

**Oral History Interview of
Charles “Bud” Townsend**

Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson

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Canyon, Texas

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Transcript Overview:

This interview features Charles “Bud” Townsend as he discusses his adventures in his youth and pursuing a history PhD. In this interview, Charles describes the pranks that he would pull when he was a child, and how that created his reputation in town. Charles also explains his journey towards earning his PhD in history.

Length of Interview: 05:19:11

Subject	Transcript Page	Time Stamp
Boots and boot making; his innocent years of childhood	05	00:00:00
His interest in chemistry; injury	13	00:30:45
How rodeo changed him	21	01:05:14
Antics he and his friends would pull; becoming a Christian	26	01:25:37
The story of his twins' birth; his higher education	30	01:49:47
Influence of black fiddle players on Bob Wills	45	02:30:55
How Bud was received in Madison	48	02:39:47
Working rodeos while still in school	60	03:32:10
Lecturing about rodeo	66	03:58:52
Bud's shoeshine business	68	04:08:17
Undergraduate students vs. Graduate students; writing	75	04:34:46

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Michael Grower (MG):

I was wearing a pair of—I bought a pair of Roper's thirty years ago. They repaired them for me and I won't ever give up them. He fusses at me all the time because I never give up on my boots. He was fussing at me. He says, "You know, a Roper's not truly a boot, it's just a shoe with a top."

Bud Townsend (BT):

That's right.

MG:

That is correct.

BT:

Ordinarily they don't have a shank, but some of them do put enough arch in them to keep feet from—but no more than that.

MG:

But they got that little short walking heel. I just don't think—it's not a graceful design to me. I know that sounds crazy. You know what I mean.

BT:

Yeah, I know what you mean but most people disagree with you. I agree with you but most people today, you can't sell them that high heel. That's kind of medium. That's not really—

MG:

That's not real high. In fact, I was going to tell you I heard of a Mexican boot maker over on Grand Street, Los Tres Vaqueros. I was told they would build a pretty good pair of boots for one hundred and fifty or two hundred dollars. So I went in there to try to get them to build me a pair of forties' style boots, because I had a pair that I rescued out of a house in Amarillo. They had red rot and they were falling apart but I wanted them to build it like that. He couldn't for the life of him—he'd made them three times. He kept making that cockroach-killer toe on it. You know what I mean? And I just wanted to say, "I don't want a pair of elf shoes, I want a pair of boots."

BT:

What do you mean by cockroach toe?

MG:

You know that long, long pointy thing. That's a Mexican—

BT:

You know that's coming back?

MG:

Yeah.

BT:

We didn't make many. We wouldn't make fifteen pair of round-toed boots, any narrow or wide. One of the neatest boots we ever made was for a ranch family that lived between Henrietta and Wichita Falls; not a little town. They had a big mansion up on a hill. Keith, that was their name; Jim Keith, his brother George Keith—Mary's mother taught him—and the old man Keith. Back in those days, I seemed like men looked older earlier. He had us make him a boot and I always wished that I'd had them make me a pair made like it. Mr. Keith would make a regular cowboy boot but put nothing in the toe. See, yours has got a—that's a celastic box.

MG:

Right.

BT:

It's just some cloth. They kept putting celluloid cement on it till they get it hard. That's the toe. We call it a celastic toe. Then there was the hand box, the leather, real cowboy, handmade boot. But anyway, Mr. Keith—and he always, seemed like, bought a dark-brown boot, not a tan. It was just as soft out here—softer than this—and kind of flattened off. It looked like to me, really, the most comfortable boot I ever saw a man—then one of his sons, Jim—he was a great fan of steer roping. Back in those days it was outlawed. They only had it in Oklahoma and New Mexico and Cheyenne, those three places. You couldn't have it in Texas. It was outlawed here until my early rodeo career, because they bused them. Now they call it steer roping or whatever but in the old days it was called steer busting. Well that already tells you it's going to be in trouble with the humane. So anyway, he was a great fan of that. George, he was the more conservative of the two brothers. When the old man and Mr. and Mrs. Keith came in, the women ran out of the office just as if it was a queen. Kind of polite. Everybody was so polite to the Keith's. But we made him that boot and I'd love to see one of them. Might have me a pair made some day. I really need boots, with forty-nine pair.

Andy Wilkinson (AW):

I was going to say you have an odd number of pairs up there. You need—

BT:

Yeah, that's right.

MG:

But it's a multiple of seven and that's a good thing. This Mexican man up there could not make the toe box wide enough for my foot. I mean, that toe box was that big. He finally got frustrated with me and gave me my money back.

BT:

What do you wear, a G?

MG:

No, it's a D. I've got a normal-sized foot. But I mean, that toe box was that big. And I kept thinking—

AW:

The narrow toe—when I was a policeman in Lubbock in the late sixties, early seventies, on Saturdays you would drive down Broadway in the evening and you would see pairs of Stacy Adams shoes with the long, skinny points and they'd be going up. They were so long and skinny. You knew, just seeing that, that it was an undocumented worker ready to go home. So you'd drive up and they would have on a pressed pair of khakis, a pressed shirt, and a sack with some clothes. It was just—those shoes were just—they were like a big red light that says, "Stop here."

BT:

What was that shoe?

AW:

A Stacy Adams.

BT:

Then there was Edwin Clapp and Florsheim. Those were the elite shoes. Well, we better get started.

MG:

I want to ask him a question.

BT:

Is this on?

AW:

Yeah. Hold your question for a second. Let me just say this is the fourth of April, 2018.

BT:

I'm going to talk personal this morning.

AW:

Good.

MG:

I want to ask you a geographical question. You talked a lot about Henrietta. In my research on Frank Ray, Henrietta was very much a major cattle shipping point in the latter part of the 1800s.

BT:

Oh it was?

MG:

When you were growing up, was Henrietta still that—I mean, I know you talked a lot about Fort Worth but I'd like to hear a little bit more about Henrietta. Mr. Ray would—

BT:

We'll talk about Henrietta. But when I was growing up, I didn't even know there was a Henrietta. I was that ignorant. I knew there was a Montague because it was the county seat of Montague County. I knew there was Waurika. But to tell you the truth, I was pretty big before I knew there was a Henrietta. I can tell you what I knew about it after I moved there in '49. I never will forget the first time I went to Wichita Falls. I thought, My gosh, I'll be kidnapped here and never get to go back. [laughter] It was known then as the world's worst water.

AW:

Wichita Falls?

BT:

Yes. You couldn't drink it. Even on some maps, "Wichita Falls, home of the world's worst water." They finally got some lakes. It's not too good now. But that was the story of Wichita Falls. When I finally moved to Denton to go to school with my brother, that I'll speak about later, then I—my brother came on the Coast Guard and they decided to go to Dallas but said I couldn't go. Well, that was in my rough and rowdy days. You didn't tell me what I could do and couldn't. So I got out on the highway and hitchhiked into Dallas all by myself from Denton. Dallas was—and oh my gosh, I'd look up at those things. I'd pass that old place. Y'all are too young to—it was called The Pirate's Cave. It was right on the main—it's kind of a cave. It was a dive. I'd see those things, and I finally ran into my brothers. So after Donald left to go back to the Coast Guard that late evening, Bill and I got out on the highway and hitchhiked to Denton. Hitchhiking was as regular for people, not just necessarily poor people but everybody, as getting

on a plane is today. You didn't think a thing about going to Dallas, just get on the highway, hitchhike to Gainesville, get on those little, old—I don't even know what the number of that old road was that went through Valley View, Sanger, Denton, Lake Dallas. I used to get a kick out of imitating those announcers for the bus stations. "Bus leaving Nocona in five minutes. Get ready, all passengers, for St Joe, Munster, Lindsay, Gainesville, Sherman, Denison, and Texarkana." I loved to imitate those guys because they really had a pattern for that thing. "Change buses in Gainesville for Dallas, for Valley View, Sanger, Denton, Lake Dallas, and Dallas." Those guys, they were better speakers. And radio people were—back then, the men who gave the news, like Edward R. Murrow, or Wendell Willkie. "Good evening, Mr. and Mrs. America, this is Walter Winchell." "Hello everyone into the Ship Sets Sea. This is Walter Winchell. Big news: Eleanor Roosevelt spent the night in the White House, believe it or not." She was gone all the time. That was supposed to be funny. But anyway, those guys were a good—well, if you're ready to get started, I am.

AW:

We already started, I think. [laughter]

BT:

Oh my gosh. I'm just cutting up.

AW:

No, this is fun.

BT:

Here's what I thought I would talk to you about today. Very personal, but you need the personal things.

AW:

We can look the rest up on the—

BT:

This you couldn't find because it's both a confession and to pinpoint who I am. You don't ever want to forget who you are, where you came from. I think that's the trouble with a lot of people, especially in show business, especially in Hollywood. They forget they're not the characters they're portraying, unless it turns—somebody asked John Wayne, "What'd you like—what kind of a man do you want to be?" He said, "All my life I wanted to be the man that I portray in the movies." So you need to know what—but anyway, I spoke briefly to this—and there may be some repetition—about my—I kept saying wild and woolly days. Jimmie Rogers had a song, [singing] "My good old rough and rowdy days." So I'll talk about that. First of all—I guess the place to begin is when I was—had the gang and everything. And when I use the word "gang," it

was usually my two little brothers and a couple of other people that we'd pick up. But I had a way of persuading guys to do things that I shouldn't have. So I was kind of a little city thug boss. So I talked about my reputation in Nocona. As some woman once said, "Bud's reputation far exceeded the reality of the man. If anything could happen in Nocona, Bud did it, like Jesse James robs a bank in Illinois and he's way down in Missouri somewhere." Though I'm not comparing myself to Jesse James. What happened is after one's daddy, father, dies—mine died in 1938. My mother was left first with seven children to try to hold the family together on the second ranch that we lived on. I told you about living near the old big ranch house. I told you about moving in 1937 with three wagons. All the neighbors bring their wagons. It was about four miles. This was a wagon train of about three or four wagons carrying what few things we had. You didn't need to wear—yeah you did. You'd take your wood stove and you'd take your ice box, true ice box if you had one. We didn't at the time. We had one later. We moved to this new place. Well, when Daddy died, a woman—and then my mother, within a year of the death, she was forty-two. Daddy was forty-eight. We think of that as very young today. The age of Natalie here, she claims to be forty now, is it?

Natalie (N):

It's forty.

BT:

She was thirty-nine for three or four years. But anyway, Momma was young, Daddy died, and here's this—that's pretty young. She had about a seventh grade to tenth grade education, if that much, but one of the smartest women I ever knew. So then Bill went off to college, to Denton, to work on his degree. He was kind of a math genius. He proved that later. He was pioneer in computers. He established the computer school at Louisiana State University. He was that far ahead of his time. They'd had a computer symposium at LSU and he invited IBM. There was only two or three that made them then. They were the size of that wall. So then they suggested that he head up that thing in LSU. But that's just an aside from where he went. Then Donald either had to be drafted and go into the Army or join something, so he joined the Coast Guard. By this time, my sister, Dorothy, decided that she would go to Washington, D.C. Women could really get jobs up there, because everybody was gone. Then my other sister had married into a lawyer family in Louisiana; married quite well. So there momma was left with us three little boys. I called those my innocent years. From 1938 to 1941 we stayed on the farm. Some of the greatest years of my life, I thought, there because we just had Momma and the two brothers we rode the bus to school and that sort of thing. It was a great life. We had our own cows, our own chickens, family. Her brother, one of the favorites of the family, was a half a mile from us. Aunt Babe, his wife, they were just wonderful people, though he did reserve a right to cuss like ranch people all did at that time. You weren't in vogue if you'd had been very polite. My mother included when she'd get mad. She was the greatest Christian I ever knew outside of my own wife and maybe even in some ways greater than even Mary as a Christian. I want to emphasize that

because I'm going to emphasize our un-Christian life. But in my earliest years—that was in '38. I should back track. Well, I will. I guess got a little unruly. That's euphemistically speaking, a little unruly. About after we'd been there three years, I went to town a lot and got—kind of got my liberty and began to get—not bad, but Momma had three children, trying to make a living for the three. She'd walk six miles to the bowl patch and pick cotton. That was when they picked cotton. Then she'd walk home and rub out the clothes. It wasn't too big a job because we had two sets of clothes, clean and dirty, not Sunday, but just clean and dirty. She'd even walk to town, six miles, and make up beds at the hotel, Hotel Nocona. So Mr. Willard, who owned the Hotel Nocona, he said, "Dot, there's an old hotel. It's abandoned. It's right above Gif's [?] [00:19:14] Drug Store right on main. Hotel Nocona was on kind of a side street. He said, "Gill Udd [?] owns that." He's either the president or chief director of People's bank. We had two banks: Farmers & Merchants Bank, which my granddad owned a lot of stock in, they kept a lot of money in, then we had—it was by the hotel then over two buildings was this old hotel with about—I could count them—about ten rooms, one bath. So he said, "Dot, I'll bet you can just leave your farm and I'll bet Gill Udd would lease you that hotel and you could live here and you could work for me and whatever." See, we couldn't get welfare. Momma applied for welfare, but that's what—I don't know what they called it, "relief" I think. They said, "Mrs. Townsend, your dad is El Keck. My gosh, he can buy that bank. It wouldn't look right to give you—" so we never got any of that, not one bit, except one time we went over and made mattresses at Montague. So Momma approached Gil and he said yeah. He said, "Dot, would thirty dollars a month be too much for that hotel, all those rooms?" Well, we'd brought in all kinds of beds and everything and lived there. Well, that means I was really turned loose, see, because now you're in town. You can stay out as late—and drink. I wasn't a drunk but every once in a while I'd get drunk and have that kind of a problem. So to make a long story short, or what should be longer, Momma said, "I just can't handle Bud anymore." Bill said, "Well, I'll take him down to Denton. He can live there with me in the Talon House." North Texas is the Eagles. Talon House. So he moved me down there because he was strong-armed. He was the one that wouldn't let me announce that rodeo—I mean, ride that bull. [Clears throat] The first thing he did—he was a very—how should I say—a conservative in terms of money and whatever. He never had any. So he got me a job at the Talon House cleaning the upstairs: clean the bathroom, sweep out. It was almost given to me, the job. Mrs.—I can't remember her name now—that owned it. Bill had lived there for some time. Bill was highly respected in all those places. Now, it was during the war, keep in mind. I went there in '42, about '42. It was before that episode in Austin. This was in '42. Then he said, "I think we can get—I'm hopping tables." That's what they called it, meaning you set the table and when the girls came—it was at the Hop House. Ma Hopkins was her name. She owned half of Denton but you'd think she was starving to death. Even had a room and house next to us by old Marcus Hall. Marcus was one of the first professors up here at West Texas A&M. So she said, "Yeah, bring him." So we'd get up about—those old hot days and no air conditioning. Just the best. Sleep in till about four to six in the morning, get up and go down the alley to the Hop House. The table would be set and then the girls would come in, these

college girls, some of them freshman all the way to senior. Bill met his wife and married there, Brad's mother. He had this job. And they'd come in. You'd bring their cereal. Cereal was a big thing, mainly; Post Toasties. And bring—if they ran low on milk that'd be called hopping the tables. When it was over, we'd take the plates away. I never will forget. After that shift—there were three shifts. You worked two and you got all your meals. You got one—you got the meal you worked and the second meal you worked but the third, you didn't have to work, third shift; morning, noon, and night. So, Bill—I said, "Well, Bill, let's go back home." He said, "Oh no, Bud. We've got to set the tables for the noon shift." I said, "What?" He said, "Who do you think set these for us today? The shift last night." So I got the job there. I was always—I knew I was on my own. I knew Momma could never have much for us. [Coughs] All we needed, but not enough. So I got a job at the print shop. Bill's roommate, Joe Speck, who later became president of a school in Georgia, he worked at the print shop. So, mainly my job was to tear down the print. If you're going to have a sheet of newspaper, you use certain type—that heavy—down here are the smaller and then down here they made this with what was called a linotype type that was invented some years before that. Well, somebody had to break that down. They were screwed in there with little wedges to hold them. So, I broke type. You put the A in the A and the B in the C and the large in the small. Then all that linotype, you threw it in a can. They re-melted that. Those linotype type machines had a thing on the side. You poured the old stuff in there and it melted it and they used it again. So anyway, I got twenty cents an hour for working at the print shop. It beat no money at all. I remember the first month. I don't know how many hours I worked. You can figure it up yourself. I got five dollars and twenty cents. Then he got me a job sweeping and cleaning the speech hall. I became self-sustained. I never had to ask anybody for any money. He never gave me a penny. Since I was twelve years old, I've been on my own. My mother never gave me a quarter after I was thirteen years old. I made my own. Because later I became a businessman, as you know, and shined shoes and announced. But I always had a job. Well, what happened in Denton was—was it Benjamin Franklin who said it or was it St Paul? I don't mean to be sacrilegious. Of course, it was Franklin. He said, "An idle mind—" you know the rest—"is the Devil's workshop." Well, Bill was young. He was going with the girls and everybody would leave the Talon—it was during the war. We didn't have but about nine people in that upper floor. We had several empty rooms. So I began to get into mischief. When I said "rough and rowdy days," it wasn't mean or kin [?] or hurt anyone or steal or that kind of a thing. It was just looking for something to have a laugh about. I finally got me a bicycle and I [drove] over to what was then called the—I guess it's TWU, Texas Women's University. So I'd go there. Oh, I'd smoke when I was twelve, just like Natalie did when she was thirty-nine. You know what I—you're too young to remember. I smoked Rum & Maple. It was a—it gave off the most beautiful aroma. And they made cigarettes. Because I was crazy about Bing Crosby, I smoked a pipe. I have some—right over—my old pipe collection over there. I'd ride over there and I'd smoke. And I'd get into all kinds of mischief; fun things. I hate for Michael to miss this story. But I'd be there at night and be lonely. Finally did get a little better job. First job I ever had, where I had to get my—I still got my old brass social security card. Was yours brass?

AW:

No. It was paper from the start.

BT:

It was brass. I believe that's right—I got one—unless I had it made. So I got a job setting pins at the Denton bowling alley. When you say setting pins, when the guy threw his first ball, if one ball—pin was lying in front, you had to jump off, get that pin out of the way. If you happened to have a drunk or somebody, he'd bowl on you while—I've known them break their legs or whatever. But then after he threw his two balls, then you jumped and set the ten pins: one, two, three—the ten pins. Then you'd get up there and put your feet up here. So that was—it was never lazy. I made pretty good money that way, enough to buy a new bike once in a while or whatever. My real love—see, I didn't go to Denton High School. I went to demonstration school at North Texas State Teacher's. What demonstration means: it was a school where teachers, would be teachers, going to be teachers, would demonstrate that they could teach. So you can imagine how little education I got. It was the worst institution I was ever in. Good people. Sweet kids. None of that, but I got interested in chemistry. This added to my—this is where I really—out of this chemistry thing came tragedy and triumph. I got to fooling around. The people we made fun of—funny I'd end up loving music and writing a book on music—was over at the music hall. It's a big place. North Texas had one of the best schools of music in the United States. Old Dr. Bane. Funny his name would come to me. Indiana University finally hired him and that's how Indiana made their great music school, was with Dr. Bane. But anyway, we'll get—it was fashionable for the chemist over—you know. Some of the music majors were pretty—be careful with this word—they were pretty sissy. I could use another word. But had more delicate ways. They were making chemistry silver acetylide. You'd make it and it would—the way you made it, you took silver nitrate, as I recall, and bubbled acetylene gas by pouring water over carbide in a beaker and that gas would go into the silver acetylide and it'd make a mud. Then you'd let that mud dry, get it into little flakes, take it over and put it in front of the school of music. Those music majors would come out and step on it. It'd go like a firecracker and [imitates sound]. They'd dance around. This was fun for the chemistry majors, the physics people, the people in science. They always have a tendency, and maybe rightfully so, to look down on everything else. So I wanted to be able to do that. So I began to try to make it. I made it and I got—had written receipts. If I'd had a good lawyer, I'd own the state of Texas. You had to write up what you was going to do. And I was who's who in chemistry there. I was just a boy, twelve or thirteen years old. I wanted to make this silver acetylide where I could take it home. We'd play with it in Nocona. I'd hitchhike home on weekends or whatever. It was fun. Not wanting to hurt anyone. And this will account for questions that people ask about my accident, my hand. I haven't told it to too many people but I wanted it on record. And then I learned that if you would take nitric acid and a few other things and get it hot enough, you could make nitroglycerine. Well, they caught me on those old green—smoke would come off, like you see in—going into Denver now, that old nitric acid dust. That's what smog mainly is. So anyway, they caught me and made me throw that out. But

finally, finally, I perfected—let's see. No. I got it to where I could make it go off with heat, but I didn't get it perfected to where you could step on it. That's what I wanted to happen. It's just fun; kid stuff. "Idle mind. Devil's workshop." Get this done. So I learned two things: that I could put a piece that size of my fingernail—it'd nearly take that TV stand off the ground. And you could put it under that bronze and it'd knock it way over here, just a little piece. I learned to make guncotton. You make guncotton by putting—let's see. I guess silver nitrate, maybe. Some chemist will hear this and say, "Bud's forgotten." You put that in water, silver—potassium nitrate. You use that in making gunpowder? Saltpeter. So, you soak it a while, take it out, dry it, pull your piece off, and you put a match to it. [imitates sound] So, you could set that silver—it was called silver acetylide. I told you how to make it. That's bubbling. The ammonia—or the—the acetylene into the silver nitrate. That's why this is dark, that silver. So anyway—I had more darn fun. I guess you could condemn my soul to hell for still laughing about it. It's still funny because it didn't hurt anybody. There was a—a guy moved downstairs, down below my room. He was a philosopher major. You philosopher majors here, let's go ahead and get mad at me. But they were always a little funny. They might have a beard. You know, they were the Socrates of their days, or Plato or whatever. So, I'd take a—they had those old stoves, those old gas stoves with a rubber hose. It was the one you had burned down all the houses in Dallas. You'd turn the gas on over here and light that and that was your heat. Pretty good heat. It had a little stuff in the back and make you throw it out. Well, those old stoves went over like this at the top and had a little thing here behind them. Well, I know—I wish I'd remember. He's a nice guy, this philosopher. He and I were pretty close because everybody else would go out and I'd visit with him at night. So I'd take a piece of that and put it up in the stove. I'd know about when he came in. I knew about how long it'd take for that to go off. Sometimes I'd be upstairs. Most of the times I'd really want—I'd sit down on his bed, because I knew that it was going to go off. Bang. The stove would go up and go four or five feet high and come back down. He said, "You know I've got to tell"—that's her name, Mrs. Wright, that owned the house. "I've got to tell Mrs. Wright there's something wrong with this stove." Well, the next day—if I knew I wasn't going to be there, I'd go ahead and put a piece in there. It'd blow up again. They couldn't figure out—they should've looked because it was making a little bump through that tin each time it went off. It didn't break all the way through. So, we would—I'd take that home, package of it. You set it off only with heat. So we had more darn fun in Nocona. We would—we knew about what time the night watchmen—this is kid's stuff but it was fun. So we knew about what time—in those days, the night watchmen had to go up and down the alleys and on certain posts was a key and you had to stick it in a thing around here. When you stuck that in here, it marked the little disc and it showed what time he went to that post to be sure he was doing his job. Well, I had learned that I could make it slow fuse. Instead of using potassium, use sodium. It would be slow. So, one night a bunch of us got around behind a drugstore where they keep the cans. You used to bring in your cans of ice cream, big cans, and put them in a ducking thing. [Phone rings] Another one of those—you know I told you not to answer. All three of them left messages and they were trying

to say my credit card was this that or another. But anyway, so for the people listening—just let it go, Natalie.

N:

Okay, I will.

BT:

We knew about what time he was going to—so we all got behind these cans at the drug store. I put a pretty good charge and a piece of that sodium soaked cotton and lit it. It'd just glow. Here came—we called him Old Man Waters, the night watchman. As fate would have it, just as he got that key down, just put in his—whatever he—clock, clock in. That thing went off. I'll tell you, it looked like a fire that big. You could see the—you know, where it went off right down the bottom. Well, the old man jerked his gun out and shot three or four times. Don't you see why this was fun? [Laughs] Well, we waited. He looked around to see. I know that he didn't—he never did figure it out. So, we'd go around on the front. This was behind the drugstore and the F&M [Farmers & Merchants] Bank. We'd go around and sit on the front of the bank. He'd come by and said, "Mr. Waters, we thought we heard some shooting back there in the alley." He said, "Well, I didn't hear anything." Another thing we'd do, I'd take a brown bag—my cousin would come from the country. Our hotel was higher than the drugstore here. You could open the kitchen window of our hotel and just step out onto this roof or on—Momma used to—on hot summer nights, we'd put mattresses out there and sleep. It was about like the slums of New York. So we knew about when Mr. Waters would come and sit at the bank. So, I would take that silver acetylide and put it in a piece of that cotton and put it in a brown sack—it looked like nature always cooperated—and light it. He'd be sitting down there resting to get ready to make his rounds. Tom and I'd just drop that down, that bag. It'd just look like a—sometimes it would blow nearly to him. I had that—pardon the expression—backfire, too. Old man Waters would be sitting there half asleep and the bag would blow over there by him. He'd go off and he thought it was a bank robbery. He jumped up and everything. [Laughs] So one night the wind blew the other way. There was a guy there. He married a beautiful girl. He was a no good rascal. I'm a good one to be saying that. So it blew over. He was just across the street from the hotel, at Ben Franklin. That sack blew—he liked to take his girlfriend riding at night. Of course, we didn't like that because he had the pretty girl. So, this sack blew and that thing went off under that horse. That horse jumped up and came down sideways. Fortunately didn't break his leg or anything. He jumped up cussing. He couldn't find anybody. He hollered, "Did you see anybody here?" [Laughs] Of course, we were way over here. He finally got back on that horse. You know, we'd kid him and say, "Well, Fats—" his name was Fats Breeze.

AW:

Fats Breeze?

BT:

Fat Breeze. He had a brother named Corky Breeze. They were—and he was the worst one of them. But anyway, we'd say, "Well, Fat, we heard something that your horse spooked last night." Anyway, to needle him, to get him—so, that was fine and dandy. Nobody hurt, nothing. They didn't know who was doing this but they finally—the next episode is—where I got the bad reputation—is that I learned how to make rotten egg gas. I believe you put hydrochloric acid over sulfur, something sulfur. They're little rocks. When that hydrochloric acid set off that sulfur, it was called—smelled like rotten eggs. This was the fun one. So, I learned to make it. Oh gosh, you could put it in that—we'd all have to get out of here. It stank so—it didn't hurt anything but it was just terrible. Rotten egg gas they called it. So one day—all those things just would come to me; devious mind. I wish I could say I was ashamed of it but it was so darn much fun that I still laugh. I said to my cousin—I could get him to do anything, old Tom. I said, "Tom, here's what we're going to do. We're going down to the Ritz—" it was the main theater—"and I'm going to put some of those particles down here. You put the—we'll put the acid in this little bottle." You could put one in one and it won't hurt you. It was not dangerous. I said, "You go in the movie. I'll stay out here with the popcorn machine so they'll know that I didn't do it. You go in and you go down—they used to—people would tee tee in the movie. Momma'd have two little boys and they'd say, "Momma"—deciding what movie—"I need to go to the bathroom." She said, "Well go right over." You could sometimes hear the urine hitting the floor. I mean, everything would work. Those were the good old days where you had that light that shined all the way down through the theater. We'd send balloons up or whatever. And before I go on with this, one of the tricks I like to play on the boys—they all picked on me at the Talon House. I learned that if you're very careful with a condom, you can fill it full of water and get it up on the door. So this one guy had been picking on me. He was a senior. He'd say, "Freshman, shine my boots." He'd been picking on me. So I nearly closed the door but leave about that much space, and fill a condom—because they all had them. I'd just get them out of their drawer. You could put three or four gallons of water in there. I hadn't many a miscarriages. They'd break. I'd get them up on the edge of that door where when they opened that door, that condom full of water hit them right on the head, some of them in their suits and everything. So that was another good one that we'd pulled with our chemistry things in Denton. There was one guy. He roomed with this kid that—oh, and I'd put that up and it got him. He's the best kid—best man in there. He was a good Christian man. Kenneth Hanna. Married a fine lady. I fixed it one time to catch his roommate who was more my age—and got him. So he said—it was Workman, his roommate. He said he put that water up there. I said, "Well, isn't that a shame. What kind of a man—" so Kenneth was in physics. He said, "I'll tell you what we're going to, Bud. I'm tired of them picking on me." He said, "We're going to shock every one of them." So he shuttled in my room, and he got a rectifier. It's a thing about that long and that big around. You plug it in and you can rev it up and you make that spark jump that far. [Imitates sound] Not going to hurt you. All you do is hurt yourself getting out of here. So he said, "Now, here's what we'll do. I'm going to get the wire." Of course, we got all this from the chemistry lab. We ran a wire to every man's bed in

that upstairs and made a coil out of it, then ran it where no one could see it. Two rooms in here. Old Duke Armati [?] [0:50:08] was killed in the Monsanto explosion in Texas City. Then Workman. Only one we didn't put it under was Kenneth's bed. Then we put it under my brother's bed and his roommate. He's the one who really picked on me, shine his shoes and whatever. Everyone in the thing. We ran all those wires along the wall and brought them into my room right by my bed. In those days, you couldn't get through a summer night without sweating a lot. So everyone would sweat enough to wet that, almost as if you'd urinated in bed. So, he told, he said, "You set your alarm. At four o'clock in the morning," when everybody had sweated enough, I set that thing. [Imitates people screaming] Down there, hollered up and down, jumped out of bed and everything else. Of course, they found it and traced that wire to my room. Bill, my brother, was on me, everybody. Wait a minute, don't leave. I want—

N:

I've got to go clean.

BT:

This is the one—let me get into this just for a little bit. It's Thursday. Anyway, so then everybody would get that thing. The guys would go into the bathroom. Because we only had one bath. If their hands would be wet, they'd start to come out. It turned out to where everybody was shocking everybody. But what gave me the bad reputation—

AW:

That wasn't enough to give you the bad reputation?

BT:

No. Well, that was just in the Talon House. But in Nocona, I learned how to make this rotten egg gas. So I said, "Tom"—that's where I left the story—"You go and set that off." It was about three in the afternoon. They had pretty good crowds in the afternoon. It could've been—it wasn't Saturday. I remember that. Boy, in a minute, they began to come out of there coughing. [Imitates coughing] The boy that caught tickets—he was a nice kid—he said, "You know, I believe that sewer creek has gone out of banks and the wind's blowing that sewer in here." He said, "It's the worst." Boy, they came out of that theater. It emptied it. But no one was caught. They didn't look because they thought it was the sewer creek. Well, that night, of all times, that's when I made my big kill. *Gone With the Wind* was playing. It was packed. I think they raised the price from nine cents for kids to fifteen and older people from twenty cents to—it was a big night for them. So, Tom and I went and we sat there a long time. Hadn't have been for a momma, we'd have gotten away with it. He set it off way down at the corner in the theater. They were dark, you know, all the way. He started it. People began to come out of that thing coughing. They were trying to find out where it was coming from. I just sat there like a gentleman. I think Tom may have left or he came back and sat down. Well, what happened was the theater managers found a little boy.

Somebody said that kid's the one that did that. This kid was Rita Fern Norwood's little brother; Norwood kid. Well, they grabbed him and accused him. That was what caught us. Rita Fern said, "No, Tom is the one. I saw him pour that out down there." Then they began to try to find it. They put their hands in urine. They swept the thing out. He had to buy back a stack of tickets that thick. So immediately said, "Bud was behind it."

N:

I really have to go. It's time for me to be there. I'll see y'all later.

BT:

But anyway, it gives you an idea of what a nice boy you worked for. They barred me from the movies, barred Tom, too. But they finally took it off of Tom and barred me. It was three or four months. Well, in the meantime, I perfected it and didn't know it. So one day I went in—I was the only one in the lab that day. They had those big old tables, you know, lab tables, sinks. They were about that thick. I had made this and I didn't know I'd perfected it. I filled these Horlicks milk tablets. Horlicks milks. It was a kind of a malted milk. You used—you could make malted milk out of it.

AW:

H-a-r-l-i—

BT:

Harlicks, H—it's either H-o-r, H-a-r-l-i-c-k-s. Harlicks milk tablets. I ate those. Well, I had this thing. It had a little tin lid on it. I don't know how much I had on there. I hope no more than that. All that made. I didn't know I'd perfected what I was working on. I was walking through the lab. This is where my rough and rowdy days got me. I was swinging that and hit it, swung it under the table, and it exploded. It blew these three fingers off, from the right of the index—left of the index, blew those. The thumb was just hanging. It was the most horrible looking thing. It was that large. It looked like a fried beef steak. It was the most horrible looking thing I ever saw. And knocked me down. I thought I was the only one in there. I learned years later I wasn't. This was funny, too. Because I did vaguely remember some guy hollering and screaming out in the hall. I was so gone. And it went down. See, it would've killed me but it went off under so it went down. My leg—this leg right here.

AW:

Oh gosh. Yeah.

BT:

See all that silver? I picked glass out of that for three or four years. Then this leg was laid wide open. It was that large. Cut everything perfect to the nerves. Nurses used to look at it and they'd

have them come in from the hospital. It was the greatest study they ever saw. I staggered out and went down outside the lab. That was the last thing I remembered for two weeks. I laid unconscious nearly a month. I came to a little—and lay there. They didn't think I'd live. We didn't have any—only drug you had was sulfa drugs. They couldn't put much on this. Only thing they ever put on this leg was Vaseline. This hand was that wide. We put it on a pad. They finally had to take this thumb off. They must've put me to sleep seven or eight times for blood transfusions. The old boy that roomed with my brother that I shocked, he gave me blood all the time. He'd always kid me. "Now, Bud, don't let this blood make you fall in love with my girlfriend." You know, just joke stuff. The girls at the Kappa Theta Pi house, they bought me a bicycle. But I laid there for way yonder more than a month. My mother had no money. My brother was working on the—we were just at the mercy of Denton Hospital. Finally—and they used ether. Oh my gosh. You talk about nearly killing you.

AW:

I had ether when I was a kid.

BT:

You taste it for days. It was the most—

AW:

Did you have the hallucinations?

BT:

Yes.

AW:

Yeah, I had those.

BT:

I dreamed that I saw a parachute landing outside my window. I said, "Go see if that man was hurt," things like that. So we stayed there and they said, "He'll never walk. He may—he'll never walk again. Maybe he can use that hand." They thought about taking the leg off. They said, "We can save it but he'll never walk again." So, after about six weeks—well, they first took me back to the old—the very room where I set the bombs off against that philosopher. I laid in that thing. Finally they said, "We're going to try you now to stand up." I'd been there two weeks. When I stood up, I mean, it just—and I went to the ground or they caught me or whatever. Finally they took me back to Nocona. Well, I was still barred from the show and everything. But by now, after that, everybody knew—my reputation was made. I was the bomber. A stink bomb was all it was. Never hurt a soul because we didn't do that. It was just mischief.

AW:

How old were you?

BT:

Thirteen. So, you can figure—I'm eighty-eight now—how many years ago. How many does that figure? Way over seventy, isn't it?

MG:

Seventy-five.

BT:

Huh?

MG:

Seventy-five.

BT:

Seventy-five years ago. Of course, it—they started to take this off, this index, and didn't. I'm glad they left it because I can use it. And this hand I can use. Whatever you got. So, we finally got the hand healed to where I could use it. But for months I had to have that Vaseline changed every day. That puss would come through there and they had to be—oh, if it stuck the least little bit it was something. So the way I walked—got to where I could walk. I never did use a cane or anything. Maybe I'm stilling feeling that effect. I slung my foot; couldn't bend it. I'd work on it. I'd sling it. I'd work on it and they'd say, "Do twenty of those." Didn't do a bit of good. Might've been in that shape and have been crippled all my life. But in those days, traveling musicians would come to town and play on the street. I didn't know the fiddle player but there was a fiddle. I'd crawl to see that some guy playing the fiddle down on the street; somebody backing him up with a guitar. The way the streets were made in Nocona is there was a—the street, cobblestone. I've got—there's two of those old bricks from that old cobblestone right back there. My cousin got them when they tore up the street. Then you'd have a curb here about six inches then a step over here about twelve inches. So, the sidewalk in Nocona was a good thirty inches from the street. They didn't even have bars or anything in those days. So, I went down there that day from the hotel just right on the street; walked down there. That's how I could get into so much mischief, because we lived right—my front yard was Main Street and my backyard was the alley. I was a true alley rat. So, I went down there and was standing on that curb thirty inches from down here listening to this fiddle player and a drunk came. Even drunks God can use. This drunk came and slapped me on the back, "Bud, how in the hell are you?" Slapped me and knocked me in front of that fiddle player; thirty inches. My heel hit like this and my weight of my body took it down. It was popping like five or six ropes breaking. And the blood squirted. My cousins and all picked me up [coughs] and took me upstairs. It brought me down to my

heels. I can do that now. It brought me to my heels. I couldn't even move it. [coughs] Quit bleeding. They said, "Bud, get up and let's see if you can walk." My gosh, I could walk as well as anybody. In six weeks, I could outrun anybody in Nocona. [Laughs] So that's the story. Well, finally after that, my reputation was made: is that Bud put the stink bomb in the theater. [Coughs] And the theater was the center of the town. So, Jerry Stout, he said, "Bud, I'm going to let you come back to the movie. You're in bad shape now and you can come back." They all brought me. They'd have—the first time, they had to pick me up and put me in the seat, just like an invalid. That kind of was the end of—we did other things; had fun. We've known to shoot craps. It was against the law; shoot dice in the alley. Just little things like that. We didn't—we weren't thieves, we weren't bullies or [coughs]—pardon me. But that's where I got the—sixty years later, the homecoming Betty Lancaster [?] [1:06:15] folks were big oil owners in Nocona. She said, "Bud, have you put a stink bomb in anything since?" Well, that gave me—then I got the Model T after that, you see? That I've already talked about on the other tape with Sally Rand—and all of that. So, my reputation in—there was a drugstore guy there. I knew him. We went to school. We never did like each other until later and we're dear friends. Scar Nelson told a story. He said one time, he said—Dickie McMahan was over at his dad's drugstore standing out in front. I came around from the alley and around people's—Farmers & Merchants Bank. He said to Scar, "Look, look at that? You see him?" Then my brother came. He said, "Look at that." Then my little brother. He said something was about to come down. We didn't do anything. All we had to do was be seen. So that was where I got that reputation. Then, as I told you, I kept that mischievous and—we just—anything we could do, you know, to have fun. We'd turn over every outhouse in Nocona—and there were a lot of them—on Halloween, things like that. It wasn't smart and we shouldn't have done it, but those were the kinds of things we did. So, what happened—rodeo changed all that. Here was I was, just all the things I'd done, though I always had a respect for learning. My brother had taken me—I never got over living in North Texas. I had so much fun and saw the academic life. They didn't have any athletic teams at that time because it was during the war, everybody was gone. But I developed, at Denton, the idea—I knew I hated learning, didn't like to read books or anything. The only book I'd ever read, ironically, interestingly, was Ruth Sheldon's biography of Bob Wills. That's the only book I would ever read. I read that book. But I just didn't care about that kind of thing. So, the rodeo—when I announced that first rodeo and got—I saw then that in spite of all the things that had happened to me, that there was something I could do that would distinguish me, that gave me a goal, that I might have a future. Not that I psychoanalyzed that, but it just happened. I can look back on it now. So, the next thing that changed my life was in Henrietta after I went up there and Ruth got me the job. That was—and the other credit I'd have to give in my life was Jesus Christ. What happened was if they gave me a goal, then being a Christian taught me how to do it and to do it right. All that other put aside, now. The damage was done. You don't look back on any of that. So what happened was when I moved to Henrietta—I may have told this but I want to tell it again because I want to tell the way I grew up. I grew up out on the range. As both of you know, certainly if Ivan was here, cowboys cuss, they raise hell, they have fun and whatever. Well, my

mother was born to a ranch family in southern Oklahoma and North Texas. As I said, she was the greatest Christian I ever knew. I don't want to preface my remarks now by saying this. I never knew a greater Christian than she. If any family came and lived in that Depression, they were ignorant, and backward, and other people laughed at them. Momma saw that. She'd get them clothes, she was kind to them, she'd give them a job if she could, and whatever, cleaning her lawn or whatever. I never will forget. She never taught—she never mentioned—she never told you why. She was just—Christianity was born in her, in spite of her rough family, which was really rough. Four boys and five girls on that ranch, and a grandfather that the only time he talked with God was with “goddamn.” I never will forget. A woman moved into our community named Maddie Bell. At this time, I'd tell you to be pregnant without being married, you know, that was almost like being a terrorist today. It was unforgiveable. People just—everybody shunned them, laughed. You know what my mother did? When she learned Maddie Bell was pregnant, she called my aunt, her sister, and said, “Cora, have you got any baby clothes down there?”, “Well yeah.”, “I want to get them for Maddie Bell.” She called everybody and got all ages. By the time that baby was born, Momma had it clothed, she had her come to the house, she treated her just like she'd treat Princess Margaret. When she got the old hotel—well, I'll tell you that in a minute. It became almost a Salvation Army headquarters in Nocona. She practiced Christianity. So I wanted to make that clear before I say what I'm going to say. I grew up among really heathens. Some of her brothers lived in the neighborhood. They had four or five sons and daughters. They were as rough as they could be, taught me to cuss, and almost [clears throat] taught me that women were to be used and never respected. I grew up with that kind of a mentality. Right out in our front yard, kids would get together and the cousins would play strip poker, try to get one—get the girls stripped. I never will forget one time they got one of them—she lost all of her clothes and she left there cussing everybody with her ass just a shining. But that was the kind of culture [clears throat] that I grew up in. I see that, as I look back, it's no wonder that the kids in inner-cities and whatever turn out like they did. The environment is so bad. I'm not making excuses, I'm giving reasons. So, we didn't know what going to church was. See, we were—we were about eight miles from Nocona and about nine miles from Spanish Fort and Valley View where they had churches. About the only time you heard God mentioned was with “goddamn.” Though I do remember—now, my dad was a gentleman and my mother a great Christian. My dad, I never knew of him to be profane unless he got mad or something, worked hard, and taught us to respect women, taught us to respect each other, and above all, our mother. If you even look cross-eyed at my mother, Daddy would grab you with the nape of the neck and you'd be in trouble. He was a gentleman from the old south, born in Montgomery, Alabama. And his mother—we don't know whether his dad deserted him, was killed, or divorced. We can't find anything on him; Tom Townsend. But Granny, we called her, she brought those two boys—she had two boys—by covered wagon from Montgomery to Indian territory, Healdton, Oklahoma, where my granddad had oil and all. That's where Mom and Dad met. But he had that old southern gentility, though he didn't speak [light bulb pops] that way. He left two—was that a lightbulb that went out?

AW:

Yeah. The bulb just went out in your lamp.

BT:

[Coughs] Maybe it's the lord saying, "Quit lying, Bud." Anyway, that's the kind of environment that I grew up in: rough, tough. [Coughs] And the Keck's were known to have money. I had an uncle named Uncle Buck. I gave the eulogy for his funeral. I told them, I said, "Here's a man that—he loved fast cars, fast horses, and fast women." And he told me, "You tell the truth, Bud, when you give my eulogy." He might've been one of the better ones. Momma had some people in her family that all they did was teach people wrong. Maybe they didn't know right from wrong. And there was always a fight in the Keck family. By fight—sometimes actually fisticuffs. But mainly it was this one mad at that one, say bad things. The family outside of maybe my own part of the family. Don't misunderstand me. Joe Hancock that raised the horse, Aunt Cora was the finest Christian lady you'd want to meet, and some of the other members of the family. But it was a—it was an environment that was not conducive to ever being a Christian or living like one, except the example of my mother. Then when I was turned loose, I didn't even do that. But anyway, what happened was [clears throat] then we moved to another ranch. Uncle Fred was one of the better persons I knew. But oh my gosh, nothing delighted him anymore than to teach kids to cuss. He taught Bill. An old rooster pecked him and for a long time we couldn't take Bill into public. He said, "Goddamn, the old rooster pecked me." He'd go in the barbershop and see a picture of a bird and he'd begin to cuss. Mr. Smith, Mary's dad, I never heard him even say "damn." Well, it just embarrassed him so much there in Henrietta. That and the barber would encourage it. "That's a peacock." Uncle Fred had taught him. He stayed with him some. He was a good man, Uncle Fred was. But he loved—he said, "That goddamn old rooster pecked me." Mr. Smith couldn't stop him. I'll tell you, it was the funniest thing. So when he'd come back in six weeks to get a haircut, this barber couldn't resist it. This young barber said, "Bill, have you seen that old rooster?" [laughs] And Bud would—he'd cut—well anyway, when I moved to Henrietta, working in the boot shop as a sales manager, Mary, of course, was a bookkeeper and kind of an office boss. There were about five in the office. It was named Foy Wood.

AW:

Foy?

BT:

Foy Wood. He was a World War II veteran. I never knew it till after he died and they sent me—I was the nearest thing to a son he ever had. They sent me all of his medals. He was on D-Day. He was right there in Normandy. So, he was a fine Christian man, and had a wife that died in the war; Baptist. Her father had been a postmaster in Nocona. Well, when I moved to Henrietta, you know, she was that old Evangelical Baptist. I knew what she did. I didn't know it then but I know it now. She pointed her finger and said, "Bud's going to become a Christian." She knew

my family and everything, and respected it and really—so forth and so on. So, Foy Wood was the gentleman. So he said, “Bud, Lois called and wanted to know if you would come and eat with us today. She’s made some vegetables.” Oh my gosh, Michael, she could make the best vegetable soup. I didn’t even know she had to have a beef base. It was the most wonderful thing. It’d just knock you down if you were walking. So I just—and I was living in the hotel, see, the old Saint Alamo Hotel—and eating in restaurants. A lot of times I’d just eat Vienna sausage or potted ham or a piece of cheese and crackers, anything. You finally just give up eating. But I’d go on weekends to Momma’s. But anyway, that’s only twenty-eight miles. I had this little, old ’39 Ford I told you about, that Tabu went off. Didn’t I tell you that story? I didn’t? Perfume. No?

AW:

No.

BT:

Well anyway—

MG:

Oh yeah, Ben-Hur Perfume.

BT:

No, no. Tabu.

MG:

Tabu perfume.

BT:

We’d been to Old Mexico and got the beer and it—when we opened it, the—it spewed and hit this bottle of Tabu I’d brought to my mother—she loved it—and it exploded. I’ll tell you that later. [Laughter] Anyway, a lot of things happened. So, she said—maybe it wasn’t the first time. You know these people who are soul winners, ss they—put a hammerlock on you the first time. So about the second time—Lois’ wife. Wonderful woman. I don’t know where I’d be without her. She made me—she either made the Lord or the Lord—both of them worked together. She said, “Bud, are you a Christian?” We were eating one time. I said, “Oh yes. I’ve always believed in God.” She said, “I didn’t ask you that. I asked you if you were a Christian.” I said, “I guess I am. I believe in God.” She said, “That doesn’t make you a Christian, Bud.” She said, “I want to show you a scripture. ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ Do you believe that?” I said, “I sure do. It’s in Bible. You know, I never doubted the Bible a day in my life.” Well, she said, “Will you accept him as your lord and savior? He’ll save you.” I said, “No, I can’t live that life. There’s so much”—she said, “That didn’t say if you could live a great life; if you would

receive Christ as your savior.” I said—just take me by the hand—I said, “Lois, gosh, I’m rodeoing and having a great time. We drink, we do this, that, and the other. We sure do have a lot of good, old rough and rowdy times. I can’t do it. I can’t make the change.” She said, “God will make the change in you.” I knew what had happened. I knew later what had happened. She got that whole church praying for me. Mary never—Mary was a member that church and became a great, wonderful—nearly—I always said, “Mary went back to John the Baptist.” That’s as far back as a Baptist could go. So, I’d never been. I got to explain this to you. I didn’t realize it then. I’d never been around Christian people like that. You certainly didn’t find it around rodeo in those days. Not anything against it but we just—you didn’t want to do that. There was other things. And my family, as I told you, was always hell-raising: Papa Keck getting drunk and members of the family drunk. You know what I mean? I’d never seen Christians. I don’t mean that my mother wasn’t a Christian. Some of the members of the family: Aunt Hazel—I could just go on and on. Do we need to make some changes?

AW:

I’m just—be ready to swap out some batteries here.

BT:

This I want to get on tape because I haven’t told many—

AW:

Let’s stop there and let me put new batteries in—

MG:

Let me use the can, too.

AW:

—just to make sure.

MG:

I love my coffee but I can’t drink too much.

BT:

You know, I drink mine in the morning and that’s it. Today I’ll—[pause in recording] Yes, I love to talk boots.

AW:

This is Andy Wilkinson. It’s still the fourth of April with Michael Grower and Dr. Bud Townsend. We just switched the batteries and now we’re back.

BT:

Well, another thing we did—we was talking about my rough and rowdy days. I wasn't the only one. There was five or six of us. We'd buy a dozen eggs. We'd get up in the dark—lights were bright down the middle of Main Street, but it was a little dark where we could kind of step into the shadows. These cars would come by and we would—of course, there was no air conditioning so the window's usually always open. We wouldn't have done this in the winter. So, we hit these cars. Sometimes they wouldn't even know it or if they did, you know, they'd laugh if they were normal people. But we made—I made—I didn't—I don't think I did it, but if I did, I didn't know it. Here's this boy who came along from down in Bonita, those old, really country boys, and his girlfriend. One of us threw an egg in and hit his girlfriend. Well, he—next day he filed a complaint that Bud Townsend—see, that's where your reputation—like Jesse James—that I did it. Nobody ever knew who did that. It didn't matter. But here came Alto, the city marshal. He's the one that told me we need to take Sally Rand off that pickup. He liked me. Somehow they liked me. So, he said, "Dot, I've got a warrant for Bud." He said, "He'll have to pay a ten-dollar fine"—wasn't that a big deal—"Or go to jail." I said, "Momma, would you pay him?" She said, "No." [AW laughs] I always admired her for that, because I had shine money in my pocket. She said, "No, you did it. Take him away, Alto." So I said, "All right. I'm not going to pay that fine. I don't think I did it." He said, "Well, the warrant's against you. You're going to have to do one or the other." So we walked—it was about—one, two, three—three and a half blocks to the jailhouse, right under the old water tower where that old jailhouse was. So, we walked. I kept telling him, "I'm not going to do it." "Whatever, Bud. I'll just lock you up." So, when we got to that jailhouse door, I said, "Well, Alto, I believe I will pay that fine." I looked at those old black bars. So that's the nearest I ever was. Well, we'll get back to—what happened in Nocona was very interesting. We'll get back to Lois and winning me to Christ. See, my reputation got so—that most of the women in town—and they'd see that Sally Rand. I guess this was a sexual come-on or whatever. Some women, mothers, wouldn't let their daughters go with me and some of my friends, especially me. So, I didn't understand why. I hadn't done anything to anybody. So, years—one girl I was really fond of, wonderful girl—I'd gone with her some in spite of, you know. So, she—unfortunately they didn't want her to go with me but she married bad and kind of went bad herself. My brother, younger brother, moved to Nocona. I was gone. This was long years later, which I want on record. She said—he said, "What about Bud?" She said—my brother said, "You went with Bud back there." She said, "You know about Bud?" She said, "His reputation far exceeded the real Bud." She said, "I was with him many times and I was never with a finer gentleman than your brother." Because there was none of that kind of stuff, but it was just—and who could blame a mother? A guy puts a stink bomb in a theater and all these things. I wouldn't respect a mother that would let her go with him. But anyway, getting back. So, Lois, she'd read that scripture to me once in a while. I'd go to church with Mary but she never put any pressure on me. Then I noticed something. I can't say whether I noticed it before I received Christ as my savior or after. But we'd go—see, Mary's [clears throat] family, they knew about my past, I guess, because her sister said, "You better not marry him." So, Lois Wood told

her one time. She said, "You know, Bud's—I don't know about you going with Bud," though she was trying—she said, "His mother runs a whorehouse down there in Nocona." Momma used to joke and say, "My whore-tel." What happened was—[MG laughs] what happened was, there were three pretty loose women in Nocona: one works at the drugstore, one has a photography shop, and I don't know where the other one. And they lived in the hotel, but they were not whores, they gave it away. You know, whores have to charge. Man, they were loose women, but I never saw a man up there with any of them. But Momma—one of them lived next door to Momma at the front of the hotel. So Lois said—of course. I guess people said that because they knew these—boy, my gosh, this one woman was the most beautiful woman in Nocona at the time. Mary told me, she said, "Lois said your mother runs a whorehouse down there." Mary had met Momma already and had fallen in love with my Momma." I said, "Well, I guess maybe she does." I said, "Let me tell you what she had in that hotel when I was fourteen or fifteen. She had her blind brother and his wife and their little girl that didn't have a home or a place to stay. She put them in a room next to her and they stayed there free as long as they wanted to. Down the hall was Aunt Lina, Momma's great-aunt. Her own kids wouldn't take care of her and Momma gave her a room for free. Then in the room with us was Uncle Teed. Uncle Teed's kids wouldn't take care of him. He had no place to go and he lived there." So I said, "There's one, two, five members of the family that she let stay there free." That's why I told you she was the greatest Christian. Then there's a boy that finally went into Christ later, but he was a part of my rough and rowdy days. He shined shoes at the city barbershop and I shined shoes at Ed Hillard's, and there was another barbershop. His mother and dad got a divorce. His name was A.L. Atkins. We called him Rusty. He was a small fellow. We had a cook who had part of his hand gone. It was a round ball here. But he was a cook. He had a room next to Momma; Happy Stone was his name. He was a cook at the Hotel Nocona. He let Rusty—Rusty wouldn't live with his mother or father because they divorced. He had no place to live so he lived with Happy. So, Happy then left there, which meant that he had to give up his room. So my mother one November night—it was cold. Nobody on the streets. My mother saw Rusty down on the streets, by the door next to the hotel. We had a door from the main street up. It was nearly straight upstairs. She said, "Rusty, what are you doing here? It's cold. Where are you living?" He said, "Dot, I don't have a place to go." She said, "The hell you don't. You get your ass up there." That's the old cowgirl in her. "You get your ass up there and get in bed with Bud. Johnny and Ed are sleeping in one bed, Uncle Teed's in one, and you're going to sleep with"—and he and I slept together for a year. After he married I said, "You know I slept with Rusty more nights than I did"—but he'd say, "Bud, shut up." [laughter] As long as he—my gosh. He later came to Henrietta after I became a Christian. A fellow and I went to visit him and got him going to church a little. We all took—all went to hear Billy Graham at the Coliseum in Fort Worth. Rusty went down and was saved and became a deacon in the church. One of the big stock holders in the First National Bank of Nocona—of Henrietta. So that was the story of what mom—as long as he lived, Mother's day and birthday, he never forgot that woman that took him off the street. But anyway, we're getting back to—I'm telling you that to show you that was the good environment. She showed me, without preaching

to me, how a Christian ought to live. So, she—Lois, they had a revival in Henrietta. I'd been going with Mary. Lois is still working on us. And he was a Jewish preacher. Name was Dr. Marco, M-a-r-c-o. My granddaughter went to Hillcrest Cemetery where Dr. Truitt's buried, and found where Dr.—I always wanted to know—if I ever get back down there, I want to put roses on his grave. So, he came, Dr. Marco, to preach a revival in Henrietta. He was a little Jew. There's big Jews and little Jews. I always said—after I heard him preach, I knew why Peter and Paul had Pentecost. I'm telling you, you haven't heard anybody preach until you hear one of these converted Jews. Whew. And he could sing Jesus Paid it All more beautiful than the angels in heaven. So, he was staying at the St Elmo where I was. Of course, everybody had filled him in. "We've got to get this renegade Bud Townsend in." But I'd reformed. I was living a good life, but I wouldn't become a Christian. So, he was staying at the St Elmo. Had a nice coffee shop there then. Never will forget old Negro Ed ran it. He was a dear friend of mine. I just loved him. He ran the hotel. So, I came in there one time. I was at the boot shop and I came over. I guess I was going to eat at the coffee shop or to go to my room, whatever, at noon. His revival had started. I'd been going. You know, in those days, they had it two weeks. They had revivals. So, you go up the steps here, then you go to that landing, then you go on up. Well, that was the way it was in the hotel, only wider. Well, I started up those steps. It was over on the right. And he was coming down on that landing. He got just about even with me and he said, "Are you the boy that's going to marry this good Christian girl?" You know how they—he had that old European—"this Christian"—and I said, "Yes." He said, "I hope that the Lord will not let you marry her if you don't become a Christian." That was pretty—people listening. So, Dr. Marco walked on by. What did I do? I did what my daddy taught me, to respect people. Didn't say a word. Might have said thank you. So, some of these people said, "That was awful, the way"—they said, "That's embarrassing." I said, "No, that's what he ought to have done." I said, "I'm not going to do it, but," I said, "I don't feel bad about that at all." Well, that's Sunday. Saturday night is when he sang "Jesus Paid It All." So Sunday, I'd always worry. I'd gone to one of those wild churches, name I won't call, where people tried to speak in tongues and people wallowed in the floor and rolled around. It was wild. Uncle Jody, who'd get religion every once in a while, then he'd get drunk. He came over drunk one time to tell my momma we were all going to hell. He was drunk trying to preach to us. But he'd take me to this—what I thought, from that day forward, that if you're going to get religion—that's what I called it—then you've got to be—go about half mad, roll around the floor, slobber, scream, and stomp. You know what I mean? So I was scared to death to become Christian. So I—at a Baptist church. I don't know where you guys go. They served the Lord's Supper and they got a little tray with little holes in it to put the little vials for the wine, or in the Baptist's case, grape juice. So, when I'd—they give that invitation, I'd put my fingers in those holes to be sure that some of this wildness didn't—I thought when you were saved, you know, that the—you're like Paul, that the sky's going to open up and so forth. But that day, that Sunday, boy, I mean, Lois had him praying and whatever. I just finally said, "This is the—this is it." So I went down. I'll tell you, that the stage was as high as that over there, nearly three-foot high. That little Jew jumped off of that stage and grabbed me. It was the

“hallelujah” chorus. So that was—that’s when I received Christ and was baptized, I guess, that night, into the Baptist church. But anyway, something that I must confess. I’d watch Mary’s family. I had never been around entire families that treated each other like Christians. They were always kind, never a fuss, never backbiting, always helping each other. They received me, when I wanted to marry into that family, as if I was a saint or something. They didn’t bring up the past. Mary’s mother met my mother and said—she always thought my mother was the greatest woman she ever knew. But anyway, I watched that. At first, in ignorance, and not being observant enough, I watched that family and they were so kind. I’d never seen Christianity. Christians, like my mother and others, Aunt Cora—I’m not saying I didn’t know them—some great ones in Nocona—but not a family like this. I thought it was phony. I didn’t think people could treat each other like they treated each other. I felt this way for a number of years. I thought, This can’t be for real. This is a show. This is Hollywood stuff. But I learned that this was the way Christians ought to live, and that’s the way I tried to live after that when I had my own family. Well, anyway, that’s the story of where I came from and how—so, some three or four years later, I decided that—and that was the other thing. See, rodeo had given me—I still had the goal of rodeo. That didn’t change. I saw you could be a Christian. It didn’t make any difference where you were. But then I decided, three or four years later—see, this is really a turning point—that I wanted to be a preacher, Baptist preacher, but I knew that if you’re going—you know, nobody slapped me on the hand and told me that I had to. I had to go to college. So, I said, “Well, that’s what I’m going to. I’m going to”—and marry was gung-ho for it. Anything I ever wanted to do, Mary was gung-ho. It didn’t make any difference, rodeo or whatever, she was gung-ho. So they called me out here to—at Floydada. They had a Western store—boy, western stores were big deals at that particular time—called the Wagon Wheel. They knew me and knew me about rodeoing. They knew I was the man to hire to run that Western store. So, Mary and I went out and stayed a couple of nights. They were big cotton farmers. They were worth a lot of money. This Western store was a hobby. They wanted me to take it over, and we were going to get longhorn steers. We were going to make a menagerie out of it. So, Mary and I went out there and I said, “Well, you know, Mary, I don’t know what to do. I’m thinking about going to college.” She said, “Now, Bud, this is where you need somebody firm.” She said, “These are good people. Don’t you come out here and let them do all this we’re going to do, then you decide you want to go to college, and we’ll let them down.” Now, she said, “Make up your mind. Let’s talk about it.” Well, we didn’t drive ten more miles and I said, “Mary, I’m going to college. I’ll call them.” I can’t even remember their names. I know when I got to Hardin-Simmons, I taught their daughter. But anyway, then the academic side of my life started, you see. I had a string of rodeos. I told you about—didn’t I, on one of those tapes—about going—sure, I told you about George Hammid.

AW:

Um-hm.

BT:

Okay. So, I had these shows booked for the summer. Let's face it, I realized early on, there's no money in rodeo. Some of these guys that are making big money, if Charmayne James makes two-hundred and fifty-thousand a year, she's already spent two-hundred. What do you think it costs to buy a sixty-thousand dollar pickup, eighty-thousand dollar trailer, twenty-thousand—not in her case—twenty or forty—you've got a hundred-twenty, hundred-thirty thousand tied up before you—not to mention all your—because I saw there was no money. And even in the—Bobby Estes was broke all the time. It took him six months to pay us off when the show went broke there in Arkansas that I told you about, that Wild West show. I saw that I needed something more than rodeo. I made up my mind then, Rodeo's okay but you need something solid, not preaching, but education. So this turned me around. So, I made up my mind that when I got back from that run—we called them runs—in the Carolinas, and Mobile, and back—Arkansas—I had 1,750 dollars profit. Finally bought that old trailer from Tony. But I had this seventeen-hundred. Well, I knew, Now you got a wife that's pregnant, very pregnant. Everybody said, "She's eating too much. She's too big." Except my old grandma was a frontier doctor. She said, "Mary's going to have twins." And Mary did have twins. So anyway, then—this brings me to the new page of my life, and that is the beginning of the learning and the beginning of academics, and later a college professor. All this came out of—if I owed rodeo so much—have my first goal and confidence in myself, then becoming a Christian set me on the direction of learning and education, not to mention Christianity. [MG coughs] So we came back and I had left old Nocona Boot to go back to Olsen—or I wanted to. We moved back because we owned a home, the first home we ever owned. A very expensive one; six-thousand dollars. Her parents gave us that for our wedding present, to make the down payment, or we wouldn't have had it. It's a nice little place. Still there. It's still in good shape. So, we moved back to Henrietta and I called Norman Olsen. I said, "Norman, I know I left you to Nocona, but I wonder if I could come back. Would you need me?" He said, "Bud, it wasn't our idea that you left in the first place. Come to work this afternoon if you want to." So I worked the next few years and Mary could stay home with—the twins were born. Now, that was a funny story. This happened in Nocona. We were down—when the twins were born—no, let's see. Yeah. Yeah. No, the twins were born the day after I got back. Bobby Estes called. He hadn't called me in all those years since he fired me over Cal Farley. I mean, we were down to three-hundred dollars. I was in college now, started to Decatur Baptist College and was driving sixty miles each way. I'm glad I didn't forget this. In the meantime—I told you about our first son being born. But we were down—I mean—to the nitty-gritty living in Tony's house for free. He said, "All you need to do is keep it up." So, the phone rang one day, about this time of day. It was Bobby Estes. "Well, Bud, how are you?" "Well, Bobby, how are you?" We hadn't talked to each other in years. We hadn't talked to each other since the early fifties, and this was—this wasn't so darn far away. This was '56. So, I can remember it by the babies, and jobs, and rodeos. So, he said, "Now, Bud, I got a rodeo at Mercedes; March the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth, three or four days. He said—well, it'd been a long time since I worked. He said, "How much," so I told him. "Oh my God." He said, "Bud,

you know you've never charged me that much." I said, "Now, Bobby, times have changed. I've been working a lot of rodeos all over the country. I have to have more money." "I'm damn sure not going to give you that. You've never charged me that before." I said, "Well, that's fine." We were fifty dollars apart. So I hung up. Mary said, "Who was it?" I said, "Bobby Estes." She said, "What'd Bobby want?" I said, "He wanted to hire me for a rodeo." She said, "You took it, of course?" I said, "No.", "What?" I said—she never did ever interfere. I said, "We were fifty dollars apart." She said, "Bud, here we are. I'm going to have a baby any day. We don't have but three-hundred dollars—no, we don't have that much; fifty dollars. We don't have any money at all, hardly, left from that Carolina trip, and you turned down a show over fifty dollars." She didn't rant and rave. Then the phone rang. Bobby said, "Well, Bud, I've got to have you. Come on down." So, little Bill and I got in the car. I remember the date. What'd I say, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth? So, we went down there, and Ruth and Dick—she'd helped me all my life. She and Dick came down—of course, she still loved rodeos—in Mercedes. It was all afternoon shows because it's in March. Even there it's too cool. So, I told Bill, I said, "When we get to that hotel down there, we're going to eat some real grapefruit." So, I announced the rodeo. It was on the twelfth of March 1956. March twelfth, the day the show ended. I called them shows instead of rodeos. Dick Salmon came down and said, "Bud"—he was a rancher. He said, "You better hightail it back to Nocona." He said, "You see that moon over there?" It's coming up. It looked like it was coming from Old Mexico. You know where Mercedes is?

AW:
Um-hm.

BT:
He'd calved too many calves. He knew that the signs of birth, you know, when a cow's going to have a calf. He said, "Bud, if you're not lucky, Mary will have those babies before you get home." So, as soon as we got our money, Bill and I jumped in the car and rode back. We got to Burnet. You know where Burnet is? I couldn't go any farther. I said, "Bill, we'll go in, eat something, stretch out in the car, sleep a little bit, and get on home." Then we got into Nocona about ten-thirty, maybe, on the thirteenth of March 1956. We laid down a while. About two-thirty in the afternoon, Mary said, "Bud, I think you better take me to the hospital." So, I took her to the hospital. At about two-thirty—Momma came and stayed with me and Bill. About two-thirty in the morning the phone rang. They said, "You better get up here. We took her to a delivery room." Well, I went up. There was two nurses there. Just this little, old Major Brothers Clinic; twice the length of this, maybe a room or two off. So, this one young nurse there liked to joke with me. She knew me. This one old, sour nurse. She didn't have much to do with anyone. So, in a little while we heard the baby cry. They said, "Well, the baby's here." But I looked in the door and coming in the side door was this John Major's brother, white as a sheet. Had on a white shirt. I'll never forget it. He was as white as the sheet—as the shirt. Then we heard this baby crying. So, this young nurse came and she went back there. I say young. She was in her

forties, I'm sure. She said, "Bud, you've got twins." I said, "Come on now. Was it a boy or a girl?" She said, "I'm not kidding, Bud, you've got twins." I just laughed a little while. She went on back, this nurse did. The old sour one came out. She said, "Mr. Townsend, you've got twins." I knew then. My butt hit that chair. For the first time in my life, I couldn't stand up. You're broke and your family doubles almost in five minutes. So, in a minute here, this nurse brought one on each shoulder up by there. They took Mary in the room. So, thank goodness, now, I had this three-hundred dollars, or whatever it was—it was more than that—to pay the—and I was still was under Nocona Boot's insurance. They'd pay fifty dollars a baby but nothing for twins. So all it paid was fifty dollars.

AW:

So fifty dollars.

BT:

Fifty dollars. So after I gave them what I had, I think we had about maybe a hundred left, and to take these babies home. I went into Mary's room and she was crying. She said, "Bud, what are we going to do with these?" I said, "Mary, we've got to keep them." I said, "There's a law. You've got to keep those kids." [Laughter] So then we went back to Henrietta, when the twins came. Oh my gosh, it took Mary, Momma Teague, a woman that her daddy hired for two or three weeks, big salary, thirty dollars a week, and my sister, Blanch, would come in sometime. Momma, and Mary, the hired—and Mr. Smith would come. When you've got twins—we had a washer, Maytag, but we didn't have a dryer. You have no idea. We used those old real diapers, hanging them out. So, when we got back to Henrietta, then I went to work for—now I'd have to leave Decatur College because I was fifteen miles from Midwestern State. So, I enrolled there and had my job. They let me write my own ticket. You leave anytime; come. And if I wanted to study up there, if I didn't have a customer, I'd get away with it. Then I was pastoring a church in Nocona. That's where I went to school: Prairie Mound Baptist Church. We'd go down there on Sundays. So I had two jobs—three: advertising, rodeoing, working for Olsen-Stelzer, and preaching on weekends. Not to mention, one of the courses that I had was Greek. I'll tell you, three hours in Greek's like fifteen hours in chemistry. It is something. So, that's—I stayed there then for—fortunately Mary could raise the little twins. In their formative years, she was with them all the time. Bill helped her. So, at Midwestern, I became their fair-haired boy in history and political science. I was a little more mature and really, for the first time, I couldn't learn enough. I want to learn everything. Took great classes. I did take enough education courses. My old professor said, "In case you get knocked off for a PhD, you can fall back on teaching." You had to think about that. So, I got a teaching certificate, a permanent one. But anyway, they liked me and nominated me for who's who. I was who's who in the history and social sciences. Graduated cum laude. They said, "Bud, you need a fellowship," so they applied for me a fellowship at Baylor. I'd always wanted to go to Baylor, but, you know, that's expensive, even back then. So, I went—we went—loaded up and went to Baylor. By this time, I still pastored that

little church, but learning and history was crowding out my preaching. So, while I was at Baylor, the talk was that the greatest of all of the history department's was the University of Wisconsin, the school of Frederick Jackson Turner and so forth. So, I wrote a letter to Wisconsin and applied to get in. They wrote me back and said, "You're admitted and we're going to waive out-of-state," a thousand dollars then. That really helped. But I knew I was—and I did my master's at Baylor on the religion of George Washington—my thesis. But I knew I wasn't ready [clears throat] to go to Wisconsin. I knew the best from everywhere would go there. So, David Vigness, one of the nicest men I ever knew—I guess I had applied or somebody told him about me. He was the chairman of the history department at Texas Tech. The reason that most people don't get a PhD in history is they just don't know basic history. They didn't know what year the War of 1812 was fought, and whatever. So, I thought, If I go to Tech—they offered me a teaching job there. If I go to Tech and teach the tool—the surveys—I'd get the basics. See what I mean? So I went to Tech and taught. Enjoyed it very much. But I didn't know any history. It's a shame that you have to have these TA's [**teaching assistants**], you know. The Bob Wills thing will come in there, because I don't know why I would hang out, sometimes—Oh I know, maybe I was writing a paper on Walter Prescott Webb or something. I was always a great fan of Webb. For some reason—I'd have to look and see what it was—I ended up over in the Southwest Collection, where Sylvan Dunn was running it. I think he maybe had one secretary. It was over in—the whole thing wasn't much larger than my cabin out there. It wasn't any big deal. That good, young, Texas historian was there.

AW:
Holden?

BT:
No. But he taught with Holden. Holden wasn't young even then. He did his PhD at Texas. He'd come to—they thought at Texas he would be the next greatest Texas historian. Earnest Wallace was there. I had his course. He was good. He was really hard on you on writing. Then they had two Wisconsin men. One of them taught the intellectual or social history. He was a curtly man. The other had studied on—with one of those great European historians they had. He studied with the same man that Ralph Lynn, who was the big historian at Baylor. So, they really encouraged me to go to Wisconsin, and so did—because Wallace wanted me to stay and do a PhD there. He said, "Now, Bud, I've got all of McKenzie's research." He'd had a roll. It was a roll that big. It looked like butcher paper rolled up, that you tear off. He had gone to the Library of Congress and had gotten, and filmed and put on this piece of paper all of the McKenzie diaries and so forth. Was his name Ronald?

AW:
Randall.

BT:

Randall McKenzie. So he said, "Why don't you write a paper on the Battle of Palo Duro Canyon?" So, I said, "All right." And I had a natural—I don't mean to brag—but I—from the—I had a natural ability to write. One of the professors at Wisconsin—I took a Tudor and Stewart course in English History. He wrote on my paper. He said, "Charles, you have the unusual ability to write and make it interesting." I put in my diary—I kept a diary—"That was one of the highest compliments"—and I know one reason I got a PhD. What they're afraid of when you work on a PhD is that you won't be able to write a dissertation. That's what they worry about. They don't care whether you make A+ in colonial, or whatever. But can they turn you loose and write that dissertation. So, while I was there, he said, "Bud, I know what"—he found it. But he says, "I'm sure where it is but nobody has ever really gone to the place where that battle occurred." Now we call it Ceta Canyon. So I loaded up the family and we came up here. We must've gotten up here about five o'clock. I was determined, as a cowboy, that I'll get me a horse rented and I'm going to go down that river until I found that—because he described it to me, where it would be. Sure enough I went—oh my gosh. It was late in the afternoon. Boy, nobody down there. This was ten miles beyond the park out here. I went on, and on, and on. I said, "This has got to be where it is." I broke off some of the dogwood. I knew they could make arrows with it. I got down off my horse and drank the water coming through that stream. It was as pure as you could get. It was the perfect place. It was the last canyon there. So I knew it had to be. I didn't know that up at the other end was that Christian camp that they've got up there.

AW:

I went to church camp in Ceta Canyon. It never occurred to me—

BT:

If you go far enough. So, I went back. I could envision how it was. I started my essay by—I said—oh, and he told me about McKenzie killing that eleven-hundred head of horses down at Tule Canyon, and that the bones were still there. So, I went to—down there and I had a fellow take me out there, an old timer. The bones were stacked about as high as that stagecoach; still there. For years they were stacked high. They finally decayed. And so I could see what—where they brought them and whatever. I started my essay by saying, "On a moonlight night, one can look along the rim of the canyon and see horses without riders, and skeletons, moving like a Quadrille for a rodeo across there." Boy, when Wallace got my paper, and I went on and wrote this, he said, "Bud"—maybe he called me—no, I believe Wallace called me Charles. He said, "Charles, I'm going to do something with you I've never done with any other student. I'm not going to make you write your paper over." He said, "You're the first student out of all I ever taught"—he said, "The paper's perfect. I'm not going to have you write it." He said, "I want you to stay here and do a PhD with us." He said, "I've got the research done." I said, "I hate to say this to you, Dr. Wallace. I appreciate you so much, but I'm going to Wisconsin." He said, "Bud—Charles, that's what you ought to do." He said, "Hell, there's not five people here at Tech

that know what a graduate school is.” [Laughs] But that’s what Wallace said. “There’s not five people here who even know what a graduate—you go to Wisconsin and come back”—

AW:

What year was this?

BT:

—“and we’ll hire you.”

AW:

What year was this that you saw the bones at Tule Canyon?

BT:

It would’ve been 1961. That’s the year I was teaching at Tech, then I went to Wisconsin. Was it ’60 or ’61? It could’ve been ’60. I believe it was ’60.

AW:

Sixty?

BT:

Yeah. Um-hm. So, I went to Wisconsin then to work on my PhD. Of course, I’d—everybody knew that was Turner’s school, though I wasn’t interested in the history of the West. I was interested in Colonial and Revolution, because I’d worked on George Washington. A professor at Tech, one of the best I had, Timothy someone. Tim Curtus [?] [2:11:47]. Wisconsin. When he came in the Revolution to Samuel Adams, he kind of put him down as a populist and everything. Kind of rubbed me wrong. I saw him as a great, well-educated man who was a democrat with a little D. So that kind of inspired me. I didn’t like that interpretation of Samuel Adams. A lot of the other historians were the same way. So, I was determined—if they let me, I’d write my dissertation up there on Samuel Adams. They had already written enough. Got it right over here, some good books on him. Harlow. Volney Harlow wrote what he did. Never did much with his mind. So I wrote on the thought of Samuel Adams. In other words, why did he do what he did? And that gave me a new avenue, you see. I started making my papers count. Curti wanted us to do something on human nature in the first seminar. I was the only student that wrote a paper on human nature. I thought—*Human Nature in the Thought of Samuel Adams*. I talked about how he believed man was more good and there was a possibility to govern himself. You know, how he used that, you see. So, that was the first chapter of my dissertation, then the next time I’d write on something else. Over in sociology—I minored in sociology, I’m sorry to say. But anyway, I worked under Hans Gerth there, who had worked under Carl Mannheim—if you know German thought.

AW:

Yeah. I was a sociology student.

BT:

Okay, then you know. He's the one that trained—I know you know him—he's the one that trained Max Weber. No, no, no. No, no. He trained—he was the greatest sociologist of his day; wrote *White Collar*. After he left Madison [University of Wisconsin-Madison]. You know, if I sit down too long, I'm a little shaky.

AW:

Yeah, me too. My knees are shaky.

MG:

I'm going to use the bathroom.

BT:

What was his name? [Door closes] You've got it off?

AW:

No. You want me to?

BT:

Well, I was going to look for that. You would know him.

AW:

I should.

BT:

Oh yes. You'd have to.

AW:

I should remember him right now.

BT:

I never could understand Mannheim. And I was in Hans Gerth's, Max Weber seminar.

AW:

We actually didn't study Mannheim very much. Durkheim, Émile Durkheim, and Weber were sort of the foundations of what we were studying in the late sixties, early seventies.

BT:

He went to Columbia from Madison. He was really quite a—ah, here he is. C. Wright Mills.

AW:

Oh yeah.

BT:

He trained—he and one other professor were responsible for his dissertation at Madison. The guy's name is C. Wright Mills.

MG:

C. Wright Mills. Got it.

BT:

He was the—Gerth trained—and I went over there. Curti was known as the most liberal professor in the regular arts and science, except one man. So I said—I went to the advisor and I said, “I want a minor in sociology.” He said, “Who do you want to work with? Whom do you want to work with?” I said, “I want to work with Hans Gerth.” He said, “Mr. Townsend, you’ve been working with Merle Curti.” He said, “Hans Gerth will make Merle Curti look like a Sunday school teacher. You sure you want to?” I said, “Yes, I want to.” See, he was a Marxist. He claimed to be a Marxist. He taught a course on Marxism and he trained C. Wright Mills. This is—Mills wrote this book, *The Marxist*. The professor then that worked with Gerth [2:17:18] died. Curti married—after his wife died—he married that woman. He was C. Wright Mills. I think maybe his big book was *White Collar*.

AW:

Yeah, I think so.

BT:

He was way ahead of his time. Instead of writing on the robber barons and the Proletariat, he wrote on the white collar. But anyway, are we at about a quitting mark?

MG:

Yeah I think so. Supposed to be going to the Lions Clubs.

BT:

Yeah. We’ll come back and work on—then—what led to Bob Wills will be the next through. I thought all this is important.

MG:

Yes, sir.

BT:

All those guys leave a mark on you.

AW:

Wilbert Moore was my professor at the University of Denver. I was working on my—

BT:

You minored in it?

AW:

I majored in it at DU [**Denver University**]. I minored in statistics and social research.

BT:

Well, you and I can criticize it then because we have a degree in it.

AW:

Yeah. Well, I was very—I never finished my doctorate because I'd already started criticizing it and that didn't go over very well. But Wilbert Mill—I keep saying Wilbert. Wilbert Mills, you know, because he got all the—Wilbert Moore—one of the things that was great about him was he spoke not in sentences, he spoke in whole paragraphs. He was—you know, if you could write fast enough, you never did need to buy a textbook because he'd just—he was such an incredible lecturer.

BT:

Boy, aren't those people rare?

AW:

Oh yeah

BT:

Real lecturers. Oh gosh.

AW:

Yeah. Gosh, he was terrific. Yeah, this is a good place to put a stop on it.

BT:

If you need to go to the—

MG:

Do I need to go get my car?

BT:

I usually—I like to leave—

AW:

I've got a van out there.

MG:

Okay. [Pause in recording]

MG:

Brilliant. I wasn't a big fan of Theodore Rex or the other one. Then, of course, he didn't write *River of Doubt*. It was someone else. Anyway, I was at—did he not write—no. Who wrote the new book on Jackson?

BT:

I forget who it is. Oh, one of the guys on Fox news.

MG:

No, not—no. This is a—

BT:

But, you see, you show your bias and I show mine because when I said Fox—no, no, no. In other words, we want to condemn the academics, but if a guy's not, tell me I'm wrong.

MG:

Well, I read the *Killing on Lincoln* by Bill O'Reilly and I thought it was trash.

BT:

I wouldn't take—I wouldn't read any of his stuff. For one thing, he manufactures them. I mean, those things, he was cranking them out. He's lucky he didn't write one: *The Killing of Himself*. Bill O'Reilly.

MG:

S.C. Gwynne, the man who wrote *Empire of the Summer Moon*, about the Comanche's, his book on Stonewall Jackson, I think, is brilliant.

BT:
Good.

MG:
It's an excellent book. It's an excellent book. You know, he's a popular writer and gets condemned by the academics. He spoke over here at WT.

BT:
I know he did. Bill went.

MG:
It was a fantastic talk.

BT:
Bill really liked that.

MG:
He was a great talk. He was very humble. That was the nice thing. I'm not a historian but I wanted to make it a story that people could read and he did. He did.

BT:
Well, it's when you—I'll tell you when you write well. It was like Bob Wills playing the fiddle; when you play from your soul. When historians—you can become so academic that you lose the—I'm quoting Walter Webb—"You lose the blood and guts." He says, "We've lost the blood and guts of history." You think about it.

MG:
I couldn't agree more. I think that this passionate way of writing, I think in an effort to remain quote unquote objective, it makes the stuff just dull. It's just dull.

AW:
The best example of how not to make it dull and still be accurate is Mr. Haley.

MG:
Yes, sir.

BT:
He's quite possibly the greatest Texas historian there ever was.

MG:

I think you're probably right.

BT:

You know that's terrible to say that.

MG:

You get struck by lightning.

BT:

You know why? Because he was against Lyndon. Oh, if he just hadn't written that. You know, at the University of Wisconsin, at the co-op where you buy your books, they had a stack up in there. They were that popular in Madison. Fifty cents a piece.

AW:

I loved it that they—that he printed them in different colors to see which color sold best.

MG:

Haley did?

AW:

Yeah.

MG:

I didn't know that. [laughter]

AW:

I mean, it's a—I've been recording this. I thought we were going to start talking—I'm going to put this on pause. But, as I put this on pause, I'm going to say this is still the fourth of April 2018. We've just returned unscathed from the Lions Club. We were not—what do they call it—we were neither tamed nor—was it tweaked or twisted? We didn't have our tails twisted.

MG:

[Choughs] That's right.

AW:

We're about to start back on our interviews with Dr. Townsend and Michael Grower is still. So, we'll pause for a minute. [Pause in recording] How did he get that on there?

BT:

He was—you know what—the greatest publisher of good history is Alford Knopf. He once said, “You historians write like hogs. You want it all.” What he meant was you’d try to include so much that nobody can understand it.

AW:

“You write like a hog.”

BT:

And Knopf has published more good things than anybody for history.

AW:

Well, you know, my favorite series of history books, bar none, is the *Rivers of America* series. The whole idea of that series was to use non-historians to write it: painters, poets, novelists. You know, those books, you can hardly read a better history book than *Powder River Let ‘Er Buck*. That is just a brilliant book. Written by a guy who was not a very brilliant poet, but was a poet and editor. Everyone in that series. Then went through—for R. Strauss, I think, is where it started, but it went through two or three different publishing houses. But all of those books are terrific.

BT:

You know, I don’t think—I hate to say it. I think of all of the historians we’ve had in—I’m not saying they don’t write good history, but they don’t write. I don’t believe we’ve had over twenty. One of the greatest was Carl Becker. Ever read him? He was Turner’s first PhD at Wisconsin.

AW:

Really?

BT:

Yeah, and he taught at Cornell. Turned out some of those great—boy, he could—he wrote like Webb. You know, it’s hard to find a twenty-five cent word in Webb’s writing. And Webb is one of the very few, I think, who could ever write anything. Charles A. Beard once said that most of the histories being written in America today won’t live beyond their first birthday. How many histories do you know that continued to live?

AW:

You know, there’s a—Paul Carlson that just retired at Tech. He was a pretty good writer, and a good historian. But he’s also a good writer.

BT:

Here's the best—

AW:

So there are a few—

BT:

Here's the best set of books that I know.

MG:

I'm sorry?

AW:

There are a few.

BT::

Here's the best set of books. It's the first set of books I ever bought.

AW:

I'm occupied by a cat here. I can't get up.

BT:

This is the Yale series. Keep in mind, the twenties. Yale University. And they got the great historians. *Dutch and the English on the Hudson*.

AW:

What's the series called?

BT:

It's sixty-six volumes. *The Yale History*.

AW:

The Yale History series?

BT:

It's a lot better than—you know, that first one was called—what was that? It's a series. *The American Nation* series. Oh, I used these for lectures because they're so—on Jackson. It's magnificent. You know, I bought these when I was a sophomore in college. I paid eighty-seven dollars for the first fifty-eight volumes. You know where I bought them? From a used bookstore in New York called Barnes & Noble. They were in used books then.

MG:

Is that right?

BT:

Yeah.

MG:

What year was that, Dr. Townsend, when you were a sophomore in college?

BT:

At Midwestern. It would've been '58, '57.

AW:

That's still a lot of money.

BT:

And I bought those books, that whole series. My grandson wants them. There's something about academia. I don't mind saying it if you want to turn this on.

AW:

yeah. I've got it on.

BT:

There's something paralyzing—when you write—well, I've had students in a seminar. Boy, they just—boy, they were the best in discussion, so when they wrote, oh my gosh, you couldn't figure it out. I said, "What are you trying to say here," and they'd tell me. I said, "Well write it like that." But somehow when they put the pen to the paper or whatever, we clam up because of the pressures of academia. Most of the pressures we let—those people can't write a good sentence. We'd play it to an audience that can't write and they keep us from writing. [Talking about the cat] Push him away if he bothers you.

AW:

No, he's fine.

BT:

Do you see what I mean?

AW:

A book that says the same thing you're saying but about poets, it's by a poet named Dana Gioia, G-i-o-i-a. He wrote this book called *Can Poetry Matter?* His thesis was that poetry, which had

been a performance art until after the Second World War. Even right after the war when Dylan Thomas came to America, he had standing room only crowds. Poets were—people went out to hear poets. Then Gioia's point was the after the Second World War, some universities realized there was money to be had from the GI Bill by starting writing programs. The poets began writing for one another and not for the people. I think it was just—it's a brilliant book. You just said the same thing that Gioia said, only about history.

MG:

It's the same thing for visual artists, too. They started banking for each other.

AW:

For museum directors.

MG:

Absolutely.

AW:

No offense. You know what I'm talking about.

MG:

No, no. I'm not in that camp. I totally get it.

BT:

I'll give you a good example of what they did in music. As long Louis Armstrong and those old New Orleans boys played good New Orleans music. It was the people who listened. Then when it turned cool in New York City, it doesn't have a beat, it doesn't have a melody. You know what it is but the musicians love it. That's what happens. Cool jazz has never had an audience. Oh, they sell a few, but they've—it's because they didn't have a melody, they didn't have something the people can relate to.

AW:

Nothing like the—well, I hate to put my likes and dislikes on the record here but Oscar Peterson is pretty hard to beat. There's a melody that he comes back to. I love it when he takes off from it, but he always comes back.

BT:

Yeah. If you don't, you've lost your audience. Well, and who can judge it except another great musician. Bob Wills—when I was working on the book, I would go—I was trying to trace down Bob to the black fiddlers. So I went to New Orleans. I went there for the American Historical [Association] meeting. So, I went down to Preservation Hall. That's where the old blacks, the

real old blacks, played. They don't care. So, while I was in there, Bill Allen came in. He didn't mean anything to you but he was the man who started the New Orleans Ragtime Orchestra. Took the old sheet music from the old hotels. That was a little more sophisticated than Beale Street and Bourbon Street. He was highly respected as a fiddler and all this music. And I didn't even catch this in my book. I said—told him, I said, "I'd like to talk you, Mr. Allen." I said—it was in the morning. You could still smell the whiskey and everything in the air. It's a little place, you know? About like my cabin. People would sit on stumps and everything. I told him, I said, "I'm kind of trying to find about the influence of the black fiddle players on Bob Wills." I did finally get some—one of the old clarinet players took me and my family up Decatur Street to Canal Street. I talked to him about him. He said, "Well, I'll tell you, Mr. Townsend." He said, "Black fiddlers were not very popular. They didn't play them in New Orleans. Then he said what I wanted him to here. He said, "Really the black fiddlers were in East Texas, where Bob grew up." Just what I—I was looking forward to coming forward to come out of New Orleans. So anyway, Bill Allen was in there. Grey-headed. Big fellow. He found out who it was. He said, "I haven't seen Bob in a long time." He said, "He was here some time ago in New Orleans." I think he played over at the St. Charles Theatre, played some there. I said, "Bob, you know all these bands are coming and going?" This is in the late sixties, you know, when every—rock and roll killed everything. He said, "How is it, Bob, that these others are falling by the wayside and you keep going?" He said, "Bob said to me, 'Bill, I always try to keep a little melody going.'" He said that's the key to Bob. He'll do a jazz solo after Tommy sings or Bob plays, then you come back to that melody after not too many bars, not eight bars, maybe. You give a steel man eight bars but then you've got to come—he said that's how Bob did it. He said he kept playing what you could recognize. You see, they didn't do that in cool jazz. They didn't do that with Charlie Parker.

AW:

One of the things that we gave up in rock and roll and folk music, popular music, in the sixties was the big band style of prefacing the singer by playing through, instrumentally, the entire song and the melody. When it came time for the singer to sing, then the audience knew what they were going to sing.

BT:

Yeah. Set them up.

AW:

It was a great setup. I think—I try to encourage my songwriting students to think about that as an approach. If we—the audience, if we help them out a little bit, they're going to get the song a lot better than if we don't help them out.

BT:

And remember one thing—you can write all the songs you want. “They’re my songs.”, “No they’re not.” The music belongs to the people. And if it doesn’t belong to the people, you can forget about what a great artist you are of writing music. You’ve got to have something the people can grab, in my opinion. And you’ve got to have something that people can do something with. That’s why the big bands—what did they do with their music, regardless of how they played it? They danced. Well, when dancing died, so did big band.

AW:

And so did our incomes as musicians. [Laughs]

BT:

You mentioned rock and roll. I still think the greatest age of rock and roll was the fifties. Still my favorite of all the rock and rollers was Chuck Berry. But anyway, we can get started if you want.

AW:

I’ve got to throw in one quick joke, though. They have this project where they’re listening for voices from outer space, people trying to contact the Earth. The story is that when the Voyager spacecraft left the solar system, it had that disc on it with the music. So the message comes back from whatever galaxy it’s headed toward and it takes them a while to decipher the message. The message is—and they finally—they’re astonished to read it out. It says, “Send more Chuck Berry.”

BT:

[laughs] Oh I loved him. He was—that’s another thing: he didn’t—he never tried to become serious. When you try to become serious with your music, you’ve lost them. Oh, people go to the symphony but half of them wouldn’t know Tchaikovsky, by gosh, from Colgate toothpaste; to try to make them look sophisticated. But you’ve got to—you’ve got to have something they recognize. And I’m the same way. I want something. But when Chuck Berry plays something, Maybelline or—Jerry Lee Lewis. That quartet, you know, that million-dollar quartet. You’ve seen that album?

AW:

Um-hm. Yeah. That’s good for when we get back together next time and start talking about Bob Wills.

BT:

It’s Jerry Lee Lewis, Johnny Cash, Elvis Presley, and Carl Perkins. They said when they got ready—they’re just going to play around—that Elvis went over and got down at the piano and Jerry Lee Lewis said, “I’m supposed to”—he said, “No, I’ll do it. Anybody can play a piano.”

[laughter] Boy, can you imagine those four in that album? Well anyway, when you're ready we'll go.

AW:
We're ready.

BT:
We'll get into the music next time or whenever.

AW:
Because we want to talk about—

BT:
Academia.

AW:
We want to talk about Bob Wills next time.

BT:
Yeah. But I mean now. Going back to Madison?

MG:
Yeah.

AW:
Yeah.

BT:
Where did y'all say is a good place to begin?

AW:
Well, we had—you were talking about your work on Samuel Adams and your minor in sociology and all that great group of people that you were with. That's kind of where we left it off.

BT:
I thought you were going to remember that I was going to talk about rodeo. [Laughs]

MG:
That's exactly right. How you were received in Madison.

BT:
Yeah.

AW:
That's it. That's exactly it. That was because you announced rodeo. There you go.

BT:
Well, first of all, I ran into old William Hesseltine. I went up in the summer to look for a place to live and went to old Bascom Hall, where the headquarters of the history department is right on top of the hill. It was between semesters. I went down and here was this professor. It was William B. Hesseltine. He trained the greatest of the Civil War historians. He trained Ambrose. And Ambrose wrote *Lewis & Clark*, *Saving Private Ryan*, all those things; made movies and he started the World War II museum in New Orleans. He was a Hesseltine student in Madison. I think he'd come from LSU [**Louisiana State University**]. And Hesseltine had one of this best students down there: Civil War historian, T. Harry Williams. And they all three wrote a book that was the best textbook of its day. Current, Williams, and Freidel, they were all Hesseltine students. So, Freidel went to Harvard to teach twentieth century and whatever he'd learned from Hesseltine. Current was there when I was there and he finally left when Hesseltine died. He was afraid to leave if Hesseltine was there. He went down to a woman's college in Greenville, South Carolina. Then Williams went back to New Orleans, where he made that good—I know you're familiar with that good LSU Press that C. Vann Woodward and all those people wrote those books. I never will forget when Ambrose—I went over to the Wisconsin Historical Society. They had one huge building with six million pieces of primary source. They had all of the archives of the South. You knew about that?

AW:
No.

BT:
Well, there was a guy at Wisconsin—I'm not even sure it was a historian, but he was from there. Right after the Civil War, the South was in upheaval; not organized, whatever. So, this guy from the University of Wisconsin named Lyman Draper. They got—I forget how many—he went down to the South while they were in disarray and broke, and bought all of their archives. He bought Alabama's archives, Mississippi, Louisiana, all of the Confederacy he could buy. And Hesseltine wrote this book on him. So, today, if you want to write a history on Reconstruction on Alabama, you've got to go to Madison because he's—you might say stole their archives. He's got them up there. So, that really made their department great because they had all the primary sources. Lyman C. Draper. Over here I've got some of the Draper collection. Sometimes if they had an excess of books, they would put them out and you could buy them for a sum. This is part of the Draper collection that was published. So, I spent money. I shouldn't have. But I bought all

I could find that they put up to sell. But anyway, oh, I went in to see Hesseltine. He was—he had produced all these great historians. So I went—and he was in there alone in his office. He didn't have a private office. Only Merle Curti had a private office at Wisconsin. Some of the greatest historians in the world didn't even have an office, but Curti did. He was Frederick Jackson Turner, professor of history. Turner's last PhD. So, these guys flocked to him if they wanted to go into Civil War, like T. Harry Williams took his degree there and he went back to LSU. And he tried to get Ambrose to come down there and take a PhD with him. He said—Ambrose said, “No, I don't want to go to the horse's mouth. If you learned from Hesseltine, I want to learn from Hesseltine.” Oh, he was mean. Gosh. The reviews he wrote of people's books—he was one of the few honest historians. He'd tell how terrible they were. And he was notorious for this. He did his students the same way. I never will forget one time I was in Merrill Jensen's class. Jensen was in Revolution. He was a great, big fellow, about your size, only taller. Big Bill they called him. The good thing about Madison was they let the undergraduates and the PhD candidates sit in the same class. You're taking—if you're taking 412 American Revolution, you'll find sophomores and seniors and juniors in that class with the PhDs. So it was really an inspiration to the lower echelon. Sadly some of them were better than we were. We're all in this class in the morning, in Jensen's class. Jensen hadn't come in. Somebody said, “Hey, Big Bill.” Big Bill sat right behind me. “Hesseltine was a little hard on you yesterday, wasn't he?”, “Yeah,” he said, “He sure was.” So I turned around and I said, “Bill, what happened?” He said, “Well, I made the mistake of writing a footnote in French. So Hesseltine said, ‘Bill, what's this?’” He said, “Well, that's French.” He said, “Bill, you ought to write in French all the time. It's a lot better than your English.” [laughter] Right before—you know—I mean. The more he liked you, I think, the more he saw possibilities in you. It's like John Ford saw so much possibility in John Wayne. And Ambrose. Never will forget the day they said, “Ambrose made distinguished on his exams. He's the first one to ever make distinguished on his prelims. But anyway, he tells the story. He said that he handed his first paper into Hesseltine and Hesseltine—see, what you do there—boy, and it's rough. If your paper's up the seminars are in the celery [?] [2:48:20] room of the Wisconsin Historical Society. Ours was at three-thirty, Hesseltine's might've been at one or whatever. Well, if they say, “Michael Grower's paper's up on Grant in the Wilderness”—he makes three copies: one for himself, one for Hesseltine, and one to put on the shelf where everybody could read it. And then the day that it's up, they pick all those up, Hesseltine reads all the remarks, and you have the discussion. They check it to see your sources and everything. Must be really bad now with the way they can cheat on computers and all, and internet. So, people would write anything on that. “This is the biggest piece of shit I ever read.” See, this guy might be from English history or he might be from the Western History. But he goes by and picks out all these and says something nasty. Some of the nastiest stuff you ever saw was put on there. “I've never read such grammars.” So, the day that Ambrose's first paper came up, they discussed it. Curti was always every polite to us. He just asked mainly questions. Hesseltine was unduly kind to Ambrose; Stephen Ambrose. So after class he said, “Steve, come by the office on Monday.” They only show up—they only had to teach two hours.

AW:
Really?

BT:

Yeah. If they—the good professors, they only teach two hours. And that's the seminar. Curti finally agreed to teach the last half of the survey. They don't have to. He said, "Come by." He knew what day he'd be back. "I'd like to talk to you, Steve." So he went into Hesseltine's office. He had all of his books. He said, "Steve, close that." Said, "Leave the door open." He said, "Well, Steve, thanks for coming. You know, I grew up down there in Alabama, and we had a snake down there that we just hated. If we kill one of those snakes, we would hang it on a fence or somewhere to warn off the other snakes. We just did that to get rid of those things." Here was the future great historian sitting there. He talked on about this snake. So Ambrose is getting nervous. He said, "Mr. Hesseltine, that's a good story, but what's it got to do with my paper?" He said, "Steve, go and close that door, will you?" There was his paper nailed to the back of that door. He said, "That's what I do with no-good papers. If you ever hand me another paper like that, I'm going to throw it and you out the window. Don't you ever hand me a piece of trash like that again." He said, "I'll tell you, I felt about like that." But Hesseltine scared him. And he's published more in the last ten years than anybody. But anyway, that's just one of the stories that Hesseltine—but he was mean. He only turned out thirty-two historians in thirty-two years. Nearly all of them became great historians: Berkley and others. Like I said, that guy came over and taught me. But anyway, if you want to get back to my story. That was part of it because when I wrote my first paper, it was an Italian boy—*The Samuel Adams Concept of Human Nature*. Well, there was an Italian boy named Lizzio. He ended up at Bates College, one of the great liberal arts colleges in Maine. And failed prelims. It was nothing. I think only one of Current, Williams, and Freidel that wrote all the books. Only one of them passed prelims up there because your major professor really determines it. They'll say it's a committee. Where was I here? Let's see, on Ambrose.

AW:
You'd written your paper.

BT:

Yeah. I'd written my paper. Lizzio, just a wonderful Italian kid. Younger than I was. I said, "Lizzio, I want you to go over this." Hesseltine had what was called the Law and the Prophets of Writing. He had fifteen of them and he wrote it like he was a prophet in the Bible. "Thou shall not do this. Thou shall"—you know what I mean? If you violate it, for instance, one that's so simple, but you watch yourself if you're a writer. "Thou shalt put thy time clause first." Well, you violate that and see how your paper sounds. "Andrew Jackson ran for the presidency and won it in 1832." Turn it around. "In 1832, Andrew Jackson ran and won." [Claps] See the bang?

If you put the time clause at the end, it'll dangle. It doesn't give you a good transition or anything. "In 1832, Andrew Jackson won his second term." Bang. Not, "Andrew Jackson won his second in 18"—no, no. It's things like that, what should be simple. Every time I ever violated it in writing my books or anything, I knew it was wrong. "Thou shall not use the passive voice. Thou shall not"—oh, he'd say, "Avoid tried expressions like a plague." You see the joke. He was using it himself, see? He wasn't afraid of making fun of himself. But you don't want to do that. I mean, he really could train—

AW:

Can you still find that book?

BT:

Writers? No, it was just a pamphlet. Everybody—

AW:

It was a pamphlet?

BT:

It was just written out. Everybody had it at Wisconsin.

MG:

I'd love to get a copy of that. [Laughs]

AW:

I'd like to see that, too.

BT:

What else was it he said? "Thou shall"—he did it like the Bible, see? "Thou shall not"—"Thou shall not involve thyself in the text, be it: I, me, mine. You know, you couldn't use your, "I did this." Oh boy, he would've had you out of the class. Anyway, Lizzio, he said, "Charles, I wouldn't do that." He was reading my first paper. There was one thing up there. If you can't write that first paper, they'll ease you out, send you to Indiana or Duke or somewhere. [AW laughs] We had a standing—they had a standing settlement with Duke, that Duke would take any student we flunked out of history. Illinois was the same way. But Curti said, "Charles, I had a student that wants to write on something. Charles, I don't want to disappoint you on your"—"He's okay. I visited with him." He said, "He really doesn't fit here." He said, "I've got a student in Indiana. I'll send him down there and he'll take care of him." He had five people at one time in the University of Y; his PhDs. But anyway, I said, "Say that again." He said, "Hesseltine wouldn't like this." I said, "Lizzio, are you mixed up? I'm in Curti's seminar, not Hessel." He said, "It doesn't make any difference. We don't do anything here that Hesseltine has warned

against.” His influence was—it’s no wonder he turned out some great historians, because everybody was afraid, even if you wasn’t in his seminar. I talked with him there that day. Some guy came from Baylor. I forget what his name was. So he came to Wisconsin and he went up—he was Civil War. He wanted to work under Hesseltine. So, my major professor down at Baylor said, “Charles, above all, don’t you ever show your thesis to Hesseltine.” I didn’t understand why. “Don’t you do it, now. Don’t you let him—don’t you even mention it. Well anyway, this boy from Baylor was a hotshot. He was good. He went up and he said, “Well, Mr. Hesseltine, I’ve decided to come up here and work under you.” [Laughs] Oh god. “And here’s my master’s thesis for Baylor.” He said, “Let me see that thing.” He walked over to a window and threw it out. [AW laughs] He said, “I’m throwing this out and if you ever hand me anything like this, I’m throwing you out the window too.” Well, the bottom line is—it seemed mean. But before he left there, he and Hesseltine wrote a book together, something on the old South. He would be hard but he had a heart. You nearly have to, at those big graduate schools, put up a hard heart. If you don’t, graduate students will take advantage of you. Mother died or whatever. But anyway, he was—god, I never will forget. He’d come down the hall. He was a short guy. He’d put on heavy shoes so he’d look a little taller. He would come down—the hall was about this wide—coming down to those classrooms. When he’d walk down through there, they’d hit the side of those walls, by gosh, like it was a motorcycle. He was that respected. And when he died, I was there. He died of a heart attack. Every professor in the history [department] took the day off and eulogized him, because he had trained a lot of them. But that was—he was one of the truly great trainers of history. And Ambrose was, I guess, maybe his last. But T. Harry Williams and some of those guys really made a big mark, took. But anyway.

AW:
Spell Curti’s name.

BT:
C-u-r-t-i.

AW:
C-u-r-t-i?

BT:
Um-hm. Curti. He came from Iowa. He studied at two or three little colleges, but one little college in Omaha. Then he went—let’s see—then he went directly to Harvard and worked under Turner. That was when Arthur Schlesinger Sr.—oh, he was a great historian. He’s the one who wrote *The New England Merchants in the American Revolution*, to show how the fight between the merchants was not all America’s fault, but the regulation and all. Curti is very meticulous and not a great writer. But won the Pulitzer Prize anyway. He wrote his doctor’s dissertation, just covered everything. So, Samuel Eliot Morison, I think, got a hold of it. He was the great

historian. Columbus. Wrote Columbus and all. He was an admiral in the Navy himself. So, he turned it down. I may have the professors mixed up, one or the other. Turner had nothing to do with it at that point. But they took it and it went up on the committee. They said, "Oh, we can't accept this." So, Mr. Schlesinger, you know, Arthur's daddy, he said, "Well, Curti, I'll sign it." He was going to let him get by. One of the other professors said, "No, it's not acceptable." He said, "Well, what's wrong with it?" He said, "Well, you cover everything and you cover nothing." He said, "Well, what shall I write on?" He said, "Take any paragraph out of your dissertation and write a book on it." So Curti took this thing that was on the peace movements in America and had him a best-seller. I've got it over here. "But take any paragraph out and write on that. But you can't write on—you can't"—see, they're hog. [Coughs]

AW:

Say that again. "You cover everything and—

BT:

"You cover everything—you write on everything but cover nothing." So, Curti got that book. It's called *The Peace Movement*, I think, *Up to 19*—well, through World War I. There was a big peace movement there. So, [coughs]—I believe he's got a call. [Coughs] But it was so great to study under—every one of them was a prima donna. You had the best man in the American Revolution. At Wisconsin, they didn't promote you to full professor because you wrote a good book. They promoted you because you had created a school around you. What Jensen did was to create a school, that the American Revolution was really as much an internal revolution as an external revolution. And Howard K. Beale was there. The new history started there. One of their PhDs by the name of Williams—just a devil of a nice fellow. I walked to school with him. That's how down to earth they were. What was his first name? Williams. He published a—he was anti-American.

AW:

Anti-American?

BT:

Oh yeah. Let's see. Where's his book? Here it is right here. Here's his book. *The Great Evasion*. William Appleman Williams. He wrote how wrong we were in World War I, and started what was called the New History. Every department in the country wanted one of his students to offset those who were far—he was really against America. He wrote other books. And to show you, kind of, the way that the professors were there. I don't know if this is relevant, except for my—

AW:

This is very interesting.

BT:

Is that he was a great fan of Samuel Adams, because Samuel Adams was a revolutionary and was a Calvinist, dead set in what he believed. Adams really wanted to build not a socialist but something like that. The idea of Puritanism is to build a community. So, he had written an article when I got interested in Sam Adams. Of course, word went through that history department and everything about me almost immediately, that I was writing on Samuel Adams. Well, nobody had been interested in doing that, though Jensen really liked Samuel Adams. So, I was walking down the hall that I described to you guys a while ago one day. I went by Williams' office. He was officing with somebody else. He said, "Hey, Charles, would you come in here please?" Now, here I was, an ignorant country boy who had come up there from Texas and wondered if they'd—whatever. He said, "Come in here would you? Sit down please." He said, "I hear that you are writing on Samuel Adams." He said, "You know, I've been"—I said, "Yes, I've read your article on Samuel Adams, and it's the best one I ever read." Oh my gosh. You'd think I wanted him to praise me. No. He thought it was the greatest thing in the world for a graduate student to think he had really been—and so we visited. He said, "Now, keep me posted on this Samuel Adams thing." That tells you how open they were. His children went to school with my children when they were little at Shorewood School. I could—and I'd walk to school sometimes. One time I caught—he'd walk with me. Went by the tailor shop. It'd be no different than you guys. You couldn't have found a cowboy who would've been any more down to earth than William Appleman Williams. He had one weakness, and that was he didn't support his PhD applicants; pass them. I've seen some of them that they failed, whereas Curti would really stay behind me. I'm sure if they said, "He's not PhD," he'd say, "Well, I'm going to vouch for him anyway. He'll be mine." I don't know that. But anyway, that was—I liked Williams. And he left after—see, I left the year they started bombing north Vietnam. This is where the student riots came. He was the far left in the history department, against every—America in so many ways, or wrote about them. When the student revolt came, the students got to his left. He wasn't—

AW:

He wasn't that far left.

BT:

He wasn't in revolt enough to go too far. He wasn't that aggressive, so it broke his heart that somebody go to his left. He went to the University of Oregon in Eugene.

AW:

Really?

BT:

Yeah. Oh, it was a great loss. Every department in the United States—Cornell had one of his men, one of his best men. I guess he's retired now. But that was—I liked him very much. It was

so open with—there was no difference between a great graduate student and a full professor, if they thought you had something. First time I ever went into Curti's office, I knew I wanted to work for him. I don't know why.

AW:

I was going to ask: why did you pick him?

BT:

I heard so much about him, and I was interested in the American revolution. I wasn't sophisticated enough to know that Merrill Jensen was the Revolutionary man. When Oxford University—he was the professor at Oxford. They have the Harmsworth Professorship to Oxford of an American historian. He went for the American Revolution. And his book of documents up there, when Oxford decided to publish the—you know, maybe they did the documents of Canada or Australia. Well, when they decided that they needed someone who knew enough about American history to do the documents for Oxford Press, then here's the man they chose: Merrill Jensen. That's the best document you'll ever find on the American Revolution in Colonial.

MG:

And he was at Wisconsin when you were there?

BT:

Oh yeah. Died of cancer right—what does it say there? Where he's from and whatever.

AW:

Yeah. That's—

BT:

Oh boy. And he was rough on me. I'll tell about that, too. I nearly fainted. But you see, there'll be, you know, like speeches of Sam Adams, speeches of James Otis, all of the Revolutionary leaders are in that book. And it's published by Oxford Press. He was—

AW:

This thing's huge, too.

BT:

Yeah. But that gives you an idea of what you studied with there. You know what I mean? But anyway, I wanted to study with Curti. Thank god I did, because Curti learned I could write. That's where they get you on that first paper. If you don't write well on the first one, you're heading out. They'll do it easy. But anyway, I went up to Madison. Somebody said, "Any time you go to Madison, you always go *up* to Madison," because you go up Bascom Hill. When Carl

Becker wrote his dissertation for Turner there in 1901, he said, "I went up to Madison." He said, "I'd heard of this historian they had there and I wanted to work with him. His name was Freddie Jackson Turner. And what did he write on? The revolution in New York. Not in something on the West. It was the American Revolution—"

AW:

Yeah, because I think of him as the West.

BT:

So anyway, I went up there and got there a few days early, and we got into our department, university department, and whatever. Boy, everybody wants to know who's your professor, who's your major professor. If you get the right one, then you're in with everybody. They figure if Curti takes you—

AW:

And if you picked the wrong one, like I did, it's a different story.

BT:

So I went in and I said—Curti wasn't a big man, but normal size, my size to a little shorter. Always wore a little dress hat and a suit. They always did. So, I went in. They said, "Who's going to be your professor?" I think Carstensen, Vernon Carstensen, he was the Western man they had then, one of them. They had two. I said, "Well, Curti"—he said, "I don't think you can get into Curti." He said, "Everybody wants to study with Curti. His seminars are full." Because whoever's seminar you were in, that's your professor. Some of them would say, "Who's seminar are you in?" So, I went into his office and here sits—like I said, he's the only man there that had a private office. I mean, even Hesseltine didn't, not a large one. About a little larger than the foyer right there, and right on the main drag there of Bascom Hall where we had our classes. So I went in and said, "I'm Charles Townsend.", "Well, sit down." He almost dis—he was so kind. "Sit down, Charles. How do you like it here? Where'd you"—I said, "Texas." "Oh. How's everything?" Just like we were good old boys. I said, "Mr. Curti"—I may have said doctor. I didn't do that again, because they just don't do it. On his door it says, "Mr. Curti," that's all. I always got a kick out of these people that put "Dr." on the door when I know that the greatest didn't do that. You know what I mean? [coughs] I said, "I want to work under you. I've been at Baylor and I worked—I forgot to mention this. I'll come back to it. That day I had that session with Hesseltine, we must've been together fifty minutes. I said, "I've been down at Baylor." I said, "I wrote my thesis under one of your students, Bruce Thompson." He wrote on Briscoe in the Civil War, Thompson did. He published it. But that's not good enough. He said—I said, "I worked under one of your students, Bruce Thompson." He said, "Who?" I said, "Bruce Thompson.", "Oh, old Bruce. I ain't heard anything about him in thirty years." You know what he was saying? He hasn't published anything in thirty years, and that's ending our conversation.

We never talked about him another minute. “Old Bruce. Oh yes. I ain’t heard nothing about him thirty years,” meaning, “We wrote him off a long”—but he published that book. But anyway, I was in Curti’s office. I said, “I’ve come to work with you. I’d like to.” You know I was humble talking to the greatest—his field was he’s the father of intellectual history, history of ideas. So, they use him in English literature, of course, as much as they do history, because, as I said, he covers everything. He said, “Charles, thank you so much for coming up here,” but he said, “My seminar’s full.” I’m not going to say what I said—what he said—because it looked like that he was prejudice and he wasn’t. So I’ll drop that. He said, “It’s full. I’ve even got one person in there that I wish I didn’t have.” Not race or anything like that. So, he said, “I’ll tell you”—he said, “Even my master’s seminar is full.” He said, “I have a master’s this time,” so he was teaching four hours, which he was a volunteer. He was a Frederick Jackson Turner professor of history. He didn’t have to teach any. He was the highest paid man there but he didn’t have to teach any class to get that money. He had won the Pulitzer Prize. And the next year, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. won it for age of Jackson. So it was that quality. He said, “I’ll tell you what, Charles.” He said, “I’ve got a student here. He’s one of my boys. I’ll get you in his seminar.” I said, “Now, Mr. Curti, I didn’t come up here to study with—I know your student’s fine, but I didn’t come up here to study with your student. I came all the way from Texas to study with you.” He said, “What did you write your thesis on there?” Boy, this was the key, because the guy down at the Texas collection wanted me to write on something in Texas, but I wanted to write on George Washington, which put me on a national level rather than a regional level. He was a real bastard, that guy that was head of that Texas collection. He said, “I might consider letting you write on so and so. I might consider.” Well, I knew then that I didn’t want to work over in the Texas collection, because he was just too arrogant. So I said, “Well, I wrote on George Washington, whether he was a Christian.” *The Religion of George Washington*. Here’s a great mind. I don’t think you develop a mind like that. I think you’re born with it; part of your nature. He said, “Tell me, Charles.” Now here I was, nobody, and here he was the Pulitzer Prize winner and the highest paid professor in the greatest American History Department. He said, “Tell me, what was his faith?” I told him he was a Christian. He asked two or three other questions. “What did this and that?” I’d say, “He belonged—he was a vestryman.” So I was talking. He quizzed me. He believed every human being knew something more about something than he did. That’s why he loved seminars. He learned from those students. “Where did you—what sources did you use the most on that?” I said, “Well, the Fitzpatrick Papers, the 38th volume.” He said, “You know, Charles, I believe I can make room for you in my seminar.” So I was in. [MG clears throat] So I went down to pay and they lost my scholarship, which was a cool thousand dollars. Man with three children. And one of his buddies that wrote the history of the University of Wisconsin, Vernon, Carstensen, was the dean down there, of that college. He didn’t tell me. He said, “You don’t need a scholarship. You’re from Texas.” He said, “You people got all the money in the world. You ought to be giving us money.” I said, “I wish I was one of those, Mr. Carstensen.” I said—he said, “Who are you working under,” and I said, “Curti.” He said, “Well, I’ll tell you what I’m going to do. You come back here Monday—we’re closing today—and

we'll see." Well, when I came, they said, "Your scholarship has been approved." That was the power of a great professor. So, I got in his seminar. He wanted us to all write on human nature. He had Lovejoy's book. Lovejoy taught intellectual history at the Johns Hopkins. You never said Johns Hopkins. Curti said *the* Johns Hopkins. Arthur E. Lovejoy, that's how it is. It comes to me. It's nearly impossible to read, understand. I always felt about that book like somebody said, "Have you Perry Miller's biography of Jonathon Edwards?" The guy said, "The only thing harder than trying to read Jonathon Edwards is to read Perry Miller's book on Jonathon Edwards." He was *the* scholar of—he was trained over at the University of Chicago. I studied with the man that taught him, because when Hesseltine died, they brought in Avery Craven, who had written some of the best books. When Chicago was—if it wasn't the best history department, it was one of them. They had some great people. So, I got into his seminar and he wanted us to write on human—and to read that book. I've still got it. So, I was the only one of the bunch. Some of them—that was what was great about it. Some of them wrote on the aesthetics of Frank Lloyd Wright architecture. One guy wrote on Walter Lippmann. Two or three—the Jews. We had some good Jewish students who'd come in from Harvard. We had three or four Harvard boys in there. By gosh, they were well-trained. They can say what they want to about Harvard but these were nearly all students of Arthur Schlesinger Jr. And I want you to know they knew history. And some of them would write on William James. They wrote on different subjects. One guy in there—he's an Episcopalian now. He was a member of a Church of God. It was a Pentecostal. He was writing on the Pentecostal—the Church of God movement in Chicago. I mean, just everything they were interested in there. And that's why I got interested—thought I'd write on Bob Wills. I sat there in that seminar and I thought, Well, if they're interested in architecture, they're interested in this, they're interested in that, they're—everything. They're interested in everything, just like Curti wanted to know about Washington. They were open to everything. They didn't cull history. So I said to myself in that seminar, Why don't I write a book on Bing Crosby. If they can write on architecture, I surely could write on—then I thought, Well, what about Bob Wills? So those two stuck in my mind. That paper, I was scared to death when I put that paper up and they all read it. None of them had a bad word to say about it. Some of them said, "I liked the way you handled this." They were sophisticated as Curti was, those students. They talk about—how great some of these schools are. It's not always the schools, it's what they let in. Some of those students knew more than some of the professors. They really were trained before they got here. And you wouldn't believe it. And they weren't arrogant. They weren't arrogant. They talked about people in those seminars that I'd never heard of. I saw how ignorant it was. Had one big, old boy. We called him Big Tom. He was in that seminar. Not the one that wrote in French. This guy was from University of Texas. He ended up teaching at a really good school. It's called Colorado College in Colorado Springs.

AW:

Yeah. That is a good college.

BT:

He died here not long ago. We had boys in there from Princeton, Yale, more Harvard than anything. They'd just come over there to do their PhD with Curti. We had great battles. I took the Jensen side of history, that the American Revolution was really a duel revolution. It was a fight for who would rule at home and a fight for who would rule. That's called Becker's statement. He said the American Revolution was not just a revolution, it was a struggle for who should rule and who should rule at home. So a struggle against England and a struggle within the colonies. Steve Nissenbaum was a Jewish boy from Harvard. He took the other position. So, we had—they had a spring symposium and the two papers that were read, I found mine—one of them the other day. In the flyer they sent out, "Charles Townsend will speak on Charles A. Beard and Federalist [No.] 10. That's what Beard based his book, *The Economic Interpretation of the Constitution*, which was one of the great books. So I took the Beard side and some of them would take—and we'd have some good—but what an environment. What an environment. And there was none of that conservative—I never heard the word conservative or liberal ever mentioned there. It's known as one of the most liberal—it was open. Anything you wanted to talk about. Nothing was culled. Nothing was decided before you talked. So, I didn't know you talked liberal or conservative. You just talked ideas. I never was in an environment like that, and don't expect ever expect to be—I don't think there is one today. They made so many rules at Madison, Berkley, and everywhere that you can't even say certain things. You know what I mean? But anyway, that's kind of the way I got started. And I wrote that first good paper. When Mary and I went up there to look for a place, we went over to some of the apartments. There was a couple of [clears throats] couples in Education. Now, get this. I said, "I hope I can make it." They said, "Can you write?" Now, this is in Education. These people are in Education with a capital E. I said—they said, "If you can't write, you better just not unload that trailer. If you can't write here, you're out." That was even in Education. Because we don't think of that as a great publisher parish thing, do we? So anyway, [clears throat] that got me started. This would've been in the fall of '92. I'm sorry, it was the fall of '62. Walt Oldsbaugh [?] [3:31:24] said—we didn't go far enough in rodeo for me to tell you about why—after I quit rodeo nationally, I went to work for Walt Oldsbaugh [?] [3:31:35]. He had all of his rodeos nearly in Colorado. So I quit the national—I didn't go to the east coast anymore, west coast, because he could book you solid. It was wonderful to announce rodeos three days and fish four. [AW laughs] We became great fisherman. But anyway, Walt called. What did I do with my watch? I wanted to kind of—

MG:

Right over here.

BT:

Oh, thank you. I wanted to watch our time. So, he said, "Bud, I've got a rodeo in Española. Y'all know where that is.

AW:

Um-hm.

BT:

“I need you to come down. It’s on the weekend.” Now, here I was, what, a thousand miles at least, twelve-hundred. So, I needed the money, as people do. So, I knew I could get on the train in Chicago at Dearborn. Yeah, the Santa Fe El Capitan. It went right on down—and they let you off at Lamy [New Mexico]. You know where Lamy is?

AW:

Yeah.

BT:

Then they bus you in. I knew I couldn’t get over to Espanola; thirty miles. I’d call a cowboy and catch a calf roper. So, went in the La Fonda and said, “I want a room.” I said, “How much?” They said, “Eight dollars. Your room’s right over there.” It was right back of where the dining room is now. Eight dollars a night in the La Fonda.

AW:

You can’t buy a glass of water for eight dollars.

BT:

Four-hundred. Four-hundred dollars, you know, if it’s in season. We stayed there the other night. It was two-fifty. But I stayed right back behind where they’re some shops there. Had rooms there. I’d catch a cowboy and go over and announced at Espanola, then catch them coming back and they let me off at the La Fonda. Well, I think I had to miss a Friday, had to miss some class. I was in the Western history class—it was very good, too—with a Jewish fellow from Cornell. They turned out some good people at Cornell. What was his name? Oh, Rostine was his name. I never will forget when he came—he was a lecturer and he came to the Alamo. He said, “A bunch of damn fools stayed in there till they were killed.” He said—so, after it was over, he called me out. He said, “Townsend, was I too hard on your Texans?” I mean, he did that just for me. “Bunch of damn fools stayed in there till they were killed.” I don’t whether I told him. Maybe I told Curti; somebody. I knew one thing—maybe Jensen’s class or somebody’s didn’t meet that day, whosever class it was. So I got on the train and worked the two days. It was just a two-day show. Really wasn’t much money in it for me, but I wanted to keep my job for the summer. So anyway, I came back and Curti said, “What you going to do this summer?” I said, “Well, Mr. Curti”—no, let me start over. When I got ready to leave Midwestern—a brilliant woman there, just loved her, Isabella Hunt, taught political science at Midwestern. She’s the first woman to ever get a PhD in political science at UT. I mean, listen, there was a lot of prejudice in the fifties and sixties against women trying to be in academia. So, there was a big fight, but she won and

got her degree. Well, she was—oh, she was a wonderful teacher. Wonderful lady. Grew up down in Decatur. She took—she was part of the people that helped get me the scholarship to Baylor. She just loved me and loved Mary. So, we got—time came for us to leave. So, she said, “Now, Bud”—she calmed me Bud. I can always remember what people called me: Dr., or Charles, or whatever. She said, “Now, Bud, when you get up there to Wisconsin, don’t you tell them you announced rodeos.” [AW laughs] She said, “If you do, they may not give you a degree.” And let’s face it, doctor’s degree is an honorary degree. They give it to whom they want to have it. They can say what they want to but it’s honorary. You better not get in any fusses and you better keep your head. So, I said, “Okay, I won’t, Dr. Hunt.” I called her Dr. Hunt. Boy, she could look at those with those steel-gray eyes and snap her fingers. “What about it, Bud?” My gosh, it’d scare me to death. So, she was teaching when John Tower was teaching there. I was in John Tower’s class. John Tower was as scared of Isabella Hunt as some of the leaders are of Trump today. I mean, she told it like it was. One time we were in his class. He said—one of the boys who sat behind me said—and he had been gone. We thought John Tower was crazy, because he’s going to run against Lyndon Johnson. I mean, in those days, Lyndon Johnson was Mr. god, with a little G. He went—he was going out and campaigning. We thought he was crazy. He’s the father of the Republican Party in Texas, there was none. So, he came, and we were talking before he started lecturing. He said—this boy said, “You said the wrong thing to Dr. Hunt, didn’t you?” So and so. This kid said—and she said—he said, “Yeah” Tower. John Tower. Powerful as he was and as fearless, to pioneer a new party in Texas. He said, “You mean you tangled with Dr. Hunt?” She said—he said, “Yes.” He said, “Don’t ever do that, son.” He said, “When I come in the building in the morning, if I see Dr. Hunt going up the stairs to the right, I run to the left.” He said, “I don’t want to tangle with her,” because she was too much for him. But anyway, she said, “Now, don’t you tell them you announced rodeos or they may throw you out of there.” So, I didn’t say a whole lot about it but I began to talk to Curti about it. I didn’t realize what I was doing. I was making myself something special in the graduate school. They’d never heard of a rodeo announcer or anything like that coming up there and studying on a PhD. So, Curti asked me all about it. “How do you do it,” and whatever. I know he went immediately to Carstensen, who was teaching history of the West. I was his assistant. So word spread that Charles Townsend, working under Merle Curti, announces rodeos. Well, instead of it putting me down, it put me above the other graduates. See, most graduate students can’t do anything. Hell, if you put them out, they couldn’t make a living, and most college professors, to be frank with you, couldn’t make a living if you put them out on their own. So, she—I mean, word went through the department. But word had already gotten out that I could write so I was already—I wasn’t getting by with that. I know that it was a—a lot of the talk of the campus at Wisconsin, that we had a rodeo announcer studying for a PhD. They were flattered. Of course, “He’s come all this way.” By this time, Curti had met Mary and he loved her, and whatever. Mary, at the second year—we don’t know whether it was encephalitis or what, but she had a seizure one night. I got ready to come home. I was scared to death. I’d never seen a seizure. Took her to the hospital and they got her all right. She had a temperature—I had to take her temperature on the hour for about

three months. I just took care of her. She could get around in that but that seizure—and she had others. I got to where I slept with a wash rag over the head of the bed. If she'd start one, I'd wrap it and stick in her mouth so she wouldn't bite her tongue and wouldn't hurt my fingers. I thought maybe she'd die. So, word got out. She was working at the WHO, Wisconsin radio station. First radio station in the nation in a college. WHO. No, it wasn't WHO. What'd I say, W? Anyway, it was the college station. Well, they found out and they began to bring food. They can say what they want to about these Yankees, but they don't need to say it to me. They're as good a people as they are in the world. Then Curti's group would send me cards from the seminar. We hoped—see, they quarantined me and the children. They couldn't go to school and I couldn't go to class. Curti said, "Now, Charles, you're loyal. Don't you worry about missing class. You're one of my most loyal students." So, to make a long story short, they did every test in the world. You can imagine the University of Wisconsin medical school, they knew what they were—they never did find it. They think it was from mosquitos that bit horses at the rodeos and bit her and gave her this problem. They checked the spine. But anyway—and finally the Wisconsin radio station, they knew we didn't have any money. So, the people down there would let her—they'd send her work home, let her work on it to save her job, and whatever. So, we kept her head—I did have to borrow some money from my brother then. And in the summer, she'd take off and go rodeoing with me and they'd hold her job till we got back. I mean, that's how much they thought of her. So anyway, after she had these seizures, I knew that we were going to be up against it, financially. I told Curti, I said, "Mr. Curti"—I wouldn't have called him Curti—that I'm going to need a job. "I sure hope I can get a TA." That's a teaching assistant. He said, "Well, go see Jensen." Of course, I'm sure he beat me to Jensen. Jensen, they all worshipped Curti. "Charles is going to need a job. Can we work him in and get him a TA next time for the fall so he can come back?" So I went into see Jensen. He was chairman. They got to put up a hard—"I'll tell you, there's so many people wanting these TA's and we only have so much and so much money." He said, "I don't know. I don't believe we'll be able to do anything." So I left with my tail between my legs. So, in about two days, the phone rang. It was that hard shell. It was Carstensen, who was teaching a course in the history of the West. Boy, he was good, too. He said, "Charlie"—[laughs] "Charlie, I hear you need a job." I said, "Well, I do." He said, "Listen, you're going to be one of my assistants. I need three of you." All the old universities, including WT, had an auditorium that would seat five-hundred. We tore ours down. They've still got theirs. Hesseltine lectured in there. For Hesseltine's classes, they had a seating chart not to see who was absent but who had come in off the street to hear his lectures, and they'd throw them out. That's the truth. They'd throw them out. "Get up. That's"—

AW:

That's sure a different a different problem than what we have.

BT:

Yeah. "That's Michael's seat." But anyway—[clears throat] oh my gosh, they'd overflow. So,

we had five-hundred in that class. And Hesseltine did—I'm sorry, Carstensen, Vernon Carstensen, he had done his PhD at University of Washington, which is a very good school, in Seattle. And Jensen taught over there for a while. So, we had the five-hundred in there. A guy named Blumenthal, he was to take a third of them, I was to take a third, and this other boy was to take a third, for quiz sessions. Quiz sessions were a big deal there. I'd take a third of the class and they could ask me questions, this, that, and the other. You know what I mean? All of us. I was by no means the top—Blumenthal, I think he went to that school in Atlanta, that Coke school. Coca-Cola made it famous, or gave them their money. It's been in the news lately. So, I'd grade their tests. I don't know whether Carstensen made out the tests or not. Only time they saw him was when he lectured. He was really good. He was good, funny, and really knew what he was doing. Especially knew about the canning industry as well as the cattle industry. When he lectured on the cattle industry, he said, "And every spring, they had a periodical gathering of the herd." [AW laughs] A periodical gathering. That was the round up. But a periodical gathering of the herd. He knew all about me, though he didn't tell me. Never will forget one—gave a test and I gave a little girl, kind of a chubby girl, I gave her a C. C in undergraduate's all right, but not for graduate. Never will forget the first time I got a paper back from Jensen. You had to write a paper and hand it in with your test, in the blue book. It came back C-plus, my test, and C-plus for the paper. I'd written on something about Jensen himself; flattery. Well, C there is an F for a graduate student. Well, I knew what he was saying. "You either write a paper this time right or I'm going to tell Curti and we'll head you south. You can go to Rutgers." We had a deal with Rutgers. Gosh, that'd be like isolating, leaving Wisconsin to go to Rutgers. That's like putting you, by gosh, on Devil's Island. So, I knew I had to have—I went in to see him. This is skipping around but we'll come back to the rodeo thing. I went in and had my paper. He said, "Well, Townsend, you write very well, but you don't say anything." He said, "Most of what you've written here, you got off the dust jacket of my last book. Now, you're going to have to"—I said, "Well, what do you want me to do? What can I do to write"—he said, "Why don't you decide who's right, whether Beard's right on Federalist [No.] 10 or whether his critics." Now, here you are a graduate student. I am to decide what historians couldn't decide. So I went down and I got the—they were in—some of them were—they had rawhide backs. Those three great, big volumes of the debates of the Constitutional Convention, three of them. They were that thick, and I was going up the hill, to Bascom Hill, carrying those books. As fate would have it, Jensen's assistant met me. He said, "What have you got there, Townsend?" I said, "Well, these are the debates of the Constitutional Convention of 1787." "Oh they are?" He took a look. The next day in class, Jensen said, "I hear some of you are really studying now." He said, "I heard that one of the students was found with all the debates of the Constitutional—see, he told him, so Jensen knew I was really working with him. Well, it was Christmas time. In those days, you had a month. I didn't go home or have the money. So, I started writing this paper. I knew it was do or die. I mean, this was it. But I'd made up my mind. I'd rather flunk out of Wisconsin than get a PhD from other schools. At least I went to the best. So, it took me sixteen days, twelve-hour days, to write the first draft of this debate. So, there was an English major, a linguist, across the

hall. I said, "Would you take this and read it and tear it apart?" He came over and showed me where he could help me. He was studying languages. He wanted to interview Mary. He thought Mary had a peculiar—and he wanted me to tell him about the language of Festus on Gunsmoke, [laughter] because he said, "That's one of the most interesting dialects I ever heard." So when I later met Ken Curtis, who was Festus, at Texas Tech, they had me and him to come down there to talk. It's filmed. It's down there somewhere. Then he told me he got that from old Cedar Jack, who used to bring in cedar from down on the river there, the Arkansas River, that goes through Lamar, Colorado, where he grew up. But anyway, then I got Lizzio again. I said, "Lizzio, tear it up." So we made all the changes. Now that was the first draft. Then I went to the second draft. Took me another ten days. I got it kind of like I wanted it. *Federalist 10: Charles A. Beard and his Critics*. I've got it. I kept every term paper. You keep every paper you write. I want to have these bound. Not that they're any breakthrough or anything. So, handed it in the next time. Made a B-minus on the next test. On the paper it said, "A-minus. Would you please return this? I'd like to read it." Well, I knew then that I was in, that I had written a successful paper for Merrill Jensen. I'll bet you he told Curti before I—boy, they keep each other posted on what you're doing. So anyway, I knew how it was to get a—so I gave this girl—when I was teaching there at Carstensen's class. Oh, here she came. They gave you a little place down in the bottom of Bascom Hall. Looked like a prison. It was just a little old six-by-six thing, a desk that'll hardly go in there. She said, "I've come to see you about this paper." I said, "What is it?" She said, "You gave me a C." I've never seen anything but an A in my life, and you gave me a C. I'm going to see Dr. Carstensen," she called him, "And see what he thinks." Well, I knew—I sure needed that job. When you get a—when a woman gets a hold of you, look out, because they won't sleep till they get you. [Phone rings] So, I ran to Carstensen—I knew where his little office was—and I said, "Mr. Carstensen, this girl says that she's never seen anything but an A in her life." See, that's a test. He said, "Townsend, she just never did get a hold of the right professor." He said, "I think you did the right thing." Well, by the time she got to him, he was already for her, see. He wasn't—by gosh, I saw her later in the semester. She said, "Mr. Townsend, what are you teaching this time? I want in your class." That's the best class I was—I wasn't—but I'd made a believer. I'd helped that girl. When she finished school, she said, "I want you to be on my committee for honor's graduation." I stood my ground, did the right thing. I could've been wrong but I don't think I was. She had just gotten away with some. So, we all three worked for Carstensen. Back to the rodeo thing. So, Carstensen, I'd seen him a time or two. So, he said—he called the three of us in. He said, "Fellows"—whatever he called us—he said, "I expect my students to give one lecture—each one of my TA's—to give a lecture to my class." He said, "You three fellows get ready. You're going to have to lecture." Oh my gosh. I can announce a rodeo but to lecture to a class at the University of Wisconsin, half of them from New York and wherever—I mean, great students. So, Blumenthal was going to have to write—the other kid, I can't think of his name. Oh it scared me. I told Mary, "They're going to make me lecture, here, at Wisconsin." This'll really grab you. "I told you you wouldn't believe it, but you'd be proud." I went to him. I said, "Mr. Carstensen, I don't know what to lecture on. Why he said, "You'll

lecture on rodeo, of course.” [Laughter] He said, “You’ll lecture on rodeo, of course. That’ll be wonderful.” So, I was thinking on the history of rodeo. I got a hold of ProRodeo Sports News in Colorado Springs. They wrote an article on the fact that I was speaking at this great university. So, he called me in one time. He said, “Charles, Charlie”—my gosh, those kids loved that. They just went wild to hear this story of the history of rodeo in this big auditorium at Madison. “You’re going to speak on rodeo, of course.” I don’t think he’d let me spoken on anything else. So, he caught me a little while later. He said, “Charlie, why don’t you write a history of rodeo?” He said, “That’s what we need.” He said, “You’re the only man that can do it.” He said, “Write a history of rodeo.” Well, I said—I was working on Samuel Adams. “But that’s what you need to do now.” Oh, he was a great guy. Well, years later, after I’d gotten interested in the Bob Wills thing, and maybe after I’d written a book—I know I was reading a paper at the St. Anthony Hotel in San Antonio. It was the Western Historical meeting, and Carstensen was president. So, I got—went out of my—they got my room mixed up and had to give me a suite. Oh, it was the fanciest thing you ever saw. I’d take guys in there and they’d say, “Townsend, how in the world did you get”—well, they lost the reservation. But anyway, I came out of my room there at the St. Anthony and walked to the elevator, and who turned around? Mr. Carstensen. He said, “Townsend, have you ever written that history of rodeo?” [AW laughs] We had this session. Last time I saw him there in San Antonio. “Now, Townsend, be sure and write that history of rodeo.” I never did. It wasn’t long till Carstensen had, I think, a heart attack and died. But I knew you guys would love this story. Not only was Dr. Hunt wrong, but everybody at Wisconsin thought Townsend—so, when I got ready to take prelims—under the old system, it’s three days there. You’ve got know all the literature and history, not just history, but literature, written on the seventeenth and eighteenth century. And you have to type it and get it back by a certain time. Pick it up at eight and you’ve got to get it back at five. That’s the first day, Wednesday—Monday. Wednesday, you’re responsible for all the literature and history of the nineteenth century. That’ll take you from Jefferson all the way to the Spanish-American War. You got about nine hours to do it. Mary was sitting over here typing and I was writing by hand. Then the toughy for me—because it never was my favorite—but the Friday was twentieth century. So, I read a year, a solid year, everything I could find on anything in—that’s why when they turn you out there, you know history. They scare you to death. Many’s the day I never put on anything but my pajamas that I had on. I’d sit there in those steel-gray Sky’s for a whole year and read American history, read, read, and know the—you were responsible for a bibliography, everything. I’ve got the copies of them. They’re not there. I guess they’re out in the—but I kept all of those, of course. I want you to know when—in about two weeks, when that letter comes—I was afraid to be by myself. I thought I might kill myself, though I knew I wouldn’t. So I told Mary, I said, “You stay home. I want you—the letter’s here. You come home at noon and we’re going to open it.” “We’re happy to inform you, you passed.” Oh my gosh. Because now, all you had to do was write a dissertation. You’d already had to do two languages—I did French and Italian—and do your minor, which in my case was European History. I had some good classes there. I wouldn’t take for that. I never will forget that Italian test. He failed me the first time. His

name was Lizzio, too. He was Italian. Taught Italian. First of all, Curti—I'd had Greek at Midwestern and Curti was going to try to get them to take Greek. But I had what they called Koine Greek. That's street-language; common. Means "common language." So, Curti said, "Charles, go down in the basement"—they had these Greek teachers and all down there—"and see if they'll accept your Greek, that you had it for undergrad." So I went down. They said, "Oh yes." They said—I said, "What will I have to read?" They said, "The classics." You know what that means, the classic Greek. Well, I'd never studied that. So I went back and I said, "Mr. Curti, they're not going to accept that." He said, "Well, let's take French and Italian. They're similar." The first time, Lizzio failed me. I said, "Are you failing me?" He said, "No, I just think you ought to read a little more." You had to be able to read, not speak it. When I got to French, there's a Frenchman who had written the history of America in French. You could guess at a lot of that, see. Continental Congress, whatever. So, I had to read—study all one summer—and rodeoing—to get that French, because it was much harder than the Italian. So I got them. So, that was what we did at Madison. But I knew you guys would enjoy that. You just thought, Oh boy, they're going to jump his frame and say, "What do you think this is?"

AW:

So, what did the people in rodeo that summer think about you studying French?

BT:

Oh, they [laughs] said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm studying French." I said, "Sit down here.", "No, no."

MG:

I've got to go, boys. I'm sorry. I have to go prep for my class.

BT:

But anyway, you got the best of this.

MG:

That was great.

AW:

Let's take a short pause then.

BT:

You cut it off. [Pause in recording] Ready to take prelims. Oh I was scared. I've already told you I passed, but I didn't know. Curti lived—our apartments were Harvey Street apartments in Shorewood. It's about three-quarters of a mile from the college, but the university owns them. They're still there. Haven't changed a bit. Bill was up there and made a speech on Eyes and all.

Oh, I was worried. I was scared. Everybody was scared. Some guys passed out. They'd pass out before—and some of them would take the—would get up there and wouldn't take them. If you ever take them, you've got to take it. If you take those papers, that's it. I know this old boy, Princeton, he'd been there so long and wouldn't take them that Carstensen called him "graduate student emeritus." He'd been there so long. They'd go off and get a job at Green Bay or whatever. So anyway, I went over to see Curti. Never will forget it. It was a cold day. Getting ready to take them in the spring, so it'd have been in the winter or whatever. The winter there was still cold. So, we sat down and we talked. I said, "Mr. Curti, I don't believe I can pass those prelims." He said, "Charles, any man who can announce a rodeo can do anything." [Laughter]

MG:

I love it.

BT:

"Any man who can announce a rodeo can do anything." So I know that he thought I was something special. I could announce a rodeo. And sure enough, I passed. But anyway, you can cut it off now, but I had to get that. That was the last hoorah for rodeo except— [Pause in recording]

AW:

All right. We're back after our pause. Michael Grower had to leave. It's getting late in the afternoon. I've got to drive back to Lubbock. One of the things that is interesting to me is—and you talked about it on and off a lot—but I'd like for you to talk a little bit about that shoeshine business, and I'd also like to know how you did it after you injured your hand. That has got to be quite a story. That took some cleverness on your part.

BT:

Well, it was kind of like Michael Grower said—I can't shine your shoes but I could've Michael's. I was going to do that. We'll do that next time.

AW:

That'd be great.

BT:

I wish we had done it. So, it would've been in 1940—I guess I'd come back from Austin, living with my brother. Boy, he was having a time down there. He was working on a PhD. This is an academic story. He was working on a PhD in math, minoring in chemistry. He had a professor down there. He took a chemistry class, and he was great. Bill was great in everything. He gave him a B. So, Bill went in to see him and said, "Why did I get a B?" He said, "Townsend, I thought you'd make up your mind, whether you wanted chemistry or whether you wanted math.

So I gave you a B and you can make up your mind.” Well, Bill stayed with math. It’ll only take us a minute to tell this story. That math department was so split at the University of Texas in, I guess it was the sixties. Yeah. Fifties and sixties. There was a split, and I don’t know the difference—you do—between applied math and pure math. They were split. They hated each other. Bill passed prelims. It took him ten years after that before they let him have a PhD. He got a job at LSU and they finally granted the PhD, then went down there. He was a great math teacher, but he got involved in computers and was a pioneer in that. That’s enough on that. I was just going to say that. Now, what happened. This would’ve been in 1946, maybe. Yeah. Either late ’45, early ’46. Well, when I got back, I was in, as they say, hog heaven, because Momma had moved from the farm and had this hotel. Well, now I was right in town where all the action—where I could go wherever I wanted to at night. For a guy who’d—I didn’t care anything about learning, about school. Later I got interested in rodeo after ’46. But this was before that. I really can’t say, to be exactly correct, why I wanted to shine shoes. But I knew that—Rusty, I knew him, Atkins boy. [Coughs] He was shining shoes. Ed Hillard had a beautiful old shine chair. It was marble. It was marble and then had the—let’s see, three—I guess we had three sets of places where you put your feet. One, two—that’d be about right if you had that many. So, I [clears throat] don’t think I’d had a job. I might have. Because later, could’ve been earlier, but I think—I hopped milk, what we’d call it. There was a dairy there, and he’d come behind the hotel and pick me up at four in the morning. I’d go and deliver the milk on the—in those days, they was in bottles. Funny thing was if they put them up the least bit wet in the winter, they’d freeze and you’d break the bottom off to try to get them back. So, I did that. But I believe—maybe—it doesn’t matter which I did first. But I guess I saw that it might be a job where I could kind of run my own business. You are a businessman when you do that. I went by Ed Hillard’s barbershop. He had this beautiful—the bottom of it. The chair was, what, forty inches long or forty-eight, and stuffed with horsehide. It was that vintage. With brads on it. So, I decided that—I went by and said, “Ed”—I think I called him Ed Hillard. He was a grouchy old devil who cut hair. Sometimes he’d have somebody to help him, sometimes he didn’t. No wonder he was grouchy. He had to—the poor guy had to feed his wife and children. Some of them kept staying there, that kind of a thing. So, he said, “Now, Bud, here’s how you’d have to work it. You get every penny you take in. That’s yours. But you’ve got to sweep out the barbershop every day.” Boy, there’d be a stack of hair that high. “Then you have to mop and clean, really clean it on weekends, on Saturday night,” because Saturday’s the big day. He said, “You can get your cleaner and your shoe polish and your rags and everything from Barber Supply. When they come by here, they sell Kelly Lynn polish, they sell rags, and cleaner, whatever; brushes.” You need good brushes, because the last shine boy took everything. They were plentiful. I guess I had enough money from something to get started, to get me one black brush, one brown brush, and then I guess later I got me a neutral brush to—you can use neutral or tan. Then those little old things we used to clean the shoes was a package of—[clears throat] looked like a big package T. [Coughs] It was thirty-five cents. You get a brown and a black [coughs] and go around the drug store and get one of those

old gallon Coca-Cola, Dr. Pepper, or both, jugs and put the cleaner—it was a powder. [Coughs] Let me get some water. Won't take but a second.

AW:

I'll pause this while you're doing that. [Pause in recording]

BT:

Natalie. Not like her to—something must've gone wrong. It was an odd [?] [4:17:09] meeting, where the teachers call in the parents and child. They had a little trouble with a boy. Anyway, so, I got started shining shoes. Some of them said, "Well, you can't shine shoes with that hand." Ed never did say that, Ed Hillard. Old Ed. So I said, "Well, we will see." Well, you could buy those—you'd buy those—I guess maybe a quarter a piece, I don't know. They're kind of ducking on one side and flannel on the other. So, I got the idea—and I'll show you one when we go up there. I thought—what I did for a long time, just wrap it around there. It shortened it. Oh, and I even pinned it, used a safety pin. Then I got the idea, Why don't you go down to Ma Crane's—you remember I told you about we sat down there on those sandstones in the front of their tailor shop and I said, "Ma"—we all called her Ma Crane. I said, "Can you sew that where I—make me a little pocket, and I can shine shoes?" So, she shined them. I mean, she sewed all of these then, I think, maybe, charged my fifty cents or whatever. She did it more charity than anything. So, I took that back and I shined shoes. We'd take, say, like a shoe like this—is it black or brown? Doesn't matter. First thing you do is get that little dobber—we called it a little dobber. Had a little round thing with hair up on it, or whatever. Some kind of bristle. You'd pour out some of that cleaner and you'd clean this, what you'd call cleaning. Actually, I think it was more—did more damage. But it was—boy, we'd really make them black around everything. You do the brown the same. Then you'd wipe that off and then you'd brush it. Then after you brushed it and it was good and dry, then you'd get that Kelly Lynn stain wax polish—it has a wax in it like Johnson's Wax. I'd put it in this hand. [rubs hands together] All around. Because we shined all the time, we'd put a piece of glass, thirty inches or twenty-four, about twenty-four—a piece of glass, have it cut, and put it over that piece of marble. Then we would open our black and just put it face down on the glass; brown, tan, neutral, and maybe later red or blue. But we didn't do many colors. And you'd turn it over and you left—all you'd do—if you came in for a shine with a black shoe, I'd just turn that over and start using it. When you left, I'd just put it back. You didn't have to put the lid on it each time, because that sealed it enough. You didn't—you'd go through those, you know, at least one a week, maybe.

AW:

I always had trouble getting the lids off those things.

BT:

Yeah. Well, you just mash it if it's—or there used to be a little thing you could turn. After you put it on there, then you brush it. Now, Russ could do it—he had two hands so he could—

AW:

Pop the—

BT:

Yeah. Well, use the brush, use two brushes.

AW:

Oh he could do two brushes? I got it.

BT:

Yeah, two brushes. You already get them—I've always been of the opinion that the brushing did more good than anything. That brush really—because that brush—that'd build up that wax on that brush and that'd—you could almost shine one without putting wax on them. Then about once every two or three weeks, I'd get a bucket, same bucket I used to mop with on Saturday night, and soak those brushes, and that black or brown would come off and you'd have a clean brush. So, I would make, oh, many, many—I thought I'd had a bad week if I didn't make twenty dollars on Saturday. Now, twenty dollars in 1945, that was a lot of money for a schoolboy. And the great thing was, I could walk by there from the hotel and if somebody, they said, "Hey, Bud, can you shine Andy's shoes before you go to school?", "Yeah." So I'd make a dime. And finally—I felt like I was stealing and went to fifteen cents.

AW:

It was a dime a shoe shine?

BT:

"Ten cents a shine." You ever hear that? "It's ten cents a shine." Then maybe at noon I'd go in there and sit and do a couple. Then in the afternoon—you wouldn't make a whole lot in the week. Maybe you'd make two or three dollars on a weekday or maybe you wouldn't make any more than forty-five cents. But that was enough for you to buy a bowl of chili or a bowl of soup or a hamburger or go to the movie. It was nine cents to go to a movie. Then on Saturday, boy, those—see, those were Saturday towns. That oil field out to the north of Nocona. You had farmers. They'd come in. My gosh, it wasn't anything to have two-thousand people in Nocona. Well, you had three theaters and they would fill them up, empty them, fill them up, empty them, fill them up, three times. That's nine filling plus the preview. It comes on at noon. I'm sorry, the preview—what did we call that—was the midnight show. You'd have a brand new show and they'd fill it up again. So, that many people went to the movies. Not all of them went. So, I'd

make twenty dollars. Sometimes you'd feel like this after you'd finish, but my gosh. You were young. It didn't bother you. I could've done another—whatever it took. If you're going to do it ten cents a shine, twenty dollars, what would that be? It'd be five shines, five—no, ten shines for a dollar and you did twenty. That'd be two-hundred. Two-hundred.

AW:

That's a lot of shines.

BT:

Yeah. And you'd get some tips. So, I would go over to—I quit Ed and went over to the city barbershop and shined there for a number of years. I was shining there when I started—I was still announcing some pretty good rodeos and still shining shoes. So Ruth Roach came to me and she said, "Bud, my gosh, you're going to be a big rodeo announcer. You can't let people know that you're shining shoes." So, I had to finally quit shining shoes. Later on I got the job at Olsen-Stelzer. But that was the shoe shining—I thought—I always looked on it as one of the best parts of my life. I wasn't ashamed to do it. It was a service, though I didn't look at it like that. It was just a job, and one that you could write your own ticket. If you want to go to a little rodeo on Saturday night, you closed at four, get somebody else to come in there and shine for you. The only drawback was emptying those old spittoons. Oh god, they were awful. We had three or four. We'd pour them out, sometimes, just out the street and try to wash them away or try to dump them into the sewer or whatever. Then we'd have to—you'd try to get all the hair out you could, but there's always going to be a little hair that you didn't get. We would—then I would—I'd get a bunch of boys in there and we'd have a lot of fun. We'd take those—my gosh, you'd have that long of thing of hair tonic and everything; Jeris Hair Tonic, Wildroot Cream Oil, Vitalis, Fitch's Dandruff Remover Shampoo. We had one that was—had creosote dip in it. It was called—you could still get it. It would cure any head thing you had.

AW:

When babies get scabies, they use that, don't they?

BT:

Yeah. What was the name of that? It was called—

AW:

Smelled awful.

BT:

Something Oil. Not Oil but—but anyway, the boys would come in and help me. I'd make music playing a funnel. [Imitates sound] And we'd have fun. Then we'd go out to Sam Arnold's Café on the highway and have a hamburger and chili. Gosh, wouldn't it be nice to be able to eat chili

at two o'clock in the morning and not bother you? That's the way it was in our youth. But that's kind of the story of my shoe shining. I was always proud that I went from a shoe shine boy to a Grammy award winner, and an author and PhD—I mean, it's still the Land of Opportunity. Huh?

AW:

Is it too far a stretch to think that your shoe shine business was an asset to you when you were Olsen-Stelzer?

BT:

Oh yes. Oh no.

AW:

Seems to me like your knowledge of boots and leather is—would've been informed somewhat about that.

BT:

I really am pretty well-informed about leather, just like he took his boot off there and I told him what the leather was. If handled right, that can be a pretty nice looking shoe—boot. The fact that I knew how to shine them and how to tell them—I'd say, "Now, the first thing you do is you go somewhere and get a shine, because if you wait till it rains or you walk through some wet grass, you're going to start ruining your shoes, your boots. You go and get a shine right now with that good wax polish," and that'd kind of start it off. Yeah, that helped. But to this day I can't help but love a beautiful piece of leather, like that that you're lying on, and this. Stickley made this. This is bound to be very expensive, because this chair was really expensive. I love good leather. Well, and that piece over there. Look at that. See that white piece?

AW:

Yeah. How do you—you know, one of the—

BT:

I bought that up at Amarillo Leather Company. That was fifty-four square feet. You know what I had to pay for that?

AW:

I bet it was a lot.

BT:

No. About \$225. Leather's really gone down. My gosh, I've got a—

AW:

There's too many shoes like what I've got on right now.

BT:

I've got a couch upstairs that I bought from Blue Leather that cost two thousand for the leather and a thousand to put it on. And this one cost me two hundred and twenty-five and about seven-hundred to put it on. But we wove—we put into that Navajo rug.

AW:

Now, I do have a question. This is just a personal question. I need to reupholster some things in my house, but we've got all those cats and I'm scared to do it. I'm afraid they'll—yours is not torn up, your leather.

BT:

No. There's one scratch on that one over there, hardly any on that one, and only one or two—there's some stuff you can buy that helps. [Coughs] I don't want you to say, "Damn that Townsend."

AW:

"Didn't help me."

BT:

You surely have a leather supply somewhere. If you don't, we'll go up here sometime to Amarillo. Two-hundred and twenty-five dollars. [Clears throat] There's some stuff you can buy—here it is. The only time—see, I got a pinched nerve way back then. That's why I have a little—here.

AW:

If I sit too long, I have trouble.

BT:

Here you are. This is called OUT! Repellent.

AW:

OUT! Repellent. Okay.

BT:

See? Look. Little on there. There's something they don't like about that. Go to the—do you have a Petco, a PetSmart?

AW:

Oh yeah.

BT:

They'll have it. And Walmart has it.

AW:

I think my wife is one of the major factors in PetSmart staying alive in Lubbock.

BT:

So there you—it doesn't discolor. Then here's another one. It's a pump. I use them both, but I don't use them very often. This is called No Scratch. There's something about this they don't like. Here's one. This is really a Naugahyde here. If you worry a whole lot about it, Naugahyde's a good substitute.

AW:

To be honest, they're more difficult on our cloth.

BT:

Oh yeah. They are. They try to—I keep it there. The thing about it is, if you've got a lot of money tied up in leather—now, this one here, this is a leather. I've never put anything on it. I've done a lot of this since my wife passed away. I've redone, brought all this furniture down. I may have told you. This piece, this and that chair, we started paying for it before we even married.

AW:

Oh. I didn't know that.

BT:

And this. If you really want understand the American Revolution and Colonial history, look at here at how—Jensen, he tried to be a cult guy. By that I mean, you've got to, these graduate students—you know, Richard Current, who was a Hesseltine, he left Wisconsin when Hesseltine died because he didn't want to work with graduate students.

AW:

Really?

BT:

Yeah. Some of them are kind of bad. I always thought my undergraduates were a lot better students than my graduate students.

AW:

I think there may be something to that.

BT:

Much better, because—see, if you're teaching undergraduates and you've got forty-five, you're going to have five pre-med, pre-dental, chemistry, science, but if you're just teaching history, then you don't get the cream of the crop unless they are the cream of the crop, and they're not. It's bad to say that about your—because that means I'm not either. But really. I had a couple of pre-med students. One of them, he went down to do some intern down at Tech. I don't know where he did his work. He was such a great on shoulders that they wanted him and a man who's a knee man to put in the department at Tech medical school. They turned him down. They said—they offered him a big deal but he said, "No, we want our own business." So they put in Amarillo Bone & Joint. We've got great doctors there. But I taught one of those boys. He worked hard and made an A, but I had two pre-med get in my class one time. They heard I was the toughest and they said, "If"—I said, "Why did you get in here?" They said, "We were told that if we can handle you, we can handle med school, that you're that tough." So anyway, the first time I handed them back a paper, it was either an F or C or something. Oh, and they'd never seen that. They were top students. I said, "Don't worry, you'll come around. We have a test every week." They said, "Yeah, but we can't compete with these history majors." I said, "What?" They said, "We can't compete with these history majors." I said, "Look, the worst students I get are history majors." I said, "You guys will beat them hands down." And they did. They had to get the hang of it, but after they got rid of their fear, they—a good student's a good student.

AW:

I agree.

BT:

One of them is—one of the great bone men in Amarillo was in my class, and his wife is an ear, nose and throat specialist. She wasn't in my class but he was. Oh no. By no means get the best—of course, now—and the big time, like Madison, you get some great history majors. You know what I mean?

AW:

Yeah.

BT:

Well, a scientist should be judged on their research. A historian must be judged on what he produces: books. If I hadn't written the Bob Wills book, I'd have felt all my life, that I had let Wisconsin and everybody down. That's the test of people in the humanities and, to me, in history, you've got to write something. The only difference in a high school teacher and a college

teacher is that one publishes and the other doesn't, in my opinion. If you don't publish, I don't have much use for you. I just think that you're stealing money. Anybody can teach. Maybe some of us are better than others. I think you ought to—I really believe in publish or perish. In other words, you either publish or get out. You don't belong in college if you can't teach—college teaching if you can't publish. High school teacher will do just as well as you will. But now maybe a little—maybe my background at Madison.

AW:

Ordinary fellows like me managed to publish a lot. Why can't—

BT:

And, you know, most people don't publish because they don't want to—that's the hardest work in the world. Hell, anybody can dig a post hole. But I'll tell you, it's hard work sit over there all day and write. I've sat right over there when I was writing that Bob Wills book and not—write a line. That trashcan would be running over. Judge a writer by his trashcan.

AW:

John Kenneth Galbraith had this—you know, he was quite a writer as well. He had a thing that he said. He would talk about his writing habits. He would go in in the morning at eight and he'd write till a little bite of lunch and write for another couple of hours. He said in the evening when he'd go out to meet people for cocktails, it'd been one of those days where he'd spent that whole time and didn't have a line. They would say, "What did you do today," and he would say, "I wrote." I always thought that was—I get more writing done when nothing's coming out of the typewriter.

BT:

Well, when it hits you then, my gosh, you may write ten pages. It's got to hit you. Many's a time that trashcan would run over. Another thing: writing is physical as well as mental. I could write all morning, do pretty well, but when you eat that middle meal, you're finished. Forget it. Afternoon, your mind is not good.

AW:

I agree. Certainly that's the case with me.

BT:

That's the way it is with me. And I didn't try. But I wanted to really hit the ball early. Boy, what's great in writing is when it really hits you and it's flowing. And sometimes it does and sometimes it doesn't. Sylvan Dunn said something to me one time. Maybe I ought to get it on tape. It's not true for everybody. Sylvan said to me—of course, my book was really considered top-notch. Well, after all, 1976 and nobody's duplicated it. I mean, they can't get by it. Sylvan

said to me, he said, “Bud”—he always called me Bud. He said, “Bud”—book was just out. I saw Sylvan somewhere. He said, “Bud, don’t ever write another book. There’s only one good book in every man. Don’t try to write another one. If you do, they’ll compare it to that first one, and you won’t be happy.” Now, whether Sylvan was right or wrong, I don’t know.

AW:

Well, my friend, Max Evans—you know Max wrote *The Rounders* and *The Hi Lo Country*. Max was giving me advice on this novel I just finished. I’d never written a novel, I’d just written poems, and songs, and plays. I was worried about how the thing was taking off on its own and going into all this territory. I hadn’t planned for it. Max said—it wasn’t quite the same thing, but he said, “You’ve got to just do—you’ve got to let it have its own way because you’ve got to think about anything you write may be the last thing you ever write.” I thought, Boy—

BT:

He’s right.

AW:

—that’s good advice. “Don’t pull back.”

BT:

Make it your best. Make it your best. But I’ve often thought about it, that some people write several books and they talk about how many—but some of them are not any good.

AW:

No. That’s right.

BT:

[Clears throat] But there are guys like Ambrose and some of these guys, they can write four, five, six books—ten—and they’d be good. But they’re—I think they’re the exception. People always say, “Bud, why don’t you write another book,” or, “Why don’t you write a history of western swing?” I said, “I just did.” I said everything about western—unless they just wanted to take some bands and talk about them. I’ve got that already done but I’m not going to publish it. Somebody wants to take it, all right. And they said, “Well, why don’t you write on so and so?” Hell, if you write on Bob Wills, he’s the giant. You think you can get enthused on a little minor one? I was going to write on Leon McAuliffe, his steel guitar player. I went up there and interviewed him for a week and brought back pictures. I’ve still got them and all. But he’s not—I couldn’t get enthused about him. He’s no Bob Wills. So that’s why I made the statement earlier today, “If you’re going to write, you get a great subject.”

AW:

Well, you've got to get enthused about it yourself.

BT:

Yeah. Everybody knows Isaiah but not many know the Minor Prophets. Isaiah was a biggie, you see. But I really believe that Sylvan may have been right. "You've got one great book in you, and if you write that, be careful what you write next time." And I guess it's too bad—did you know Sylvan?

AW:

Only barely. He was already gone before I took this job. I met him after he'd left. But I didn't know him well enough.

BT:

I don't believe he ever wrote anything.

AW:

I don't know if he did.

BT:

Huh?

AW:

I don't know if he did. I mean, I think he was co-author on some journal articles.

BT:

He had the mind to do it. I think he could've done it but he didn't do it. It's like Walter Prescott Webb once said, "There's more going to write a book—there's a thousand—how many people do you know that's going to write a book and how many people do you know that wrote a book?" But the one reason—see, I wrote my book because I loved it. It wouldn't have mattered up here whether I wrote a book or whether I didn't. I wrote the book because I loved it. And there's a whole lot of having some—a difference in having something to write and having to write something. That's what's hurt our profession, the history profession, is they tell—they say, "You've got to publish," so you publish a piece of crap. They say—well, Walter Webb spoke on that. He said, "Most of what all you historians"—this is when he was president of the American Historical Association. He said, "Most of you people, what you write, the only people that read it are those poor graduate students that you forced to read, and they don't enjoy it. Tell me I'm wrong." If you've got something really good—but you've got to get a good subject, in my opinion. Well, I don't believe Natalie ever wrote it. You heard about the two historians, didn't you?

AW:

I hope. No, I haven't. Let me—I'd like to hear it.

BT:

One of them—they were all talking, two or three of them. They said, "Well, what do you think about Jesus Christ?" Well, that's the Great Philosopher. He's the savior of the world. Another one said, "His teachings"—one fellow said, "You know something, he's never published anything." [Laughter] He said, "He's all right, but he's never published anything." And it is funny that the reams of books that have been written about him and he never did write anything. It's too bad he didn't put that into a book. I don't mean to be flipping about religion.

AW:

It's a great—the great architect, Louis Kahn, never wrote anything down, people wrote down what he told them. That's the only way—in fact, we're not sure about the—I think—about the philosopher Heraclitus. We only know what people said he told them. We don't have the—like later people. Well, I think this is a great spot to stop, because we started talking about writing—

BT:

Are you stopped now?

AW:

Um-hm. No, I'm about to stop. I'm going to say thank you, and we're going to get back together and start with Bob Wills, because we just finished on talking about writing, and that is a natural thing for us to do.

BT:

And how I got interested in it, and go through the interviews.

AW:

And the research, and then the other thing, of course, being a writer myself, I want to know what it is that isn't in the book that you really enjoyed to learn about and to know.

BT:

Oh yeah. And the people I got to meet and that kind of a thing. [clears throat] What was I—I had a thought just then [pause] about writing. Oh, it's this. One of the first papers that I ever wrote for Dr. Neighbors at Midwestern was Roger Williams. You know who he was, or you may not. It's pretty technical. He was the great—he's the man that came into Massachusetts Bay during the Puritan year and had to leave, and established Rhode Island and established religious liberty.

AW:

I've actually performed in the First Baptist Church in America, Providence.

BT:

In Providence?

AW:

Yeah. It was quite an experience.

BT:

Well then you do know who he was.

AW:

Yeah.

BT:

I didn't mean to talk down to you, but I didn't expect you to—

AW:

When you said Roger Williams, I was thinking of—I was thinking musicians.

BT:

Roger Williams—I had to write a paper in Colonial history for Dr. Neighbors. So, I wrote it on Roger Williams and religious liberty. First paper I ever wrote in college. You know what? I didn't write any better when I wrote my book forty years later.

AW:

Really?

BT:

I really believe—well, we need to get this down when we—be sure and—be sure we talk about it. I really believe writers are born. I don't think you can anymore teach or train a man or a woman to write than I think you can teach them to be a whatever. You either got it—pardon the grammar—or you ain't. You either—and my son, Bill, when we were at Madison, he wrote a paper—he was a fan of John Paul Jones. He wrote a paper on John Paul Jones when he was in the eighth grade. He's published and is well-known in optometry. Famous. He writes no better than he did with that first. I don't know what it is. It's a gift.

AW:

It's a way of looking at the world, I think. It's a perspective that's hard to explain to somebody. I

tell my students in songwriting class—here I get twenty kids in a class and they're expecting to learn to be songwriters. I tell them at the beginning of the semester, "I can't teach you to write a song."

BT:

No you can't.

AW:

"I can teach you to write a better one. I can do that. I can help you do better, but I can't teach you to do it." What I don't say is that I can never teach you how to be a great songwriter. That's beyond all of us.

BT:

It's a—it's almost mystical. Well, take Hank Williams. Who could've taught him anything?

AW:

No. That's right.

BT:

You couldn't have—nobody could've taught him. He was—you read the lyrics to *I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry*. You can't—I don't know how you guys do it. I admire it so much. But where do they get the melody? How do you get something nobody else has ever written when millions have been written? I just don't—I can understand how you can write lyrics, but I don't understand how you can write that music.

AW:

Even the lyrics—when I'm writing a song, lyrics and/or melody, things come out my mouth and out of my pencil that just amaze me. They're so great. I don't mean I'm not great. I am fortunate to have those things happen to me. You know what I mean? It is a mystery. And you can no more sit down and make yourself do that quality. I mean, you can sit down and make sure you write—

BT:

It just happens.

AW:

—but that part of it happens.

BT:

Stuart Hamblen told me—he wrote *This Is No Secret* or some songs, religious songs. He said, "I

thought I was crazy.” He said, “I was the only man I ever knew of that the melody and the words come at the same time.” He said, “I thought I was crazy.” He said, “For a long time, I wouldn’t tell anybody.

AW:

That’s the same way it happens to me. I don’t see how you can separate them. When people say to me, “What comes first, the melody or the lyric,” I kind of punt, I say, “The idea”—what I mean is they both come at the same time. There’s a music in the language and they’re ideas in the music, and they come together.

BT:

What do you—are you interested in mainly western music?

AW:

Oh no. I’m interested in all kinds of music. I hardly find any musician who’s worth a salt that doesn’t have very eclectic set of things they listen. You can learn something from anything you listen to.

BT:

But you’ve got to wait for that inspiration.

AW:

Um-hm. Well, I mean, I also think that the more you’re writing, the more times you’re paying attention when the inspiration comes.

BT:

You know, sometimes in writing—great writing—you better put it down right now or it won’t come again. Is that true in music?

AW:

Oh yeah. I put—I keep a notepad by my bed for two reasons: one is if that great thing happens, but the other is the un-great things that happen. It lets me go back to sleep if I’ll write them down.

BT:

That’s right.

AW:

No, it’s time to get it. The muse flies through the air and if—it’s not going to terry along with you if you don’t take care of it.

BT:

I can't prove it, but great writing is inspired writing. I was going to write the album notes that I won the Grammy award for. I went through all the musicians, the music, and Bob. I came to the end and I knew he had this stroke and he'd never speak again. I knew that [clears throat] what I wrote was, in a sense, obituary. Well, I couldn't get it. I couldn't get it. Other was easy, though inspired of them. I was lying in there with Mary. She was sound asleep. I was going to have to get it ready for the next week, to send to United Artists. And it came to me just in a flash. So I jumped out of bed—it was cold that night, but I didn't worry about it. I didn't put on a robe, and I sat right over there and worked it out. Then I went over and wrote it down. I knew if I went back to bed it'd be gone. I wrote it down. It was the end of—and I sat down there and I cried like a baby. I just cried for—because I knew it was the end of an old friend and that what I was writing was the end of it. [clears throat] I read a book—I think there's certain things that happen to people. This woman wrote a good book on Man o' War. It's out there. Bought a book for my daughter. It's a woman writer. So, she [clears throat] was writing the last chapter. The last chapter was they were going to retire him because they were going to weight him down so much, what we called handicapping in racing. They were going to maybe put 148 pounds on him. You get a bottle of water that's eight pounds and try to walk up those steps. But can you imagine 140 pounds? That's as much as one of these things here nearly weighs. So, they were—so they decided to match him at the first Triple Crown winner, Sir Barton, who was a good horse. It was obvious this would be the last race. They weren't going to run him anymore. So, she wrote half of that chapter about that race, as a matter of fact. Then she came to about the last four pages, when she was talking about when they retired him and how many people came to see him, what they said. And at the end, she talked about the old darkie—I'm going to use that word—that took care of him and how he'd come and put his head in the pit of his arm. The last three pages was from the heart. She knew she was writing the last on him. And she wrote like she hadn't written in that whole book. That was inspired. That was from—the difference in writing from the head and writing from the heart. Am I right or wrong?

AW:

Oh no, you're exactly right. Did you ever Robert Carter's long thing, *On the Border with Mackenzie*?

BT:

No I didn't.

AW:

Well, most of it is not worth reading, because he wrote it late in life. He was trying to get his pension back. And most of it he's reporting—

BT:

You mean Ranald Mackenzie?

AW:

Ranald Mackenzie, yeah. And Robert Carter wrote this book. Like I said, the Army hadn't treated him any better than they treated Mackenzie. But he—most of the time, he was reporting what everybody else said, but he was at the Battle of Blanco Canyon. That chapter is electric. There is—

BT:

A different writer.

AW:

He was a different writer, because he wasn't trying to report something. He was—it was inspired. It was what came from him. I think it was Frost. I may be wrong but I think it was Frost who said, "No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader."

BT:

How brilliant. How—I wish I'd said that.

AW:

And Wally Stevens—

BT:

His wife said, "Don't worry, tomorrow you will."

AW:

Yeah. Wally Stevens, a poet—I mean also a poet—said—and this is the other thing that I think harks to inspiration: Steven said, "It's not every day that the world arranges itself into a poem."

BT:

"The world arranges itself."

AW:

It's not every day, which is a caution to you as a writer that you better be there the day it does, but that there are certain things that you can't summon yourself. You just have to be able to take—

BT:

Yeah. It was a different woman who wrote that last three pages. I shed a little tear, because I

loved the horse and loved—but the way she put it. She'd say, "And the people would come and the old horse would come and put his head in his arm. He'd pat"—I mean, see, that's moving writing, because you're writing about something of the heart.

AW:

Well, or the thing we always try to teach—and you seldom have much luck with it—the adage, "Show, don't tell."

BT:

Huh?

AW:

"Show, don't tell."

BT:

"Show, don't tell." Oh, yeah.

AW:

The horse putting its head in the crook of the arm is showing.

BT:

It was—it's just—sometimes it hits you, just like some of your work in this novel. And you can't make it happen, I don't think.

AW:

No, no, no. It would—

BT:

It has to happen. What was it that you said? "The world doesn't arrange itself every time."

AW:

That novel I just finished wrote me more than I wrote it. I like to think I wrote it but I really was just—

BT:

Instrument.

AW:

—standing guard over the keyboard. All right.

BT:

Well, it—it's worth your coming and my time for you to say what you said a while ago. "No tear in the writer, no tear in the reader."

AW:

I'm going to—

BT:

That's the truth.

AW:

I'm going to look that up and make sure it was Frost, but I'm pretty sure, and I'll let you know.

BT:

We haven't produced anything like him in a long time.

AW:

No. And boy, he's sure worth talking about because he's also a person that—you know, we expect our great artists and great people to be—I mean great accomplishers to be great human beings and they not—and they aren't always.

BT:

I never can feel the same way if they're not.

AW:

You don't want to learn much about Frost.

BT:

I never can feel the same way if they're not.

AW:

Yeah. You don't want to learn much about Frost.

BT:

No, you don't.

AW:

His friends didn't even like him.

BT:

I'll be darned. That's too bad.

AW:

It is too bad.

BT:

You know what, that's why I love Theodore Roosevelt. The more I learn about him, the more I love him. And if I know that some people can get away with it, with being a bad person and moving people, but it's hard to do.

AW:

Oh, they're very few of them. All right. I've got to get back to Lubbock and this is a great place to stop. I really enjoyed this last few minutes listening to you talk about writing.

BT:

And you know what? I think one of my secrets—well, I did have a course in writing at Texas Tech. It was darn good. Well, we can talk about that next time if you want to. And I can't think of that darn—he's the one that they thought was going to be the next Webb. What is his name?

AW:

I don't know. And I'm going to have to—

BT:

I don't think he ever wrote a whole lot. I don't think he ever reached his potential, but he taught this. There was only five of us in there. I never will forget—what was it? Where was it? Was it that class? One, two, three. I believe there were—I know of three. There was only five people in there. Of course, you know a lot of these say, "If you don't get ten, you can't have a class." Out of those five people, I can't tell you how many books came.

AW:

Really?

BT:

Yes. Not all of them good, but it beat—some of them where they—but just some classes turn them out. Turner had that—those students he had at Wisconsin when he was there, like Osgood wrote on the cattle industry and this Herbert Bolton wrote on the Spanish borderlands. You can go on and on. Sometimes—and Turner never did write much except that essay.

AW:

That's right.

BT:

I've got—see, Curti was Turner's last PhD. Then after Turner retired, he went to the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. There's a girl here that teaches literature. She's the one who had the hat.

AW:

Yeah, Bonnie.

BT:

Okay. Bonnie's a great fan of Turner, though some of these young historians—to make a reputation, they try to bring him down. That's an old trick. But it doesn't last. So, she went to—and Curti then, when he retired at Wisconsin or before, then he went to the Huntington. They pay you and you stay. She went out there, Bonnie did, and she—I don't know whether she did that for me. She and I had talked and she knew how I loved Turner and how I loved—well, I think he's the greatest historian. He's the only one that made us understand ourselves. The other—you can criticize him and the other great historians and great works, but Schlesinger's book on Jackson don't make us understand—doesn't make us understand ourselves. Turner made us understand who we were, or invented us. You can go on and on. Or individual, all that that he talked about. I don't know whether she—we had talked on the phone. I hadn't even met her at that time. So she went out there and found all the letters that Curti and Turner had written. And they're upstairs. I haven't read them yet. But she got those letters; Bonnie. She's not run-of-the-mill, Bonnie's not.

AW:

I don't know her very well but now I want to know her better.

BT:

And she's not afraid of pop stuff either. She's a great authority on John Wayne. I think we make such a—well, maybe I'll say this when we're taping. I think people make such a mistake not writing on pop. After all, if you could write something on—good—on Michael Jackson, as wretched as his life was—and talented—if you could write that right, look at the thousands who would read it. But you can't write it on somebody—there's nothing wrong with popular figures. My gosh.

AW:

Not only that, how many millions of people have pop figures like Michael Jackson and Bob

Wills impacted. So if you're writing about them, you're also writing about those millions of people.

BT:

And you're writing to them.

AW:

And writing to them.

BT:

It's too bad. So sad. And they sell out for money and friendship. I told Willie Nelson one time—he put on a show out here. He knew me because he's a Bob Wills' fan. So it can't just be a book, it's got to be a good book. I gave him a book and we talked. I said, "You know, Willie"—he put his picnic out here in our stadium. I said, "I'd like to write a book on you." He said, "Dr. Townsend, I know you could do it, but I'm going to let my bus driver write it." Now, nothing—I'm not saying a bus driver couldn't write it better than I could. I don't mean that at all. I think to some writers, it's better that they never did go to college, and he could've. But that—somebody wrote that book and you can't find it. It's got to be a good book. The public out here's not dumb. They told me, "Do you think people, Bob Wills' fans, will read a book?" I said, "Well, I hope so.", "Do you think they'll read a scholarly book if you tell the truth about him?" I said, "Well, I hope so." You'd be surprised at the letters that I got and people said, "I was so glad when you handled his drinking problem, when you told his—this, that, and the other." The people out there are not so dumb. Hey, they're smarter than we are. They're not having to write books. [Laughter] So, you know what? They liked the scholarly. "We liked to know where you got all that." Now, Illinois was—I wanted it at the bottom of the page. University of Illinois said, "No, Charles, we'll put it at the end notes." They were right. Don't put it down—don't get it to looking too sophisticated. But if they wanted to check the footnotes, they will. I think it is distracting.

AW:

You know, the other thing is I think it makes you write better, because the bottom of the page is too easy to think about that as sort of a parenthetical.

BT:

Yeah. And let it speak for you. But here's a sad one. You can correct me. You may know more about it than I do. Elvis Presley died on one day and three days—I'm exaggerating—three days later, there were three books written on him, and not a one of them lived beyond his birthday. Tell me of a good book. And if there ever was a man worthy of a good book, it's Elvis Presley, but nobody's written it. We need it to be written and the peoples will hang with you with the feeling—

AW:

There hadn't been a good book written about Buddy Holly.

BT:

No there hasn't.

AW:

There have been a bunch of books written, but they're fan books. They all missed a—

BT:

You're right. You can't write as a fan, but I did.

AW:

You can be a fan. But Haley was a fan of Goodnight, and he said as much, but he still wrote the book.

BT:

Here's the trouble with Holly. And it wasn't his fault. I got to Bob Wills while he was in his death bed and talked to him many times. Buddy Holly died and no one had ever come to him in a scholarly way to ask him the right questions. So you will never be able to write the proper book on Buddy Holly. You've got to—somebody needed to talk to him.

AW:

Yeah, they did. But there were—there's enough evidence, right at the end of his life, about the things that he was doing differently that gave—that can give an insight into the—and the book would be about the—what I really think was a genius that never got developed.

BT:

He developed it pretty good.

AW:

He did, but I mean it to the point—you know, the fact that he was recording with black musicians and that he was getting ready to build his own recording studio in Lubbock. We have the plans for that at the Southwest Collection.

BT:

You do?

AW:

Yeah. He was thinking about—for a young person, he was thinking about things that it took the industry another decade to even begin to—and I'm not saying that makes him—

BT:

No.

AW:

But it's—

BT:

His wife, can anybody do anything with her?

AW:

No. When I turn this tape off, I'll tell you some stories about that.

BT:

Well, if you could—if she could tell you, she could help. But, see, how long was she married to him?

AW:

Months. I mean, it was—

BT:

See. I just don't think there's any way to write the kind of a book that needs to be written, but I'd like for somebody to try. Do you see what I mean?

AW:

Yeah.

BT:

I'd like for—and Hank Williams, they still haven't written—they still haven't written the book—I watched that—what was the name of that movie? Sing me—no. Not *The Hank Williams Story*. There's another movie coming out. Boy, there was a man I wish I could've gotten a hold of. I'd like to have said, "Now, Hank, where did you really get the ideas for 'Jambalaya'? How much time did you spend in one of those"—what do you call them—pierros [?] [5:17:47]. "How much time did you spend"—Hank Williams was a man of nature. Just listen to *I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry*. "A falling star lights up a purple sky." Now, he had to slept out a lot. As a boy, we slept outside. I remember falling stars. But the difference in me and Hank is that he saw poetry in this. But how he came to do all of these things. I know how he wrote *Mansion on the Hill* and

some of those things. I wish we could've gotten Buddy Holly, because, evidently, from all I can learn, he was a good person. Good husband. Good person. I guess I'd say—from what I know, he was a good man by any man's standards.

AW:

Yeah, he was one of us. He was polite.

BT:

Loved his mother.

AW:

Yeah. Good son. Good daddy.

BT:

Now, if you want to cut that off and we'll talk about—

AW:

Yeah I will. I want to say thanks again for the talk on writing. Thanks.

End of Recording

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