

**Oral History Interview of  
Don and Carolyn Kimbrell**

**Interviewed by: Katelin Dixon  
January 10, 2020  
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:**  
*American Agriculture Movement Interviews*

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## Interview Series Background:

The American Agriculture Movement grew out of the populist agrarian protests of the late 1970s. Officially chartered in August of 1977, it remains active. Materials in the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library reflect principally its formation, the tractorcade protests of 1977-1979, and the farm and rural suicide hotline prevention efforts of the 1980s. Materials include oral history interviews, photographs, video and film, and miscellaneous papers.

## Transcript Overview:

This interview features Don and Carolyn Kimbrell as they discuss being farmers and being active in the American Agriculture Movement and protests. In this interview, Kimbrell describes his relationships with other farmers and how he helped them with legal paperwork. He recalls being sent to jail for protesting on a bridge in McAllen, Texas. He closes the interview by recounting the 1979 Tractorcade, and his wife describes her involvement in the Tractorcade.

**Length of Interview:** 01:20:32

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### Keywords

American Agriculture Movement, Tractorcade, Protests

**Katelin Dixon (KD):**

The date is January tenth, I'm here at the MCM Eleganté with Don and Carolyn Kimbrell.

[Recording begins]

KD:

What is your complete legal name?

**Don Kimbrell (DK):**

My complete name?

KD:

Yes.

DK:

Gary Don Kimbrell.

KD:

And when and where were you born?

DK:

I was born on July 7, 1943.

KD:

And where?

DK:

In Lubbock.

KD:

In Lubbock, okay. So, just tell me a little bit about your family background and kind of your upbringing and a general overview of that.

DK:

All right, well I suppose my family's been farming since Adam as far as we know. As far back as we can go we were farming. Of course, at one—not too many years back, everybody had some ties with farming.

KD:

Right, right.

DK:

But we started out at Idalou. I was at Idalou until I was eleven years old, and then we moved to Smyer, and lived there until I graduated, and met my wife there and we lived about a quarter of a mile down the road from one another, and—

KD:

You graduated from Smyer High School? Okay.

DK:

Uh-huh. I graduated from Smyer.

KD:

What was the size of your graduating class at that point?

DK:

I'm sorry.

KD:

How many people were in your graduating class in that point?

DK:

Twelve.

KD:

Twelve, okay.

DK:

No, well actually only eleven graduated, but there were twelve of us in the class.

KD:

Okay, and tell me a little bit about how did farming change on your land over the twentieth century. What were kind of some of the advances in technology and also just changes in practice that evolved that you saw in your lifetime from childhood through—

DK:

It almost gives me chills to think about it now—

KD:

I'm sure.

DK:

How different it is. I have a picture hanging on my wall of when my dad and grand—he was just seventeen at the time. They moved to Idalou from Oklahoma in 1927. And they bought a set of equipment which was—it consisted of mules and wagons and mule pulled equipment. And I've got a bill of sale that it's amazing to see. And so they were there, and of course I was—we lived at Idalou, and I was born here. And then Dad always farmed and he—we had A John Deeres, and finally moved up to a G John Deere in later years, so that's where it is now. And I think—I never get on a tractor these days. With the GPS and all of that, that I don't think if my dad could just see this. Because he would not believe that a tractor could drive itself.

KD:

And what were your parent's names? I meant to ask you that.

DK:

My dad was William Melvin Kimbrell, and my mom was Zelda MacEnroe Kimbrell.

KD:

Okay. And any siblings?

DK:

Yes. Had one brother.

KD:

Okay. And what is his name?

DK:

Gillis Wright [?] [00:03:10].

KD:

Okay. And moving on to some of the American Ag, your beginnings with that. How did you first hear about the American Ag Movement?

DK:

Well, of course I had known Jerome and Katherine, and some of the earlier people for a lot of years. We had originally been with NFO [**National Farmers Organization**] which was—we realized there were problems several years before American Ag really started. We were trying to do collective bargaining through NFO, and had some success, but we had a lot of political battles and a lot of legal battles about collective bargaining. They were trying to stop us from being able to get together and contract.

KD:

Right.

DK:

And so, that was being very difficult, and then all through the seventies there were some really, really rough times. And Gerald got ahold of us one day and said there was some guys in Colorado that had gotten together and were trying to put together a farm strike, that we had to do something. And the basis was that so many people early on thought it was kind of a selfish motivated thing, but you know we're just looking after our own interests. But a lot of the basis for it was we realized that it was harming the whole country. Because there was a fellow by the name of Red Paulson, actually his name was Arnold Paulson. But he came and spoke to—even back when we were working on the things before American Ag. And he talked about the economy of the nation or the economy was generated by raw materials and things that were renewable and that money really wasn't—the economy wasn't generated in a printing press. And so we listened to those things, and we thought about, and he talked about—he had no connection with farming. He was an economist. But he said, as he talked about it he said, “You guys need a better price. Even if you didn't want it, the country has to have you make a better price, for the well-being of the country.” And so as time went on and we saw our neighbors going out of business and the farm sector shrinking, and we thought we do have to do something. So we met with probably twice a week at nights, we were all even and that time of the year it was pretty busy. But in December it was an easier time for us to do that kind of thing. So on December the fourteenth we decided that we were going to—the plan was for people all over the country to go and to shut down, blockade the grocery supply chain. And that was not to be mean, it was perceived that way in a lot of cases. And I'm understanding that. But it was to show how quickly the grocery store shelves could get empty. And after one night, the next day we went to Amarillo. And the very next day you could go the grocery stores and there was no bread there.

KD:

Yeah, crazy to think.

DK:

Because if the delivery system—we were trying to make the point that the delivery system started from the ground, and just to show that the importance to not only us but to the public. I'm going way too long.

KD:

No, no, we want all the details.

DK:

Way too wordy.

KD:

I want you to say a little bit more about the opposition. I knew you alluded to it briefly, but any specific instances where just opposing the AAM, I know you've talked a little bit about that, but—

DK:

Well here, really quickly, I'll try to run through this pretty quick.

KD:

Yeah, oh no, take your time.

DK:

From Amarillo, the third day we were in Amarillo, maybe the second day, and that was on December the fourteenth I believe was the first day there in Amarillo. And they were doing the same thing here in Lubbock. And we heard that a fellow by the name of Marvin Meek, that they had thrown him in jail because they had blocked the Missouri Beef Plant out in Plainview. So they said, "We need to go help him out." and so we got on our tractors in Amarillo and drove to Plainview during the dark hours of the night. Of course, they all had flashing lights and it was a safe thing. But we got to Missouri Beef just as it was beginning to break daylight, seems like, and we began to negotiate, Marvin needs to be out of jail. We'd never met him before. And through the course of the years after that, incident after incident, we got acquainted with people from not just our own state but all over the United States. And it was a wonderful thing. But anyway, opposition-wise, while we were there the *Avalanche Journal* came out with an article that farmers had always been gentle people and they were acting like union goons. [Laughter] And so we were going to—we were there at Plainview, and we parked our tractors at Hale Center, the ones that came from Amarillo, at a cotton gin there. And we were going to come to Lubbock to help the people that were blockading some of the like—I don't guess [inaudible] [00:08:54] are still here, but the grocery warehouses that delivered to the—and we were going to do that, and we tried to negotiate with the business owners, "Please, just take a day to shut your doors and to not—so that we can explain what we were doing that people—" we wanted people just to understand. We wasn't wanting to hurt the consumer or the supplier or anybody. We just wanted them to understand about food and about farmers. So, on the way, we had CB radios in our tractors. It was about the only modern convenience we had, and somebody said, "You know, that was sure not nice. We really ought to go circle the *Avalanche Journal*." And so we got there and we just surrounded the *Avalanche Journal*, and by then it was probably maybe ten o'clock at night. And there were tractors that came from all the main highways coming in to Amarillo, they were coming from towards Brownfield and from towards Idalou and from the north, our group and just almost every main road coming into Amarillo—I mean into Lubbock, there was tractors. And there was a song playing on the radio that was really—I mean it just fit. You could see, for as far as you could see there would be tractors with blinking lights. I wish they'd have saved a

recording on the radio, because the announcer just got more and more excited. They had gotten in a helicopter and were flying over. And you've probably heard this part of the story before.

KD:

I haven't.

DK:

As they were flying over in the helicopter, and I don't remember which radio station it was, but one of the radio stations here were saying, he said, "There's lights as far as you can see to there. And they're that way too!" And it was just—his voice just built with excitement as it went. And so, we surrounded the Avalanche Journal, and a lot of other people had the food warehouses in different places surrounded, and were talking and negotiating with them. And—I lost my train of thought. But—oh. They told us we couldn't stop our tractors and have—the police came and brought wreckers, and they were going to—it was really funny because they brought this little wrecker and it was going to move this big four-wheel tractor.

KD:

Yeah, no

DK:

No way was it going to move that.

KD:

No, no, of course not.

DK:

Finally they brought a bigger one and then they were going to move it, and he had it locked in gear and they said, "He's going to tear up my transmission if he does this." So anyway, one of the policemen said, "You can't stop these tractors here, but we can't stop you if you're moving." And so he said, "If you get close enough and you're moving, you've still got the same thing." And this was a policeman that told us that. So we had a rolling blockade from that point on. And finally, one of the neat things that everything that where we were was they would come out to people and the policemen would walk up and he would say, "Who's in charge here?", "Well, nobody, we don't—" you know, "Well who's your leader?", "We don't have a leader, we're just individual farmers." And it was just—nothing like that had ever happened before. Because they couldn't find who to talk to. We finally said—he said, "Is there anybody that you would agree to let speak for you?" So we said, "Yeah, Gerald McCathern and one or two others. If he's willing to talk to you," and he came. Of course, he was kind of our spokesman already.

KD:

Yeah, we have some of Gerald's interview as well—

DK:

What's that?

KD:

I've listened to some of Gerald's interviews at the collection.

DK:

Gerald and I made lots of miles together.

KD:

And this is the next thing I was going to ask you. Tell me about some of the connections you made with other farmers. Personally, professionally, when it brought people together, tell me about some of the relationships that developed.

DK:

Just the mutual heart of the thing. You had to admire people that were willing to take their time and risk. Every time—luckily, very few people got hurt through the years, or hurt anybody or got hurt. But the heart of the people was just became evident. Like the policeman that told us that. And so other farmers we met, well, one neat thing that happened, my father-in-law lived at Smyer at the time and we had moved up there before coming with the Amarillo bunch. But my father in law was the quietest peaceable man that you ever could have known. And when we were at the Avalanche Journal, well somebody was always traveling back and forth between the different groups. And somebody said, "I saw your father-in-law over at the [inaudible] [00:13:59] Platter in that blockade over there." I thought, no, not my father-in-law. And sure enough—

KD:

Wow, yeah, even he was out there.

DK:

People like that. There was just—and then there were a few naysayers even among farmers that said, "You guys are—this is wrong, you're hurting the public, you're making people think that we're trying to be mean and we're not." And we said, "But we're not trying to be mean and we want to convey that." So we got to know people all over the United States. We went to different things. I was at McAllen, we did a small blockade at El Paso. We went somewhere probably once or twice a month to a different place, either to help somebody—I didn't get to go when Wayne Cryts when they had the soybean—you've heard about the soybean raid that they had and

got his soybeans out of the—and I didn't get to go to that one, but I did get to go to Little Rock when they had him in jail for contempt because he wouldn't turn over some of his records.

KD:

Oh really.

DK:

And we surrounded the courthouse there, just walking, we didn't have tractors there. But we built relations—and that's one of the neat things. You see us here today and there's people from several states. But we had a convention here, I don't know if anybody's talked to you about the convention in 1993?

KD:

Um-hm.

DK:

But the hotel was completely full, we had hundreds and hundreds of people at that time. That was probably the ultimate height of American Ag.

KD:

Wow.

DK:

And Willie Nelson came and spoke, and the day that we asked him if he would speak, tears came in his eyes and he said, "People have always asked me to sing and I love to sing, but nobody's ever asked me to speak."

KD:

That's nice.

DK:

And he was at Littlefield with Waylon Jennings, and we went up to the bus and they had fenced off with cow panels, for security and so forth, and there was a fellow standing there at the gate to those cow panels, and I handed him my card and I said, "Could you see if Willie would visit with us?" Because we wanted to thank him for what he had done. He had helped with Farm Aid to put together a Farmer Rancher Congress in St. Louis, that two people from each county in the United States was the goal, to get two farmers from each county, not each state, to come to this, and to try to get all the different farm organizations together and come out with a unified message of what was needed to help with legislation. And out of that came a bipartisan bill called Harkin-Gephardt. Tom Harkin and Gephardt had gotten together and wrote a bill to—by that time there

was a huge, huge debt that people were carrying all over the country with Farmer's Home Administration. And they were just had sent out foreclosure notices.

KD:

That what I was just going to ask you next was about the farmers—

DK:

I'm sorry?

KD:

I was just going to ask you next about the Farmers Home Administration, so yeah, carry on with that.

DK:

Okay, yeah, yeah. They had sent out just hundreds and hundreds of letters—well, thousands all over the nation, but in this area, that—and it was a packet about this thick, and they said, “You’ve got sixty days to fill this out and get it in or we’re going to file foreclosure on you.” And so, Harkin-Gephardt had made a—what am I trying—the law provided for people to reduce their debt to FMHA and to draw up a plan that was feasible and that they could work their way out of and over time. And Farm Aid had helped also. You know, we don’t give Farm Aid enough credit for a lot of this stuff, a lot of people say, “Oh!” But that bill made it possible for people to rework their debt. And they funded a little group of young lawyers that were just kind of fresh out of school, maybe some of them still in school, to—and they were called FLAG, Farmers Legal Action Group. And Farm Aid helped a neighbor—they worked on a pro bono deal except for the help that they got from funds from Farm Aid. And I know we ourselves, my wife and I had—I mean we were struggling big time. And by then I was state president for American Ag. I was state president for Texas for three years—I mean six years. But anyway, we had decided that if we needed to learn to fix our deal, and we were trying to help the other people, that we needed to learn everything we could about that.

KD:

Of course, yeah.

DK:

And FLAG built a game board showing how to work through that process.

KD:

Really?

DK:

It was the coolest thing as a matter of fact. My wife cried when we got it, and it had a video that went with it that told us how to play this game.

KD:

That's neat.

DK:

But anyway, we decided that we needed to help other people, so from that point on we put it out around that we would help them fill out their papers. And in the meantime, David and Arthur Chancey, a bunch of us from Texas decided we needed to have a membership drive and try to get out and put out the word of what we were trying to do, to be able to get more folk's support. And we were down at Temple, and David said, "Why don't stop by the FMHA office there in Temple and just visit with—" Bob Hopper was the state director at the time. And, "Cool!" So all of us went in and asked if we could sit down and visit with him, and we told him what we were planning to do, that we wanted to help farmers work through this. And he very indignantly—I'm not saying bad things about him, because we later worked good together—but he said, was terribly indignant, but he said, "That is what we're for is we're here to help farmers, and we don't need anybody between us and them." And I said, "Mr. Hopper, I'm going to tell you what's fixing to happen. You don't realize the hurt that's going on out in the farm country. And I know you're partly in tune because you're the head of this organization. But I'm going to tell what I think's going to happen. If you have an old dog that you just dearly love, and he dearly loves you, and he breaks his leg, and you and you're all well-meaning, and your love for him is—you're going to fix that, and you start to touch him and it hurts, he's going to bite you. That's what's going to happen. We're fixing to have deep, deep conflict." But we kind of left it at that. We didn't totally convince him. And sure enough, as people began to get their packets, and they were thinking, We're going to have to leave the farm, we're going to have to pick up our kids and everything, we're going to have to sell everything. As we got the word out, people started coming—our house was our state office at the time. And our secretary and treasurer were in Lazbuddie, Norm and Jeanette Thorn were secretary and treasurer, and they helped a lot too with these things. But we said we would help people work through if they would just bring their paperwork and we would give them a list of what they had to bring. And we worked—and I'm not saying this to be bragging or anything, but we worked nearly every night to the middle of the night. And it was a commonality that really stood out. We would see people come, and husbands and wives usually, and they'd bring their paperwork, and they'd drive up and they were very—their countenance was really down. Because they didn't think it was going—we were going to be able to help. They thought they were done. And almost everybody that laid their paperwork down said, "I bet you've never seen one this bad before."

KD:

Oh [laughter].

DK:

You know.

KD:

Yeah of course, that's everybody's perspective on it.

DK:

Everybody, it is. And you'd look at it a little bit, the bottom line and say, "You look just about like everybody else." [Clears throat] excuse me. But anyway, we worked through a lot of them, and there's a lot of people didn't get help and didn't make it work. But I had a lady call me about two years ago and said, "I just want to thank y'all and Farm Aid and American Ag. We raised our family because of what—"

KD:

Oh nice.

DK:

"What y'all had done."

KD:

Yeah, that's—

DK:

But, man, this is not me.

KD:

No, I understand.

DK:

It brings back a lot of stuff.

KD:

Of course.

DK:

But anyway, not everybody was saved, but a lot of people. And I had not only Bob Hopper—now he, at the state level they didn't totally change their mind, but yet he told me one time, he

said, “You were right, it was good to have y’all there helping because there was a lot of conflict there.” There was some—it’s amazing it wasn’t more serious than it was. Like at Tulia, someone shot through the door of the—it was at night so there was nobody there, that wasn’t intended for anybody, I don’t think, but—

KD:

Yeah, but still, it’s a statement.

DK:

Because there was just deep frustration. But luckily there was nothing really bad that happened. And countless county supervisors would say, when you go over the family and meet with them they’d say, “We’re so glad you helped with this.” Because it was impossible for people, everybody to be trained. Later I was in Washington, D.C. and I said—it’s when Bill Clinton was the president by then, and he had appointed a guy by the name of Mike Espy to be—and he was later kicked out of the—and Mike Espy spoke at the Lubbock Convention in ’93.

KD:

Oh really, I didn’t know that.

DK:

He did. He spoke with his entourage of security, and his chief of staff was here—

KD:

Yeah, oh wow.

DK:

I mean it was a big deal.

KD:

No, I’m sure.

DK:

If you could look compared to today, it—

KD:

Yeah, right.

DK:

It was an awesome thing. And the town was—you couldn’t go anywhere in town that you didn’t see American Ag caps.

KD:

Wow.

DK:

People, if they didn't have that they had a jacket with American Ag. Everybody had a deep pride in what they were doing. But even as far as the national office, what I started to tell you was, that I said something about how did they feel about, were they resentful of FLAG being in this? And Socks Johnson [00:26:27] said, "No, basically FLAG helped write the regulations that implemented the Harkin-Gephardt Bill, and that was neat to hear.

KD:

Yeah, it is.

DK:

But out in the country there as resentment some, but then there was more times than not when you went with someone that needed somebody there between them, sometimes there'd been conflict enough, even when you got their plan worked out, they were mad at each other. The farmer was mad at the FHA personnel, the FHA personnel was mad at them. I had one guy that after the family left town, that said, "Hey, come back in here for a minute." And this was at Farm Bureau. And they had had really bad conflict with this one fellow, he was pretty cantankerous. But he wasn't a bad person, he was just—he wanted what was right. And they had already lost their farm through—they had already been foreclosed on. And they'd had a very successful operation up until the seventies. And this guy said, "I just want you to know how much we appreciate American Ag for coming in and helping. Because we would've never been able to work things out with this bank if there hadn't have been somebody to come help." And I worked with—Garret Condray [?] [00:27:50] that was at Tech at the time.

KD:

Oh, okay.

DK:

I worked a lot of with Garret Condray. And he told me one time at a meeting here—it might have been at that convention, he said, "You know Don, one thing that people have to learn—" which fit me good anyway, I didn't insult anybody, he said, "You can disagree—" of course he was a lawyer too, and he said, "You can disagree with somebody as much as you want to, and you can be forceful, and you can show them the law, and as long as everybody's respectful of one another—but the first time you just start calling people names—" which I didn't intend to do that anyway—

KD:

People shut down.

DK:

But there had been some of that.

KD:

Yeah, right.

DK:

Just because that's people's nature. If they don't know what else to do—

KD:

And frustrations are high of course, yeah, absolutely, yeah—

DK:

Yeah, there was a lot of that going on.

KD:

Yeah, that's an understatement.

DK:

Pretty serious things that went on. But anyway, I think it got to where it changed from resentment at most of the FSA offices, to a lot of times we were going to Washington enough by then and talking to the lawmakers and that kind of thing, that a lot of times you'd go into the FSA office—well it was not FSA back then, it was ASCS. Conservation and Stabilization Service.

KD:

Okay, yeah, I was going to ask.

DK:

Which I liked a lot better because it showed that there was a cooperation.

KD:

Right.

DK:

But anyway, and they would say, "What's going to be coming down? What are we going to be looking at doing?" Instead of that conflict, begin to wane. And Harvey Joe had put together a

fish fry in the later years. We went from blockading and doing all kinds of stuff to—there was still some of that from time to time, like we went to Willie Nelson's thing because of all he had done when he was having his IRS trouble, we did a penny auction or a no sale deal and stopped the IRS from selling his main home, they'd already sold a bunch of stuff.

KD:

Oh yeah, yeah, right.

DK:

But he was able to get that home place back because of the efforts of that day.

KD:

Oh how about that, well that's something.

DK:

So there was still some of that, but mostly we'd grown up to the point that we were going to D.C. and in the beginning you'd go to the congressman or senator, whoever bureaucratic office in USDA or whatever, and say, "I'd like to talk to the head person here" whether it'd be congressman or senator. They'd say, "Well he's in a meeting," or "He's going to be—he's busy." And we didn't carry much clout even with their tractors. But by then Harvey Joe came along with the idea that let's do a fish fry and invite everybody. We can have it in one of the house office buildings and we've got some guys in Arkansas that we can get everything donated, we can get chicken and fish and we'll feed everybody, and we won't lobby at that, but we'll invite the office staff, the secretary, everybody that's from the bottom up. And the congressman, senators, USDA people. And that was probably the best thing.

KD:

Who were some of the politicians that showed up?

DK:

I'm sorry?

KD:

Who were some of the politicians or senators or congressman that you worked with or showed up or—

DK:

Well actually almost all of them.

KD:

Really.

DK:

The heads of USDA, the secretary himself would be there no matter who they were at the time. We did that for, oh I don't know, a few years. And it got to the point that when you went into the office and as soon as they saw your pin and saw you were from American Ag the respect had changed. And the first thing they'd say when they saw you walk in the door was whether you knew them personally or not, and some of them we got to know rather personally. But they would say, "When's the fish fry this year?" And you'd say, "It's such-and-such, and is the congressman or senator or secretary or whoever in?" And they'd say, "Hang on a minute, we'll get that." And we made tremendous inroads, and we didn't even lobby—

KD:

That's great.

DK:

We didn't talk about—well naturally it came up.

KD:

Just for that camaraderie.

DK:

Sometimes it was them that brought it up the fish fry. But the main purpose of the fish fry was to show them that we cared about them, it was kind of an appreciation thing, and a get to know you thing.

KD:

Yeah, that makes sense.

DK:

Not a tell you what we want thing. So things really grew at that point, but as with all good things it wasn't too long after that when there were fewer farmers, there were—a lot of things happened that we were not—but we became in lots of cases I think the conscience for a lot of the commodity groups and organizations. When we first started, some of the organizations were really fighting us. I'd been a Farm Bureau member for years, loved their insurance. But there was a lot of conflict, because the first time I went to Washington and heard them say, "We don't need higher prices because it will hurt trade." I said, "I can't do this anymore."

KD:

Yeah, that's kind of what I was going to ask you about. Other organizations, what—you mentioned the Farm Bureau, but when this all came along, how did those—who left their allegiances and how did this all shift and—

DK:

A lot of them in the beginning, most of them in the beginning, we were amazed that they were so resistant and they fought us instead of coming alongside, until they began, just over a few short years, that attitude changed with so many. Not so much with some. There was one or two had—just between me and you—that it was hard to ever make inroads. But it got to where the states started having—we started having meetings on the state level with the congress, state congress and senators, and even the governor a few times. But it was the state legislative body that helped start it. And Farm Bureau and even Farm Bureau, we all got to meeting together, and actually made some real inroads. And that's partly what the Farmer Rancher Congress had been about a few years early. At one point during that Farmers Ranchers Congress, they said—they had passed white caps with Farmer Rancher Congress on it to everybody there, every delegate there. And they said, "Would you please take off your organizational cap and just put this on?" And pretty good deal. But anyway, I've rambled along.

KD:

No, but yeah, that's what we want. So that's perfect.

DK:

As far as the places where we were, we started with the Amarillo thing, and I was in McAllen, we were in jail for three days there.

KD:

Oh my. Yeah, tell me a little bit about that.

DK:

Okay. We were trying to bring attention to that the trade was not even, and that Mexico—we had nothing against Mexican farmers, as a matter of fact later we worked together with a lot of the Mexican farmers and built a good alliance there.

KD:

Excellent.

DK:

But basically in the beginning we were trying to get country of origin lading, and let people know that it wasn't—we weren't getting a fair shake because they were still using DDT, and

we've had DDT banned for years. And a lot of cheaper products that they were using, well, the mayor of McAllen was Othal Brand at the time, and he had a vegetable shed in Hereford close to where I was living at the time. And we decided we needed to bring attention to it, so we invited all the national news agencies. And usually when we had something like that—

KD:

[Phone ringing] Do you need me to stop?

DK:

Just for a second. I wouldn't get it, but my wife—

KD:

Yeah, that's fine.

[Pause in recording]

DK:

I am just rambling on, taking up your whole time.

KD:

No that's perfect, that's why we're here. We want to hear all your stories.

DK:

What were talking about?

KD:

We were talking about jail stays.

DK:

Oh, about jail.

KD:

Yes.

DK:

Well it ended up nearly everything we did was en masse. Every county by then that had much farming at all in it had a strike office. And so, I told somebody here awhile back, if we'd have had these things would have been dangerous, dangerous—

KD:

I'm sure.

DK:

Got the word out a lot better, but it had to be basically the strike office would call a bunch of the guys or put out some kind of a—but we didn't have faxes, we didn't—I mean we didn't have many tools to work with. CB radios was the most sophisticated thing that we had besides home telephones.

KD:

Yeah, right.

DK:

But anyway, they put out the word that we needed to go to the different borders and stop the bridge for a short of time, get the national news—we'd learned by then that if you got the national news media there, they wouldn't cover everything but they'd gotten to where some of this was pretty interesting. So they would send representatives to come like that to come to the bridge. And we got down there that night and the night before we were supposed to go on the bridge, and got to the hotel where everybody had decided to meet. And newspaper said, "Five divisions—" or, "Several divisions of law enforcement have been called into McAllen because there is a farm group that are threatening to block the bridge." And there were only 250 or so of us, about 250. And we normally would have expected more.

KD:

Yeah, right.

DK:

But we got there and we saw that article, and it was—and the mayor had decided that he was not going to allow this to be started—I mean it was a pretty rough—I wish I'd have kept that article. It was kind of scary. But we got ahold of the mayor, he came down to the hotel, we negotiated for a good long while that night. And some fellows from Georgia, there were people there from several states, it wasn't just Texans. Our group had driven all—from where I lived, it was nearly fourteen hours to get down there. And it was as many a guys as from Happy and Tulia—we lived in Happy at the time—that you could pack in a car, that went from our group. So anyway, we got down there and we finally negotiated a deal, we thought that it was—that we could go on the bridge, let the news media take their pictures and do all that. But during that time, the truck that was the first truck that came across the bridge that was going to get pictures—I don't know what happened to his air lines, but something happened to his air lines and I suspect it was nefarious.

KD:

Yeah, you think, yeah.

DK:

But anyway in the meantime we really thought that we had enough of an agreement. But we weren't out there just a few minutes and they said, "Okay get off the bridge—" it was one of these bullhorn deals. Well they had already parked buses, I mean they were really prepared. They had parked buses in this little area that had a cyclone fence around it and would hold us all.

KD:

Okay, yeah.

DK:

And so they said, "Get off the bridge, time's up." And so some started off the bridge immediately, some were—we were not belligerent, but we didn't just immediately do things.

KD:

Sure, yeah.

DK:

And nobody had time. Even the ones that started off the bridge immediately, they closed the end of the bridge and herded us off into this area, put us on buses and took us to the jail. And it was built more like a prison than a normal jail. It was out kind of in the country, and all the cell blocks around the edges, they formed walls. And then there was only one weak place in it, and there was a little lobby thing that had glass doors and a space between it, and then glass doors on the outside, and that was the only weak place in the thing, they kept that guarded. It was a real, real secure place. But they took us all and gave us mugshots, and the film disappeared for the mugshots, and they were hunting that all night, and it was partly funny, I mean we developed a little camaraderie with the jail people.

KD:

How funny.

DK:

But they gave us—they made a big, big mistake. They let us have one office with one telephone, so we could—with everybody allowed to make one call, you needed a place to do that. Well it's easier on them to say, "Well y'all appoint a guy from y'all's group to sit in this office, and then each one of you can go in there and make calls." Well all the time he was calling every strike office in the country. By the end of the third day there was three thousand farmers marching

around the jail. They almost could hand to hand be around the jail. And they kept negotiating down—

KD:

That's amazing.

DK:

They would come in and say, "We'll reduce the charges by this much." And we said, "No, we didn't do anything. We're not going to take any charges." And so we would have a meeting every, oh, several times a day, that they would come in with a different offer. And by the night, the last night of the third day late in the evening it was almost dark, with all those guys marching around the jail, and they were meaning business, there was one guy from Levelland that was a really neat guy, he was a fun guy and he wasn't violent at all. But by then it was—they've learned things to do. And he had on his army helmet and all his army gear.

KD:

Oh, how funny.

DK:

And they were just really saying, chanting you've got to let them out and all this kind of stuff. And then pulled the local farmers, they pulled a 4020 John Deere tractor up right against those glass doors, and they had the throttle wide open, and the guy was standing on the back. He said, "When I take my foot of the clutch we're going in and getting these guys." By then, [clears throat] excuse me. This is my wife Carolyn.

KD:

Hi, it's nice to meet you. You want to join us?

**Carolyn Kimbrell (CK):**

I brought hearing aids.

DK:

Thank you.

CK:

And then I need to go.

DK:

The jailor had—he was a calm guy. He really knew his business. The main jailor. And he came in for that meeting and said, "They've reduced the charges down to the same as a jaywalking

offence.”

KD:

Okay, well that's fair.

DK:

So if you'll all sign on and he said, “There's just about to be bloodshed here. We can't let these guys run up—” or well they said, “We can't keep them from running their tractors through the door, but when they do, we've got to really crack down on them. There's going to be people hurt on both sides.” So we finally talked it over and we agreed. And this guy that I was telling you about that was the economist?

KD:

Yes.

DK:

When we went out of the jail that night, it was getting dark and there was a flag that was flying over the jail right there at the entrance. He was standing right under the flag. And that big old guy, he was a great big bear of a guy. And it was cold, even down there, and he had on this big old coat with a fur collar and he looked like a bear. He hugged every one of the 250 guys that came out there.

KD:

Really.

DK:

There's a lot more to the end of that story, but I'm not going to take your time.

KD:

Well feel free to if you want, we want to hear all of it.

DK:

But anyway, when we came home we had lots and lots of support from people all over. It took a couple of years later I was getting off the elevator in Washington D.C., and this lady was about to get on, and she said, “You guys sure did disappoint my husband.” She saw my belt buckle from the McAllen deal. And she said, “My husband was on the plane on his way there when y'all got out.” And they turned him around and sent him back. Anyway.

KD:

One of the things you mentioned was your alliance with the Mexican farmers. Could you talk a

little bit more about that?

DK:

That happened with the legislative group that I was talking about. I wish I could remember what that group's called, but all the farm organizations, people from A&M and the legislators and all had a meeting, oh, almost once a month. Several times a year. And out of that came a real—when they were working on some of the trade issues they decided that we would elect representatives to go to Mexico City, out of that group. And each head of each state farm organization was invited to go.

KD:

Okay.

DK:

And some of the legislators, people from A&M and the Mexican farmers and those Mexican government officials did the same thing. Really neat deal. We made lots of inroads and lots of friends during that.

KD:

Now did you go to Mexico City,

DK:

We went to Mexico City.

KD:

okay, that's what I—

DK:

And that was—

KD:

What year was that?

DK:

That would have probably been around—I wish I could pinpoint it better. I have got some material probably that would probably tell, but I can't say right now, but it was around '90. About two or three years before the convention that we had here.

KD:

Here in '93, yeah.

DK:

And that's where we kind of broke down some more of the barriers between us and some of the other farm groups, because all of the state presidents got to be kind of—even Farm Bureau—

KD:

Yeah. [Laughter]

DK:

Bob Stallman was the newly elected president then, and we had several good conversations. We didn't always agree, but we could work together, whereas in the early years there was no working—

KD:

Yeah, how did that evolution happen just in terms of when did tensions between these groups—

DK:

I'm sorry?

KD:

Tensions between these sorts of groups ease a little bit? Since it was very contentious to begin with, but—

DK:

It began with the Farmer Rancher Congress that Farm Aid basically put together in St. Louis. And Carolyn and I were lucky enough to get elected from our county, and Farm Aid had put the money out, and they asked people in every county for to get as many people as they could to elect representatives. And she got elected. Only one representative from each county, but we were by Swisher County and we were kind of on the line between Swisher and Castro County. So, one of us got to go for each county. So she got to go with me on that. It was a good thing, because that's where that law began. She was as involved in helping folks with their paperwork.

KD:

Really.

DK:

That interesting thing I was telling you about a while ago?

KD:

Yeah, yeah.

DK:

We had it really sophisticatedly—if you want to call it that—with sticky notes? We had it tab indexed with sticky notes to the major issues that we knew that would be—we would have to prove for people. For ourselves and for other people. And so that got off the subject, but—

KD:

No, no, that's fine.

DK:

But what started with Farm Aid, but then the legislative, the groups where we met together and during the trade representatives—everything wasn't hard. One fun thing that I got to do was they had each state president from each organization get together and go have press conferences when they were working, when NAFTA [**North American Free Trade Agreement**] was—we were not favorable towards what they were trying to do with NAFTA at the time, at the original draft. And some guy down in San Antonio furnished—it was a corporate guy, had a corporate jet, and he furnished it for us to do press conferences. We left here or Amarillo, one, and we made it all the way to Corpus Christi and McAllen, and we made probably Dallas—all the major towns in the state we made that day, and got to fly together. So things like that is we rode together and we got closer.

KD:

I'm sure, yeah.

DK:

We still didn't agree on everything. But I would guess I'm a little prejudiced, but I always said that American Ag became the conscience of the other farm organizations, because they'd always been able to get by with it and snow their people. And I was one of them. Because I probably sold more Farm Bureau insurance by bragging on it than most of the Farm Bureau dealers. But the first time I went to Washington, and I was sitting, waiting to talk to the congressman and I heard them back them, because we were talking about that we had to get prices up before—if we were going to people on the land, and heard them in there saying they had a delegation in there, and I could easily hear them saying “We can't raise prices because we'll stop our exports, what to do.” And that had always been the story. And I believed it.

KD:

Right.

DK:

But you still can't grow it below the cost of production.

KD:

No, no, that's—

DK:

Anyway, there had to be some meeting of the minds. And there was, we made a lot of inroads. And they did too, I mean we all made a little.

KD:

Okay, yeah. What about some of the issues of race and class sort of surrounding the farm crisis and of all of this, tell me a little bit about that.

DK:

That was one of the most beautiful things. And we made alliances that—race was a big deal in that we formed a close alliance with black farmers. We formed a close alliance with the Mexican farmers. We formed a close alliance with—one time when we went there—there's always a protest going on in Washington of some kind. And the American Indians were there. And we listened to their cause. And we worked together with a lot—labor unions. Most farmers at that time had been—we had been indoctrinated to think that labor unions were—I grew up thinking labor unions were our enemy.

KD:

Evil, yeah, yeah.

DK:

And wow, they were good friends, and we allied and worked together with labor unions, American Indians—

KD:

What specific unions did you work with, do you remember?

DK:

What's that?

KD:

What specific unions do you remember working with, or—

DK:

Auto workers, steel workers, are the main two that I remember. There were others that we—and we really worked at building relations with and trying to help people that weren't able to help themselves. As in, some of those things that were going on with the black farmers, American Ag

really backed them on that. And sometimes we went and did things en masse on those kind of instances. But as far race, the only thing about race was we were for not—that not being a problem.

KD:

Right. So the final kind of question to wrap up, when you think back on all your time, how did this sort of shape you, your politics, your views? It's a big question, but—

DK:

No, it's a good question. And we realized that there was a lot of people, a lot of things—money had too much to do with what could be passed in Washington. And there was a power of the people if the people will stand up, you can make a difference. I mean I whole-heartedly believe the cause of the Farmer Rancher Congress and American Ag—American Ag was at the root of that, I'll just take credit for us. You might get a different answer for that—

KD:

No, I don't disagree.

DK:

But David had gotten pretty close to Willie Nelson by then. And several other people had worked on trying to break down those things. I mean lots of individuals, you'll never hear their names.

KD:

Right.

DK:

Worked on those kind of things, but probably a good many of us that—I mean there were Democrats and Republicans and all different thought processes among us. And that didn't altogether change, but me personally, I became a lot stronger, because of what I—I just saw the parties, one working more for the elite, and one working more for the average person. And to me—and this is very—I mean there could be a lot of argument with this, but I just saw it more as a party with a heart. And I don't agree with everything that the Democratic Party does. There's things that really bother me. But when the bottom line comes—I voted for Ronald Reagan the first time he ran. The second time I didn't, because that's when all this first was going on. And Bob Bergland was his secretary of agriculture, and Bob Bergland later told us at a fish fry, he said—and of course he was being a little political, he was wanting to get along, but I think he really meant this. He said, "I knew at the time that I was secretary that you guys were right, that we had to do something. And I wanted to do something, or I knew we needed to do some of those things, but I couldn't, because of the political atmosphere." Well, you know. But I was

glad to hear him say that. I didn't totally believe it was coming from his heart, but anyway, that was some of the things that—but one of the things that was neat was the fact that we did, as in the case of Harkin-Gephardt, helped us to be—to work together, to work with us, on what was needed. And that was probably, even though it didn't fix the price problem as much, it allowed some people to stay. And like the lady I told about that called, raised their families and stay on the farm. And that was a bipartisan thing. And I thought we helped to bring that together. I'm a real believer in from that point on, and it kind of addresses what you're asking, in a government that's good. One reason America was successful for so long, and is, was a government of the people. But when the people stopped governing and stopped taking an interest, then it's not a government of the people anymore, it's a government of the bureaucrats and the politicians. And if we don't call, if we don't have any part in it, we just elect them, and if we think we've voted, we've done enough, we've missed it.

KD:

No, right.

DK:

And that's probably one of the main things that I learned from them is that you have to stay involved. We have a responsibility to have involvement.

KD:

Yes. Anything else? Is there—what—

DK:

You know, I could tell you different events, but I've already told you about some of the main ones. McAllen was one of the main ones, the early beginning night was one of the main ones. The Tractorcade, we didn't talk about that.

KD:

Yeah, tell me, yeah I do want to ask you about the Tractorcade.

DK:

We don't give our wives enough credit. My wife stayed home with—I got all kinds of glory out of that, because I drove a G John Deere with no cab on it. And I was really embarrassed when I took it up, where they were going to leave. We took the tractors—we left out of Amarillo, or Bushland.

KD:

Okay.

DK:

And this little old ugly 1956 model tractor was—didn't compare with the others with their flags, and it was a lump in your heart, in your throat kind of thing when you saw those tractors gathered there to go.

KD:

I'm sure, yeah.

DK:

Scary, because we didn't know what conflicts we were going to have on the way. And so many of the things—we weren't sure that it was all going to turn out good.

KD:

Right, yeah.

DK:

There was a lot of reasons, like at McAllen, when we made an agreement to get out, we also made an agreement to—that they would let us go back on the bridge and have the news media take their pictures and do what we intended to do to start with and make interviews. And they had uncovered tarp that was on top of the bridge that was machine gun on a tripod. And it was uncovered that day, we got to see what was under that tarp. So you never knew what was going to happen. But as far as the Tractorcade was concerned, it was such a beautiful thing that the further we went, the more people came out. Every town we stopped at, almost every town, we were on the road twenty-one days. And almost every night the local people did a barbecue or did something, and fed that whole vast—

KD:

How many?

DK:

The I-40 route was—you know it's hard to say how many. We were twenty-five miles long when we were travelling down the highway. And the other groups, there were four groups, and they were all about the same. But our group, it was so neat when you went under a bridge and the whole bridge was just—you were nearly afraid it was going to fall down, because there were so many people on the overpasses, waving and thumbs up, and hardly any negative stuff.

KD:

I see.

DK:

The Southwest, y'all have got—I presented two albums and some—I had a diary of each day.

KD:

Okay, yeah.

DK:

And they made a little disc with some of that stuff.

KD:

Okay, yeah, no, I know that we have a number materials, okay.

DK:

So you've got that. But the Tractorcade was important, the Farmer Rancher Congress was important, even though it wasn't just an American Ag thing. The McAllen thing, what else? All the meetings we had. We had local meetings that got acquainted with people, and then things like several times a year when we would go to Washington, the people that we—we had an office that overlooked the Capitol building.

KD:

Oh nice, yeah.

DK:

It was on one of the higher stories of a building that overlooked the capital, and when we got into town, whatever issue was going on that affected agriculture at the time, they had packets made up for us. Larry and David mostly were at the office, and sometimes it would be just farmers that would go up and stay for a month at a time and switch out.

KD:

Very nice.

DK:

Helping put these things together. And it would be this is the issue, and of course we already knew mostly when we got there what we were going to talk about, but here's the votes that's for this and against it, here's how this congressman is leaning, and this is who you need to go see, and then hands you a packet. And the first time we went, we went together. And I had a brand new pair of boots, and they had a hole in the soles the night before. We were there for like a week.

KD:

Wow.

CK:

Or less, maybe five days or so.

DK:

And you know, but you were organized to the point you didn't have any sitting around time.

KD:

Really.

DK:

In later years she finally got to go to the zoo and go see some of the—but we went—

KD:

What was the schedule like, what all did it—what was a typical day?

DK:

A typical day would be you would take your folder and you would have so many of the congressman that you—and they didn't tell us who to go see other than to tell us who was leaning in this direction and who was not. Who we needed to work on. And so you'd go make appointments, and that's where the fish fry thing came in, made it a bit better later on—

KD:

Yeah, I can see how that would be a lot more accessible, yeah, right, right.

DK:

—That you could actually get in and talk to those people. But that was kind of some of the main things that—and there was like I say, in the beginning there was probably a meeting at least once a week somewhere in a local area, town around.

KD:

Oh wow. Yeah.

CK:

The most important thing that happened was all these things worked up to the Farmer Rancher Congress.

DK:

Yeah, we've talked about that.

CK:

For us personally that was the most important thing. It kept us in business and most of our neighbors.

DK:

We hadn't had any neighbors that hadn't been—lots of people had been really well-off and borrowed at banks and didn't deal with Farmer's Home. But nearly everybody had been forced into a deal where they had to go get Farmer's—get assistance from Farmer's Home, even people that had just been highly successful.

KD:

Really.

DK:

At least had to go get guaranteed loans, didn't have a guarantee with them. So nobody, there was almost no one.

KD:

It was almost universal that it had to be.

DK:

That didn't have some connections back to that and have to go through that process that—

CK:

Of course that would have—the whole Farmer Rancher Congress would've never happened if this other stuff hadn't happened first.

KD:

Of course, right, right.

DK:

And we had to go to the state office that I told you about our relationship with them. We had to go to the state office, and we took our book like everybody else got within sixty days of you've got to do all these things. And some of it was repetitious, so it wasn't as bad as it looked. But we went with it, and they had sent us a particular problem they had with this—what we had done with this. And we'd worked it out just like a play, I mean we knew what we were doing by then. And when we got there, when we walked in they said—we had had it—we had to drive to

Temple. And when we got there the head guy there had his lawyer with him. The lawyer for the state office. And he said, "Well, it doesn't matter if you fix that one or not, we found another one that I don't think you can overcome." And I just—we both our feathers were kind of falling by then, because you drive all the way down there and they haven't even let you know what to prepare for. And I said, "Well what is it?" And he said what the problem was, and I just said—well, you know, and turned to the—grabbed the sticky note that was to that thing and I said, "Look, read this and I think that'll fix it for you." And he handed it to the lawyer first, and the lawyer read it, looked at him and handed it back to him and he said, "You better read this." And he read it, and he shut the book shut, and said, "Well I guess the law's the law, whether you like it or not."

KD:

[Laughter] Okay, well that's—

DK:

So this tells you. The only reason I remembered to bring that up is because what I was saying a little bit ago about unless people are involved. You know, if FLAG hadn't of helped, if people working together made those kind of things happen.

KD:

Absolutely.

DK:

If FLAG hadn't have been there in the first place, if we hadn't had a couple of good congressman to write a bill that came out of that Farmer Rancher Congress, it wouldn't have happened. So it had to be there. If those little young lawyers, if Farm Aid hadn't been there, it wouldn't have happened. If those little young lawyers hadn't had the heart to want to work with people, it wouldn't have happened, if we hadn't gone to the effort to put together the plan and to show us, to train us how to do it, it wouldn't have happened.

KD:

Yeah, that's right.

DK:

Because that attitude shows you that it wouldn't have happened. And they wasn't necessarily just bad people, but they had a mindset that was wrong, and it told you that they didn't want it to work. They wanted to use everything they could to your disadvantage rather than for your advantage, and their job was to administrate the law to everybody's advantage, like he'd originally told me, this is what we're here for. So.

CK:

We got that packet, of course everybody was just devastated when they got it.

KD:

I'm sure, absolutely.

CK:

It's just this thick of legal mumbo jumbo. But I figured we've got sixty days to this, we've got to get into it. And I read the whole thing from cover to cover more than once.

KD:

Oh my goodness.

CK:

And had categorized the part that really applied, because a lot of it was just legalese—

KD:

Yeah, so much.

CK:

But still being pretty frustrated about what to do about it. And we got a packet from FLAG, and it had a road map on it and it was a thing you folded out.

DK:

Game board.

CK:

And it was a road map. Start here, do this, do this, do this, and if you just follow those directions, hey, it worked. And I remember sitting on the couch with this mess in my lap and rolled that thing out and looked at it, and it made the whole thing make sense.

KD:

Really, yeah.

CK:

I sat there and thought, This is going to work! So we figured it out, and we went to the bottom end of our situation and worked our way back up, so we could jiggle with the figures. And we made it work. And then the people that came to us for help were getting help [?] [01:11:24]

KD:

Exactly.

CK:

So we just took their figures—and of course you did all of this with pencil before a computer.

KD:

Makes a big difference.

CK:

But it wasn't that hard to do, because once you knew what you had to work with you just worked it back up and it worked.

DK:

I already kind of told her that, but I'm glad you told—I wanted her to get to hear a little bit from her.

KD:

Oh that makes sense. Oh absolutely.

DK:

Because if it weren't for the wives that while those guys—and women. The maddest she ever got at me was one of the events that I hadn't told you about. And it was women that did the first one. They decided they were going to go out and stop the train.

CK:

I'm still mad about that.

DK:

And I didn't let her, because I was afraid she'd get hurt.

KD:

So tell me about that. Oh, and before you do, could you give me your full name also?

CK:

Carolyn Kimbrell.

KD:

Okay, yeah, just for our records, yeah. Tell me about the trains.

CK:

Well, it's just we heard the women were going to go stop the train just like the men in [inaudible] [01:12:18]. And I was all prepared to go do that, and he just said, "If something happened to you and left me with all these kids, what would I do?"

DK:

We've got four boys and a—

CK:

Anyway, he put the guilt on me until I stayed home, and I've been mad ever since. [Laughter]

DK:

We had three boys and a foster boy that were from nine to sixteen at the time, and she was having to tend them while I was off doing this other stuff. And I couldn't afford for her to go stop a train and get hurt. But that was another neat—has anybody talked to you about the train stopping thing?

KD:

No, not me personally. We might have some stuff but no, not—I haven't interviewed.

DK:

The way it actually started out. And I shouldn't have brought it up because it's still a sore spot, because she really wanted to do that. But we set a day to go stop the trains, that the railroad people had—farmers are an intelligent bunch of people when you put them together. Well any group of people, when you put a lot of heads together. So, they told us that you have to stop, the trains have to stop if there's a flare on the track. So they told us how to do it, how to stop them. And so when we went—people all over the country went and stopped trains. And ours was between Plainview and Tulia. And so we had a carload of guys and the carload from Hale Center and Tommy Appleblack [01:13:56] was their head guy. They were the ones that had the flares. We put the flares on the tracks, sure enough, the train just came to a stop. We all—we had coffee for the engineer and we sat there and talked, and he told us, he said, "Guys, I have to stop, and I have to stay stopped for so long," and the road was about that thick and that's that far, so he could go along [?] [01:14:18] a lot better than we could. So talked to him, we told him what we were about, and we were part of that was to get—you had to get news coverage to make your points. And so once we got him stopped, well when his time came, we moved out of the way and he took off, and Tommy said, "I think we can catch him again by the time we get to cone elevator [?] [01:14:47]. He said, "Come on," he was—Tommy was probably fifty, sixty years old at the time, really good guy, nice guy. But anyway, we couldn't catch the train again. But that happened. Her daddy went to stop the train that runs from here to—at that time it ran from here to Bledsoe, and it went through Smyer. And so, man, they got out there, got ready to stop the

train and it didn't run every day, and it didn't run that day, so they couldn't stop the train.  
[Laughter] They were all gathered up.

KD:

[Laughter] Oh, that's disappointing.

DK:

It didn't happen.

KD:

All prepared.

DK:

But she had to stay home and deal with those boys and deal with all the financial stuff.

CK:

Went he went on the Tractorcade it snowed. It was the worst winter we'd had there in Happy in forever. It snowed right as he was leaving. And it had snow on the ground until we got home. And every weekend the weather was so awful that all those boys were in the house, and—

KD:

There you are.

CK:

With me.

KD:

Yeah, yeah, exactly.

DK:

She had to go break ice for cows—well the boys helped some.

CK:

They did.

DK:

At the age they were. But we ran cattle pretty much was our livelihood during those years. But through the years, I mean you can just see there's people from—and still we remember people that dropped out through the years, and with such fond—we built some really, really neat relationships.

KD:

I'm sure.

DK:

And Pete Laney was one of the relationships that we built at the time. That guy was the most effective speaker of the house Texas has ever had. That's probably a prejudiced opinion, but Pete was wonderful. And we would have never known him without this kind of thing going on. And so we learned to know people and then in later years—people like you got—it's been a neat deal to see that Southwest has taken an interest. Because as big as that was, it never—I mean it made a splash more at the time, but so many never recognized the importance of what had taken place there. And really, really appreciate what you guys are doing, and if you ever think of a specific—one of those events that you hear about that happened, and you want to talk about it, you can give us a call because—

KD:

Oh yeah, absolutely, because that kind of stuff comes up, yeah, we're going through these interviews and we don't have a lot of information on this specific thing and we're really lucky to have resources, living resources to tell us about what happened, so that's—

DK:

And we were talking last night, probably 80 percent of those living resources from the Tractorcade days, from '79, are not here anymore.

KD:

Exactly, exactly.

DK:

So y'all just came at the nick of time, because— but—

KD:

Yep, yep. Well we're glad to do it, so.

DK:

There was probably not an event that happened, not many things happened that I didn't get to be there. And it was partly due to the wives that stayed home.

CK:

I'm thinking there might be one or maybe two people, two women here that might have stopped a train, I'm going to ask them.

DK:

We shouldn't have brought this one up, you can tell it's still a sore spot.

CK:

It's my time for history [inaudible] [01:18:43].

DK:

But she did get to go to Washington a lot [01:18:46].

KD:

Yeah, tell me a little bit about that. Your time in Washington.

CK:

Well, I mostly [phone rings] went with him, and—

DK:

She was lost most of the time.

KD:

[Phone rings] Do you need me to pause?

DK:

We'll quit in a minute. [Talking on the phone]

CK:

The first time we went I had studied the map, but unfortunately I was sitting facing south while I was studying it, and so I was totally turned around when I got there. And we went with another couple and I lead us all over the place in the wrong direction.

DK:

She knew where everything was.

CK:

I've never been able to live that down.

DK:

But it was all the wrong direction.

CK:

So whatever I said they'd just turned around and go the other way and figure it out.

DK:

She'd always been a wonderful navigator, but she better—

KD:

It happens, it happens, I understand.

DK:

—And we told her if you ever get turned around, to get yourself straight, look at the statue on top of the capitol. But she kept looking for it and she was looking down lower.

CK:

I don't know.

DK:

Or something. She didn't see it until the day we left.

KD:

Oh that's funny.

DK:

But the statue faces east, right?

CK:

I'll take your word for it.

KD:

Okay, well I see people moving. Is there anything else that in the last nick of time that—

DK:

No, I think—I'm sure we've told you way more than you needed.

KD:

No, we want all of it, well it was a pleasure to get to talk to both of you, so—

DK:

If you've got something that wheeled over, if you've got—

CK:

Well for this though maybe.

KD:

I don't. Monte probably does, I will write down my contact, yeah, let me just—

DK:

Can you write me. Thank you.

*[End of Recording]*



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