

**Oral History Interview of  
James Abbott**

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson  
July 27, 2016  
Temple, Texas**

**Part of the:  
*Soil Conservation Services***

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## Transcript Overview:

This interview features James Abbott, who discusses working for the Soil Conservation Services, his old coworkers, and his family.

**Length of Interview:** 02:54:25

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## Keywords

World War II, agriculture, Soil Conservation Services,

**Andy Wilkinson (AW):**

This is the twenty-seventh of July, 2016. Andy Wilkinson here at the James Abbott's home in Temple on the North side of the cemetery. [laughter]

**James Abbott (AW):**

I don't know where you – there's, in 1995 –

AW:

Oh, okay. That's good.

JA:

I don't know, is –

AW:

Tai Kreidler's still there.

JA:

Is he there?

AW:

Yeah. I don't think—Bailey Mayo is the one who got us started doing this just a year ago. I don't know that Bailey knows that this collection is there, because he didn't tip us off and we didn't have any reason to go looking for it, but—

JA:

Bailey was raised in Winters, and my farm is nine miles north of Winters.

AW:

Oh, really?

JA:

Yeah, it's in Taylor County though, not in Runnels County. I was raised in Bradshaw.

AW:

Okay, where's Bradshaw?

JA:

It's on Highway 83, south of Abilene. It's about thirty miles out of Abilene. There's nothing down there, but the farm is two and a half miles west of there. I was born on that farm in 1924.

AW:

So it was 10/29 of 1924?

JA:

Right.

AW:

Got it. And you were raised there, I would guess, right?

JA:

Right. I went to school, but they don't have a school there anymore.

AW:

Yeah because I don't remember—I don't take that road all that often. I'm usually going up towards Sweetwater heading back from wherever I'm heading back from.

JA:

I didn't know. This is just a sketch of—

AW:

Is this what I can keep?

JA:

Sure, you can keep that.

AW:

Thank you very much. This will save me a lot of talking here. University of Oklahoma?

JA:

Yeah, I went to four different—[laughter]. I went to lots of colleges.

AW:

Yeah, but you wound up with your Master's at Tech.

JA:

I got my Master's at Tech, yeah.

AW:

And a B.S. before that and both in Agronomy. How did you get interested in conservation?



JA:

Well, maybe I ought to start back a little further than that.

AW:

That's fine.

JA:

I got out of high school in 1942, and of course, the Pearl Harbor deal had started in December 7<sup>th</sup> of 1941, so six months later, I was out of high school. I joined the Marine Corps and [let] me show you how quick things happened. I joined the Marine Corps one—I can't remember the date even—one day, one afternoon, and I went from Abilene down to home, tell my mother and dad that I'd join the Marine Corps, but they had to take me back to Abilene the next morning to catch the train. So I went, next morning, went back to Abilene and catch the train. We go to Dallas and we get there that afternoon and they gave us a physical and so forth. They put us on another train headed to San Diego. So two days later, I'm in San Diego in the boot camp and they cut boot camp in half because of—

AW:

Having to hurry up people through.

JA:

Right, so when I get out of boot camp, and everybody had to tell what they were interested in and so forth, and so I joined the Paratroopers because they paid twice. You get a hundred dollars rather than fifty dollars a month.

AW:

Yeah, but you knew you were going to have to jump out of an airplane? [Laughter]

JA:

Right, yeah, and it is fun. I'll tell you that. I wrote home and told mother and dad I had gotten out of boot camp and I joined the Marine Paratroopers, and I get a letter back from dad said, "Son, what in the world possessed you to do a stupid thing like that?" [Laughter] I wrote back and I told him, I said, "Well, it's just a matter of dollars and cents. I get paid a hundred dollars rather than fifty dollars." And I get another letter back from him and it says, "Well, it may be a matter of dollars makes damn no sense." [Laughter] He swore up and down he didn't say it, but he did. But anyway, I get out of Paratroopers and I was – the first and second battalion of paratroopers were the guys on Guadalcanal. The time I got out of the parachute training, that bunch had come back to the states and I think it was on Camp Matthews or Pendleton, one or the other. Anyway, I thought I was being trained to be in the third or fourth battalion, but I was made a replacement in the second battalion, and all those guys had just got back from Guadalcanal and Telugu and

those places and had to turn right around and go back. Maybe they were back in the states two or three months at most. We went back, but I was replacement in that second parachute battalion and all these other guys that I went through parachute training, most of them were in the third or fourth battalion. But anyway, that's a long story. But anyway, in 1944, I wound up, well I come back a little before that, in '93, or '43, in Okano Hospital [?] out in Oakland, California. They discharged me, and they sent me to Waco up here.

AW:

Had you been injured?

JA:

Yeah, see these? Other things, but anyway, they sent me to Waco. There's a VA [Veteran's Administration] up there. I get in there and they go over me and all this. One of the things that happened, he had – I thought he was a shrink, but I guess he wasn't. He was a counselor of some kind. He asked me why I didn't go to college so I told him that I was one of seven [laughs], and dad was a dryland cotton farmer. I didn't have enough money to, and you guys are not paying me enough. [Laughter] Or my disabilities to send me to college. He said, "Well, if I can fix it up, would you want to go?" And I said, "You damn right. I'll go tomorrow." So I went to Tech on a World War I rehabilitation act.

AW:

Wow. A World War I rehabilitation act.

JA:

Right. I don't know what year, near Earl Burnett or not. Do you know Doctor Earl Burnett?

AW:

Yeah. I mean, I didn't know him, but I know the name.

JA:

He was head of the ARS [**Agricultural Research Services**] Experiment Station here in Temple. Southland—Black Land Experiment Station here. He was a classmate of mine there at Tech. Half a dozen of us is on that World War I Rehabilitation Act and Doctor Earl Burnett was one of them. Anyway, of course, all my young experience all was on farm so when the guy asked me what I wanted to go, and I said anything in agriculture. And so agronomy and soils fit me right. So I started there in the middle of the second semester.

AW:

In the middle of the semester? [Laughter]



JA:

Yeah, in the belly of the summer. He had two six week terms and I had taken the second and so from '44—middle of the summer '44, to '47, I got my Master's degree.

AW:

That was a lot of school.

JA:

It was. Every time I opened the door, I was going to school and I worked after, on the campus. I say on the campus – on the college farm. I headed Red Top Canyon and all that kind of stuff.

AW:

Now, you were working for the school and not for the SCS [**Soil Conservation Services**]? Not a trainee?

JA:

No. Not at that time, but I got my Bachelor's degree and they had set me up for a Master's degree so I immediately started going. It didn't make sense if I didn't keep going. They'd declare me rehabilitated.

AW:

And you'd be back in the service?

JA:

No, I wouldn't be back in the service, but they I wouldn't be – they wouldn't pay for anymore schooling. They'd paid all the school costs, of course, and gave me ninety-seven dollars a month to live on. Well, the first week I was there, they had at Doak Hall, which is a women's dormitory, had a dance. I went to the dance, didn't dance, but I went to the dance. I get standing over there with one of the guys and this pretty little lady, [long pause, interviewer and interviewee get up and walk somewhere] she came across the dance floor and asked me to dance.

AW:

Oh my goodness. Really?

JA:

So, I turned her down. [Laughter]

AW:

What was wrong with you?

JA:

She was walking back across there and I was watching her walk back over there and something was telling me—and I think it was the good Lord telling me, he says, “You stupid idiot. She asked you to dance. You didn’t ask her.” So I went back across and apologized and doing a huge deal of—we’ll scoot around here and dance some, so we did. We started dating. Eighteen months later, we got married.

AW:

What was her maiden name?

JA:

Hart. Una Hart

AW:

E-u?

JA:

No, just U-n-a.

AW:

U-n-a. I think your daughter said where she grew up, but I don’t remember.

JA:

In Seminole. She grew up Seminole.

AW:

In Seminole, that’s right.

JA:

She graduated from Tech in Foods and Nutrition in January of ’46. Well, little town of Bradshaw, there’s nothing there anymore. The old Methodist church I went to there, it’s a community building now and once a year, they have a get together, but Bradshaw didn’t have chemistry and biology, trigonometry and all this kind of stuff. That young lady there was a whiz at that kind of stuff. She took all those kinds in Foods and Nutrition with the engineering majors.

AW:

Really? Wow.

JA:

She was in the top five percent of her class, so to be right frank, I’d have probably never made it

through college. [Laughter] Except, she tutored me all the way through my Master's degree and she taught at Slaton and she taught one or two years at Roosevelt.

AW:

When did she start teaching at Slayton?

JA:

Probably in '45. Might have '44, might have been the fall of '44.

AW:

Well, my mother graduated from Slaton High School in '46 so she was –

JA:

Yeah, she could've. I can't – that's been so damn long ago – I can't remember.

AW:

I mean, she probably knew your wife.

JA:

But she taught there at Slaton and I can't remember whether she taught at Slaton before she did at Roosevelt or after. I kind of believe she taught at Roosevelt first and then at Slaton. She did that until I graduated from college. While I was doing my master's degree, and it goes back to your question about soils and so forth, Dean Laddy [?] [00:16:09] was the Dean when I started there, and then Stangel took over while I was in school there. But I wound up – when I was doing my Master's – to teaching the freshman soils course. The headquarters was Soil Conservation Service and was right across college there and they were on well, College Avenue, I guess. So I went over to get the directions of what the soil scientists did to map soils and all this kind of stuff. That gave me all of the stuff they had. So while I was teaching the freshman soils course, which is a one hour course at that time, I was also teaching myself [laughter] what was required in mapping soils in a country. In 1948, when I got my master's degree, then I interviewed with N.P. Stevenson and Courtnet Tedwood [?] [00:17:47]. Courtnet Tedwood [00:17:49] was an assistant state conservationist at that time, headquartered in Amarillo and West Texas was so damn far from Temple, that even the staff members couldn't do that. N.P. Stevenson was in the personnel section down here in Temple, so they hired me on so I went to work here in 1948, with Soil Conservation Service in Lubbock.

AW:

Oh, so you were stationed in Lubbock?

JA:

I was living in Lubbock and so I was stationed in Lubbock. So they didn't have many soil scientists around. All the old ones, all the farmer ones were in the damn army or the military so I went all over the Panhandle making trial surveys for the Soil Conservationists is doing planning for farmers and ranchers. There was two of us, Ernie Shaw, who graduated from Tech. He went to work maybe a year before I did there at Lubbock. He and I were the two soil scientists there in Lubbock. After I'd been there, I guess about a year, they transferred me to Lamesa, and I was a soil scientist. And one of the main jobs I had then was some of those ranches, like the Hickenbocken [?] [00:19:59] Ranch in Gaines County for instance, which is in the Northwest part of Gaines County right up against New Mexico. All of that ranch has been broken up into farms and all of them were being financed by the Farmer's Home Administration, so they had to have us all survey on those in order to get a loan. And from Lamesa, you know, ordinarily a Denver city back in there. It was a good, long drive.

AW:

It sure is.

JA:

So I'd leave on a Monday morning and I'd go by Seminole which is in Gaines County and I'd pick up the maps of that area and get the names of the places that I needed to make surveys on that wanted loans. I'd go out there, and I stayed with a farmer and his wife. On a Friday afternoon, I'd drive back to Lamesa. I did that and I did one down by Latraccia. They had a ten thousand acre ranch that was broken up into small farm. Anyway, I did all that until 1952, then the Soils Conservation Service was hiring buckos of new employees at that time, so they – the guy with a name of Homer Taft, he'd been a Soil Survey Supervisor. He had been made – the Soil Conservation Service reorganized in 1952 and they changed. They set up a whole different organizational structure. So Homer became the air conservationist at Lubbock. You're getting all these new employees and so he forbade on me to move back to Lubbock and set up a training deal for him out at Tech. So I went out to Tech and they provided a space to hold these training sessions out at Tech. There for, I guess, for '52 and '53, I helped train in sessions. Most of them, as soon as they'd get through with the training session, they had to go to Korea or some damn place. The biggest part of them went into the army. They had been drafted and all this kind of stuff so a bunch of them went back. That lasted about two years. Then, Homer prevailed on me to become the work unit conservationist. They call them district conservations.

AW:

Yeah. I was having a talk with Dale this morning and I asked him to tell me the difference because I hear people talk about a district conservationist and sometimes it means one thing and other times it means something else. So this was when it changed from—it was still a work unit?

JA:

Yeah, work unit conservationist. I was work unit conservationist at Amherst, really. I had been out there about a year and I moved to Littlefield, built a brand new courthouse—Lamb County did in Littlefield.

AW:

And did you stay living in Lubbock or did you actually move?

JA:

I actually moved to Littlefield, went from there to there. So then, I ran the operations in Lamb County for the Lamb Soil and Water Conservation District from I guess, '44, I think that's when I went over there, '44 to '57. In 1957, they passed the Great Plains Conservation Program Law and of course, all of that out in there was to be under the Great Plains Law. So they chose Homer to come into Temple to be the assistant state conservationist for programs, and so Red Smith, who was our state conservationist, chose me to replace Homer as air conservationist. From '57 to '61, I was the air conservationist there in Lubbock and that's when I got the award to go to Washington. Don Williams was the chief of Soil Conservation Service in Washington at the time and he gave me credit for saving the program because we were hold—buckos of Great Plains Conservation Program contract with those farmers and ranchers out there.

AW:

And what James is referring to is a really great photograph of him and Una?

JA:

Yeah, Una.

AW:

And two daughters, with George Mahon, and the Capitol Dome in the background. It's a great, great photograph. And you said that he would come by your office in Lubbock when he was in town?

JA:

Oh, yeah. He came by. I imagine he went by all the federal offices and, when he'd come by—I'll tell you a story, we'd have him fighting for funding of the different programs and agriculture and all that kind of thing, you know, and food stamps was a big percentage of the agricultural budget. I told George, I said, get rid of the damn food stamps there and our budget won't be so damn big and they'll increase it. I'll never forget. He said, "Oh, James, don't say that." [Laughter] He said, "That's what we trade on all the time. If we didn't have that big part of food stamps and so forth that all the city people and all this kind of stuff, we wouldn't get any budget for agriculture."



AW:

Now, that's really interesting because we think of today as the time when agriculture has no clout in Washington, but even then, people like George were having to work out deals with the rest of the population of America to be able to get agricultural plumbing. That's really interesting.

JA:

Absolutely, right. So anyway, that's really when I was acquainted with George. Of course, he was raised at Colorado City, and so I knew him before we went up first. We go up there and he wined and dined us all the time, when we wasn't tied up over at the SCS office.

AW:

You told me before we got this interview underway, while your daughter was still here, you told me a great story about the hamburgers. That would be worth just repeating because this is quintessential George Mahon.

JA:

He stuck us into the restaurant there with all of the congressmen, eighty. You get in there so he asked the two daughters, and you can see there how they're just teenagers. He asked him what they want and they want hamburger. They didn't have hamburgers in there, so Mr. Mahon, he meticulously told the waitress exactly how to make those hamburgers. [Laughter] That's probably the first hamburgers that the restaurant had ever made up there in Washington.

Anyway, where was I? Oh, yeah. In 1957, they passed the Great Plains Conservation Program Law and that's when I became the air conservationist in Lubbock and we had—Lubbock area served eleven counties. I supervised eleven counties and I think at that time, we had a hundred and ten people in the area and they probably don't have half that many now.

AW:

I'll bet that's right.

JA:

They've really gone downhill from a personnel standpoint, but we were doing lots of work, but Don Williams was cheap as a Soil Conservation Service, and he made several trips out there. I got well acquainted with him. I toured him all over the eleven county area there. I was showing him the work we were doing on farms and ranches out there with the Great Plains Conservation Program. In fact, the business, about the time that—well, in 1961, they selected Homer Taft, and I think he wound up in Kentucky as the state conservationist or someplace. But anyway, Red Smith then brought me into Temple to head the program.



AW:

In 1961?

JA:

Yeah, so they always allotted out of the Great Plains Conservation Program Fund so much for each state, but they'd get down towards the end of the fiscal year and these other states didn't have enough contracts to use their damn money. Hell, we'd get an extra seven million dollars we used in contracts here in Texas. That's the reason Don Williams give me credit for saving the Great Plains Program, because as soon as they'd tell me—

AW:

Because you had to use that money up or they were going to cut it out.

JA:

Right, absolutely, so we'd use batches of money for that. Now, Dale Fischgrabe, that you visited with, he was working at conservation at Muleshoe. I put him in his job out there.

AW:

Well that photograph you showed me today of the Shuster's signing that, what he said, was a first contract. You were in that with —

JA:

Right. I was an air conservationist there when we did that. We had a later photograph of that somewhere where we, you know, ten, twenty, years later we—

AW:

Oh, they had a memorial.

JA:

Yeah, a memorial.

AW:

Right, he didn't have a photograph of that. He had some documentation of it, but only the photograph of the original.

JA:

I think I probably have some photographs of that somewhere around here.

AW:

Well, we love photographs so if you have some extra—

JA:

We can look in a minute. I'll show you.

AW:

If I interject just a minute, one of the things that Dale also said that I thought – because he traveled over a lot of the United States and he said there was a real difference between the way that SCS was run in Texas, and the way it was run everywhere else. He said that Texas was much more organized. They had a manual for everyone, and so it didn't matter if you were Harlingen or you were in Dalhart, you had some things that were the same. He said it was the only state that was like that. Now, how did that come about and would that have helped and would that be sort of indicative of why you were much more successful in Texas at placing this money than maybe some other states?

JA:

Of course, Dale would know more about what happened in other states than I did because when he left Muleshoe he went out of state. In fact, \_\_\_\_\_ [00:34:05] had a guy by the name of Roland Willis. He replaced me at Littlefield. He was raised at Knox City, but he went, I believe, to Indiana from Littlefield and then he wound up as state conservationist of Oklahoma. He lives still out at Oklahoma now. I talked to him. He called me about a week ago, but he's in bad health. Most of those states, in those early days, I made all of the Great Plains Conservation Program meetings in Denver, and in Washington. I would write a lot of the procedures that we used in contracting with the Great Plains Conservation Program. When the program started, we didn't have any of that kind of thing. The makeshift contract forms and all that kind of thing, we developed here in Texas and it became the standard for all the other states to use. I was the hearing officer for any contract violations that happened here in Texas. In the early days, we had a few of those because ASCS, they handled the ACP program which was just a one practice kind of thing. They really didn't have any of that kind of thing, but the farmers and ranchers, I guess, got the idea that they weren't dealing with legal contracts and so I can tell you lots of stories about the hearings on those kind of contracts, but the forms in the instructions that we used for the Great Plains Conservation Program were primarily developed here in Texas. Later, they had the Land Treatment Program for the Watershed Program and the Five Sixty Six, Law Five Sixty Six. I was on the committee to help write the rules and regulations for that. The guy that finally wound up editing the whole damn thing was a guy by the name Wayne Chapman, who was our air conservationist at Vernon at one time and a W.C. at Abilene at one time.

AW:

Wayne –

JA:

Chapman.

AW:

Chapman. Now, our chancellor's, Robert Duncan, his father was an area conservationist.

JA:

He was working in a conservationist environment. Frank, I knew Frank real well.

AW:

Well the chancellor will be glad to hear that. [Laughter]

JA:

Yeah, eighty five of them remember me, and I— old Frank and me and Vernon, and he'd invite me out to have dinner with them. Now, I've had dinner with them and he was just a kid.

AW:

Yeah, well I'll tell you that. He's so proud of his dad and the works that he did. So, I'll tell you, we are really lucky at Texas Tech. We got him. I know they're not lucky in Austin because they lost him, but to have somebody that has that background is a big plus.

JA:

Yeah, I knew Frank for a long time.

AW:

It sounds to me like you are the fellow behind the curtain on a lot of these programs by being a part of the drafting of these procedures because that's what makes the thing work, right?

JA:

I was real fortunate in it. I was one of the youngest that really came to work in that period of time and I had real good mentors.

AW:

Who were your good mentors?

JA:

Homer Taft was the first one and then H.N. Smith was a state conservationist here, was the second one. They—Fats [?] Dykes. I can't tell you what his other—he went by Fats Dykes.

AW:

D-y?

JA:

D-y-k-e-s. He was in the old regional office in Fort Worth in 1952, whenever they did away with all those big regional offices. He went to Washington and he was the deputy or something. I'm not sure what his title was, but he was second in command in Washington. I had attended training sessions that he held, so I was well acquainted with Fats Dykes. Every time they had committee to work up this kind of stuff, he'd put me on the damn committee. I don't know how many times that I went to Washington.

AW:

So your committee would meet there to do the—

JA:

Yeah, sometimes it would be six weeks.

AW:

Oh, gosh.

JA:

I was on one, one time. I believe it was I'd be there one or two weeks and I'd be home a week and another two weeks and home a week. I hated them. They had all kind of agency people in connection with them, and some of the people in their agencies, they didn't like me telling those other people what I thought. It's aside the point now, but they tried to transfer me up there several times. [Laughter]

AW:

How did you avoid that?

JA:

It was after Fats Dykes retired, but I'd ran there so many times, I didn't want it up there.

AW:

Wasn't it difficult in that kind of service though, to turn down those promotions?

JA:

Yeah, they told me one time and got asked another guy's name wanting me to come up there. I told them I'd come if they'd make me a division director. That was about two steps up above where they wanted to transfer me into, says, "Oh we can't do that kind of thing." I said, "The hell, you can't. I can tell you where you did it. So if you can't do it, then hell I don't need to come." [Laughter] and he said, "We can just transfer you, what would you do then?" I said,

“You’ll know the answer to that when I get the papers.” I’m not going to come with that kind of thing. I can tell you stories about where some of my friends did go and they regretted it.

AW:

I have a friend that’s with, I guess it would be the National Parks. He’s a Ranger and they kept trying to send him back. We went to high school together— kept trying to send him back. He said, he turned them down, and they finally put him by himself in little watchtower somewhere out in New Mexico. He said, they thought they were punishing me, but I thought it was a really good deal. [Laughter]

JA:

I was thinking about people, wondering why I didn’t know and a guy by the name of Wes Fox—

AW:

Wes Fox? Now, I’ve heard his—

JA:

He came to work at Lamesa when I was a soil scientist there, and I trained him as a saw scientist. He graduated from Tech. He was from Oklahoma, but he went to Tech. Wes was a hell of a nice guy—kid at that time. I wasn’t much older than he was, I guess. Anyway, after I left, he was there at Lamesa and when I transferred back to Lubbock and then over to Littlefield, they transferred him down to Spur. He and Taylor—J.H. Taylor, was a W.C. down there, and he and Taylor didn’t get along so Homer Taft asked me, “How do you and Wes get along?” I said, “Hell, real good. I’d like to have him”. Okay, so he sends him to Lamesa. I mean—not Lamesa, Littlefield. He comes over and he’s my soil scientist there in Lamb County. When I became an air conservationist in Lubbock, the position came open and I brought him in as an aerial soil scientist. And then, a few years later, about the time I got voted in to Temple, I helped get him his air conservationist at Vernon. Then I brought him back, talked Red Smith into bringing him back to Temple as the assistant state soil scientist here. Then he went to Oklahoma as a state soil scientist. He and I talk all the damn time. He called me and I told him and we’d visit. He called me one day, he said, “Washington wants me to come to Washington as the soil scientist, what do you think about that? I said, “Well Wes, you only have a Bachelor’s degree in saw scientist and you’re in a highly technical field. If you look around the guy that heads that is a PhD.” I can’t remember all the guy’s names now, but they were all PhD’s. I said, “You’ll be a gopher amongst them.” I wouldn’t recommend you. I said, ‘You get along with state conservationist alright?’, “Yeah.”, “He let you run the saw program alright in Oklahoma?”, “Yeah.” I said, hell, couldn’t ask for anything better than that. He didn’t take my advice. He moved to Washington in the soil section up there. I guess it hadn’t run six months until I was up there in some damn assignment, and he comes around and invites – wen to the house to have dinner. So I’m there visiting and I said, “How’s Pat liking it up here? I’ll tell you, she hasn’t figured out yet, and I haven’t been



able to explain it, how I got a promotion up here and my check is less than it was when I was back in Stillwater. To make a long story short, he finally got transferred back to Fort Worth in an office up there. He retired.

AW:

Is he still alive?

JA:

Yeah he is, but he has dementia.

AW:

Oh, gosh. So sad.

JA:

I haven't seen him. Una and I went to—they had one of their sons—I can't remember what happened to him, but he died. He was maybe twenty years old, nineteen or twenty year old boy. Something happened to him and he just died. We went up to his funeral and that's the last time I've seen Wes. Anyway—

AW:

Would you talk a little bit about what it was like to be a soil scientist, particularly when you were doing those maps and evaluations because one of the things that Dale said this morning was that, "We never went home until whoever was out mapping soils got back, because that was the one guy who was going to be out there and if they were stuck, well there was no one to help them." It sounds like it was a little bit of the Wild West.

JA:

The vehicles we had back in those days were not like they are now. In fact, the one I had at Lamesa that I used all the time and a lot of that is real sandy in there. I put on—I carried two by twelves, just long enough to go into the back of the trunk of—

AW:

Boards.

JA:

Bed of the—about eight foot long. When I got out there, we got stuck in that sand. We jacked that thing up, and we could put those on in and we could get her to run, to start. We could get ourselves out of the sand and so forth. That happened very regularly out there. Probably, I never did have any mud trials out there. [Laughter] Terrible I tell you. He probably had the thing. One



of the reasons, probably, is that we always had maps and so forth and we left everything in the field office.

AW:

So they knew where you were going?

JA:

Yeah, they knew where we were going. They provided the maps to start with. Dale was there at Muleshoe and saw his high school out there, and Dale would give him the maps and outline the farms even when soils surveys on, and then he'd go out there. Well, he didn't want to have to go back to that same farm the next day, so hell, he might stay in there an hour later. When he got through, he needed to get in the office there to leave the damn map in and the soil information with them. That's the reason they had to stay at the office. Otherwise, he'd have to carry it back or mail it back or something like that. The field office wouldn't get what they needed –

AW:

Unless they waited for him.

JA:

Right, they were waiting for him and they did. I'll tell you a funny thing that happened, I was – seven oak was in the territory in the Lamesa area. It was a district. I was in there one day and I was putting the maps together or something and a guy walks in the office, and introduces himself and said, "can you find about any farm around here?", "Yeah, if you've got a legal description on it, I can find it." He got his legal description and so I looked at it and I get the maps out and I find the damn location of it. I said, "Hell, that's in the Souder Ranch." I said, "Are you sure you've got the right—" [Laughter], "Yeah." So then he tells me the story. Back in teens or early twenties, he homesteaded his quarter section or I can't remember now.

AW:

This fellow did?

JA:

Yeah, he homesteaded. He had paid the taxes on that every year all these many years. He said, "Would you have time to carry me down there? Or go with me down there?" I said, "Well sure, but we'll go in my vehicle." We get in there and we go down Southwest of Seminole and there's not a damn thing in like about thirty miles. Still in Gaines County. Gaines County is a big county.

AW:

Yeah, it is.

JA:

We drive up to it, and I check and it's a dirt road that we were on and I stopped where I thought the thing was and I said, "Now, if my calculations are right, your place starts over there about a quarter of a mile right over." He said, "You mind if we crawl over a fence?" I kid you not, we crawled over the damn fence and we go out there and we found the post –

AW:

The corner?

JA:

Corner post with a guide wash [?] [00:54:57] and a few other things there. It showed that somebody had lived there before. He tells me that he had built a little old shack there and they were homesteading this thing, and these cowboys come along here and they whipped up on them and tore up everything, tore it down and run them off. He recovered from all that shenanigans and left. And here, I can't remember now how many years, but it was twenty odd years later. He's showing up back here. I said, "Well I supposed next time instead of getting a soils guy to go with you, you need to get a sheriff." [Laughter]

AW:

Do you know if he ever –

JA:

I don't know if ever did.

AW:

Would you know his name or how I could find it? That's a great story.

JA:

I don't know. Hell, that's been a long time ago.

AW:

The reason I'm asking, there were two or three similar events in that part of the world. You know, the famous event there at the twin sister's windmills. Not far from there, were the fellow that had, the clerk in Austin or I guess it was an attorney, had discovered there was a strip that the surveys had missed and so it was unclaimed and he claimed it. He went off to make good his claim and they killed him.

JA:

I never did hear anything else about it after that.

AW:

So your job as a soil scientist wasn't always that easy either. [Laughter] That's kind of dangerous.

JA:

No it wasn't. That's right. I was looking to replace the survey between Seagraves and Loop. you know, are you acquainted with Seagraves and Loop? Well, that's a desolate country out there. Back in the late forties, it sure was. I was looking for this place, there wasn't too many houses and so forth out there. And so here I was down alone, hunting for this place, and here's a damn shack that's out there, and all the old shacks. It had to do with wind erosion, they're sitting down in a bottom of a donut. [Laughter] Anyway, I parked it out, and I go up and knock on the door and here, this fellow opens the door just about that far with a damn pistol sticking right at me. "What do you want?" [Laughter] I told him the name of the property that I was looking for and he said, "This is not it," shut the damn door, and I left [Laughter]

AW:

He didn't give you the instructions of how to find it either.

JA:

No, this wasn't it. A lot of those land owners out in there are real skeptical. [Laughter] So you had to be sort of careful. That's one reason I sort of like watching—surveying on them old ranches is being them because there wasn't anybody out there, been there long time. Anyway, it was—where did I start? I get distracted.

AW:

Oh well, I got distracted listening to those great stories. We've gotten you – I mean, just in the chronology thing—have gotten you back to Temple.

JA:

Yeah, when I came into Temple, here in nineteen—in August of '61, I was assistant for program, which is the Great Plains Conservation Program was a main thing and it covered all the plains to all of the area on the high plains, and the rolling red plains. So that meant— and you can't come in from Temple to Lubbock, and Pampa, and Amarillo, and Pecos, and all those places. So consequently, I was gone three out of four weeks all the time, and this young lady here, she raised our three girls. You met—

AW:

Yeah, tell me again the name of your oldest.

JA:

Linda. Linda Smith.

AW:

Linda. Linda Smith.

JA:

Linda Smith. She graduated from Tech in '68.

AW:

And this is your wife?

JA:

That's the old wife and she—

AW:

She still looks the same.

JA:

Yeah.

AW:

And this has got to be a—

JA:

Great grandson.

AW:

Great grandson.

JA:

Yeah, that's our great grandson and that was probably about six months before she died.

AW:

She looked good. She looks good in this picture.

JA:

But she was a whiz. I mean, she—we moved to Temple, it was her—she raised these girls because I wasn't around to help much with it. Then in the seventies and eighties, she was the consultant dietician for nursing homes here at Temple, Colleen, Florence, and Georgetown. She wore out two cars.

AW:

Yeah, that's a lot of territory too.

JA:

Damn sure is. She did and I'm not lying. She wore out two cars doing that and that's her car. It's out here. She traded off a Crown Victoria Ford. I don't remember. This one here, that's a '06, so that other one had to have been about a '01, but she wore that damn thing out. Before that, she had a Chevrolet. She wore it out, but which she did all that and of course the girls, then, they were, the two older ones, the younger one was—the younger one incidentally lives in Big Springs. She's married to a guy by the name of Eddy Spurgen. Dale Spurgen is his brother. He's the county judge at Jones's County. He was raised in Anson. Eddy is a retired major general. He commanded the thirty-six infantry division in Iraq.

AW:

Wow. We've collected the archive of the Anson Cowboy Christmas Ball. So that's where I know the name.

JA:

Spurgen?

AW:

Yeah.

JA:

Yeah, well they owe—he's the county judge there in there, and Eddy's his younger brother.

AW:

And your middle daughter, where is—

JA:

She lives in Bedford, Georgia, which is a suburb of Atlanta. She works in Atlanta. She graduated from Tech in '72, and her husband is James Behnke, B-e-h-n-k-e. He graduated in Foods and Nutrition from Tech, got his Master's degree, rather. I think he got his Bachelor's from Iowa. He was a dietician in the air force, I believe. When he got out of the air force, he went to Tech to get

his Master's and that's where my daughter met him, and so they live there and that's where our grandson—this is the great grandson. Our grandson—he was—I think they made a stop in Ohio, a couple of places, before they wound up around Atlanta. I talk to him all the time, but I don't see him all that often.

AW:

Yeah, that's a long way. Well, it's real interesting that your family is on one side of the table or the other. Either the eating side or on the growing side. [Laughter]

JA:

Yeah, now, Jim is retired from that hospital complex there, and now he does training for people that are going into food service. They have to have a certification and so forth, so he trains and gets them certification for the state of Georgia. That's what he does now.

AW:

That's something. That's a lot of kids and all doing well.

JA:

But after, it seemed to me like every time I—after being down here for a number of years, sitting and driving all that time, the static nerve in the back of my leg goes up your butt into your back—it got so damn bad that I—I believe it was in '83 or somewhere along there—I requested or we had a vacancy in Abilene, I requested to go back out there. So I went out to Abilene for two or three years. I think it says in that in there somewhere. And then, we had a reorganization and I come back into Temple. And then I wound up as – when I wound up and retired, I think it tells what—I was the head of the technology division in the state office here, which included the soils and engineering and plant sciences and all of that kind of stuff. Plant material centers and all that kind of stuff. I said grace over those the last few years that I was here.

AW:

And let's see.

JA:

I could tell you stories about that. Some of the real interesting programs that we worked on, the Rural Development Program was real interesting.

AW:

Rural Development, tell me about that.



JA:

We had communities and so forth do a whole bunch of things, but well, the most interesting one that I did was—we had the state department, Texas Parks and Wildlife, set up Sea Rim State Park down on the coast. And I went down there with a counterpart from Parks and Wildlife there in Austin, and we looked over the whole thing. And one of the problems that they had was that when they built the Houston ship channel, they shut off this marsh from the gulf so the gulf didn't flow in and out.

AW:

So it's no longer a saltwater and freshwater marsh, it's now just—

JA:

So several things was wrong with that, doing that. One is, it affects the shrimp production. The shrimp breed in marshes, but they grow in the bay.

AW:

So they have to get from one to the other.

JA:

Right. So I don't know, it's Sea Rim. I don't remember how many acres in it, but lots of acres in the damn thing. So I get a guy by the name of Gene Vitatoe [?] 01:09:34] was our state conservation engineer here. I got him to design a deal between the ship channel and the marsh so that the tides can move in and out.

AW:

That's similar to a bypass that people would do with a dam so that fish could get—

JA:

Right.

AW:

Yeah, but this was a bypass for the tides.

JA:

Right, absolutely. Whenever they dug that ship channel, they just closed it off. See, well what we did really was taking it out. We constructed a pretty good sized deal there. Can't remember now. It was about maybe a hundred yards wide so that the tides could move in and out. So then, we had put platforms and stuff like that out there so people could go out there and they could sit, and watch the birds and all this kind of stuff in Sea Rim State Park. Now, I'll tell you this funny story. One of our state resource conservationists, a guy by the name of D.B. Polk, he did –

[Laughter] I can tell you. Anyway, so we needed to plant some stuff and get some vegetation and so forth so he's a vegetation man. So, I take him down there, and the Parks and Wildlife visit and they have two airboats there. He gets on one, and I get on one. We go all the way around this thing here, decide exactly what we're going to do and what not. And so you know, in those marshes you got open water, and you got this vegetation, and then you have little pathways through the vegetation so you can go from one open water to another, whatnot. Well, of course, here I weigh about a hundred and seventy pounds. D.B. weighs about two seventy, a great big one. [Laughter] So he's—we go along there and we go through one of these areas of his vegetation and guide it. Pilot in one of them, I'm good, go right on through, we didn't have any problems. And old D.B., they get him halfway through the damn thing, and it stops, dragging bottom. [laughs] And here, there's nothing to do, you know? You either got to reduce the weight or somebody got to push. And so there's only two of them there and the rest of the guys are driving, so D.B. has to get out and to make all this story more funny—old D.B., of all the damn times, he shows up in a damn suit, in cowboy boots, and a damn white shirt and tie. Well, we're circling around out there. After they tried a time or two, we get to move that damn thing, which I didn't think we could do, but D.B. just stepped out and pushed that thing. Well, they have alligator hole, what we call alligator holes along there. So, he steps out, and the water is about boot high and he takes two or three steps and he steps in one of these damn holes and he goes plum up to his damn shoulder in this thing. [Laughter] Of course, this old boy had a damn airboat and a fan and going like all getting in his shot out there and there's old D.B. sitting out. [Laughter] I like that. They finally circled around, and old D.B. finally gets back in the damn airboat. He says, "Take me back to goddamn car." He never did forgive me for that.

AW:

That sure did him a pair of boots, didn't it.

JA:

[Laughter] His boots were full of water. That was one of the—we did all kinds of stuff like that. Even had the, I guess the part of Houston, built a little island down there. All of the damn waves and so forth eliminated the little old island right there pretty close to where they all docked and so forth. We have to rebuild that damn island and so forth, but most of them are more community related on it. We did something up at Gail, I'm trying to think exactly what we did.

AW:

Gail, Texas?

JA:

Yeah. You know where Gail is?

AW:

Oh, I know. They had a buffalo stampede down in the middle of town not too long ago. They had a Fourth of July parade and somebody brought a bunch of head of buffalo and thought they were a trail broken up, but the buffalo decided they wanted to go to a different part of Gail. [Laughter] That was a big event because there wasn't much corralling those buffalo. So what in the world would you have been doing in Gail?

JA:

I can't recall now exactly what our project was, but we did something. It probably had to do with health. Probably. We built something, helped them built something, had to do with health. Best I could remember

AW:

I had no idea that there were that many, that diverse group of programs. I knew about the Great Plains Program and the Watershed, but I had no idea about all these other—

JA:

Yeah, these Rural Development type deals and of course, we did— we built over two thousand flood prevention structures.

AW:

Really? That's a lot. Were most of these earthen?

JA:

Yeah, they're earthen just like—well I start to say just like a Corps of Engineer's deal, but it wasn't. When I was air conservationist there at Lubbock, on that, I guess White Water Creek River that starts over New Mexico and comes through Plainview and goes out down there by Spur. That was a five sixty-six deal. We built all of the structures. One of them, the first one, I think is in New Mexico. We built over New Mexico, and we built like, I can't remember now how many, but five or six structures all the way down to Plainview and maybe past Plainview, but the thing that always irritated me, made me dubious of the Corps of Engineers, something in the damn laws. I can't remember now what the hitch was, but the Corps of Engineers had jurisdiction in building the floodway through Plainview. They got more damn money to plan and design the damn thing, than we got for building all of the damn flood prevention structures and not to this day have they ever built a damn thing through Plainview and you probably can't with all the construction that has taken place inside it now.

AW:

Yeah, it does seem that—and maybe I'm just prejudice because I'm from a rural area, but I think about—I never hear anybody say anything negative about the programs that were administered

by the SCS, but the only news we ever get about the Corps of Engineers is having to fix something that didn't work. I didn't know anything about this Plainview project there.

JA:

You know, I retired when I was seventy years old from the soil conservation service, after forty seven years.

AW:

Was that '95 when you retired?

JA:

Yeah, well the first day in '95. I retired on really the last day of '94, but I did consulting work for ten years. The last consulting work I did was for the Department of Agriculture, the Brazos River Authority in the city of Waco. This had to do with the dairy waste from all the dairies that had been built in Erath County, and so forth up there. Now, back to the Corps of Engineers. They got money to do land treatment work in those areas to improve the water qualities for the city of Waco, Lake Waco, and all the others. So when I found out about this, I went to the Corps of Engineers in Fort Worth and visited with them about exactly what they had done that I had heard. They had so many contracts to do this work that would help improve the use of this dairy waste. Well, yeah we do. They brought out some of those with land owners, so I looked through these contracts, and these plans they had worked up with these landowners. I said, "How much of this have you got done? I haven't seen any of it out in the areas that I visited." Oh, Congress hasn't given us any money to install it. I look at the dates on these things. I said, "Hell, these damn things are not worth the paper they're written on." I said, these farmers are doing all kinds of other things now. You can't develop a damn plan with a farmer out here, and then forget about it and wait for Congress to pour money on it because—

AW:

By then you're going to need a new plan.

JA:

Oh, yeah. You have to have a totally new plan. Hell, it might even be a different loaner, different operator. I told him, "You might as well throw them things away. You can't implement these. It's too damn old."

AW:

Yeah, not to mention that things like dairies are, at least on the plains, they're going and coming pretty fast because they'll build one and they run out of ground water and they have to shut it down to move on.

JA:

[Laughter] That reinforced my thinking on the Corps of Engineers. They had all the—and when that thing hit New Orleans and it flooded out and went over their dams and so forth, they didn't look far enough ahead. I don't know.

AW:

Well and then, you look at what's changing today with what's happening with the climate and where the rains fall that didn't used to, and where it not fall and where it used to. You don't pick up those structures and move them around for convenience either.

JA:

You know, a lot of people say there's no such thing as climate change, it just rotates, and this kind of thing, but I think they'll find out one of these days. I think the whole damn city of Houston will be under water one of these days. I get a call one day from a guy down at Houston and he wants to see if we can't do something with the flooding that's taking place down between Conroe and Houston. Okay, I'll come down. I had a couple of guys with me and we go down there and meet them. We go out into this new subdivision and I kid you not, all these houses, expensive houses, most all of them were two levels. The water had gotten up to the second level in the damn thing. It meant it got ten foot deep.

AW:

At Conroe?

JA:

Yeah, it's between Conroe and Houston. It's not in Conroe.

AW:

Yeah, but still, that's pretty far away from the Gulf.

JA:

Right? Yeah. They had carpets and mattresses and all this sitting in the damn yards and what not. They're trying to clean it up and so forth. Of course, water had gone down. So I go out and I go behind them, back of these houses straight here, right along here. I go out back of the houses and here's a damn channel there about as wide as this whole room here and water sitting right up top; a little over the top still. Why in the hell if he fishes the damn channel, why in the hell you still got water? We go down this thing here. I guess a mile, maybe a little over a mile. We get down there, and I kid you not, it just stopped.



AW:

So the channel didn't go anywhere?

JA:

Didn't go anywhere. [laughter] When builders built those houses, they went in there and they dug that damn thing down there and just stopped I guess wherever their property ended or something. I go back and I tell this guy, "There's not a damn thing we can do about this until you find an outlet for that." Now, I said, "If you can find us a place that we can take that channel all the way to the Gulf to end it so it'll drain, then we can help solve some of your problems here, but we can't pipe the damn water out of there. How in the world did the cities ever approve the goddamn division with the—" that's nothing in the world, but a long pond. A long, narrow pond. It's stupid.

AW:

Yeah, that's incredibly stupid.

JA:

But I travelled around all over in that area and they got whole divisions down there. Really, in the San Jacinto and the Houston area, that the only thing that's above water is the road. They built the paved roads, but there's houses, one house after another, all vacant, fed and stationed here on the corner, vacant. Not a damn thing anywhere. Water standing there, two foot deep on the whole thing. I saw one farm that we went to, drive up to the gate, it's just as flat as the floor. It is two foot deep on the gate entering into the farm. Every damn bit of it's under water so I think that that whole area down there is going to be under water.

AW:

Yeah, you can't even grow rice like that. You've got to have some—

JA:

Another thing that Parks and Wildlife wanted us to do is the San Jacinto Monument—is, they told me, was eleven feet lower than it was when it was built.

AW:

Really?

JA:

Yeah. You know, it was amazing to me that it would have been that damn far, but if you've ever—have you ever been to San Jacinto?



AW:

Um-hm.

JA:

You know, they have a restaurant there. If you've been down there recently—

AW:

No, I haven't been recently.

JA:

More than half of the parking lot on that thing is underwater now. It's all—I think that restaurant is probably closed. They had a concrete walk around that reflection pool in front of the pond and all of the walkway around that, it's all part of the pond now. Water is over walkway around that thing. We couldn't figure out, anyway, how the hell we could raise a—

AW:

Monument. [Laughter] No. No, that's a tall order, no pun intended. Golly. My son has been back in Lubbock now for some time and we're really glad, because he and his wife have our only grandchildren. Including that little boy that's birthday is about the same as yours, but he worked at the Museum of Natural Science in Houston so I'd go down there a lot and he and his wife live not too far from there. Every time they'd have a hurricane, water—and they didn't live in a low line area of Houston, they lived in an area that was pretty good, but still there was so much of Houston that was low, that the water would come right up to their part of town. They were sort of near the downtown area, a little bit south and east, but I thought—and that was before any of us were talking about climate change, but it was just a hurricane would fill the place up, and it didn't drain very fast either. I guess there are more of those channels than just that one. Wow.

JA:

I don't know, it's a—

AW:

You mentioned working with people in Austin. One of things that's always been curious to me is why all of this soil conservation organization is here in Temple and it didn't wind up getting—

JA:

Well, I wondered about that a long time, but I think the main reason, the thing is headquarters here in Temple, it's not only the Soil Conservation Service State Headquarters here in Temple, but the State Soil and Water Conservation Board is headquartered here.

AW:

Yeah, I have a friend, Rex Seism [?] [01:31:15] who—

JA:

Yeah, I know Rex.

AW:

Yeah, Rex—

JA:

Yeah, Rex, he replaced old Harvey Davis, but the founding father, main man that developed the soil conservation districts, was a guy by the name of V.C. Marshall and he was raised out here or lived out here at Heidenheimer. V.C. Marshall is—

AW:

E or V?

JA:

V. V.C. Marshall. Some of his, I guess, sons—there are several Marshall's here in town and I'm trying to think—when I first moved down here, our office was in the First National Bank building down there. Before I retired, it must have been in maybe the late eighties or early nineties, they built the Polk building and they're over in the Polk building now, but there was a Marshall that I think was in the insurance building, was headquartered there in the bank and we saw him all the time. I think he was the son of V.C. Marshall. He might have had more kids than that I'm not sure what relation to him. But Paul Washer was the first state conservationist of Texas in SCS and he worked with V.C. Marshall to develop soil conservation districts all the way across Texas. To give you a little more background, when I was at Lamesa, then Andrews, Ector, and Midland, and Gail, I guess, they were not in soil conservation districts. So my job was to meet with the ASCS county committees to do that and also if there's any leadership around that would be interested in developing soil conservation districts, I'd work with them in develop new soil conservation districts. All of those are in soil conservation districts now. But I met with nearly all of those county committees whenever they would meet to provide any kind of technical assistance that they needed. We worked and provided the technical system for the installation of ACP practices and all that kind of stuff, even in counties that weren't districts. I had a whole lot of other things to do other than just maps or surveys, do survey work.

AW:

Over your time in this profession, are there programs that have been more important, had more impact than others? I keep hearing people mention the Great Plains Conservation Program and the Watershed Program. Is that kind of the top or are there—

JA:

No, I wouldn't say so. The main reason for the existence of the soil conservation service is to provide technical assistance to farmers and ranchers. If a farmer or rancher wants any kind of technical assistance, he can get it free of charge. He has to pay for it if he carries it out, but we would help him plan it, design it, and supervise the installation of it, but the soil conservation service's main responsibility is to provide technical assistance to farmers and ranchers. That includes soils, vegetation, agronomy, plant materials, engineering, whatever. The Great Plains Conservation Program, the Watershed Program, and all of that, are just other ways to provide assistance to local communities, particularly the Watershed Program. See, like Nolan Creek over here, we built structures all up and down Nolan Creek, except on a couple of them over there and it just so happened, one of \_\_\_\_\_ aunts [?] [01:37:05], and her aunt was named Curry, and he was one of the first employees that helped build Fort Hood. He had a half of section of land out there and one of these structures was to be built on that land. Never, ever built it. There was two or three structures that were never built on Nolan Creek out there, and Belton feels the effect of it every time we have big rains like we had in May this year. We used to before, when they were still living, [Laughter] we used to go visit them and so forth. I'll tell you a funny story. Old Curry, we were over there visiting and you know, is visiting with \_\_\_\_\_ [?] [01:38:17] and he says, I call him \_\_\_\_\_ [01:38:21] sat around and listened to all of this, and I get in the pickup with him. So he drove down to county road and he finally drives up to a gate and I get it. He wants to go through, so I open the gate and close it. He drives through the brush and trees and so forth and he gets down there, and I kid you not, here sits a little old dale here, looks like an outhouse and he says, "It's about time for we have a drank." [Laughter] "Would you like a drink?", "I guess so." He gets out and this damn thing has a big old lock on it, and he takes out his keys and he opens the damn thing, and the only damn thing that was in there was a damn refrigerator. I kid you not, they had a highline running down there with an electric line running that little old house. He opens up this refrigerator and the only damn thing in there was a jug of whiskey and a jug of water. [Laughter] We had a drank or two of that whiskey and we chased it down with a little of that water and so forth. We get through it, he shuts the damn thing, and we go back out. He bolts that and locks it up again. I don't know what in the hell happened to it, but they have a school built right there on that property now.

AW:

Well if there are schoolkids— [Laughter] just checking my battery to make sure my battery is good.

JA:

You're not recording all that. [laughter]

AW:

Oh, yeah. This is good. This is good stuff. [laughter]

JA:

Anyway—

AW:

People listening to this a hundred years from now, they'll enjoy it too. [Laughter] Is it safe to characterize the programs like the Great Plains Conservation and the Watershed that what they did was provide money that allowed the assistance that you were providing to be realized?

JA:

Yeah, to be installed.

AW:

Got it.

JA:

The Great Plains Conservation Program, it required a complete basic conservation plan on the whole operating unit, not just one field or something like that. It also had to include the management practices that go with it, and the management practices are really much more important than the physical things on it. You can install anything, if you don't manage it right after you get them, then they don't do you much good. It's a whole lot more important that you get the good management practices in there and that the land owner understands that the management of it, once he gets it installed, is as much better. Of course out on the plains and arroyos, we spent bucks of money putting in conservation irrigation systems.

AW:

What is a conservation irrigation system?

JA:

Well, when I was out there, starting out there, you couldn't drive down some county roads because the damn irrigation water was running across the county roads and so forth. Now, I had more than one farmer tell me, "Don't worry about that, I've already used it." That's a bunch of crap. He hadn't used it.

AW:

Right because it would be running down the ditch.

JA:

Running—that's what I told him. I said, hell, if you would of used it, it wouldn't be running out down across the road. So what we did is match the application of water for what was needed for the crop that's being grown.

AW:

Oh, okay. Alright, I get you now so that was learning how to conserve the irrigation that you were doing so you wouldn't over irrigate.

JA:

Absolutely. We should've started that in the beginning rather than after the water table started down.

AW:

Of course, there are a lot of things we should've started before. [Laughter]

JA:

Absolutely. Our hindsight seemed like a whole lot better than our foresight, but that used to irritate the fool out of them. They go down in tears, and I rode down the road and see water running across the bar ditch, and I go up and ask them, "Did you know your irrigation water is running across the damn road?" In order to get it soaked up, you got to let it run. "You'd be a whole lot better off if you'd put in a system here where you only put the amount of water that you need on it." Had a lot of discussions with different people on that.

AW:

That brings up something that I think is interesting, too, that I've heard mentioned from a lot of the folks that have spent their lives doing this work, that—they talked about the way that you got the job done was different than the way the government gets the job done today. Today, it is more about a regulation. Here's what you got to. It sounds to me like you were out there persuading people to do things.

JA:

Right, absolutely.

AW:

That's a big difference.

JA:

Yep. To some degree it is, but it is all the same. You got the landowner, the guy, the operator, has got to be the guy that understands what the system requires, and follows it like that. It doesn't do any good, you can have the best plan in the world, if you don't carry it out, and manage it properly. Now, they're using all kinds of different systems. They're using drip systems, and circular systems and all this kind of thing. Back in the fifties, about the only thing they had they'd run bar ditch down the sand here and turn it into the roads.



AW:

Yeah, I can remember moving siphons when I was a kid.

JA:

You don't find them doing that very much. You don't find—

AW:

I haven't seen any beach water—

JA:

You don't see many water running across the county roads anymore like it is. I still take the progressive farmer and stuff like that, you know? [Laughter]

AW:

Well it's a lot more expensive to get it up out of the ground today than it used to be, for one thing.

JA:

Yeah, it sure is. It sure is so another— been a real revolution in the farming and so forth – when I was a kid, or ninety years ago, you could walk around that house out there and you could count thirteen other houses that had families in it, and ours wasn't the biggest one. Not anybody living in our house. It's still sitting there, though, but none of the other houses are still there. They're all gone so the big lot of those are bunched into one operation. The equipment and so forth that are required for farming operation now is so expensive that you can't make a living out of a quarter section, or a half a section, or something like that. Most of them have four to ten thousand acres in them now, in a lot of them. You know anything about old Charles Mitchell or not?

AW:

No.

JA:

Charles graduated from Tech in dairy manufacture and he owns— he was raised on the farm just joined us west down there in Taylor County. Part of his is in Runnels County. He's added some too the old Mitchell farms. When he got out of Tech, he went into the dairy business with somebody, and then he owned it out at Pecos. He's about a year or two younger than I am. He's late eighty-eighty or ninety. He may be ninety now. But anyway, he's in bad health. I talk to him every once and a while on the telephone, but the guy that leases his farmland and so forth there, has a half a dozen places that are individually loaned. He probably has leases on six or eight different places down in that neighborhood. He lives up towards Abilene, but he has a whole lot down there twenty miles from it. Every once and a while, I happen to be out there and he

happened to come by the county road and he sees me out there, he'll stop and talk to me, but I've got all my cropland in the conservation reserve so I guess I left these girls to look after it whenever that runs out. I think it has got four more years to go, but all of that is changed now. You don't have near as many people to deal with. They're harder to deal with because they have different kinds of leases with every operator.

AW:

So there's no one solution fits all for that?

JA:

Right. Usually not, no.

AW:

Does that make it more difficult for a NRCS agent in today's world to work?

JA:

Yeah, I'd say it does.

AW:

I would think so too.

JA:

It makes it more difficult, but also— I wouldn't say this but, usually a guy that can operate that kind of a thing has a better understanding of what you're telling him than the ordinary –

AW:

Than somebody did fifty years ago.

JA:

Right.

AW:

So in some ways, it would make it a little easier.

JA:

Right.

AW:

Yeah, got it. What should I have asked you about that I haven't?

JA:

God, I don't know. I guess I told you more than I should have. [Laughter]

AW:

No, it's been great. Let me— there's a question I've got. I was telling Dale this morning that one of the things that I really liked seeing, that we've gotten a couple of , and I call them instructional manuals that the folks would do in each office or district and carry them around as a way of marshaling all their information together. He said, yeah, a thunder book. Is that what that is?

JA:

You— he had a whole truckload of stuff. It's got the handbook of the Great Plains Conservation Program.

AW:

That's what we got from you in '95?

JA:

Right.

AW:

Oh, that's great.

JA:

You got all those and also, the Soil Conservation Service was set up on a line and staff organization. When I was in here in the state office all the time this year, I was in— all of the things that I wrote was under the signature of the state conservationist, and whoever was state conservationist at that time. A whole big a lot of the letters in correspondence that are given, I wrote, but their under the name of A.J. Smith or sometimes it has down here a copy to me, but most of the time, I wrote all of those things, but they went under the name of the state conservationist. Hell, a lot of times, he didn't know what the hell he was saying. [Laughter] That reminds me of a story to tell you.

AW:

So he had to count on you to know.

JA:

We had a Great Plains Conservation contract with a guy out in the Pecos area, and we put in spreader systems and ponds and all this kind of stuff. Big ranch. We spent, I think somewhere, twenty-four thousand, twenty-five thousand dollars of the Great Plains money on it. So he turned

around and he sold that ranch to another guy. This guy that bought it, he decided that the damn thing, he didn't like that, but he signed when he bought it from the guy. The guy was smart enough to get him to sign to assume the responsibility of that contract. When he tore that stuff up, we held him in violation of his contract.

AW:

And that meant he had to pay that money back?

JA:

Right and this is part of the story. So we send him a bill for the refund on that money and he appeals that to Washington office. Well, the wording in the Great Plains Law says that, in this kind of thing, he has to refund all the money that was paid to him. Well, the guy that was looking after this thing in Washington was from the Dakotas, and he made a stupid ass mistake, and he – in order to satisfy some people up there that didn't want to require him to refund the damn money, he said, well the money wasn't paid to him. It was paid to the previous owner. We had never administered that way here and I didn't intend for this to be. So when he appealed it to the state conservationist and we denied his appeal, he appealed it to the chief. Of course, the chief didn't ever see it, but the guy that's looking after G.P. up there did. Told him since he didn't get the paid— we didn't pay him directly, he didn't have to refund it. Made me madder than hell. So the office general council in Washington that looks after G.P., was a guy, at that time, named Bell Turner.

AW:

Bell Turner?

JA:

Yeah and I knew Bell Turner, and I was smart enough to know that after I got the job down here to get Bell down here and take him around, get real well acquainted with him, and show him what we were doing and so forth. I called old Bell, and told him what my problem was and what a stupid decision that the Washington office had made, and he thought about it a while and he says, "How much damage do you think that he did to the land and all of that down there when he did all this?" I said, "Hell, I don't know, but I could do some figure on it." He said, "What I'd do is I'd figure out how much damage he did when he tore up all those practices down there, and I'd send him a bill for that." So I a range conservationist and so forth and we figured it out. We figured it out he had damaged it forty-two thousand dollars.

AW:

Which is more than what the original. [Laughter]

JA:

Yeah. We sent him a damn bill for forty-two thousand dollars. Damn Red Smith, you never did know him, but he—

AW:

No, but I've heard Red Smith stories.

JA:

I get in and he gets a call from this guy, and of course, he signed all that, but he didn't know what the hell he was signing, so when I get in, my secretary says, Mr. Smith wants to see you. [Laughter] I go down and there and, "James, what in the hell is this business that this guy out there owes us forty-two thousand dollars for the damage he's done on that floor?" And I said, "Yeah, that's right. I'm going to check this out with the attorneys." [Laughter] I forget now who it was, but I had a range conservationist that helped me calculate all the things. It comes up to that forty-two thousand. He said, "I thought they said we only paid him twenty-four thousand and something. Whatever it was." I said, "yeah, that's right, but Washington said we couldn't collect that from him because we hadn't paid it directly to him. We have not ever managed the program that way. That was a stupid damn decision up there." At that time, we had a contract up in Wheeler County where they had an old boy that died and he had a little old dryland farm and we'd paid him three hundred dollars and his poor wife would have to refund that three hundred dollars. I told him, I said, "Hell, Red, you can't even forgive the goddamn three hundred dollars for the guy up there that died, and his wife doesn't have three hundred dollars, and you let some rich son of a bitch get away with tearing up what we did out there?" [Laughter] That made a lot of \_\_\_\_ [02:00:06] and the guy finally refund us the twenty-four later, so— [Laughter]

AW:

Oh, that's a great story.

JA:

That was crazy. That was an interpretation of a one— of a word "the," you know? [laughs]

AW:

Any logical person would have never interpreted it that way.

JA:

[laughs] Anyway, that was—

AW:

That's a great story. That's interesting country out there. My dad and grandfather went on a



crazy spree and bought a ranch down, not a ranch, a farm down by imperial, back when they were irrigating from way deep down in that salty water, and they didn't keep it but a year or two and saw what was happening and thank goodness, they sold it and got out. But I just can't get it out of my head every time I drive, especially from Rankin down there to pick up the interstate headed to Stockton.

JA:

I think some of those little places have got desalinization plants for city water down there now.

AW:

Really? Well, I see, still there alongside of the road, concrete ditches for ditchwater— you know that nothing but shinnery growing up there. There's one old gin up on a hill—what's left of a gin, and it's hard to remember that at one time, there was cotton growing there.

JA:

I don't know. I've had a real interesting career.

AW:

You sure have. Did you enjoy it? It sounds like you did.

JA:

Yeah, I did. You know, you wouldn't work for anything for forty-seven years unless you didn't enjoy what you were doing. I believed in what we were doing.

AW:

Can you talk about that a minute because one of the other things that seems real clear to me is that people who came to work for SCS and later NRCS about the same time you're doing it, that the motivation, pretty much across the board of everybody I've talked to, wasn't so much, "Oh, now I've got a good government job and I can work until I retire." But it strikes me that all of you had a—I don't know if I want to call it a calling, but you were certainly interested in the good that was being done by conservation.

JA:

Yeah, I met and worked with some of the best people I ever—you'd ever encounter—dedicated people. Now, I'd run into a few, several old sore heads and so forth like that during that, but they were few and far between. Everyone that I know, for instance, a guy named Hershel Bell, he used to be the superintendent farms there at Tech and he taught some there at Tech, but when the SCS came about, he became a zone conservationist for the Soil Conservation Service. He was one of my dear friends. He retired up at Hale Center years ago. In fact, he officed there in my

office there on 19<sup>th</sup> Street when I was an air conservationist out there, but Hershel was one of the most dedicated—I've got a picture of old Hershel. [gets up, feet shuffling across the floor]

AW:

I'm going to change batteries while you're doing that.

JA:

Huh?

AW:

I'm going to change the battery while you're doing that.

JA:

Oh, okay. [Short pause in recording]

AW:

Andy Wilkinson back twenty-seventh of July, 2016, with James Abbott after a battery change.

JA:

Hershel Bell.

AW:

That little silver fish, you want to get rid of those. They're going to eat your papers up. We have to worry about them at the Southwest Collection. [Paper shuffling] This is a nice—

JA:

Yeah, we both got the fellowship award. I don't know what year that is.

AW:

I think '74.

JA:

Okay.

AW:

At least that's the date on the back here. [pause] Oh, I see. Yeah, there we go. Yeah. Thanks. That was good to look at.

JA:

And this old boy here graduated from high school with me, and his name's Arso Bagwell [?] [02:06:23]. He graduated from Tech.

AW:

Everett Abbott? Are these Abbott's kin to you?

JA:

Yeah, that's my dad and that's my older brother.

AW:

You look a lot like your dad.

JA:

Yeah, Everett is ninety-six years old. He lives down at Katy in an assisted living deal. His daughter lives down there with him.

AW:

When would this have been taken, about?

JA:

July 23<sup>rd</sup>, '92.

AW:

Golly.

JA:

I don't know. Is he dead? I don't know. That's what that says. I don't know.

AW:

Well, these—it's an older picture. This is a column that says way back when.

JA:

Dad died in '79. Mother died in '83. [laughs, inaudible, 02:07:35] way back when. Yeah, all those people. I used to date that old gal in high school. Here's a—when I came to—no, that's not the one.

AW:

Is that you?

JA:

Yeah, that's me. That's Clyde Graham. He was state conservationist. He's dead too. Nearly most of those people are dead, nearly all of them. I've got another one I want to show you. [paper's rustling, door opens] Here's a picture of when I came into Temple. It's still not the latest one I got. This is Wes Fox. That's the guy I've been telling you about. He graduated from Tech. But every one of these—well, this one here, Wes, and I are the only three on there that's still alive. And Dale in there was our information [?]. He's writing a book.

AW:

I was going to ask. I've got a list of people here and both Bailey and Dale Fischgrabe said that you would be good to say, here are the people that I ought to get to first on this list, and if before I get out of here today, if we could go over that, it might be helpful.

JA:

Okay. You've got a list?

AW:

Yeah, I do. I've got James Alderson and Dale Allen, and I've got an appointment set with him for tomorrow. Old Gene Bartmier because of his engineering and then Doug Bartusch.

JA:

He's an engineer, too.

AW:

An engineer? And then Glen Black and I've got a note here that he may be in a nursing home, may not be able to be interviewed.

JA:

Yeah, I don't know about Glen. He's not in good shape, I haven't seen him lately.

AW:

What about Robert Brown? I don't have a phone number for Robert Brown.

JA:

Bob Brown?

AW:

Bob Brown?

JA:

He is close to death. I don't think you could see him. [door closes] He may be in worse shape than Glen.

AW:

What about John Burt who was a—B-u-r-t.

JA:

Yeah, you could see John. I see him pretty regular. He goes to Methodist men in the same church as we do and he was state conservationist, but he's not an old timer in Texas. He's from Mississippi, and he became state conservationist after I'd left, after I'd retired.

AW:

Okay, so he came after. Alright.

JA:

And he's not in just real good health either.

AW:

What about Joe Camp?

JA:

Yeah. Joe is the same age I am, but he hasn't made any—he's a North member of the National Association of Retired Federal Employees. We usually go to that thing all the time and he hasn't made the last meeting or two. I don't know.

AW:

I'm scheduled to see Jack Elrod tomorrow.

JA:

He's a good one to talk too, but they're all a whole lot younger.

AW:

I have a note here that the trainee program would be of interest to talk to him.

JA:

Yeah, he was in administrative section here in the state office, and I don't really know all that much about his background. I see him all the time, but he and his wife, Charlotte, are real nice people and so he could tell you more about administration, maybe that kind of stuff, than I can.



AW:

Joe Pat Henson?

JA:

He would be a—he farms up here east of Troy.

AW:

Yeah, I have him at an address in Troy. I understand that Vernon Hicks is probably not able to do an interview and Harlan Johnson, the same. I've heard that they're both—

JA:

Yeah, of course, Harlan, he lives up the street here.

AW:

Oh, does he?

JA:

Um-hm. I believe on the next street over and up the block. I really haven't heard exactly how he's getting along. He hasn't been to our—we meet every first Monday. [Laughter] that's retired. We meet out there at that hotel. Well, I say it's a hotel, at that Weston Inn which is on 37<sup>th</sup> Street just back a hotel. We meet Monday, but Dale and I and Dale Allen and Lynn Black.

AW:

Well I talked to his wife last week and she said he was not doing well, and so I told her I'd call back next time I was down here to see if he was doing better. When you meet that time, if you think about it, you might ask if anybody else would be good. It'll be probably a couple months before I get back down again, but I'd like to. Charles Melton? I've got him on the list. Dale Mingers? And also I've got Allen Newman. I tried to call him earlier today, but didn't get any answer.

JA:

Yeah, he lives right up here.

AW:

It was right around noon so he may have been gone. Ricardo Rodriguez?

JA:

That doesn't ring a bell.

AW:

Okay. Steve Usselton?

JA:

Usselton. Most of those guys are nearly after my time.

AW:

Okay. Gary Valentine, would he be the same?

JA:

Well, he was working in the state office there. He is a biologist, but Gary could, from a biology standpoint, he could be a good one to talk to, but I haven't seen him in a long time. He doesn't attend any of these retire deals.

AW:

I didn't get to contact him. He didn't have a phone number so I'll have to send him a letter to the address that I have. The only other one I have on the list is Frankie Wheeler.

JA:

Is he here?

AW:

It says he's on Bottom Avenue and Temple, but Bailey said some of these addresses may not be all that right. [Laughter]

JA:

Bailey may have addresses that were given for the annual meeting you have down in New Braunfels, Schlitterbahn. I haven't made them in the last three years, I guess.

AW:

Yeah, we've only been the last two years.

JA:

My wife—this cotton white killed her, on the twelfth of April of '12, and he brought her back to life right after having heart surgery to replace a minor valve. It was due absolutely to neglect. They didn't keep the mucus sucked out of her throat. I try everything to forget and forgive some of those people. On the day that she had the so-called episode, I get out there in the morning and they walk her down the hall and back, doing real good. I sat there and visited with her and they bring her in lunch and she ate about half of it, doing real good. Linda was here. She was there with us. So Linda and I went down to the cafeteria at one o'clock to get a bowl of soup. We were

gone about thirty minutes. Una was on the fourth floor. We get back to elevator, and had some chore I needed to do so I said, "You go on up there and I'll be back in a little bit." I forget what it was I was going to do. I didn't get to my car. My cellphone was ringing and she was telling me, you better get back up here, something has happened. I turn right around and go back up there and she was laying on a gurney, totally out of it. The only person I knew there was Dr. Knight. He's the guy that did the surgery. I asked him, I said, "What in the hell is going on here? Just less than an hour ago, she was doing fine." He said, "Well she coughed up that mucus in her throat, and it blocked her breathing wind passage and she died and we had to bring her back to life." To back up just a little, she had fussed at them so damn much, and they hadn't done anything about it, and then Dr. Smith, her regular heart doctor, had given her medication that would help her get that stuff out of her throat. She sent me to the house to get, and I'd come to the house to get stuff and went back out there, and the damn nurse must have heard us talking or telling me to go get it and she came and told me, "You get that stuff out of here. They haven't prescribed that here and if you don't, I'll have to get your security up here to remove it." So I took it back and put it in the damn car. Stupid me. I should not have ever done that. But she gets down into the—back into the damn ICU, and she stays there and they immediately start wanting me to take her out to rehab. I said, "You're telling me that, that place out there on that craggy [?] [02:21:35] road is better than this main hospital to get all these damn tubes and so forth out of her?" They'd had a trach on her, and feeding tubes, and catheters and all this kind of crap. "Oh, I'm not telling you that at all." I said, "Well the hell with it then. I'm not taking her anywhere that's not better than this." And this—well you don't want to hear all of—

AW:

Well, I don't know. It's a—

JA:

But anyway, the son-in-law, and daughter in Georgia, and the daughter in Big Springs is an occupational therapist. She graduated from University of Texas down at Galveston. They got together and they found out that the Life Care Hospital in Fort Worth was in the top 15 percent, I believe in the United States. I took her to Fort Worth, and she stayed in there and I don't serve them much and they got her off all those trach, and feeding tubes, and all this kind of thing, her eating and so forth. Then I bring her back to Weston Rehab Center, stayed in there a while, and then in there she gets a goddamn bug that you get in those kinds of places. She had to go back to the hospital to get that. While she was in there, she gets the Shingles. They isolate her up on the eighth floor then. And then finally, I get her home and she says, "James, don't ever take me back to the damn hospital." I said, "Okay." So then in, September, I believe it was the 15<sup>th</sup> of '12, she was in real bad shape, and I asked her, I said, "are you right sure you don't want to go back to the hospital?", "No, I don't." I said, "Well okay, but if you change your mind, you let me know." I'd found out that I don't put her in the car and take her. I call 9-1-1 and have them come get her. That way they get extra, but if you take them out there in damn car –

AW:

You have to sit and wait.

JA:

Yeah, so anyway, oh, about dark that day, she says, I'm feeling so damn bad. I think you better go back out there – and she has an infection in the blood. Well, I thought when they told me that, that she had Leukemia. “You mean to tell me she's got Leukemia amongst all other things?”, “No, she doesn't have Leukemia. She just has an infection in the blood. Whenever you have a small membrane around your lungs and your heart, and whenever you got to cutting and messing in those things, they have a tendency to get infected and that causes an infection in the blood and it's not Leukemia. We can take care of that with antibiotics.” So then, they started giving her antibiotics intravenously, takes eighteen days to give it. Well she started feeling better after a week and started fussing about, “I want to go home.” [Laughter] One of the doctors—they had three doctors that worked together, they said, “Well she's wanting to go home so bad. I'll give you pills. You can give her the last nine days of these pills.” I brought her home, and she took the pills and she says, “Don't take me back out there anymore.” Well, whenever they dismissed her at that time, they put her on hospice. So I had Gentiva. The nurses help people that come all the damn time to help with her, and she lived until the fifteenth—or twenty-first of November.

AW:

Of '12?

JA:

No, of '15.

AW:

Oh, '15?

JA:

Yeah. The episode happened on the twelfth on – yeah the twelfth of '12. April 12<sup>th</sup>, '12.

AW:

That's a long stretch to have to go through all that.

JA:

But see she'd been in ICU for about a month after the episode, and then took her to Fort Worth and she was there for almost four, five, six months, and then I brought her back to Weston. She was there for several months. She had to go back to the hospital again and then took her out of there, and then we went to the Weston Inn, which is owned by the same one as that other one. And she stayed there for all that period of time. But that took about three years.

AW:

No wonder she didn't want to go back.

JA:

Four years. She was down four years. From April 12<sup>th</sup> of '12, to November the 21<sup>st</sup> of '15. That's three years. Over three. Three and a half years. Poor thing. [pause] If she'd have lived another thirty days, we would've been married seventy years.

AW:

Wow. When did you get married?

JA:

Married twenty-third of December of '45, and she graduated from Tech on the January of '46, a month after we got married she graduated.

AW:

Wow. That makes me feel like a pup. We've got our anniversary coming up next month, but it's only forty-eight years. [Laughter] Seventy, that's quite a record.

JA:

She was a whiz. [pause] You never know that you're never grateful enough until it's too late. I depended on her help a lot.

AW:

It's easy not to realize how much we depend on until we can't.

JA:

Right. [pause] I tried to hire people to help her, and she wouldn't have anything to do with it. She'd tell them, "James do everything I want done," so I did. I did everything that needed to be done. [pause]

AW:

You brought some extra photographs there.

JA:

Yeah. [pause] I want to save that as well. This is H.M. Smith there. [papers rustling] A lot of people didn't like him, but I'll tell you, he was the easiest man I ever worked for.

AW:

Really? Because you're right. I've had a few people say he was pretty prickly. [Laughter]



JA:

I guarantee you, he let you do your job. He didn't interfere with you doing your job.

AW:

Where is this? I'm having trouble placing it.

JA:

I'm trying to think. I think that is out at the Plant Material Center at Knox City. Here's a picture of a Great Plains Conservation Program Committee meeting.

AW:

Wow, that's a great committee meeting because you're out there in the grass.

JA:

I don't know if you want to look at these.

AW:

Sure, I do. Some of them have some—

JA:

I'm trying to think.

AW:

This one's got names on the back.

JA:

I'm trying to think. I never thought about pictures before you come.

AW:

These are nice photographs, the ones that are SCS official ones. They have everybody's name on the back of them. That's really good. This is a scrapbook that you—

JA:

Yeah, this is. The old Bob Keith, you didn't have him on there, but he's out in Michigan now. He did a little up here, but they moved Michigan. Their daughter—let's see—that's old Vernon Hicks right there. He's got a walking stick and so forth.

AW:

I might recall, I think we've done an interview with her at New Braunfels.

JA:

Let's see who else. Now, there's—that might have been Schuster right there.

AW:

The son? Yeah.

JA:

This was the technician when I was at WC over there at Littlefield. John D. "Treetop" Harmon.

AW:

Treetop. [Laughter]

JA:

That old boy there is dead too. There it is, "site of first Great Plains Conservation Program contract in Texas, H.E. and Jack Schuster." December the 20<sup>th</sup>, 1957. There's pictures of Dale and Bobby. That's my younger brother and his wife. Una's dead there. That's Una's brother there and he's on his death bed. There's a bunch of crap. My wife, she was a flower person. She put flowers everywhere.

AW:

Looked like she was good at it too.

JA:

That's six of us there. This is Everett down here. He's the oldest. He's not up there in that picture. Yeah, there's Platford [?] [02:37:44] Bradshaw. That's in front of the—

AW:

Oh, yeah.

JA:

We've got a picture of the only person, Red Wayne Fisher, was the only one in Bradshaw killed in – he was killed on Okinawa in World War II and so we put his picture in there so you can go by there and look at that. That's right there in the middle of Bradshaw. You turn off Highway 83 going to 10-86, it's about two blocks up there to the south side. Two of my brothers and I went out there and played in mud at dad's house out there on our old farm. These are old pictures. This is my step-grandson. He's at A&M. He spent two tours, and he's going to Marine Corps. He spent two tours in Iraq. He was going to spend a career in the marines. Boy, after two tours in Iraq, he said, to hell with that, now I see. [Laughter] He'd had enough of it.

AW:

I can imagine.

JA:

You don't think it snows in Temple, but it snows. There's an old boy that would have been good to interview, but he's dead too. That old Joe Narsh, he was my range conservationist when I was A.C. there in Lubbock.

AW:

That looks like he was at the reunion, though.

JA:

No.

AW:

That's not Schlitterbahn?

JA:

I don't think so. That was taken on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of '07. It could be. [Cough] Right month.

AW:

That place looked familiar from the last time I was there.

JA:

You know, I tell you this about Wayne Chapman. Me and Wayne had finalized the operating procedures for the land treatment on watersheds. That's Wayne Chapman right there. He's the one that did that. That's W.T. Booger Moon. He's dead. He was ninety-seven or eight when he died.

AW:

You know, another thing that I've observed is that you folks in the SCS, have a lot of longevity. I don't know what it is about getting out and riding around those un-air conditioned pickups that may have done it. [Laughter]

JA:

We didn't have air conditioning.

AW:

That's what I mean.

JA:

That's a classmate of mine. He's dead. She's dead. She's dead. I don't know who that is.

AW:

This is here in your house, isn't it?

JA:

That was down at Bradshaw at Old Methodist Church. That's my son-in-law, Rick, and that's my youngest daughter. That's Linda, of course. I believe that's all I've got. I probably got others, I've got a lot of photos somewhere.

AW:

We are always—we're especially interested in ones that have names attached to them, because that's useful for people later on and your daughter, Linda, understands that if she does genealogy.

JA:

[Laughter] Yeah, she's gotten all of the \_\_\_\_\_ [02:42:49] people taken care of. Let me see one other thing that might be —

AW:

Oh, gosh. You've got a lot of photos there.

JA:

That's me and old Guy Nut. Guy's dead now. He wound up as state conservationist of Utah. I can't remember whether he was a Tech graduate or not. You wouldn't believe it, but I was an all-American softball player in '52, and '54.

AW:

Oh, really?

JA:

They used to come and get me and fly me. Pick me up and fly—

AW:

Lubbock Bluebonnet Sun Beamer Team. I've got to make a note. I have never heard of it. I have got to make a note about that.

JA:

The Bluebonnet—

AW:

Cleaners?

JA:

Cleaners, yeah. Ralph and T.R. Bumpass. Here's a whole bunch of them that was before me. That's Logan Cruise. He was a watershed man. This is Jim Cougar. He was a state soil scientist. This is Red Morris. He was a state resource conservationist. There's Paul Washer. He was the first state conservationist that I was telling you that worked with V.C. Marshall. He's the one that did that. That's Ray H.N. Red Smith. He died in '69. Damn, I was up in Amarillo whenever. That's Rick Antine [?][02:46:33] C.A. Rick Antine. He was the most knowledgeable, vegetative man in West Texas that I ever knew. I used to travel with him a whole lot out west. We'd drive into a place like Pampa, for instance, we get there, ate there, check in the motel or hotel, and he'd go to the library, and he'd research stuff. Next morning, he'd tell me where they were wrong [laughter] in their history. That's Clyde Brown. He and I used to hunt. We'd go up into west Amarillo up there around Vega and so forth on the Canadian river. We'd hunt deer and so forth up there. I've got pictures somewhere showing us skinning deer. But old Clyde, Clyde was an engineer, he was a watershed engineer, but he wound up as state conservationist here. I wouldn't put him in the top two or three in the state conservationist, even though he was one of the closest friends I ever had. That guy, he's old Field Criss. He was a state conservation engineer when I got here. Most of these guys graduated from college in the twenties. That's old John Kincaid. He was an old bachelor, never got married, but he was assistant state conservationist here, and mostly for South Texas. They used to be -- well, he and Cruise and I, we were -- I had West Texas, he had South Texas, and Logan had East Texas. We had the operations for those particular parts of the state. Hell, old Logan, he just died two years ago. He was ninety-six when he died. I don't know how old John was when he died, but he was an old bachelor. Every one of these guys are dead. How come we have two pictures in here. Anyway, that's H.N. Smith and Barry Marshall. Barry Marshall was one of the originals here. I thought I had--well, I guess I don't. I probably have others around here somewhere.

AW:

Well, if you get around to it and there's some point at which you want to turn loose some of those, again, especially the ones that have names and identification on them, we would put them in the archive along with everything else.

JA:

You want one that's something like that?

AW:

You bet.



JA:

You can have that. I've got—

AW:

You have an extra one, didn't you?

JA:

An extra one in here just like it. I don't know, but I might—I probably have duplicates of a lot of this.

AW:

Well, you don't have to think about it today, but if you do think about it and you have some duplicates that we could put into the collection, it's always nice to have.

JA:

Let's see what we got here. I can't even remember what that was. I might have either took a picture, and haven't had a place. I don't know whether you want that or not, but I know I've got a duplicate of that somewhere.

AW:

Oh, yeah. We'd love to have it. Well and this photograph was taken by Dale Allen, whom I'm going to talk to tomorrow.

JA:

Old Dale probably took a hell of a lot of these. That's old Bob Price there. A majority of those are dead. I don't know. Anything else I can tell you?

AW:

Well, I'm sure there will be, but I know how to get ahold of you. I did bring – we ask you to sign a release form saying people can listen to the interview for scholarly purposes, so I made two copies of it. I just want one of them back, but I wanted you to be able to keep one. And I'm going to end the recording right now. Speaking of recordings by saying, thank you again. This has been a great, great interview. James, I really appreciate it.

***[End of Recording]***