers, and I got my master's in history, and I couldn't get a job teaching history. So I went to San Angelo and taught ninth grade math for a year and then got married and we went to Oklahoma and both of us got our PhDs. But anyway, I came back here by accident, I went through a divorce, my mother was living here, got a job, and I was getting too old to keep changing jobs. So I just hung on. But I published in two different areas—Spanish colonial publications, mainly on Spanish mining. And I've published a lot on American Indians. That's all I did for fifteen years was work with Indians. But I came back here, I'm back in the Big Country where I did all that original research, and I kind of picked up my old research and started working on it again. And I thought, I'm going to squeeze the last ounce, there's not enough time, enough years left for me to go to all these little towns and get what's left out there. So I initially sent them out there to squeeze out the last evidence of these Spanish mining stories, in addition to getting the local history. So one guy went to Old Glory; I remember he was a big guy. He came back; he was from up there. He started shaking his head and said, "I can't find anybody that knows as much about that as you do." Of course I interviewed back in '70 and '71, all those guys. And in fact I went to Knox City Wednesday a week ago, and they said there's an old guy up there, he's about eighty-five, his cousin lives in De Leon, we all went together up there, and said, "He knows a lot about that mining up there." And I got up there, and "What was your dad's name?" Hey I interviewed his dad in 1971. I had a lot more—see he knew, but after forty-six years, he couldn't remember all the det[ails]—and I'd written it down in detail and typed out the interview. So that's the power of recording everything.

ES:

Right right. And so really, the area of research you're interested in, most of those people are gone now, you're thinking.

DH:

Oh yeah.

ES:

For sure?

DH:

And see, Worldwide Media came to my museum two years ago from London. And they wanted to interview three of us, and then they interviewed a guy in Oklahoma that had published a lot on this, and it's called the Spider Rock Treasure of West Texas, and so I have the artifacts in my museum that were found at Clyde in 1902, some copper plates and daggers, the letters they wrote back and forth in secret in 1905, and I have the epaulets, the silver cross, and the copper artifacts up at Aspermont. I have the actual rock that was found, the hieroglyphic rock at Rotan. But what

they want me to do is sign off on everything, publication rights. So they came all the way from London. I wouldn't even let them see those artifacts. That's pretty tacky, isn't it?

ES:

Well, we're having a lot of that in our archive, and a lot of archives are having that issue. They want—you know we're used to people wanting it for research. And we're used to people wanting it, maybe for publication in a book. But when you get a documentary crew that wants to do it for world-wide distribution, in perpetuity—

DH:

Yeah, and any form or fashion—

ES:

In any form or fashion, across all media. And you know, we're now going back to [Texas] Tech legal and saying, "We're getting a lot of this. We need to figure out how to deal with this." Because usually we could restrict it and say, "A little more limited." But—

DH:

Well then, they got in touch with me from Mysteries at the Museum, and they were supposed to come down on November 18, and they were going to look. Basically you have to have some amazing artifact that you build a story around, and they were going to look at that Rotan rock, hieroglyphic rock, and they were coming on Friday November 18, and I said, "If you don't get here before 4 o'clock, I'll be at a football game up at Wichita Falls." But Jerry Eckhart works at the museum, and he can tell you anything I can. And they said, "Oh there's a misunderstanding. We're bringing W. C. Jameson to tell the story. You and Jerry can critique it." And they're getting ready to leave from New York. I said, "Don't come. He can find his own rock. He can find his own museum. It's through, over and done with." And then they got in touch with me from Lionsgate in Hollywood. That was in January I guess. And they wanted to do a documentary where they filmed this, the digging—a search in action. Kind of like that Oak Island that they do, there's a program on television about it. And I said, "Well, you know, a lot of this was on private land, and these ranchers and farmers don't want people coming in and breaking their fences down and everything. And a lot of this is valuable archeological sites that we want to protect, we don't want it destroyed, it needs to be handled properly." Besides that, again, you'll have to sign off, you'll have all the publication rights. I said, "We're not interested." So I keep—you know—cutting my nose off to spite my face.

ES:

Right. Well they just want an interesting, enigmatic story that they haven't heard. They're just digging for something to put on TV.

DH:

Well at this late date in my life, you know, I don't need any publicity. I'm not looking for that. I've worked too hard on some of these sites to—I have page after page of notes. I have them by counties—where I've interviewed and typed them out, you know. All that's gone, just about. But some of these still have hieroglyphic rocks in situ, you know. They're still located there on a big ledge where you can't move it. So that's why I got into this to start with—I was going to change history. But you can't change anything that's been in print for fifty years, I've found out.

ES:

I find, though, with these interviews, and maybe I'm biased because I'm from this region. But I find that there's a lot of these narratives that are coming through reading, you know two thousand plus that I've read now, that aren't being told. And I'm really excited by the prospect of—maybe not one interview or this other interview. But putting—amassing them, you've got this kind of Big Country narrative that's so similar.

DH:

Yeah, I'm wanting that to be preserved.

ES:

And that is. And so I don't know if it's going to change history, but I think it really—

DH:

It might not change history, but it'll preserve history.

ES:

It preserves it, and it's an underrepresented voice. There's so many of these interviews that are people that were born in the twenties, in the thirties—they remember the very beginnings, middles—the Dust Bowl, they remember just the beginning of World War II. But they talk about they were poor farmers, and so they've got that whole entire—and I think what's interesting, and I wanted to ask you about this—in the classes, do you sit them down and say, “We're going to do an oral history interview” and kind of do a mock interview, because I noticed, the students—it's their first interview, so there's always a learning curve, but there's a bit of a—they start out with a lot of exposition. So you get a lot of interviews where it's seven pages of childhood, and like, oh yeah and then you got married and you had kids and we're done.

DH:

Yeah, that's it.

ES:

And so can you talk to me about coaching them, and what you do in class?

DH:

Well, I probably haven't coached them as much—I did it—you just made me think of this—this is what I tell them, you know. They come in there, and they say, “This history is boring, and I already know it. I had it in junior high. I had it in high school, and this is the third time I've had it. And besides that, where's my ethnic group in this book, or my community in this book, or my family in this book.” And I said, “Well, this is national history. The major players in the story of the United States, and most of us unfortunately—the great heroes are the ones that build the bridges, build the roads, and things like that, and most of us fit into that category. The backbone of this nation is a common worker. You know it's a melting pot and how could you discriminate against anybody when people come from all these different nations. But yeah, we're going to do something that's important. You're going to find how history is made, how history is recorded.” And that's basically the reasoning behind it. And yeah, we have gone through some of the mock things, but we haven't enough, I'm sure. And even for a while there, when my classes—you know, the semesters kind of vary a little bit. If I have an extra class or two, I have them for five points extra credit, to stand up and give an oral presentation of the interview, which is pretty important to share what was so exciting, what did you get out of this interview, and share it with the rest of the class. Now here's the thing that I've thought about doing here on out, I'm kind of leveling out—is for them to pair up and interview each other—to get their story on tape.

ES:

I think that would be interesting especially like a pre-interview to get them to understand kind of like the dynamic going back and forth. I love the idea of the oral presentation because I feel like a lot of them probably don't even take the time to summarize, “What did I just experience?” and so that helps a lot.

DH:

Well, part of that is my fault, I think, because I said I want a verbatim transcription, and they said, “What if they curse a lot? Do I put the curse words in there?” and I said, “You can do like Nixon and put ‘expletive deleted.’” Finally I got—our society is so open now, I said, “Well that's up to you.” And this one oriental guy interviewed me, one of the interviews, and he completely—I guess he thought I wouldn't read it, and he smeared—he put quotations in my mouth, using profanity that I didn't say, you know, it really bothered me.

ES:

I'm going to be interested also—I haven't run across any of yours yet, which is interesting, I've been in the H's for a while. But you know, H is a letter that there's a lot of names. A lot of people have the last name that starts with H, and so I think I've been working on H's for like three, four months now. But I find it interesting, I look at some of these transcripts, are they just making up these quotes at this point. But I only take about—maybe five to seven minutes for each interview that I'm going through and summarizing. And so I haven't been able to go back

and like listen to it and compare. And I know there are some that you actually wrote notes on like, “This is a great recording,” or “this sounds good,” and I’m curious to see the different levels of sound. But that also brings me to the—when you started this in ’95, did you tell them it had to be on cassette tape?

DH:

Yeah.

ES:

Because I noticed for a while, you were counting off for the mini-cassettes, but after—

DH:

Yeah, I know, exactly, because they don’t hold up as well and you don’t get as clear a sound, but what happened—technology passed us by during this thing, and so the—I’ve got some tapes that you can still play that are forty years old, but you can’t play them very many times—probably they need to be played once and put on a CD. But yeah, if they can put them on—but I said, “Do not use your cell phone to record this. And do not use one of the recorders that doesn’t have a tape.” And so I guess—you’re going to find—

ES:

I’m finding some of those, yes.

DH:

There are a lot of recorders in there.

ES:

Yeah, they just turned in the little voice recorder.

DH:

They just turned in the recorder. So there’s quite a few of those in there. But I tried to get them and I said, “You know they can—there’s a means where you can transfer it from that kind of recorder to a CD.” But a lot of them don’t know how to do that.

ES:

No, and I was noticing that, and I was wondering what you were doing today to combat that. Because some of the boxes from about two years ago, they started putting them on SD cards, or they put them on USB drives.

DH:

Yeah, yeah, right. They’re doing that more and more than anything else.

ES:

So I'm guessing then, you could provide them a sheet and say, "I want a minimum of this number of pages, I want it on this format." And you're still going to get—not matter what you say, they're going to turn in whatever format—

DH:

And also you notice that I hand out—and I say, put a release form in there, and some of them don't do that, which causes a problem. But most of those people are dead now, so I don't know.

ES:

I was wondering if you could talk a little bit more about the release, for a couple of reasons. One, I'm wondering if you noticed if when it went to McMurry, if they actually removed the release and put them completely separate.

DH:

Well that's possibly what happened, I don't know what.

ES:

Because I'm finding that only maybe 30 percent actually have releases.

DH:

Well, that's probably what happened, or they might have done it out here at this college when it came here. I didn't have any control over it.

ES:

I'm hoping that we're going to open up a box at some point and there just be a massive stack of releases. Because I know when you and I talked last year that you were saying the majority of them have releases but some don't.

DH:

Yeah, that's what I thought.

ES:

Well now I'm finding—

DH:

That it's just the opposite.

ES:

It's really the opposite except for the newest ones, and that's what made me also think, the newest ones hadn't been processed by anybody, and so—

DH:

Yeah, that could be true.

ES:

And so if you ever run across releases back at Cisco, or I'll let you know on that. But that's actually, the release—I love that you started with it. And it covers it all, and it's going to be great for us. We're having to now rethink, because most of these, we're not finding releases on—how do we still disseminate this information but hold back.

DH:

Well I'll tell you Lynda Bebee—she worked on that project, she was assistant librarian out here, and she's retired, and she lives in San Angelo. I talk to her quite a bit, I'll ask her—that B-e-b-e-e, Lynda Bebee, L-y-n-d-a. She—I know she worked with that quite a bit, so she should know if they pulled them out and put them—or if they came from McMurry without some of them. I'll ask her that question.

ES:

That would be good, thank you. You know, I never did get you to just say, for the recorder, and also just because I'm gathering it from different things. The project, I'm thinking started around the fall of 1995. That's the earliest date I've found so far. Is that about right?

DH:

That's probably about right. I'd been here two years by then. And I had them to write research papers—they'd written research papers on nearly everything you could think of. Kennedy's assassination compared to Abraham Lincoln's. Mrs. Lincoln went bananas, and Mrs. Kennedy liked bananas—you know they tried—

ES:

Yeah yeah.

DH:

Anyway, I had nearly all the founding fathers and so forth—papers on them, and that was about the time that I came up with the idea—why don't we do the oral history?

ES:

To preserve your sanity, also. So you didn't have to read those.

DH:

Yeah, right.

ES:

I've seen that it came from essentially 1301, a 1302 class. So U.S. early history and then reconstruction onward. And then Texas?

DH:

That's right, and a few Texas histories, yeah.

ES:

Did you require more of the Texas history students? Did you want them—did you say it needed to be longer or more in depth or anything different?

DH:

No, no, no, because it's a lower level course. In fact, some of them that took that course, they'd go to Tech and have to take it again to get credit because it was an upper division course up there.

ES:

Oh okay.

DH:

But what happened—you know, on the core courses, you have to have—and for a liberal arts degree, you have to have six hours of history. The 1301, 1302 would satisfy that, but the Texas history had to go down as an elective. So I quit pushing people to take Texas history. I taught it for twenty years and for the last couple of years it didn't make.

ES:

Well and if it didn't transfer, yeah.

DH:

Right. I felt like I was doing them an injustice when I found out it wasn't transferring. But they're teaching it online out of West Texas College at—

ES:

Snyder?

DH:

Snyder. So they're draining off part of the students.

ES:

When you started in '93, were you just in Cisco, or did you also teach at the satellite campus in Abilene?

DH:

I taught—no, I've been at Abilene for twenty-four years.

ES:

Oh okay.

DH:

I drive up there four days a week. But for two or three years, I taught a night class out here on Tuesday night, but I did not require the paper.

ES:

So actually all of these interviews are coming from Abilene.

DH:

That's right.

ES:

Okay.

DH:

Because I had mainly football students on Tuesday night and they barely could read and write, so I didn't require the oral history.

ES:

I noticed that the vast majority of the people who were being interviewed were Abilene-area, but I just thought maybe they were driving out to Cisco, but you were teaching in Abilene.

DH:

But I did have them come down here and interview quite a few people.

ES:

Let me see, I want to make sure I don't forget anything else. The move to McMurry and the removal from McMurry, you covered that. But—what years approximately, do you remember?

DH:

I can't tell you that.

ES:

Okay. But it was—

DH:

I do know they had them for about five years, I remember that. And I felt like they didn't do anything with them, much. What I had hopes was, these things could be cataloged by subject, by name and by region, by town, and people could utilize them when they were doing research papers, you know.

ES:

And that was the thing—that's what I'm working through. I'm going to the national Oral History Association conference in October, and it's going to be in Minneapolis this year. And I'm actually going to present a paper, and it's essentially like—seeing the history through the metadata—through all the mess of interviewee, interviewer, location of interview, subject, all of that because I think that's one of the things, the sheer enormity of this collection, is finding how we can make it useful to researchers.

DH:

Yeah, right, exactly.

ES:

And so, somebody—we've had a couple of people contact us, and they said, I want to find my grandmother's or whatever interview. And we can do that a lot of times if it's already been done. But then we had somebody a couple weeks ago call up and say, I'm interested in—I can't even remember what town—but they wanted to look at one town. And I said, "Well that's a little more difficult right now, because we're not all the way through it. It's hard to get at that without going interview by interview." But that's something that we want to work through, and figure out a way, long term—and I'm still grappling with it, it's one of the reasons I'm going to present on this, because I'm wanting to get feedback on it. But I wanted to make you aware—your name's going to be—

DH:

Well, I was at the University of Minnesota for two years, visiting assistant Professor of Indian History, I taught up there. I taught seven different courses in Indian History, all the way from pre-history to urban Indian affairs. And I developed—see I got the PhD, and I started out as you might suspect—studying Spanish colonial history—kind of an extension of my master's. and Max Moorehead, Dr. Moorehead had to retire, and I switched over to American Indian, American West, and most of that's coming out of books and so forth. Well my wife and I got a job on the Navajo Indian reservation to teach at their junior college. And I'm teaching full-blood Indians their history. I taught five courses, and they'd sit there and frown at me for six weeks

before they'd ever—so we had a chance to go to the University of Minnesota, and I was up there for two years, and developed using my students, with their research, to help develop these courses. And so, she was bored to tears—her career wasn't going anywhere—she sent her resume south and got a job at the University of Oklahoma, and I said, “Don't worry about me. I'm an Indian historian, there are thirty-nine tribes in Oklahoma,” and I get down there and find out they don't even teach Indian history in the public school. So I went back, taught ninth grade math for a year, and then that's when I started contracting with these tribes to write their histories. And I did that for about five or six years.

ES:

And was this in the—what decade was this?

DH:

That was starting about 1980, '81, '82. And then in '85, the Chickasaws paid me \$50,000 to write their history. And I'm driving all over Southeast Oklahoma with the weightlifter, you know, trying to interview everybody. And so the contract said present a publishable manuscript, and all that kind of stuff. And so I wrote a grant to start an Indian library, a tribal library. I wrote two of them that year, there are three funded from U.S. Department of Education in Oklahoma. And I wrote two of them. And the grant was for \$49,500. Well they never published my manuscript because they said it didn't represent them properly. I let the cultural committee look at it for a year, but I published another book on the Chickasaws. But anyway, that grant was for \$49,500, and the way I looked at it was, they paid my \$500. But anyway, she's at University of Oklahoma, everything's taking off, you know. And I was—I finally sat down there with the Chickasaws—the lady came in and said, “The Eagle is jammed. The Eagle is jammed.” And I said, “I have to learn this culture.” Come to find out the computer was called the Eagle, and the mainframe was jammed. And then I needed to go to the restroom, and they hattak and ihoo on the doors, no diagram, and I didn't know which I was—a hattak and an ihoo.¹ So at that time I said, really you need to grow up in a culture to know the little subtle things. You need to know the language to interview the elders. Why don't I start a series of workshops and train Indian people to write their own history books. So I started in about '85. And University of Oklahoma would pay me \$1,000 for three days. I had fifteen tribes show up to that workshop, and I was doing one a year, and they'd pay me \$1,000. Well in 1988 they hired me full-time at OU on a research grant—this does have a –

ES:

Oh you're good.

¹ <https://anompa.chickasaw.net/anompa/index.html>

DH:

They hired me on a research grant, it was paid for by the Indian health service, and they said, "Do you want to continue the tribal histories?" I said, "Sure." They said, "Well you're a full-time employee at OU, you can't double dip, you'll have to do them free." I was on that grant four years, and I did eleven more of these workshops. I did five the last year. They're generating \$10,000 a workshop. I generated \$50,000 that last year. Well, the Indian health service pulled my grant—they gave me six weeks notice, and OU said, "We can't keep you on. We can't pay you"—I said, "what happened to the \$50,000 I generated this year?" They stuffed it down a hole somewhere. They said, "By the way since we financed these workshops, the material used in the workshops belongs to OU." Well, this was material I developed while I was teaching on the Indian reservation, while I was teaching those courses in Minneapolis, while I was working with these different tribes in Oklahoma. And they're claiming all of it. Well, being the nice guy I am, I had it published as a book, Michigan Indian Press, 1992, and they dropped me like a hot potato. And I came down here, my mother was a widow, and so forth. And I went through a divorce, and I'm picking up pecans out here for \$25 a day, and I said to myself, "I really showed OU. I kept my stuff." (laughs) So that's kind of how I ended up here. You know, but I went through Minneapolis.

ES:

Well, I have a friend that lives up there now, and she says that there's actually a lot more Native American culture up in that area—she lives in Duluth—than we have down here.

DH:

Yeah, right. Oh sure.

ES:

And the minute you cross into Oklahoma, you see more of that. But I think the problem that I see with the Big Country, a lot of times, is that it's so much like the rest of West Texas, that we don't think about it as having its own kind of identity. And so that's what I keep pushing, and that's why I try to process ten to fifteen of these interviews a day—to keep things going.

DH:

Oh bless your heart! Bless your heart!

ES:

Because I think it actually has a lot of good to it. But that's also why I wanted to come out and kind of tell you, I'm working on it. Slowly but surely. If any word gets back to you that it's not open yet, it's because we're still just weeding through it, and trying to figure out, since we're not seeing the releases from the earlier interviews, what we're going to do long term, things like people could still come into the reading room and they could view the transcripts, but we

wouldn't necessarily scan them and put them all online like we would do ours that have releases. So—let's see—

DH:

Well, I know I kind of wandered all over everywhere on that.

ES:

No, you're good.

DH:

But I just kind of explained how this stuff—

ES:

No, no, that's good, how this, all kind of works together.

DH:

It all came together, and I wasn't programed like a normal historian to go through western civilization and all of this. But on my doctorate, I had a minor field in Ancient Roman and Greek history, I had fifteen graduate hours, I had a field in archeology, fifteen graduate hours in archeology. I had a field in colonial Latin America, I read books all the way—countries to South America, but the major field was American Indian, American West. But you had to have two languages, and they let me use archeo-magnetic dating for the second language. It came out of geophysics, and I studied sixteen graduate hours in that. So I was pretty spread out, I was trying to prepare myself where I could work in museums or whatever. And then I end up teaching the beginning level course in history. (laughs), which is kind of interesting. But my research, my course is a little different than the book.

ES:

What do you hope the trajectory of this is? Are you going to keep on teaching? Are you going to keep on having students interview?

DH:

I'm probably going to die with my boots on, I've got to go buy me some books. (laughs) No, I'm going to be seventy-five in August.

ES:

Oh wow.

DH:

I know. That's what your body begins to say after a while. I was out there working, my grandad's farmhouse, I have it out here and fifty acres still. And I was out there working on waterlines yesterday, but I really—I begin to feel all that, and it becomes a reality to me because my mother was one of twelve, and we moved out there to that farm when I was six and a half, the grandparents and their always extended family there, and now all that generation is dead, and I'll go out to the farm house out there and say, "Hello everybody, how are you doing?" Well they're all dead. And I have to go to the—of course, my daughter is here with me, but I have to go to the Dothan cemetery—it's a country cemetery—to have a family reunion, you know out there. But it's becoming a reality to me, but it makes me realize how very, very important this is. We're so busy, our society, we can't sit down for a minute at a time, and when you're in a community like Cisco, an old community—and the age I'm getting, people are just dying left and right, left and right, you know. And so I'm a pallbearer to a lot of funerals, but it makes me realize how very, very important these interviews are. Because—and those students that keep calling me and they're kind of emotional about it—Hey my grandmother just died, and I told them at the gathering that I'd interviewed, and we'd really like to hear her voice again and all this. And so, it's a real thing, and there's no way that you can preserve everything. And that's what kind of gets you. And even though a person is sitting there, they're willing to tell you everything, but they can't—they have so many memories and all, they can't really capitulate, regurgitate or whatever all of it. And we don't realize what's important. I told them, I said, "Beyond the personalities, the dates, and events, you're going to learn something from these people that is very, very important. You're going to learn how to make decisions, how to get up, you know, when you get knocked down, how to not give up, go through the Great Depression, go through World War II," and these people today—they don't have that kind of tenacity, they don't have that kind of toughness. They need—they need to learn some lessons from some of these people, and I think that's more valuable than the other.

ES:

I noticed that really early on, the first couple of years, you would give out a question sheets. And it was kind of like, where were you Kennedy assassination, where were you—

DH:

Yeah, right, exactly.

ES:

I don't see that question—I don't see kind of that formulaic later on—did you get to a point where you just kind of just tell them exactly that—just see where the interview goes—

DH:

No, I still give them a form, but I had a couple of Mormon students, two girls in my class, and they were pretty—they were older students, they were pretty enthusiastic—they kind of harassed me a little bit. And they wanted me to go to the Mormon temple there, or whatever it's called, in Abilene, and speak. And of course I was up there with all those elders, they were sitting up there with their suits on, and they were kind of harassing me a little bit. Well, "Speak in some Indian language." [Hale sings a song] They shut up after I sang that song, quit harassing me. But these two students—they had been into genealogy so strongly that one of them formatted this—they reformatted the questions that I had. And I don't—I'm not really satisfied with that. But they seem to think it was a little more general and would fit—and so that's where my latest questionnaire came from.

ES:

So are they asking more like—who are your father's parents—is it more genealogical in nature, or—?

DH:

Yes it is, yes it is. And I was trying to think of an event or something that would spark this person's memory. Like can you remember the first television you ever saw, you remember when Pearl Harbor was bombed, how did that affect you, stuff like this.

ES:

I imagine—I also am seeing the interviews from '95 through about 2005, you get people that were born at the turn of the century, so they could talk about when Pearl Harbor was bombed.

DH:

That's right.

ES:

But now—

DH:

But now we're getting to the point where they can't remember.

ES:

Yeah, it's barely Kennedy assassination at this point.

DH:

I know.

ES:

And so you're really seeing—I think that's also what's really interesting about this progression.

DH:

Yeah, it's changing. You're exactly right. But they can't remember the Great Depression.

ES:

Right, and we're getting more and more that are just, like, Oh I was two when the dust bowl ended or something like that.

DH:

It's hard to believe that there are no more—I remember when the last World War One veteran died, and I interviewed—I was up there, and we had five language professors that taught Indian language at the University of Minnesota. Of course, I had to go speak to the board for them, because they were trying to pay them a lot less than the regular teachers were getting. But they were specialists. They couldn't go to college somewhere and get a degree in that. They learned it somewhere else, you know, I mean they didn't have courses in it. They're teaching it. If they're teaching it, do they deserve to get the same pay as everybody else? So anyway, Henry DeCora, Marie DeCora was teaching, she was from Wisconsin. She taught Winnebago language there, and she was elderly, and one day Henry DeCora her husband was up there to pick her up, and he was a World War I veteran. And of course I interviewed him, but they're gone, and now nearly all of the World War II are gone. So you're absolutely right, it's progressed this direction.

ES:

I find it interesting, though, trying to spark these memories, I think that was a really great way, because you focus so much on home life and culture that you get a lot more of this personal narrative of you know like what your mother was cooking or what games you played as a child, which wouldn't satisfy genealogists necessarily, but it does give a great picture of what this region was about in the thirties and the forties and the fifties.

DH:

Well let me give you an idea about how I structured this initially, on things. You know about the WPA projects. But they had a historical arm—they went out and interviewed people. And so those—they didn't have recorders, but those transcripts in Oklahoma, they're called the Indian pioneer papers and they have the transcripts, and I went through the catalog—the inventory to see what kinds of questions they were asking these people. And they're talking about clothing styles and food styles and things like this. And initially, that's what I patterned these questions after. You know, out that WPA oral history project questions.

ES:

That's great. I did not know that.

DH:

Yeah, that's what I did. And I don't know where those transcripts are. There's a book that's been published by Texas A&M, the WPA papers. But I never did find out exactly where the transcripts are—I saw them at the Oklahoma Historical Society, and they had a copy at OU too. And there was volume after volume of transcripts, and that's where I looked at the index, and they'd interviewed the Indians and the pioneers both. But that's—you probably, if you don't know where that collection is, you probably can find out.

ES:

Oh yeah, and I bet so. And I know that there's—

DH:

It went state by state, I think.

ES:

Yeah, and the WPA stuff, there's kind of a resurgence of interest in it now, especially we're coming up, you know eighty years gone. And so there's a lot of—well, my dad and I were talking about it yesterday, some of the WPA buildings in Sweetwater that are going to wrack and ruin that we—

DH:

Well I was walking down the University of Oklahoma campus and there was a sidewalk and it had a stamp in it, built by the WPA 1936. You know—

ES:

You don't realize how much work they really did, and then all of a sudden, it's all of these parks, and we were out at the golf course at Lake Sweetwater, and a lot of that—those structures around there were that so—there was something else along those lines. Oh. Talk to me—the release, very early release you had talked about how you were wanting to capture the story of the American dream. And I just want to hear it in your words.

DH:

Right, right.

ES:

Talk to me about the American dream.

DH:

Well, the way I phrased this was, a lot of these people are walking encyclopedias of history. They're walking, they're talking history books, but I said to them, the students—that not everybody that's old knows anything. You know, a lot of people weren't interested in history. They didn't listen to their grandparents stories, they weren't interested, and you need to find somebody that when they were your age, say back in the thirties that they listened to all these family stories, and they captured. And that way, you're not only getting their story, you're getting what's been handed down to them. That's what I really had in mind when I said a walking history book because the American dream—that's something that I don't know if we've lost or we're losing or what. But I remember in the late forties, I was in the first grade in Ranger, Texas. And my aunt's husband had been killed at Anzio Beachhead, and my parents, another one of those war marriages, they divorced when I was an infant. Well, we're over at Ranger, and this aunt is supposed to watch me and her daughter. She was about my age, and they both—the national youth administration—my aunt and my mother went to Ranger in 1938 to study vocational nursing. Well, both of them graduated and they met their husbands there. Well my aunt's husband was killed, like I said. And my parents divorced, I don't ever remember seeing my dad. But my first memories—I'm over there, there are two adult women, two of us children, no car, no man, and the first day of school, I told my mother I can go down there by myself. And I walked seven blocks down there, and I got in a fight the first day. But outside of that, I remember we had a patriotic session before school that came over the intercom, we'd sing patriotic songs, we'd say the pledge to the flag, and of course that's not too far from the ending of World War II, so people were very patriotic. And that kind of went by the wayside at some point, and I actually was in college when they took prayer out of the classroom in '62, and Bible reading in '63, but I really wasn't aware of it because I was playing football and we were busy, we were going everywhere. And I was struggling, I was majoring in math trying to survive. But society changed, and I guess I became a little more aware in 1999 when they took prayer out of the high school football stadium, and my aunt died two years ago, and she lived to be 100. She lived out in the old farmhouse out here, and she loved football. So we went to those games all over West Texas, she was in her nineties, and when they took prayer out of the high school football stadiums, I was pretty upset, and she said, "Why don't they sing the third stanza to the national anthem." I said, "I didn't know it had a third stanza." Well, it says something about in god we trust and so forth. And I said, "When they find that out, they'll try to change the national anthem," you know get another one. But we're not nearly as patriotic as we were. I've kind of lived through that kind of transition, my mother had Alzheimer's, I had her here for seven years. She developed that after I came down here, and she'd look at you just as sane, with her beady dark eyes, and she'd say, "The boys just came home from the war. They're out there in that garage apartment out there." Everything happened in the garage apartment. Well she was a nurse for forty-five years, and she'd say, "A lady's having a baby out there. You need to go help." Or "A man's beating up his wife." So anyway, I was programmed, and they told me, nobody out there had gone to college. Had three people out there that hadn't gone past the eighth grade, they

mispronounced everything. But we had a good football team here my last two years, and I got a scholarship. In fact, Texas Tech came down once a week my spring of my senior year, and there were three of us they tried to recruit. A&M would be here another day, University of Oklahoma another day. And I was kind of living in tall cotton there. But they told me, said, "Don't go to a state school, there are a lot of sinners there." And I went up to Abilene Christian and they'd recruited every scum bum in the world, and they stole everything that wasn't nailed down, these football players. And I was just appalled, you know. But I can see changes, you know. I was brought up pretty strictly, going to church and so forth. And I see our society has changed, but I'm not hitting on exactly what you want, I guess.

ES:

No, no, you're hitting on, I like to hear—

DH:

I'm hitting on my personal experience.

ES:

Yeah, I was going to say, I'd like to hear your perspective.

DH:

My—I tell my students. See I have to cover the beginning, when man first set foot on this continent, and you know the theories. And I ended up giving speeches in twenty-five states to Indian youth on—encouraging them, and so forth. But I ended up in Smithsonian, and Dr. Dennis Stanford, this movie company in Hollywood, it was another Kevin Costner thing. They hired me for a month to go up there, paid me a thousand dollars a week. I had his name opening all the doors. And I'm in there with Dennis Stanford, the head archeologist at Smithsonian. He's pulling out all these drawers with Clovis and Folsom points in them in his lab, I have a video of that. But I tell my students, I can't tell you what to believe. You know I'm covering all these different possibilities, and I get over, and I mention Genesis 1:27; I mention the Mormons, talk a little bit about their story. I talk about the Indian origin stories that I got from the Indians. I talked about the other evidence that the big boys, the authorities at Smithsonian and National Geographic, the Bearing Strait, but I said, "You owe it to yourself to look through all of this and decide for yourself—don't let me or anybody else tell you what to believe. But if you're really an educated person, you owe it to yourself to look at all these possibilities." But I said, "As far as me, I still go to church on Sunday, but that doesn't make me any better than anybody else. But I feel comfortable with that." So you got to be real careful. You're not supposed to talk about the Bible in class and all, but you can't leave it out when you're talking about all the possibilities of where man came from. And—I still don't have it worked out.

ES:

Well, have you noticed a change—maybe talk a little bit for the recorder about the student make up. You said briefly that you've got some Dyess kids, you've got some Abilene kids, you've got commuters coming into Abilene. Can you talk about age ranges, is there anything you can kind of generalize about the student body?

DH:

Well, they're a little bit older students in the Abilene area. We have a lot of people that—see it makes it interesting because we have people that raise their kids, and then they decided to come back to school. They haven't been in school in twenty years. Then we have people that got their GED, they don't have too many social skills, they were homeschooled or something like this. And then I have people from some foreign countries that their English is not that good. I had ten Chinese in there at same time at one point. See we get a spillover from Abilene Christian or McMurry or Hardin Simmons—we get some of those students that come there to take the beginning level course, because maybe they were athletes or something, they have problems at the other school. But it's pretty hard—they said shoot low, they're riding shetlands. You know, its pretty hard where to shoot. Some of them, of course, they're going to get it in spite of me. I have about five real students in every class, and they don't even need me in there. But the quality of student has gone down, I have seen that in the last twenty years. They expect everything, you know, free gratis. You owe them something; the world owes them something. Society owes them something.

ES:

Well, especially, you know the mentality of you're paying for your education—they're paying you, so you just hand them the grade that—we've seen the rise of that a lot more on all college campuses.

DH:

Well most of them, they're on Pell Grants, and they're actually getting it paid, you know.

ES:

You said that these are people that are coming back to school after—a lot of times. Was it like that twenty years ago as well?

DH:

Yeah, probably more so twenty years ago than it is now.

ES:

Because, I kind of think of—and correct me if I'm wrong—I think of Cisco Junior College has always been, almost a technical school—almost one of those colleges that you could go back—

continuing education, even more so than one of those—for a while TSTC [Texas State Technological College], for example, was trying to be “oh come get some of your credits before you go onto another college.” But seems like Cisco has always been one of those “come at any time, just take a couple classes.”

DH:

But the—our enrollment has actually gone down. You know, as high as Hardin Simmons and McMurry and Abilene Christian are—you would think they would get all their basic classes over there at Cisco College, but our enrollment has been down for the last couple of years. But part of that is, if the economy gets a certain way, well they get a job if they can. And when jobs are hard to find, they come to college. But we have a diverse student body, and it’s hard to know exactly—you know even on a beginning level course. And my object is not to say that—if you can’t pass this course, this history course, you’re not college material. Basically it may be that this is not your major, it may be not your interest area, it doesn’t mean—but if I can teach them how to synthesize and organize and summarize and listen and be able to retain some of this data—well, I guess being an old football coach for a few years, I taught mainly blocking and tackling, the basics. And what I’m trying to do is string a cloth’s lines from here to here and put the basic things on that clothes line that they need, and then get them—if they have the basic thing, go on wherever they want to. But it’s not a hard course, like math and so forth. But you can’t pass my course unless you come to class. I don’t count off, but they can’t get a lot of this information anywhere else, even in the textbook.

ES:

Have you changed your pedagogical approach—have you changed the way you’ve taught the material in the last twenty years? I mean, we see a lot of changes, we couldn’t google everything twenty years ago, and we’re not getting the material the same, we’re not synthesizing information the same way really. So have you started—

DH:

I understand. Well, the students help me do some of that because they’ll challenge me.

ES:

Really?

DH:

If, for example, I said there are twenty-two blacks that won the Congressional Medal of Honor in the Civil War. This guy from Merkel, his mother was a history teacher over there, and he’s a pretty sharp kid. He held up his hand and said, “There are twenty-five.” I said, “Where’d you get your information?” Mine through research, he got his off the internet. So—it’s a little bit easier to get material now than it was.

ES:

But I think the interesting—the oral history is kind of the common ground. That hasn't changed. This open dialogue hasn't changed.

DH:

(phone rings) Oops sorry.

ES:

No your good.

Pause in Recording

DH:

—changed much, well I have to change certain things. They found—you know, it's been a long time since I got my doctorate now, even though I had pretty good training. But with technology and everything, they've come up with some new information, and they have a site off the Southeast coast of Africa, a dry cave, where they found writing there that—you know that writing in France they thought was so old for a long time is about 30,000 years old. Now they're pushing it back about 100,000. So there's a lot of things happening. And just like American Indian genealogy. Hey I spoke a lot of places. I spoke, even, I did the genealogy of a thousand Indians for that book on the Delaware Indians. And then I spoke at the American genealogical society meeting in Biloxi, and then I got on the internet here a while back and they're selling a tape—they're selling one of my tapes. They're still selling that speech that I gave down there, but with you know DNA and so forth, it's kind of bypassed what I've done. So I have to modify a few things. But that's the good thing about teaching history. Some of it—what they do is—they come out with a new history book about every two years, and they're getting to where they cost around \$200, and all they do is add another chapter to the text. And it's getting so long that they'll probably have to have three semesters, 1301, 1302, and 1303. Because second half of 1865-present is getting too long, you can't cover all of it. But when they write these books, I don't think they go back and do original research. They're trying to do something about the ethnic groups and everything to incorporate them a little bit more into the general theme. But I went to the National Indian education conference in Anchorage Alaska one time, and they had the fifty big city school districts represented, and they're trying to figure out what do we do with American Indians in the history book. Do we just have a separate chapter or do we weave them through the picture, you know the whole thing? So the books, they're not changing as much as they should. Our textbook is written by PhDs from Harvard and Yale, and they naturally stress the East Coast tradition and everything. San Antonio began in 1718, New Orleans in 1718. We had a whole history out here of the Southwest, and I can't go into that in great detail, I could in Texas history, but I can at least refer to some of it. So yeah, not everything is on the internet.

You know, it gives you a good bibliography for some of these places, but it doesn't have the body of the material, and you still have to go to the archives and things like that.

ES:

And I think oral history is also helping to supplement that—if you stress to them to get their history, they can see there's more than just what's written in this one textbook. There's more out there to be derived from other sources and other places.

DH:

Well, not only that, but when I started, when I went back and I was going to change my major to history, oral history was relegated as a secondary discipline back then. And it's kind of gotten more prominence in the last few years.

ES:

Yeah, I think what's also helped oral history is how much more media saturate we are. So people don't want to read a book as much as they'd love to hear somebody talk. They'd love to hear a radio piece on it, or a documentary or something because you go to oral history conferences, and it's a lot of historians like us, but it's also a lot of documentary film makers that want to do this sort of stuff and tell stories in alternative ways.

DH:

Well, see that was my problem. Like I said earlier, I was a mathematician, I didn't take a lot of the basic courses down the line that you would normally take to major in history with a bachelors. And I was able to concentrate on my interest area when I got into graduate school, and I wasn't trying to learn what was out there—I was looking for some answers. But I'd already seen what was out there. I'd been out there for a year and saw all these hieroglyphics and everything, and I was trying to get the answers to all that, so my approach has been a little bit different all the way along. Down at UT, they kind of brand me as a maverick historian I think, because I wrote—I went through the Bexar archives, found fifteen references to Spanish mining in Texas, in Spanish records, and did the dissertation on the history of mining in Texas. I sent it down—we went to the Navajo reserve, and while we're out there, about 1978, I sent it to the director of the Bureau of American Geology at the University of Texas, economic geology. And he said, if it has merit, I'll send it on to OU press, I mean Texas Press, with my blessings. And I got it back about three months later, and the editor said, we decline to publish this in this form or for that matter in any form because we don't believe there's any Spanish mining in Texas. And I had it right there in the footnotes. So I waited five years, I sent a paper to the State Historical Journal, excerpted fifteen pages out of my dissertation, and the footnotes were right out of the Spanish. They said, "We decline to publish this in this form or for that matter in any form, because our editors don't believe there's any Spanish mining in Texas." And that's when I quit trying to prove it to them. I said if I convinced them, they'd pass some laws where you couldn't

look, and they'd put their name on everything you found. So you see, I've quietly gone about my research in that area, building up evidence and so forth. Smithsonian checked out my master's thesis and have found thirty fired clay structures that I attempted to prove are Spanish smelting furnaces. And that's the reason I studied the archeo-magnetic dating—to try to date those. But you know, you get bogged down in trying to live and trying to survive and trying to get some retirement, and I was just trying to get them to do some original research, you know, with this oral history. And I think it's probably done some of them some good.

ES:

Do you—did any of the oral histories that your students do ever lead back to your research? Did you ever have any confirmation of these things?

DH:

Not really. This guy was in my class two years ago in the fall, and his grandad lived east of Roby, in Fisher County, and he had a bunch of gyp caves up there, and I was talking about these hieroglyphics. And he said, "My grandad found this disc—it has some Spanish writing on it, and another one has some hieroglyphics on it in one of these caves on his place. He won't let anybody know about it, and he carries them around in his pocket. And when he goes to bed at night, he puts them in his pajamas." And all that. And I tried to get him to interview his grandad, and his grandad wouldn't let him. And I've had a few like that.

ES:

I've noticed there's been a couple that they'll ask, "Do you know anything about the Spider Rock treasure or anything?"

DH:

Yeah, right exactly.

ES:

And they'll be like, "Nope, nope."

DH:

Nope, nope, sorry.

ES:

And I wonder if it's partially this region, because I feel like a lot of people are very protective of their land and their personal autonomy. And so, you know if it could encroach on their space at all, there's a little bit of protective nature, of not wanting to admit it, kind of like holding onto the coin.

DH:

Well see, I've got a folder about that thick of interviews. I interviewed this guy seventeen years, and he was one of the searchers at Spider Rock and he was an old Spanish guy. And when I was working on my master's thesis and going to all these counties, I found twelve places where they'd been—he had a group of nine men that worked with him—they'd been out there with bulldozers, at nine places, all the way up to Brownsfield. At first, he wouldn't let me write anything down, wouldn't let me—and that was before I started on the doctorate. So I'd drive around the corner and sit down and write all the specifics down before—and that really helped me in studying those classes for the graduate classes, because I'd already been steeped, you know, trained in gathering material and trying to remember it. Finally he let me tape him, and I have about fifteen cassette tapes of that guy. I had them put on DVDs or CDs, and that stuff, I'm going to have to put up there in that collection at some point because it's too valuable to just let it disappear.

ES:

Well I was going to ask you—what's going to happen to your research long term? What are your plans with it?

DH:

I'm probably going to have to put it up there with the rest of this stuff.

ES:

Okay. Whenever you're ready.

DH:

Well, I'm just—I'm just afraid it's going to disappear. And I told you about going up to Knox City about a week ago? Did I mention that?

ES:

No, I don't think so.

DH:

Okay well this guy at De Leon, Hadley Scott, he'd been a mail carrier for years, and a guy that sat behind him at church for years, they got to talking about hieroglyphics and he said, well I have a cousin up in Knox City, he's about eighty-five.

ES:

Oh yes, you did. It was about—it was his father.

DH:

Yeah, and I went up there, and I knew more than he knew. And I had these written out interviews.

ES:

You still have to track down all those leads, but it appears like you've got all the research that you can find right now.

DH:

Well, here's—about the time—you know, you keep beating your head against the wall, beating your head against the wall, and pretty soon you think, Well yeah, I'm crazy like some of these other guys. Like that Frank Olmstead came from LaSalle County Illinois in 1920. He dug one trench, he lived in a dug out, dug one trench after another, they buried him in one of them in 1948. And you get to thinking, well yeah, I've flipped out on this thing completely, but I've managed to still—you know, teach and give some semblance of sanity on this. But then the big boys, the authorities, they keep saying well there's nothing in the Nettie Lee Benson collection or whatever it's called now, the Garcia collection down there that talks about the Spider Rock. Well, it takes a long time for these things to filter down. And I interviewed Joe Cobble, Senior in Snyder in 1971, and he said, "I've got more stuff on this than any one man living." He was digging at the Clyde site in 1939, but he'd dug on the O Bar O side—I don't know which way you from—you probably come down the main highway—

ES:

Uh huh.

DH:

But Kent County up here, you can cut through by Jayton and by Claremont, and there's a butte out there called Treasure Butte. And I interviewed B. Bilibie Wallace, it was sixty sections of land at the time—it was called the O Bar O Ranch, he said Cobbles was here in the teens, right after World War I. He's been in here several times with bulldozers. Well there's an article in the Dallas newspaper that had interviewed somebody about this in 1933, he says the terrapin map to buried treasure. And it told basically what had happened—one of the first surveyors at Kent County, they had a Jacob's staff and they're going along and they hit—it's sandy land—they hit a rock, they uncovered it, and it had these five cartwheels carved on it, in 1677, a bunch of other stuff—a diamond and a circle out there with terrapins or turtles in it and stuff. Well, I interviewed Cobble, and then I interviewed Vernon Cobble, his son, in Wichita Falls in 1982. He said, "I was with dad when we dug some of that stuff up, and it called for six miles west of these turtles, and that was Treasure Butte." We get up there and it's not much bigger than two of these rooms, on top it had a caprock, and it had a little soil on top of it. And said, "Dad had a crowbar, he was going down like this, and all at once the crowbar goes down." They clean it off and they

had these round holes drilled through the caprock, apparently they put black powder in there and fractured the rock like a piece of a puzzle, they had taken it out but they put it back in, and they took it out and there are four skeletons laying there with their feet touching, their heads pointed towards the cardinal points, and they had a map rock carved laying on their foreheads. And they'd put—I know, that's weird stuff. But they put the plug back in there. And so—I came back and Joe Cobble Senior had died in '76. I came back from Oklahoma, his widow lived in Abilene. Her name was—I get them mixed up—anyway, I said, “What happened to that trunk full of maps.” He said he had drawings of these rocks and stuff in the trunk. I have more than any man living. She said, “Well Joe Cobble Junior has them at Lake Leon, south of Eastland.” So I called him, I was still in Oklahoma, and I interviewed him, and he was pretty congenial and couldn't get off of high center. And then we interviewed Vernon Cobble and told him the situation, and he said, “Well I'm a half-brother. I was with my dad when we found those rocks. I have as much right to that as he does. I'll help you boys get that.” And so the next time I called Joe Cobble Junior, he said, “You went behind my back and tried to get that stuff.” And then I moved down here about a year later, and he's running a used tire shop over in Eastland—Ranger—and I went over there, he cursed me, he called me every name in the book, he said, “My dad had to run people off like you all his life.” And I said, “I'll just wait until he dies.” He died three years ago. Well, Conzact [?] in Baird is related, and I thought he'd have a better chance of getting that stuff. And it got kind of congested because Joe Cobble Junior had been married twice and his second wife had grown children, he had grown children, and then when he died, the trunk disappeared. And both sets of children thought the others had it, and they couldn't find it. And Kevan Cobble lived in Odessa, he was one of them, one of those children, and so Conzact said, “We need to go to Odessa and see Kevan Cobble.” Well about three months later, that's two years ago, I'm down here at the antique shop on Sunday afternoon, and that old boy always asks, “Who are you and where are you from?” Well our name is Cobble, and we just moved to Cisco from Odessa, and one of them was Kevan Cobble. And I'm not very smart. I went up there and I said, “What happened to that trunk full of documents?” Well it made them mad, and they huffed around for about fifteen minutes before they ever settled down. And so he's lived here for two years, I know right where he lives, I have not bothered him. Well the second wife was named Eula Cobble, she moved to Slaton, up by Lubbock. And I called her two years ago, and she said she didn't know anything about that trunk full of documents. Two weeks ago, she died. They brought her back to Eastland, and they had the viewing over there on Thursday evening, and Conzact told me about it and he said, “Both of us need to go over there, or at least once of us.” I went over there and I had a disc, a CD, and it had these interviews on it—the sound of Joe Cobble Senior out at Lubbock. It had Vernon Cobble on there, and it had Joe Woods that had looked for it—that guy that had the bulldozers and everything. And so I gave it to Jackie Arrington—he's the son of Eula Cobble—Arrington was living with him in Slaton, I didn't know him from Adam. And so I gave him the CD, gave my condolences, and then his son walked up, bald headed guy. He said, “I took your class years ago in Abilene.”

ES:

Really? Wow!

DH:

I mean that's the way things go. It kind of broke the ice a little bit. Well, I bowed out and left and about 8:30 that night, that son called me and said, "Dad put that CD in his hip pocket and sat on it and broke it, and could you bring another one over here at the La Quinta." And I went over the next day and took one and I took a Xerox copy of that article that came out in the Dallas newspaper, Xerox copy of a couple of my interviews and gave that to him. And the bald headed guy, my student, was standing out there and I gave it to him, and he said, "We think we know where some of that stuff is." Now I haven't heard from them yet, but see I'm still—

ES:

You're still working on it.

DH:

I'm still working on it.

ES:

Chipping away.

DH:

And stuff kind of—it dovetails and comes in after all this time—it's weird.

ES:

Well, at some point, I mean your research needs to go somewhere.

DH:

Well, that's probably where it's going to have to go. I mean it'd be a logical place to put it. There's not place here that has the ability to archive it, you know. And I—I've got things kind of, I've got a chest in there that I keep most of this stuff in, you know it's kind of buffet. And you can lock the doors. But what happens if you ever loan anything out to anybody, it doesn't come back. You lose it. But that's a little bit different, but it's still part of West Texas.

ES:

But still, it's all part of it. And it's also part of why this really started because you were doing oral histories, it's just natural.

DH:

Well I've got—I don't have all of these—let me get this thing. Just wait right there, and I'll—

Pause in Recording

DH:

This was full, but I pulled part of them out and had CDs made of them, but this is—these are most of the interviews dealing with Spider Rock, some of them have been pulled out, and I've made CDs out of them. But see that stuff gets kind of old, where it's not usable after a while.

ES:

Yeah, you've got, I see—1971 here, '90.

DH:

Yeah, I've got a few '70s and '71s in here. Here's 1970, Bob Blackwell. Here's '87. Yeah. But here's Vernon Cobble I was talking about, and Joe Cobble right here, 1972. Here's Edith Cobble, that's the one, the first wife in Abilene when I interviewed her. But that covers several sites, San Saba mines; this old boy dug on the San Saba mines for forty or fifty years. I've got quite a bit on him.

ES:

It looks like pretty much the latest one was 1990. Did you switch formats or did you just run out of—

DH:

I started using video camera. I've got quite a bit—

ES:

Okay. VHS?

DH:

Yeah. Well the last one I've got is one of these that does this little disc because they're more permanent and you don't have to transcribe them—I mean use a device to play them.

ES:

Yeah, when you were talking about the three-quarter inch machines, those are the tapes that are starting to really deteriorate. VHS isn't quite as bad, but we're still seeing reports now, it's 2017, they're thinking we've got ten years before all of our VHS's stop playing.

DH:

Well, that's the reason I said, so much off if you use a ninety-minute tape.

ES:

Yeah, exactly.

DH:

You know, because it's in the same size container, and it's thinner is the reason they get it in there.

ES:

Yeah, my AV tech, he likes to say that it's toilet paper because it just shreds if you're not careful. And you're right, microcassette—it's—a lot of the student, that was the way they were recording lectures, so I get why they were using it, but at the same time—the voice quality is—

DH:

Yeah, not very good quality. Well, I was recording everything. I kind of—you know I've got a couple of grandkids, my grandson is twelve, and lives in Austin, he's pretty phenomenal. Of course, they've never said no to them. He had trouble in the first grade because he went to first grade that day and they said no, and he'd never heard it before. But in some ways, these kids, when they don't have parameters—they explore everything. And he—he's not afraid to do anything, he was outstanding math student in his elementary school in the fifth grade. Well, this year he switched over to drama. So they had a play, some kind of major production, there were eighth graders in there and one of the guys stepped down and he got a major part. Well, he got a big trophy for outstanding newcomer, outstanding performer, outstanding band student, the highest you could score on the UIL art thing, and he took everything nearly, and I said "What about math?" Well he made straight A's in math, but they put him in whatever you call it, elevated math, and the little girl, she just graduated from the second grade, she looks like she's about twelve, she's real tall. But she's been reading for a long time, and so they're exceptional people, but I don't know they raise their kids differently now.

ES:

I bet they're recording a lot of their kids though on iPhones.

DH:

Well, I gave them a video camera just like the one I have, and they don't use it.

ES:

You know, though, the phones—especially there are certain apps now that you can download. And the audio quality—I mean it is better than what we were getting on cassettes. I still—I was worried I couldn't find my recorder this morning, I was like, Well, if worse comes to worse, I'll do my phone. It's not perfect, but it's better than what we were getting. Some of the stuff I've been listening to from the sixties—it's better than that.

DH:

Well, see I was recording everything for years, anytime we had a family reunion or so forth. I found a tape and had it transferred to CD—a VHS tape of my ex-wife's—her grandmother's ninetieth birthday. And of course, she's been dead for a while, and she came to see the daughter, and so I gave her a copy of that tape. And my son was in high school in Norman, and he graduated in '93, and he's been playing—singing—playing western music in Austin for ten years. He started in high school, and I had one of his performances when he was still in high school in a parking lot in Norman Oklahoma on tape, and he was here and he got a copy of that put on a CD. But I was recording everything for a long while, but I just—you know—I was kind of the recorder. But you kind of get worn out on it, somebody else needs to do it. I gave them a video camera, and they don't. They sent me a father's day thing with pictures, but—I don't know what kind of medium they're using.

[showing pictures 1:45:55-1:46:40]

ES:

How was the football team here, last year? Did y'all do—?

DH:

We won eleven and lost two. And we lost to Wall, 19-18, and we missed three extra points. And we won district, it was one of the toughest districts in the state, and we beat everybody there. And then our quarterback got hurt, and we got beat in the second round of the playoffs. We beat Alpine, and so forth—but here's what I've been doing. I've been writing this book on the Brent West years, right here. I'm still trying to get the photographs put in it, but it's pretty hard.

ES:

That's what I was thinking that Cisco did really well early on—or recently.

DH:

We've won more than any team in the Big Country—Abilene High, Big Spring, Brownwood, Sweetwater—

ES:

Wylie—

DH:

Any of those teams—Wylie. We won more games than any of them, the last sixteen years. So I'm trying—

ES:

Yeah, Sweetwater finally had a decent season this last year, and then they can't even win state. But it was close.

DH:

Yeah, they did well.

ES:

That's great though, you're getting there.

DH:

I'm getting close.

ES:

You're the—are you—I'm guessing because I don't know anybody else, but are you kind of the default town historian? Does everybody see you in kind of that role?

DH:

Well, what's happened—the real authorities have died off, just about. Judge Scott Bailey, his mother lived to be ninety-nine—Maud Bailey. And she could remember way back to the early part of the century, about 1905 or before. And she told him everything she knew just about, and he had almost a photographic memory. He's one of these guys that graduated from law school without going to—he got his law degree without going to law school, and he was a county judge for thirty years, and he died. But he knew everything, you know, and then Olga Fay Parker started teaching English, and incidentally she's in that—

ES:

She's in here—

DH:

She's interviewed.

ES:

Okay that's good.

DH:

She started teaching English at Cisco College in 1946, and she was walking around here, she was in her nineties, and she knew everybody. I see her over at the café and she said, "That waitress over there was in prison for a while." But she was really a neat lady, and they just gradually died off, and I'd say Jim Webb probably knows more about the town history—the stores and shops,

who was here and who was there, because he's in his early eighties and he's still painting houses. You know he has some helpers, but he knows a lot about the downtown history. And then J. C. McDaniel, he teaches math, he's just about having to retire, he's taught over forty years at Cisco College, he lives at Carbon over here and has a farm. But he started out as a railroad buff, and he has read all the old newspapers on microfilm, just about, dealing with railroads. And he was here doing this, you know, back in the early seventies before I came back here. He probably knows more about Cisco history than I do, but he's not one of these outgoing-type people where he's going to tell anybody anything, I'm not sure he has it organized where he could format it, but you could ask him anything nearly and he'd know the answer.

ES:

Then he probably needs to—is he interviewed by any of the students?

DH:

I don't think so, no, because he was down here and I was up there. He knows a lot.

ES:

So the work never ends. There's always someone else.

DH:

Well I am, I am getting a lot of questions from time to time, people will call me. They'll refer—like they wanted to know about a guy named Eastland—that was his last name, lived back east, and last fall, he called I guess the chamber and they called me, and they wanted to know how Eastland got its name and all this and the black bean affair and so forth, you know. But then they're starting a prisons—or they have a prisons museum down in Huntsville. But they're doing a display on the first electrocutioner down there, and come to find out he was the chief of police here at Cisco in 1928 and '29, and so they got in touch with me and I found some stuff on him for them. But they're beginning to ask, and when they came—when the water came up over the dam, you know, last year about this time and a little before—so the engineers came up here, and they're looking for blueprints of the dam. The city didn't have any. I didn't know about it for two weeks, later after they were gone, I have forty blueprints to the dam in my museum.

ES:

I was wondering—usually it's the library or the museum that'll have those.

DH:

Yeah, I've got the blueprints and I never did tell them, you know after that because they'd come and get them.

ES:

Did they—is it rebuilt now? Is the dam rebuilt?

DH:

It wasn't the dam, it was—

ES:

Well, the road—is the road rebuilt?

DH:

The road is rebuilt, but they still haven't rebuilt the treatment plant. And we have a temporary system on the back of a truck that came from New York, and we're paying \$40,000 a month to lease that thing to provide water for the city. But then the other thing—they—people come to you about various things. The country club and the golf course shut down a year and a half ago, nearly two years. And they wanted to know who owned it. So one of the members came to me, wanted me to research it, which I did. And Cisco is kind of booming now, you know, they're filling in most of the shops and everything, and the Wilks brothers have something to do with that, with their money—billionaires. But I researched it, and it began in 1921, they filed a charter down at Austin and it said very specifically, it'll exist for fifty years and it said there's no capital stock. And then it closed after fifty years in about '71, and it overlapped—it was called Cisco Country Club, it became Lake Cisco Club in 1999. It existed for thirty years, and they pulled their charter after thirty years because they didn't pay the franchise tax, so that was about 1999, and so—yeah '69 when it overlapped with '71. And I got the second charter, and it said absolutely, no capital stock. And so it really—the land could not be sold, and in Article 8, it said, In case it closes by legal or other means, the land will go to another non-profit in the area that stresses education, recreation, and entertainment.

ES:

Is there such a non-profit in Cisco today?

DH:

Well, I'm probably the only one—the museum. But here's what happened—I went to the lawyer, and they sold it last week. The lawyer, the county judge Brad Stevenson that owns the title company over there now and the former bank president Dick Wooley—and I turned them into the state attorney general for fraud—back several months ago. And they wrote back and said, “We don't intervene except for charitable organizations. They'll have to get a lawyer.” And I told these country club members, the officers and so forth, I said, “You better get a lawyer, they're going to take it.” Well apparently they did, but see they asked me to do things like that. And I researched it, and I was over there, and I know how to do—you know after all this I know how to do court research—I mean courthouse records and stuff. And so I'm over there

researching it, and Brad Stevenson was in there—he runs the title company—said, “You don’t need to research this. I’m researching it for the community development cooperation.” I said, “I’ve already researched it. I’m just in here double checking some stuff.” I told him I found all the *Dallas Morning News* articles, and he didn’t know how to do historical research, all those too. But you find yourself being spread into these other areas, you know, they come to you.

ES:

Especially in a smaller town.

DH:

That’s right. But since I’m not a lawyer, I don’t carry any clout or anything. And since I’m not crooked, I can’t really do what they do. So that sounds kind of bad, but I hate to say this, but it’s absolutely true.

ES:

Well, it seems like a lot of the small towns everywhere, but it’s a trend of—whoever is most invested—who wants to put the most investment—personal investment, time investment into it and then if you have political connections, that’s how you get business done.

DH:

Well I mean, I sound like a negative person, the examples I’ve give you, but basically, I researched that for my own benefit, I share it with the people that they want it, and then I’m probably not going to rock the boat or anything because I’ve got to live here. I’ll put it in my files, and I can see what’s happening, but it’s not going to help anybody because apparently there’s been a trail of the way they have gotten where they are, some of these people, and that is a sad commentary. And it’s not that I’m’ perfect, but I end up letting up people take advantage of me. I had a fellow living here from August until March, and he had 200 hours of community service, so I had him paint my freight depot down there. Well they kicked him out of his house. He didn’t have any place to go. So I had him here for a while, but you try to help people, but right now you’ve got to be careful—if you try to help people, they take advantage of you. I mean, there’s a lot of people in Eastland County that don’t work because they can draw SSI \$733 a month disability, which is more than they can clear working, you know by the time they pay for their gasoline and everything. A guy called me right before you came—he’s wanting to borrow \$80, you know, and so—you can only help so many people. And you’ll help them until you realize they’re not going to help themselves. And I had a guy out here at the farm house, I had the Boggsses out there for a year, no nine months, they got kicked out of their apartment at Jacksboro, and I let them stay out there—they didn’t have to pay any rent. But I said, “You can stay until school’s out.” Well they came, sat down in here, and they wanted – it was the end of May and they wanted to stay an extra month. I said, “No we made an agreement.” Because I knew if I didn’t get them out, I never would. And so they got mad, and their boys broke three

windows out of the trailer house that's out there. Well then I had this—I call him the Mexican mechanic, which sounds kind of negative but he's from Mexico. I had him as a student. He had hair about the length of yours, and had a big nose, looked like he was Aztec, and I got along with him pretty well, he worked on my cars some. And so he finished up there, and then he drove back and forth and he'd stay the week up at Arlington State or UT Arlington. Then he was driving back and forth to Angelo State. And he said, "I've just got one more year to go and I've finished all my Pell Grant." And I said, "Well, I'll pay your tuition this year." I paid \$5,200 for his tuition. And then when he got through, he said, "I've got four more courses." I said, "I can't help you anymore. I've helped you all I can." He sat in Abilene for two years and didn't get a job because he was drawing \$600 a month disability, if he took a job, he'd lose his \$600. So being the nice guy I am, I moved him into the farm house for two years. He left in March. So— anyway, sorry about all that.

Pause in recording

ES:

I guess, well we can finish up, because we're wrapping up on the interview. But I'm wondering—we talked about the reason for starting the project and the original goals—changes over the years—

DH:

Yeah, there's several different reasons as you can see.

ES:

Yes. Releases, the trends—oh that was the one other thing I was going to ask you. Because I see certain trends, certain commonalities across the interviews. When you would get the interviews, did you see different themes emerging? You said there's a large collection of Mexican-American interviews—

DH:

There's also quite a bit on World War II, military. You know one particular couple—this is kind of interesting, the way these things develop. This veteran, he was kind of lonely and so forth, and it was a husband wife team that interviewed him, and they ended up becoming such good friends, he ended up willing everything he had to them.

ES:

Wow.

DH:

Yeah, at the end—you know when he died. So that was neat. But yeah, I already had categories. But the trends you're talking about—

ES:

I think, the takeaway that I get from this—this whole interview really is that—yeah, because that's all of my notes—is that it's a small little action. This oral history interview, but it's this personal connection that actually leads to so much more—these larger ripples of effects, you know, friendships, or just conveying knowledge. And even though it's just a junior college class, and maybe they're just trying to take it for credit that it really seems to—as apathetic as many of them sound in the interviews, it actually really does have an effect on the students. Is that what you're seeing?

DH:

Yeah, well let me tell you about this one person—I can't remember her name. She had a bachelor's in Russian history, and took my class—I believe it was Texas history class. And her husband was out at the base. And when finished this interview she said, "I've been to the Louvre. I've been to the British Museum, and this is by far the most interesting historical thing that I've done." She interviewed one of these people that was really outgoing, and I can't remember who it was right now.

ES:

Well, that's great. Anything else you want to add to the record?

DH:

I think I've told more than I should have.

ES:

I'm sure I'll think of more questions as soon as I walk out of the house, but thank you so much. This helps a whole lot in understanding the collection and what we're doing moving forward with it.

DH:

Well I'm not sure that—since I didn't—all my experience delaying with this was in the field with my own interviews, and of course when you're interviewing somebody on a buried treasure or something, if you show too much interest, they'll clam up on you. So you have to be kind of casual and so forth, but I learned how to communicate with people, how to get them to open up, and that's not easy to do, and I try to tell my students it's like carrying on a good conversation. They can tell whether or not you're interested in what you're doing. And I said, "If you don't know your equipment, and you get back, and you can't hear your voice on there, a lot of these

people speak very softly. And I know the recorders are better now—their speakers—but you get back, you could hear your sound, you couldn't hear their sound. What are you going to do if you get back and maybe the batteries were out, you weren't getting anything. You going to go back and say, oh I didn't get the interview, can I do it again? A lot of them may be upset if you don't know your equipment, if you don't get the recording the first time around.” So anyway—

ES:

Yeah, I'm looking at the recorder right now, and I'm thinking, oh did I get it loud enough, now that I'm second guessing.

DH:

Yeah, I talk pretty loud.

ES:

Yeah, yeah, and these pick up everything. And we record at such a high quality now, we can always boost things. You can derive more than you get out of tape. But yeah, the second go around of an interview, it never captures the magic of the first interview. So I'm glad we got this on tape this time around.

DH:

Well, maybe that'll help. If you can think of anything else, just let me know. But what I was saying was, I didn't take a professional class in how to do this, but I was in the field for a year dealing with a hard subject, and then I dealt with the Indians. And I remember going down with the Oklahoma Historical Society, and they had some tapes, Comanche tapes, and they had found a lady down there at Apache Oklahoma that could translate Comanche. And we get down there and she said, “Oh that's the old Comanche. I know the new Comanche.” But I got a video tape of that at one point. So—I don't think I ended up with any of the Indian archive stuff, because I was working for them at that point.

ES:

But you learned out in the field. You didn't have to learn—

DH:

Yeah that's right.

ES:

And that's—I think that's really an interesting way of learning it too, just diving in the deep end and figuring it out as you go along.

DH:

Well the Indian projects were difficult because they don't trust you, you know, starting out. But if you make friends with them, they're always your friend.

ES:

Well—

End of Recording

