

**Oral History Interview of  
Dennis Glass**

**Interviewed by: Daniel Sanchez  
September 7, 2018  
Amarillo, Texas**

**Part of the:  
*Sports Interviews***

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## Interview Series Background:

The Sports History interviews encompass interviews conducted by members of the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library staff. They hope to document the evolution of sports and the role of sports in the social fabric of this region.

## Transcript Overview:

This interview features Dennis Glass as he discusses his past in drag racing and working with cars. In this interview, Glass describes his start to drag racing, starting his own business, and being a board member of the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

**Length of Interview:** 01:07:40

Subject	Transcript Page	Time Stamp
Introduction, family history; drag racing	05	00:00:00
Racing while working at Sid Stout Ford	08	00:11:46
Running his own body shop business; the hall of fame	12	00:25:45
Wives of drag racers; working with Make-A-Wish Foundation	14	00:32:44
Being on the board for the Make-A-Wish Foundation	16	00:39:05
Playing football; experiencing the implementation of integration	19	00:51:39
How much Amarillo has changed	21	00:57:55

### Keywords

Sports, Drag racing, Automobiles

**Daniel Sanchez (DS):**

My name is Daniel Urbina Sanchez. Today's date is September the 7, 2018, and I'm in the home of Dennis Glass in Amarillo, Texas. Dennis, could you please start by stating your legal name?

**Dennis Glass (DG):**

It's Dennis Melvin.

DS:

Where were you born?

DG:

In Post, Texas.

DS:

Post, Texas?

DG:

Yes, sir.

DS:

What date?

DG:

March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1940.

DS:

Nineteen-forty. Could you start off with a little bit of your family history? Tell us about your parents and grandparents. Any admission you might have on that?

DG:

Yeah, my granddad and his wife moved his family from eastern Tennessee to Lockney, Texas, back in 1900. And then they moved over in Leonard and my dad grew up over there in Leonard, and he moved, back around Lockney, and he met my mother, they married in '38, and eventually moved to Amarillo. I was born in Post, but started school here in 1946 in Amarillo. Dad worked for Hull-Dobbs Flight Kitchens. They moved him around a little bit, he was—back in the days when they served you a meal if you got on the plane instead of peanuts. We moved to Mississippi for a while, we moved back over here in time for me to start school. And dad was in restaurant business for himself some after the Hull-Dobbs years. And dad was kind of a car guy. He liked the cars and he got me interested in cars at a young age, and that's kind of how I got to where I wound up in the body shop business. Dad had an old '49 Buick and every weekend,

we'd go out there and pull the plugs out of it and file the points and run a little water through the carburetor and get her all spiffed up and ready to go. And I learned to drive in that old car. And I actually owned the car a year before I was old enough to drive, and I started driving at fifteen with a hardship lessons. It really wasn't all that much of a hardship, but I wanted to drive. Dad was a wholesale meat salesman at that time, and he would get up at 4:30 in the morning and make his rounds to get some orders for the butchers that'd come in at six o'clock. So as a kid, I'd get up at 4:30 just to go and drive the car. And then he'd come back in after six, six-thirty, then I'd get out, get ready, go to school. So I was always into the cars, I was president of the auto mechanics class in high school, and all my aunts and a lot of other people said, "You don't want to—find you a good career, you don't want to be a fool with those old cars." But I did, so I wound up—I went to work at Plains Chevrolet delivering people back, shuffling cars, sweeping the floor, and they let me move back to the front end department, and learn the front end business from a man named Shorty Bryant. And I went from there to being the head front end man down at the Sid Stout Ford at the age of—I was twenty when I got that job down there, and I worked for Sid for fourteen years, and we kind of got into the racing part of it down there because that's where the—some of the guys that I worked with down there were into racing. I actually started out in drag racing first, and I had a little B modified roaster, and later a D-gas pickup, and I did that for two or three years, and I had twenty year so, class wins in the drag racing part of it. And kind of—you know, met James Gibson a long time ago out there. In the late sixties, we all decided we needed to go motorcycle racing, so we got dirt bikes and run down at river and ran some motocross races and stuff. In '69, I tore a knee up down there in a race. So I had three motorcycles at that time so I decided I'd want new ones. The change pretty regular, got a little better every year. So I sold all that stuff, and before my leg healed up enough why, Kenny Stead and Lyndon Moss had convinced me that roundy-round racing might be more fun, so they have me build a stock car that I ran for half a season and got over into the simple modifies. And I raced the supers for eleven—ten and a half years after that. Made a lot of friends, and had a lot of fun, a lot of those guys are gone now and I miss them.

DS:

We have a lot to cover then.

DG:

Yeah.

DS:

Let's start with your drag racing. What was your first entry to the drag race?

DG:

You know my very first one was a—daddy had a '53 Chevrolet six cylinder and little old Belair and he'd let me take it out, helped me when we went out to the drag races, and we ran that thing



a time or two. When I was a junior in high school, one of the soldier boys, when the air base was out here, had a '32 Ford Roadster with a hopped up flat head, you know, it had a Lin—I mean, a mercury crank in it, and a set of heads, and two twos, and different ignition. Fenderless Roadster. And he had it worked on out at the Ford Truck center out on Amarillo boulevard north east of 8<sup>th</sup> then. And he couldn't pay for it. So they had a sheriff's leaning against it and they had a sheriff's auction that was single bids, you just—I bid \$187.52 cents and I was the high bid and got the car and somebody asked me, "Why the fifty-two cents?" I said, "That's all the money I had in the world at the time." I just bid it all and I got that roadster. It was snowing the day, they had it like I said open top, no top, and kind of the competition inside you know it had to jump seats out of an airplane, metal seats out of an airplane. Well I couldn't stand that I had to drive it up and go around high school they day I picked it up but that I got to drag racing that roadster and we just—daddy helped me and we made it a toe-bar kind of vehicle and quit driving on streets. And had an open exhaust and they did a little—change the gears and put some Lincoln-Zephered gears in the transmission. And I would drag race that for a while, then a guy come along that really offered me more money than I thought it was worth it at the time. Not near what it'd be worth today, we've all got a story about what we should have done [laughter] because it was an original '32 steel body and they'll just bring a ton of money right now. So I sold that and I got this pickup and started messing with it and I got it to where it eventually—it was just a drag race truck too. Did that for a while you know, I enjoyed the drag racing but I got married and had a family, and you know, you got to get your priorities. So, I got out of the racing business for a while and didn't do that up until the motorcycle—I had some street bikes, I'd always ridden motorcycles since early sixties. Then when Yamaha DT1's come out, there were an economical bike but they were—they'd hold there own down there on riverbeds and on the motocross tracks and stuff. We all started spending our weekends down at river and I say all, I mean Kenny and Lyndon and a bunch of the guys I race with, Dale Cross, we all kind of did that down there. And then I got a Bull Taco El Bandito 360 and it would run faster than it would stop, and that's when I got hurt. You really need a compression release to help that thing stop. Takes the compression out of the engine, and I had one ordered, but I just had to race it that weekend and it just didn't have enough brakes on them and I jammed my foot in the hole and tore my ACL. And back in 1969 all they did was stick a needle in there and drain it the best they could and send you on your way. So I had no ACL in my left leg and doctor—best doc here in Amarillo told me one time I had to loosest knee he'd ever seen you can just move that left knee back and forth. But old body's are pretty Neat thing, I've learned to adjust and compensate and kind of build the muscle up in that left leg and I use to throw it out once in a while but [knocks on the table] I haven't in fifteen or twenty years. I just know—I got to get out the pickup, I can't—if I ever get weight—all my white to the inside of my left leg, then I'm in trouble. So that was what led me to sell them and get ready to buy—like I said, I didn't need three—it's hard to ride three of them at once anyhow, so I just kind of sell that stuff and get me a new one, and they had me build that first stock car, and we were all working Sid Stout Ford then. At one time there were seven of us that deal. I don't know how, we have five super modifies and two stock cars running out of there.

DS:

Who was it that was racing?

DG:

Dale—Lyndon Moss, Dale Cross, Kenny Stead, Jerry Malone, and I with the supers. And let's see Bobby Huff and I think—who was the others? I think maybe Tommy Laytham was the other stock car that was running, but they were seven of us, and two I worked in the body shop. I work in the service department along with Dale so the two of us in the service department, and Jerry Malone was used car manager upfront. Monday there was way more talking going on that I should've been work. Sid was good, he was a good sponsor, he was good for the sport, mainly because Tom McClellan who was his general manager, Tom was a big supporter of the racing, he went all the time. Tom is in the motorsports hall of fame for his contribution. And then out of that bunch, Kenny, Dale, Lyndon and I are all in the hall of fame. So it was kind of a little core group. We just kind of stayed together and raced together, and raced on Saturday night, and argue about it on Monday morning you know, it was fun time.

DS:

Yeah because that's also what the manufacturers were using as a sales point right there. The racing.

DG:

They were and Sid was also running a drag car out there, a factory thunderbolt. Jock Moss was running it, and then we had a '69 Ford Mustang that was factory race car. Jim Gray who was the lease car—lease manager up there. He was running that Mustang. So Sid, he spent a lot a money that he knew about and probably some they didn't [laughter]. But it was a fun group. We enjoyed it.

DS:

So you were all racing at the same time, were y'all learning at the same time?

DG:

You know I was a little behind the curve. Those—Kenny and Lyndon had been racing for a good while. Jeremy Long didn't race too long with us. He started about the same time I did. He—Jerry relocated, I don't know, he moved out somewhere. I started out working on pitting on Lyndon Moss's car. And I helped him with his car for a couple of three years before I decided maybe—during that time when we were riding motorcycles then. I decided that maybe I'd like—with a little encouragement from them, I said maybe I'd like to do this so. I owned my own car. I bought a car from Jim Helms and kind of rebuilt it. I owned that car for two and a half years, and then I sold it, and started driving for Jake Riggs and so I—you know, it's hard to make any money racing cars then and now but I had the opportunity to drive for him. So, I got half what



the car made and didn't have to pay any upkeep on the car and stuff. I actually made a little bit of money, certainly wasn't enough to retire on, but I made a little money during my last seven or so years that I raced. And Lyndon raced—he'd run the supers with us for a while and then he got over and he started running a late model. He started running a really nice late model class, and he went over and ran it. Dale Cross had raced earlier, and he run a Coup, a little Coup, lower class out there. Dale was working right next to me there in the service department at Sid Stout, and when I decided I wanted—the stock cars were fine. I finished third in the points as rookie in the stock cars at mid-season. But I got tired of have the fenders back out every week and doing the cosmetic part, and getting it ready to race, and I thought, Maybe I'd like to go a little faster. So I had a couple of guys that wanted to pay me what I was asking for the car. Dale Cross wanted it so bad he couldn't stand it, but he couldn't put the money together to pay me, but he said, "I'll just—I'll pay you out, I'll let you—you can charge this." He had a big charge account with snap-on. He said, "You can buy tools, whatever you want charge them to m." So I let Dale have that car, and he tells people to this day I got him back into racing, and I thought, I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing. So I let him have the car own credit and James Gipson built him a new motor to put in there. I was running a 351, 352 actually, that motor was, and he built a 390 for him. And they went on to win three or four season championships with that stock car. He had a little more motor than anybody else, to the point to where G.W. Elkins the promoter out there told Dale he was going to have to move up to supers or do something, but you can claim them. You're supposed to have claim the engines and somebody would claim that motor, and Dale would've not been pleased, because it wasn't you know it's kind of a nominal fee to claim to the motor, but nobody ever did. Dale's another one that we just didn't—

DS:

Yeah, because I think James told me that story about people claiming his motor a few times but you know he knew how to build motors, it didn't matter to him.

DG:

Yeah, see that yeah, what Dale did was kind of funny, we used to tease him all time like he thought we didn't know about it. He put a little oil reservoir under the dash and he had a little drip line on it that would go out and drip a little all along to the header, the exhaust on it. So he'd buzz around out there and he'd get lead, and then he'd flip that oiler on and he'd just be smoking around out there come back in and he'd tell everybody, "Man that old motor's just about to blow up." [Laughter] It'll run about two thirds of the race and then it just smokes and I said, "Oh Dale, quit turning your oiler on." [Laughter]

DS:

Is that a true story?

DG:

That's a true story.

DS:

Wow.

DG:

Yeah, that is a true story.

DS:

Oh that is funny. He just didn't want to mention—wanted make sure it stayed his motor, right?

DG:

Yeah, yeah he did. Nobody's—I'd venture to say nobody's ever love racing more than Dale does. He still—he loves to talk about it, he just still kind of lives it you know, I enjoyed it and I love it, but I kind of moved on. I still go to the races some, and I still watch races but it just—my daughter was twelve years old, and you know, staying out at the race track every Saturday. I mean, they came, but I thought well maybe—by then I was—let's see, I quit. That's forty years old when I quit. See, I didn't start driving until I was thirty. So I was forty-one I think when I quit racing. Kenny Stead had decided to retire that year, and Kenny and I were buds, and my wife sat with his wife up there, my ex-wife. So I thought, Well this might be a good time for me to quit too. So, that's what we did, and I just kind of didn't look back. So I didn't go out there for a couple of years, and kind of got over the notion, but I just thought maybe I need to spend a little more time with my daughter. It was every Saturday night from May to Labor Day, except for the weekend that my dad died, that's the only weekend I ever missed the racing, for eleven years. Ten years full-time, and then I run another half a year after I supposedly retired, I went back and rode with somebody else a little while. It was a fun time. I remember when I just had to have a car, got a car, got that stock car, had been running it, and I was okay with it, and I pulled back up there to go out on the race track, first race with that super, and I've never been nervous on a race car, but my own knees got to shaken, and I thought, What about—did I spend all this money to get this super and is this going to be fun? But at the end it was, I did it for another ten years.

DS:

Wow [laughs].

DG:

And then after that I wasn't—Dale, I keep talking about Dale, but he would always try to win hot laps. He'd get up there, you know—before the races we all went out and buzzed the track a little and got the feel of the track, feeling of the car, shake it down a little bit. And Dale'd always get

up there early and he wanted to go out and then we'd go, and followed him out there, and sometimes, you just kind of follow the leader a little once in a while because you don't want to get in trouble in the hot laps, you just want to feel the track, feel your car, and get rid of your butterflies if you got any. So Dale had come in and he'd say, "Well, I've got butterflies," and we'd say, "Dale we all have butterflies," until you get in the car. And he said, "Yeah, but yours' fly in formation, mine are just all over the place." So I told Kenny and Lyndon one time I said, "You know Dale always likes to win. He always says, 'I want hot laps, I want hot laps.'" I said, "Let's get right behind and tonight we'll just go buzz him and give him a hard time." So we got out there, he kind of makes an entrance on the track, you know, kind of shoots out there first, so we just—we're ready, and we went out there with him, went off in the first corner, we went just all over him out there and kind of surprised him, and we'd back in and we said, "Dale did you win hot laps" [laughter]. He's a good guy, I really liked Dale, but he was so—he was fun to harass. When he was driving Coups one time, he comes flying off the race track, they had a wreck out there, and he comes flying off there and he didn't have much of a pit crew. So we went around to—Kenny and I jumped down our—Lyndon, I think, and I jumped down off the pit grandstand went down there to see if something was wrong and get him back out on the track. He pulled up over there to concession stand in the pit so he get him a Dr Pepper [DS laughs]. Lyndon and I had three or four rows on the track. One time [phone chimes] it's mid-season, championship, where they rushed out there, we had—at mid-season, we had a high-point car, mid-season championship. So if you had the points lead going into that night you would high-point car, but if you had the most points that particular night, you were the mid-season champion. So we were running the mid-season championship and Don Birdman was leading the semi, and I was running second, and Lyndon was running third, and Lyndon was probably a little faster than I was, but he couldn't get around me. So on the next to the last lap, he spun me out in the corner and I was trying to get mine to refire because I wound up facing back down the back straight away, and I told Lyndon later, if I could get that started, I was going to meet him back down that back straight away, and he said, "Yeah well, I was thinking I hope that thing won't start because I know what he's going to do." Well, it went on around, and I finally got it going to run about fourth or fifth picked up a few points there. Then my dad was alive then, and he'd come down to the fence, "Dennis," and I said, "What?" And I was trying to get my car fixed, it did bent the nerf bar and stuff a little bit. "What did you say to Lyndon?" And I said, "I hadn't said anything to Lyndon yet, I'm trying to get my car ready to go race in the feature." And so daddy was mad because I wasn't mad, and I said "I don't have time to be mad," so daddy was mad at me. So we got the car fixed, we went back out there, and I ran second in the feature, and picked up enough points that I was third in the mid-season championship, which was a good night for me I thought. So then, you know, all the wounds have healed, and I'd done well, and I'd outpointed Lyndon for the night and stuff. We'd always, Kenny, Lyndon and I sit always sat around and talk after the races anyhow. Daddy stayed mad at me for about two days because I wasn't mad at Lyndon. And Kenny and I were—Kenny won the season championship one year, and I was runner up to him, that was a good night for us. It was just a little more fun to outrun

your friend, your close friends. We were all friends out there, but you know, there's always some guys that are underfunded and sacrificed some more to be there than you are, and maybe not quite as competitive, but three or four of us were really competitive among each other. We had a standing bet for who had the quick time when you timed in. When I first started racing, we always timed in at the first of the year, and then we timed in at mid-season. That meant everybody went out one at a time and made a timed lap, and you were lined up according to your times. We always bet a dollar and most of the time Kenny or Lyndon would win that dollar but we had sixty-four cars out there one night in a Labor Day race, and I had quick time, and Lyndon owed me a dollar. Kenny gave me a dollar. Lyndon tore a dollar in two and gave it to me, and I've still got it in scrapbook in here, I've got—I told people Kenny gave my dollar and Lyndon gave me two paper fifty cent pieces [DS laughs]. So it's a—like I'd say it's a lot of fun memories but you know, we kind of—I got involved with doing some other things, I went in business myself for one, and that was some other reason I had to put a little more of focus on other parts of my life.

DS:

What was your business?

DG:

I was in the paint and body—auto body. I owned—I went in partners with Ken Henson, I bought him out in a couple of years and eventually changed it to Dennis Glass Auto body, but I was in the body shop business for seven—for myself for seventeen years.

DS:

Wow.

DG:

I was service manager for a while at Tom McClellan Ford who put in the Ford dealership out on I-40. Before I went in to the—so I've always had a car background, I've always worked in the car industry someday or other but seventeen years for myself. And then when I sold out I just did a little hobby shop and got a little small place of my own, and I mean, rented a place, and just did my own stuff. I had a couple of street rods, and motorcycles, I had two motorcycles, and I was doing custom car work and motorcycles, painting on motorcycles and stuff. Did that for several years. I finally got to where the painting just bothered me a little too much, and having a little trouble breathing one time so I just decided maybe I could find another things. So I've gone back to doing woodwork. I really enjoy doing the woodwork. I built that entertainment center right there, and I've built several other piece of furniture. My youngest granddaughter just started to Texas Tech this year—oh not my young—my oldest granddaughter, sorry, and I built her a complete bedroom suite. She wanted a bed and a dresser, and a night stand, and the desk, and a



stand up mirror, and a mirror that looked like a window, it's got six panels in it. So I did all—she wanted to leave all of her stuff here and didn't want to take any of her bedroom stuff from Amarillo. So I really enjoyed doing that kind of stuff. It fills the gap and gives me something to do, and keeps me challenged a little bit.

DS:

Well, you know, another aspect of that racing was, when you came back into it and y'all started the Amarillo hall of fame and all that. How did that—how did your involved in that come about and when?

DG:

Well, four years ago, James and two or three of them have gotten together and wanted to try to do something to preserve the history, and they started a group which was called Amarillo Motorsports hall of fame. They've since changed that to Amarillo Area Motorsport Hall of Fame, because we've got some people from Lubbock in. There's a—if my memory serves me there's a motorcycle rider from Lubbock going in this year and some drag racers from other than Amarillo. So we wanted to show that was more than just Amarillo, so they had a little name change. I was not involved in that part of it until after—I was part of it 2017 class and after that, they asked me if I would be interested in trying to help them because a lot of the people are young. A lot of these members in this Amarillo Area Motorsports Hall of Fame are considerably younger, James is the oldest guy there, but they—I guess you'd say I'm a historian for them because I can remember some of those facts, and I've got some scrapbooks in there from some of the other facts, and I have kind of a cross-section of—I'm not just focused on one—I mean, the dirt track's my number one deal, but I really enjoy drag racing. I still watch drag racing and motorcycles, I still own a motorcycle, and so, I became part of the—I started helping with the Hall of Fame last year. So about the time you first met with us was about the time they'd asked me to come be part of that group. So I actually wasn't—and I'm still not. They'd already done the bylaws for last year, but they want me to be a voting member next year. I told them, "I'm satisfied with just coming to the meetings and offering input when asked, and I don't feel like I need to vote." There's—I have never witnessed any close votes so I don't know what and when their voting.

DS:

[Laughter] you're not going to be the tie breaker, right?

DG:

I don't think I'll be the tie breaker, but they're working hard. It's a good court group, we're getting some community support, you know, they just—we had the Elkins Memorial race out there the twenty-seventh I believe of July. And they just Pokey the Clown passed a bucket around out there, and we got about five hundred and fifty dollars donated just to start the Hall of



Fame museum. We got the property out there at race track donated to us, we've got the well—Doug and Ian and we're working on putting some funding together, now to start the structure of the building, and it'll be designed to where it can be added on to as need be.

DS:

So you can build it in phases.

DG:

So, I think it's neat that it really is a motorsports you know, and more than just one aspect of racing. Plus, you know, it's just kind of a community deal. Lyndon used to keep track of the guys that we would race with and how many of them we've lost and the last count I had, we were over seventy drivers, owners and pit crew chiefs, pit guy, race track owners, promoters, and stuff kind of out of that era that we come from. There's no many of us left that raced in the seventies unfortunately. So it's a good deal, and it's kind of slow starting, but they're beginning to accumulate a little bank account. They'll get it done one of these days.

DS:

And it's amazing, last year when I—somebody called me that was working on a vintage car and that's kind of what peaked my interest, and made me say, "You know what? Let's look into this." And I had a student of mine look it up, and we had a total of five interviews that have been done in '59 of motorsports, and that was it.

DG:

Fifty-nine. Really?

DS:

So I was going—well you know, there's more to be done then [laughter].

DG:

Yeah, yeah. You know, we—there's—they're just a core group of community support for the racers out there. You know, we had—they had a group called Fifth Wheels, which was mostly ladies from the—wife's of the racers, but they worked—raised some money, had a few fundraisers and stuff, and if anybody got hurt, why they would help them out if need be and stuff. And I didn't—fortunately I didn't need any help, but I broke a knee down in Wichita falls racing a car, and their track insurance paid me. I was off work for about three weeks but they paid me for that down there. It's a—and you see it out at this track out here now, they just, they've got these ladies that work just about as hard behind the scenes, trying to see that the right thing gets done as the guys do. Guys take all the credit, they let the girl do the work. And we mentioned a good part of what I did after I left the racing part, was the Make-A-Wish.

DS:

Yeah I was about ready to ask about that

DG:

We'll talk about that. It was kind of another group of optimist guys. The racers weren't involved in it like the \_\_\_\_ [00:34:56] but we heard about Make-A-Wish Foundation and was trying to get started out in Phoenix, one of our members in the optimist club had transferred. He was head of the southwest Airlines and then Audi [00:35:12] had transferred to—they were going to transfer him too Phoenix, and he went out there and looked for home, and he heard about that deal, and then he'd come back and tell us about it. So the optimists thought that kind of fit with our friend of youth motto, and we got started trying to do that. And I just—I became so involved in that, I spent a lot of time—I traveled—one year I traveled a lot trying to get chapters set up around the country. I think I was gone fifty-three days one year as we were opening new chapters around the country and you know, two or three days at a time, I'd be gone and became part of the national board and was president of the local board the second year we had Make-A-Wish in Amarillo. We granted our first wish here with—a lady'd heard about us and gave us a hundred dollars and we opened a bank account and they charged us eight dollars for checks and we had ninety-two dollars and we granted a wish for a little girl to go to California [phone rings]. Sorry. Go to California and go to Disney World, and we didn't know for sure how we were going to make that happen, but Vince Reed one of the local business men stepped up and gave us some plane tickets and we talked to Disney and they comped some tickets, and all of a sudden, we kind of put that thing together with no money. Local chapter grew from there, national has grown from there. They've kind of gone backwards from number of chapters back in my day. When I was traveling so much, we were trying to get as many chapters around as we could, and now they're thinking it's more efficient if they kind of condense some chapters. Like for instance, we had one in Odessa, one in Lubbock, one in Amarillo, one in Dallas, one in Houston, and they've kind of got all of those, kind of under the umbrella of Dallas. So we've got a few less chapters than we did before, but we've still got the same coverage and still doing the same work. So it was a fun thing, and like I'd mentioned, that's how my current wife—we've been married twenty-five years, but that's how we met, was through her son having leukemia and we just—you kind of get wrapped up in doing that. I probably even let my business—I probably even neglected my business a little bit during some of that time, but it's just kind of something that you don't want trying to loose of you know? So many of those kids that had a health problem seemed like a disproportionate number of their families had financial problems, maybe through the child's health problems or what I don't know. And then we had some families that could afford to do anything that we could do for them, and they'd said, "My child doesn't really need a wish," and I'd say, "You know sometimes it helps just for the child to know that somebody outside of the family helps about them." So we had some families that changed their thinking and would let us go ahead and do a wish though they could have paid for it. You know it's just a

great organization. There's lots of good charities out there and I just happen to think that's one of them.

DS:

Yeah, when you told me that as well. That's an important thing to put down. So what was it like being on the board for that organization?

DG:

You know, we were a pretty close group here locally because we knew each other through the Optimist Club. I think that that probably gave us a leg up as far as kind of on the same—anybody have any egos or any personal agendas so we just had come together as optimist members to work with the youth. So that just kind of carried over in there, now Charlie Patton, a good friend of mine, still talk to and he's in Dallas now, Fort Worth actually. There was a time or two we'd just—we'd take different sides of something but—and we could kind of get heated with each other, but when the meeting was over, it was done, and we were slapping each other on the back and going about. So we had no trouble at all locally. Over the years, the board evolved into different people from different walks of life coming together and they didn't have any common bond like we did, they didn't know each other before. Truthfully I think it suffered a little bit, they would have fundraisers and some of the board members didn't show up and we never experienced that in our time, but the cause outweighed all that and it has survived, and it's done well so. That was great for this group, on the national board, there were twenty-five of us on the board, and we were from all over the United States, and we served a three-year term, so I was elected twice, served six years in there, and I made a lot of good friends, but I kind of witnessed the same thing going on there. We were all had a reason for wanting to be part of the deal for—on a personal level, from witnessing the kids, or being with a group that supported the youth organizations or whatever, or having a sick child. Several of the national board members had a sick child. Well over the years, I guess the national progression of stuff is the national board became less about grassroots or members and more about what somebody could bring to the table financially. So we replaced, guys like myself, with people with initials behind their name, which was good for the deal. I'm not saying that was a wrong move, I'm saying it was just different, it changed it. So, they went from more of a hands-on working board, people, I mean, I promise you there's nobody on the national board now that takes fifty-three days out of the year to be away from their family to go do anything, but I couldn't bring a five million dollar fundraiser to the table either. So it's probably the way it ought to go because we got to have the money. We can't operate without the funds. We didn't disagree a whole lot, we had a couple of instances. Early on somebody said, "I can get—gummy bears has contacted us, and they'll make a--" whatever it was donation to Make-A-Wish for every—this was on the national board, for every package they sell, they'll give—Make-A-Wish, whatever it was, a nickel, a dime, or 5 percent. I don't remember the amount. The amount wasn't a problem, the problem was some board members thought gummy bears just wasn't the right image for Make-A-Wish. That that

mom'd be standing in line and the kid would want gummy bears, so somebody asked, "Would you feel better about it if it was a fancy chocolate or something? They said, "Well you know, just candy." That's not—so, a couple of years rolled around and Godiva Chocolates said, "We will do a fundraiser for Make-A-Wish and guarantee—" what it was, a hundred thousand dollars or something, to use Make-A-Wish name without an advertising deal. Boy, yeah, everybody was just all over that. Well, another one of the ladies, beside myself, there were two or three other board member on there that had been in the first session you know, so they brought that up, and they said, that was, "I guess that's progress because we've gone from gummy bears to Godiva chocolate [laughter]. Pretty sure it's still candy.

DS:

Yeah. For some people is all about image, right?

DG:

Yeah. And I stayed in contact. I still got a good friend down in North Carolina, and just lost one up in Seattle, a friend of mine. I made some longtime friends through the national deal. Texas had kind of a different image—it's kind of interesting to see what people from New Jersey that haven't been around Texans think about Texas—you know, when we first went up there, we were—there was all—we were all you know tall with starched jeans and boots and stuff on and--they thought that Texans all rode horses and carried guns, I said, "Well some of them carry guns but don't too many of us ride horses anymore." [laughter] And then I got some good friends with—I mean I got some little Yankee Jewish friends, old Danny Laborman, I'm friend with two-three. I'm on Facebook, I still got a little link to the past. It's fun to have. This weekend we've got our class reunion coming up, and I've kind of shared that thing for the last forty years or so, and that's a week from tomorrow. And I got a core group of those guys that I started to the first grade with, that up to about two years ago, we played golf together once a week, and ate lunch on Thursdays. Now, we've just about quit playing golf but we still get together for lunch and eat, and you know, when you think about it, I've graduated from high school sixty years ago, known for seventy-two years, and are still friends with them, even though it's kind of fun.

DS:

Yeah, it is.

DG:

Yeah, some guys I've first grade pictures. We're all standing up there ready for school [laughter]. Back in my days, first grade was the first day of school.

DS:

Yeah.



DG:

Now they've gone about two years finally get to the first grade.

DS:

Exactly, yeah. At the time they're three and a half-four, and they're already thinking about it.

DS:

Yeah, they go to church K, kindergarten, then they go to pre-K, and then they go to K, and then yeah. Things have changed. We had six classes, they have about nine classes now. I say, "They spend all their time changing classes."

DS:

Well, you know, we've talked about your—a little bit about you raising your business and Make-A-Wish. Is there any other aspect of your life that we need to cover today?

DG:

You know, I just think, you know, I've been lucky. I'm fortunate to be where I am. I'm fortunate that I—I think I'm reasonably healthy. My mother died at sixty and daddy died at sixty-nine, and I'm seventy-eight, and I think I'm still doing pretty good so, you know I just think that life gets are a little more important to you, family gets a little more important, I get to see my grandkids. I've got—I got two kids in Tech now, oldest grandson is working on his masters down there, and my granddaughter is starting, I've got a senior at Randall and a freshman down there at Randall high. I get to spend a lot of time with them. I've got—still got a Harley sitting out there, I can get out and if everything's just perfect, get out and ride a little still. I've got a forty model Ford with kind of a little street rod, you know it's stock looking on the outside, but it's got a new motor and transmission, rear end, and air conditioning, that kind of stuff, so it's pleasant to drive. I don't get it out as much as I should, but I've still got it. It's just kind of a tie to my past and my feeling for cars, my care for cars—their generation—cars are just kind of to get you from point A to point B, but we still got a few kids that like the Camaros and the Mustangs and stuff, but by and large, when I was young and in high school, a car—boy if you had a car you was just getting around on that fair, and I worked, and I had a car. I played football till I got hurt, and track and stuff but I always wanted to make sure I had a vehicle, so I worked enough to have a car. So when I look back, I've grown up in the fifties. The time it was, the—everyone was in a good mood, everybody's glad that war was over, everybody's glad as they were getting GI loans and getting houses, and you didn't have to lock your car, you didn't have to lock your house, and there wasn't anybody breaking into school, some shooting people. It was just a fun time to grow up and I just feel fortunate, and you know, you just like to think that—I would just like to think that when I'm gone, somebody might have a fond memory or two of me. That's one reason I like to do all this woodworking stuff. I give all that stuff away, but I just think, "well I might pull the old drawer out one day and remember poppy, with a date on the back of that drawer back there.



And you know, I don't expect to be immortalized when I die but I'd be nice for my family to think [DS coughs]. And I don't—I'm not fixated on how much longer I've got, but at seventy-eight, you got to realize your way past half way done. I just think I've been fortunate. Mel and I've been married twenty five years and she's been really great for me, and we kind of co-mingled—two these granddaughters, hers, and other two are mine, but we just—we both think they're each other's and the kids, I think the grandkids think that too. So they've all kind of grown up together, and so, you know, short version: life's been good I think. I come out of football and racing motorcycles and racing cars without too much damage, my back still bothers me some but I know a lot of people that hasn't done anything that their back bothers them at this age.

DS:

So you said you played football. What era did you played football in?

DG:

You know, I played in nineteen—we started in the seventh grade in Horace Mann Junior High, and we played, let's see, that would have been '55, we started in '55. We have played kids in eight ball before that a little bit, but they didn't start kids then until we were in about the sixth grade. I think we played one year kids and then played through, all through Horace Mann, I was—back in my days it was end. I was left end now they call them receivers and wide outs, and you got to change everybody's name to something different. And I was—half back on defense now there's safeties or cornerbacks, I was I guess would've been a cornerback then. And then when I got in high school, I was a receiver but I got my back torn up. Very, very messed up and was in traction for about a week, and so I didn't play football after that. Mother threw a fit and the doc said that I shouldn't get that thing hit again. So I reluctantly gave up football in tenth the grade and just ran track after that. I was good enough to make the basketball team, but I wasn't good enough to start, so I didn't like to do that. [laughter] We had a really good team. Palo Duro—my sophomore year in Palo Duro we won the state championship. Had be—and there was four seniors and a sophomore on there. So we had to be a good basketball player to start on that team. But I liked football. I didn't encouraged my grandson, but he's—whenever he was three pounds and nine ounces when he was born, so he's kind of a little guy, and I said—but he loved baseball, so he played baseball all through high school. I enjoyed football, I just wish we didn't have to have politics in everything you know. I'd like for us to kind of take a step back and all look at each other and decide everybody can't be right or wrong. Sometimes there's kind of some middle ground in there you know where everybody's to just kind of get along back—and maybe I'm living in a fantasy. Maybe in the 1950s we didn't all love one another, but that's what I seemed like to me. It was just less bickering and arguing. Of course, I grew up through the segregation part of it, so I remember all that. I got my heights real early so I carried a copy of my birth certificate because they wouldn't let me on the bus or into the movies because they knew I was over twelve, but I was six feet tall when I was eleven years old so.

DS:

Wow. That's a big kid.

DG:

Yeah, but then I quit. I didn't grow anymore you know, I'd sure like to see just everybody, I'm not picking a political party, I'm just saying I wish we'd just all take a deep breath, try to move forward, a little common sense.

DS:

And you mentioned integration. So what years were you in high school you said?

DG:

I graduated in '58.

DS:

Fifty-eight. Oh, so you were ten years ahead of when the high schools were integrated in Texas. Yeah, because that was '67, '68 was the first year of that. And the way it was handled—I don't know how they did it in Amarillo, but most places, they closed down the black high school, just to integrate it into the—

DG:

That's what we did. We had Carver high school here. And Carver had a really good sports program, and I think they were a lot of kids in Carver that weren't pleased that they closed their school and bussed them to other school. You know, I don't think—having these kids have grown up around here lately, I don't think there's too much friction in schools, but then again, I have my head in the sand over that. I used to go out to Caprock for their career day and would talk to them out there. You know, some of those kids just start in such a hole. There were two or three girls out there that were trying to finish up high school that already had two babies. You know, you're just shooting yourself in the foot when you start life like that. Palo Duro when I went there, we had—Isadore Rojas was out there, and Isadore was a friend of mine. He was—everybody liked Isadore. And I don't think we had a black going out there. Probably Palo Duro now is—probably there's more Asian population in Palo Duro than there is—and they're smart, you know, those kids—I know if those Asian kids are as smart as a whip, and they are nearly always they're valedictorian, salutatorian out there and stuff. We still go back over to Palo Duro and my senior down here has been on the varsity tennis team since she was freshman, they played over at Palo Duro the other day. We went back over there, and they kind of built up a new tennis court and stuff out there. But it's really grown, it's—lots has changed. I'd go by my old neighborhood out there and look, and I just—it kind of makes me remember where I came from and appreciate what I got.

DS:

And you kind of—I was going to ask—I was going to ask you something about the fact that you've been here a while. How much has Amarillo changed from what you can—your first remembrances of what Amarillo was like to now?

DG:

Well you know, when I came here, we graduated down at the old—they call it auditorium. Is that what they call it? Anyhow, the civic center wasn't even there when I came—when I graduated. The air base was out there, and there's lots of soldier boys around, and my dad had a café then, and I was downtown. As a matter of fact, it was where the Amarillo National Bank building is now. It was cross street from the post office, and of course a lot of those air man would come to town on the weekends and stuff and you know, I don't even remember having a—daddy having any problems with any of them. And then later, when I started working Sid Stout Ford, the air base was still out there and we did a lot of work on the—a guy had a few '55, '56 Ford convertibles, and he rented into those airmen on the weekends and stuff. And then we'd try to keep them up and going and stuff, but you know, the base was there, it was—the SAC [**Strategic Air Command**] Air Force base was out there and they had the old—they'd break sound barrier occasionally here and stuff. Everything was downtown, there wasn't any malls. We'd go to town on Saturday. We lived over on North Polk, we could walk. Sometimes we'd ride the bus home, after we'd go down, walk around. A friend of mine named Troy lived across the street from us and we'd walk down there on Saturdays and go to the movies or mess around a while. Star theater you could—I lived over on Buchanan then, that was probably in about the eighth or ninth grade, maybe even the seventh. Saturday afternoon matinee was a double feature and cost nine cents. Coke, candy bar, and popcorn were all a nickel, so you could take a quarter over there and see a double feature and have a drink and two snacks, and have a penny left. And of course the automobiles, I could name you every car. I can identify them from a distance, what they were, and most time tell you where the semi-plant was and now I look at them, and there's so many of them, one looks like the other to me. You know the town was—well it was just centered around downtown, and if you did anything you either were at home or you went downtown. When we went out to eat, most the time it meant we would go down to the Lotaburger on northeast 8th and have a hamburger out there, and that was about the extent of our eating out. Mom cooked all the time, we didn't need fast food. I mean, there wasn't any fast food, and everything was Mom and Pop, you know, conglomerates hadn't moved in. There wasn't any Walmart or any of that kind of stuff. And then you see the evolution and now you seen the evolution of the evolution. They built these malls and now they're tearing the malls down, and redoing ,and redoing, and moving to different ones, and I know that's all progress. I kind of hate to see the Mom and Pop deals go away though you know, they—I tried to do business with them, but it's kind of hard to do because they're just about all gone. And I tried to buy locally because I was in business for myself for all of those years, but you know, it's just so hard to get out and go get in the car and drive out to the mall and buy something when you can sit out over there on your iPad and punch

one button on Amazon Prime and it shows up out here two days later and it's cheaper. I mean it's just—it's hard to not do that.

DS:

Yeah, there's some stuff that I like to buy that I can go down and get it at my local guitar store but I'd rather order it online because it gets there faster and no sales tax yeah.

DG:

Yeah, and you know what you want, fine you can go get it locally if it's available, but if you don't really know, if you want to do a little bit of shopping, you can spend five seconds there and go through all kinds of options of what you could get, and I know why Amazon is doing so well. Did you see where they're ordering over thousand Mercedes Vans?

DS:

No, I didn't know that.

DG:

They're going to lease those to independent—around different cities to independent contractors to deliver Amazon stuff, so they bought the van, they own the van, you rent the van from Amazon, and they ship it in, you get it and you're responsible for delivering, and you got a contract for delivering it. So, I mean, they just stay ahead of the curve sounds like.

DS:

Who was it that's still in the autonomous deliver vehicles now? Someone was just talking about doing that. We're going to have self driving vehicles to do the deliveries.

DG:

Yeah, I saw those. I don't know, you know, the old Jetson deal, the old cartoon may—

DS:

I took us time getting here but it's finally here, right?

DG:

Yeah. You know the wife and I laugh—back when I was a kid, they had 2001 A Space Odyssey—I kid, I wasn't a kid, I was a little older, but when that movie came out 2001 A Space Odyssey, 2001 was a good ways off. And I didn't pay much about the movie, didn't remember much about it. Well I was over at Walmart, a year or so ago and I saw that movie in there in a five-dollar bin, and I thought “Well—“ I think we just got the Blu-ray or something. I said, “Well, I'll get that and we'll see.” So I got that movie, looked at it and watched it I guess is the



term, and it wasn't a very good movie [laughs]. it wasn't what I thought it was going to be, and it wasn't much like to 2001 either as I recall but.

DS:

Well you know, and what's funny, I tell people is, you look at all these movies that are talking about the future, and they're showing them using a phone that doesn't even begin to compare with the Androids and iPhones that we have now. That's like that segment just made a quantum leap over what they were expecting because basically you have a computer in your pocket.

DG:

I know, it's just—and it's funny how attached you get to it you know. My wife kept saying she didn't even want a cellphones at all, and I said, "Yeah, you need to get a cellphone. I need to get hold of you." So she finally got a cellphone. Now, I said, "Well you need to get an iPhone.", "Ah." She didn't want the iPhone, and I said, "Yeah, let's go there and get it. You need to get on." So we bought a car for here that would—just automatic program to it, and I said, "Let's just go get you one." So we got one, and they said, "You want text messaging?" And I said, "Yes" and she said, "I won't ever do it." And I said, "You will." So we got that. She's over there talking to those grandkids all the time on there, texting back and forth to them, because you know, you call them, they might not answer the phone, if you text them, they'll kind of respond back to us and stuff. You just think you're not going to do it, but you wind up doing it.

DS:

Yeah, it's amazing sometimes families will be together in a room and they're all—they're not interacting, they're all on their phones.

DG:

Yeah, one of our tennis friends down there, the dad, he works at Pantex. He got a pretty good position out there, and he carries two phones, personal and a Pantex. Well, last Saturday, he was over there doing that having both phones out, and I said, "Are you talking to yourself?" [Laughter], to his phone, and he said, "Well, I could be. Who knows."

DS:

That's funny.

DG:

Yeah.



DS:

Well, you know, Dennis I thank you, I know this was kind of short notice for you, under bad circumstances.

DG:

It is, I wish we could have done Lyndon, and I told James I didn't mind doing it, I just wish—you know, we just missed Kenny so, I didn't want to miss Lyndon. But maybe he'll get on his feet, maybe, hopefully.

DS:

Hopefully and yeah, and as soon as he's up to speed we can make arrangements to interview him.

DG:

Yeah, okay, good. All right, well glad to do it.

DS:

Well, thank you. I think I'm going to head back home now.

DG:

Okay.

DS:

I'm glad that you agreed to do it a little bit earlier because there's a—let me turn this off.

***End of Recording***