

**Oral History Interview of
K. A. and Mavalyn Goza**

**Interviewed by: Monte Monroe
April 16, 2011
Anson, Texas**

**Part of the:
*Texas Cowboys' Christmas Ball***

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This collection features interviews related to the Texas Cowboys' Christmas Ball in Anson, Texas. Topics covered include the traditions associated with the ball, the leadership within the Cowboys' Christmas Ball Association, music and Michael Martin Murphey, and the way in which the ball has changed over the years.

Transcript Overview:

This interview features K. A. and Mavalyn Goza of Anson, Texas. The Gozas talk about growing up in Anson, their early experiences with the Cowboy Christmas Ball, and their continued involvement in the event.

Length of Interview: 00:28:57

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[0:00:00-0:03:18 release forms are signed and contact information is given]

Curtis Peoples (CP):

Okay. Now that we got that out of the way, we'll get started with the interview here. Feel free to talk as much as you want to about any particular subject. I kind of have some questions that will kind of help us along here. I guess more than anything, I'd like to start out with getting your name again, which is K. A. Goza, which we're already got. Today is April 16, and my name is Curtis Peoples from Texas Tech University and we're doing oral interviews about the Cowboy Christmas Ball here at Anson, Texas. We're at the wonderful historic Pioneer Hall and we're actually out here in the ticket room. We are here also with Mavalyn. I believe, K. A., you're going to be the primary speaker today here talking about the Cowboy Christmas Ball. I was going to see—first off, if I could get a little bit of background information about yourself. Can you give me a date of birth and place of birth and where do you come from?

K. A. Goza (KG):

Right out here southwest of town I was born about two miles from where I still live or where we live at the old Union community. My birthday is December 30, 1933.

CP:

And growing up, can you share your parents' names?

KG:

Klebor, K-l-e-b-o-r and E. P., my mother had initial name.

CP:

Were they originally from this area also?

KG:

They were all raised around here, about the same area that we still live in.

CP:

Were they born here or did they migrate here from somewhere else?

KG:

They were born here.

CP:

Okay, do you know where your say grandparents whoever settled this are came in here, where they came out of or came from?

KG:

They came from Mississippi to Oklahoma and then came onto Texas.

CP:

That's exactly what my family did.

KG:

My granddad didn't think—Oklahoma was a pretty rough place and he thought it wasn't a good place to raise a family, so they came onto Texas, he and two brothers. There was five of those boys and two of them stayed in Oklahoma, and the three of them came to Texas.

CP:

The car was passing so we had—your grandfather had five sons, and two stayed in Oklahoma and three stayed in Texas?

KG:

No, my grandfather had three sons.

CP:

Three sons.

KG:

That was my great-grandfather had five sons.

CP:

Okay. Well growing up here in the Anson area here, big sky country in West Texas, what was your home life growing up around here?

KG:

Oh, my dad was a cotton farmer mainly, he always had a few cattle, but he was mainly a cotton farmer. So we chopped cotton and hoed weeds and pulled bowls.

CP:

Usual stuff, huh?

KG:

All kinds of stuff like that. Of course, we fished and hunted a lot. We never did kill anything that we didn't eat hardly; we always did it for food.

CP:

Did you attend classes here in Anson? Did you go to school all the way through high school, I guess?

KG:

Well I went to school out there at Union for seven years, and her dad and mother was my teachers out there. And then the country school is consolidated. I think it was 1947, and I came to town in the eighth grade. Then I graduated from high school in 1952.

CP:

In Anson—in high school, did you do any extracurricular activities? Did they have band or 4-H? I'm sure they had 4-H, I know they still do.

KG:

Well, FFA and football and track and stuff.

CP:

So you're an athlete.

KG:

Well, I used to be.

CP:

Used to be. Well, getting to the Cowboy Christmas Ball, I guess growing up around here, I'm sure you'd always heard about it, but can you talk about maybe your first interest or hearing about it or maybe when even you first came to your first Cowboy Christmas Ball.

KG:

Well, when I was a kid, it was a pretty rough place. It wasn't a place for a family to come because there's a lot of fighting and drinking and everything, but then after we married and our kids got big enough to dance, we started coming and bringing the kids. I guess that's thirty-something years ago.

CP:

So you started coming in the early fifties?

KG:

Probably the sixties.

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CP:

Oh the sixties. When did you all get married?

KG:

'57.

CP:

1957? Okay, I guess the years before that it was kind of rough to come out?

KG:

Yeah.

Mavalyn Goza (MG):

We didn't bring the kids.

KG:

We didn't bring the kids out here until they got to be teenagers. Then it was kind of more of a place to bring a family. There wasn't so much extracurricular stuff going on.

CP:

Well how about you? Did you ever come by yourself before you were married?

KG:

Yeah, a time or two, but I didn't know how to dance much then.

CP:

You didn't?

KG:

I was mainly a bystander.

CP:

So you just came just to kind of watch the events or anything? Now after you got your kids grown and everything, you started coming, you said, I guess, a lot of the fighting and stuff had stopped. Did they change the rules? Had they changed the rules by then about drinking and things here?

KG:

I don't know if they've ever changed the rules here or not, but they just kind of—

CP:

I know you can't bring any alcohol inside. It's always just been outside.

KG:

I think it's always been that way. Anyway, they kind of cleaned it up some, it was a rough place, and got our kids old enough to dance as it was back when I was a kid.

CP:

And you said that was in the early sixties when you first started bringing the kids?

KC:

Let's see—

MG:

Yeah, it was sixties, or late sixties.

CP:

Probably late sixties and seventies.

KC:

Yeah, late sixties and seventies, I guess early seventies when we started coming.

CP:

How many children do you have?

KC:

Three, two boys and a girl.

CP:

Did the kids seem to enjoy coming to the dance?

KC:

Did they what?

CUP:

Did the kids seem to enjoy coming to the dances?

KC:

Uh-huh, yeah, they enjoyed it.

CP:

So then did you all—like you said, you learned to dance by then, start dancing? Or were you still just a bystander?

KC:

No, she kind of taught me—she danced some in high school, and she kind of got me started dancing, and then we'd dance with the kids and then our grandkids. I don't guess we've ever brought any great-grandkids down here, have we?

MG:

No.

CP:

Have your children moved off elsewhere, I guess?

KG:

Well one of them lives in Abilene. The girl lives down there, both the boys still live here.

CP:

Oh they do? Are they farming down here?

KG:

No, one of them works for UPS.

CP:

UPS?

KG:

UPS, he's been driving their truck for them for twenty-three years or so. The other farms and then he's a part time preacher, too.

CP:

So do you continue to come to the ball every year? Is it something you just kind of plan on?

MG:

If the sun comes up.

CP:

If the sun comes up? Well, since you started bringing your kids there in the late sixties, early seventies, have you missed any of the events or have you come every year?

MG:

You've missed two when you had your heart attack.

KG:

I was in the hospital getting over it, I guess.

CP:

Did you ever—being a part of this, have you ever served as like a board member, president, vice president, treasurer, anything?

KG:

No.

CP:

Just like to come.

MG:

Spectator.

CP:

Spectator? Now somebody was saying that you give dance lessons now. Is that true? Is that what I was hearing up there? Somebody said he'll teach you how to dance.

KG:

That's the way I used to do these girls and women, they'd say, "I don't know if I can dance or not." I said, "Well you lucky booger. I'm a dance instructor." I never have been, but I lied a little to get to dance with a pretty girl.

CP:

So you keep coming back, what about your children? Are they coming back to the event?

KG:

They don't as much as they used to.

MG:

They're so busy.

KG:

They've got so many other things going on now. Of course, one is a preacher and he doesn't do that anymore, and the other boy married a lady and she's not too crazy about coming down here.

The daughter and son-in-law, they've got grandkids now and so much going on they don't come much anymore. They used to.

CP:

It sure is a busy street around here today, isn't it?

MG:

They're having a ball game.

KG:

Yeah, having ball game or something up here.

CP:

Oh they are? Probably I think opening day or something maybe for the baseball.

KG:

It's little league park.

CP:

Okay. Do you know much about the history of the event itself? I guess we all know it started out with Chittenden poem and all of that. Is there anything that you maybe could share about the history or changes in the event over the years? I know you mentioned that some of the fighting and stuff—we can try and shut that door, I just didn't want it to get too hot in here for us, too stuffy, and that may not even do—there we go, we'll see if that'll work—I feel like I'm cooped up in a little chicken coop or something in here, keeping the chicks warm with a lightbulb—so have y'all seen any other changes in the ball over the times you've been coming or has the event stayed the same?

KG:

I guess a whole lot of it is the same. We used to cook wild hogs up here. We'd bring a cooker up here and cook out there and feed people free, and they'd try to pay us for it and we would never take money. They couldn't believe we was doing that free. Then one time, some guys come up there and they of course was outside, and they bummed beer off of us, and we let them have a free beer and they ate of their meat that we cooked and then they stole our knives. Then we got kind of mad at them and we quit cooking hogs.

CP:

Were these local people or just somebody that came?

KG:

Oh, they're from Abilene, I think. I knew one of them's mother. I never did tell her.

CP:

So what is it about the Cowboy Christmas Ball that's most appealing to you? Is it the music or comradery, the dancing, or what do you think would be most appealing for you?

KG:

The dancing and then you get to see people you don't get to see a lot of them but once a year, and that's here.

CP:

So it's kind of like a family reunion almost.

KG:

Yeah, it's kind of like a reunion, but of the reunions here, we don't really get to dance at high school reunions. You come down here and get to see everybody and visit and dance, too. It's a pretty neat deal.

CP:

Is there anything you want to add?

MG:

In '57 when we married, we got to lead the grand march.

CP:

Oh, you did?

MG:

But that's really—it's something, but it's really nothing because every time somebody in the community gets married, usually they get to lead the grand march, our kids, each one of them got to lead it when they got married.

CP:

You said you had three children and they all three got to lead the grand march?

MG:

The girl first, uh-huh, Ginger first, then Trey, and then Greg.

KG:

When our oldest son was leading the grand march, after it was over, well, this lady came up and said, "Is your name Goza?" and I said, "I think so." And she said, "Well I'm Patty Goza from Abilene," or she was, and she married old Buck White, he was a musician. Then Ricky Skaggs's was dating—they had four beautiful daughters, and Ricky was dating one of those girls, and he later married her. Anyway, we got to meet some of our kin folks that was musicians that we didn't even really know until then.

CP:

So are you a musician?

KG:

Oh no, I used to play guitar a little, but I don't anymore. I got arthritis and stuff, I just don't play like I used to. Our son still plays and sings

CP:

Did you ever play at these dances or the bands?

KG:

Oh we had a little band one time. We played over the Stanford radio station over there when I was in high school. We had two or three guitars and a fiddle player and a piano player. I played the mandolin for a while because we had so many guitars. My cousin had a mandolin and I borrowed his and played his for a while over the radio there.

CP:

So just like one of those little afternoon radio programs?

KG:

No, it was on Saturday morning, and then we'd play in high school at assemblies and everything here at high school.

CP:

Did any of the other band members go on and play music full time or—?

KG:

No, I don't guess they did. After we got out of high school, none of us ever pursued it much after that.

CP:

Just got busy working, huh? Well we also have a music archive, and I play guitar myself. I broke my wrist and my elbow into four pieces, so I'm not able to twist my arm anymore right now so I've taken a—

MG:

How'd you do that?

CP:

I took a fall and put my arm out and should have just fell, but you don't think about that, and so traded one of my guitars the other day for an dobro because I can get my hand doing that, so I'm going to try and learn the dobro.

KG:

There's a guy here that plays the dobro, and he plays at funerals and things, he's real good.

CP:

Oh, what's his name?

KG:

Jim Liner.

CP:

Jim Liner, I might have to look him up because—

KG:

Yeah, you that Conoco station at the red light, well, he runs that.

CP:

Oh does he? I'll have to stop by there and see if he's there on the way out of town.

MG:

Real neat people.

CP:

Jim Liner.

KG:

Yeah, I've known him for a long time.

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CP:

So I guess you plan on coming back to the Christmas Ball this year?

KG:

Yeah, if we're still able.

CP:

You know, it's a repeatable event that's carrying on traditions. For future generations, do you see some of the younger people still wanting to get involved or what do you think is going to happen?

KG:

Well, they're getting some younger people on as their sponsors. Now they used to—they were all up in years, you know, and a lot of the sponsors would sit around and look like they was about to go to sleep or they was bored, you know, they was getting so old for that. But now then they've gotten some younger couples, and it'll keep going as long as they keep getting young blood. Of course, they've got kids that come and everything, just like we did.

CP:

What are some of your thoughts or aspirations for the future, where you would like to see the Cowboy Christmas Ball going? Is there any, like, changes you'd like to see or things staying the same?

KG:

Well, I'd like to—since I don't have much hair as I used to, I'd like to get to dance with my hat on. A lot of girls won't come because they won't let them wear them tight jeans, you know? They've got to wear a knee-length dress. Since it started out that way, I don't know if they'll ever change it.

MG:

They won't change it, it's a tradition, and really I'm not sure if we want it to.

KG:

One time we were here and this young couple came in, they had read about it in the paper. They had gone to school at Tarleton or somewhere, and of course, she had tight blue jeans and they wouldn't let her dance, but they took her back in the back room back there and suited her out in a little dress, and she came back, and of course her boyfriend, he already had jeans and boots and stuff on. They just wouldn't let him wear his hat. Anyway, they used to keep dresses, so if somebody come wanted to dance, they'd just take them back there and put a dress on and let them dance.

CP:

Do they still do that?

KG:

I don't know.

CP:

I'll have to ask Sue Anne about if they still do that. Clay was telling me the only year they got to wear jeans was 1949, and it was so cold he said that and the word went that women could wear jeans, and then that was the first and only time that ever happened because it was so bitterly cold. There's a newspaper picture of his aunt, Dawn and I think it was Dianne and Deana Snow, he said they're living down there I think in Irving or something. There's a picture of them in the newspaper, and she's wearing jeans out on the dance floor.

MG:

I never knew that.

CP:

Yes, 1949.

KG:

I never knew that happened; that was before we ever started coming I guess.

MG:

Well how neat.

CP:

What do you think about the long-term legacy of the Cowboy Christmas Ball, what it is that offers for the future that we need to remember? What's the significance of this event that really stands out to you for the future, the legacy?

KG:

Oh I don't know. One thing, there's a lot of pictures around on the wall and they take pictures of everybody. You can go back and look at those pictures and see people that we used to come down here with thirty or forty years ago that's passed on now. It's neat to go back and see who all was here and everything.

CP:

Did you get a chance to look at that film that we digitized? They have it there on the computer. They were showing it earlier. It was a film from 1953 and they found it in the attic over at the

chamber of commerce here in town. They gave it to Sue Anne, and we took it there to Texas Tech where we're working, and we put it on a projector and turned it into a DVD. It's the only footage there is from that time period, which you can go there from 1953 and somebody's talking and talking about a lot of different people and dancing around. You may want to take a look at that, we'll go in there in just a second.

KG:

Yeah, I'd like to see that. One thing that has changed that I forgot about is they used to do a lot more square dancing and stuff like that than they do now. Of course there's not as many people knows how to do that, and none of the kids unless their sponsor's kids know how to do it anymore. They used to do a lot more of that than they do now.

CP:

I noticed that in the film there was a lot of square dancing, more of that going on there in '53.

KG:

Yeah, there was a lot of it back then.

CP:

When the ball is going on at a certain part of the night, they'll get out there and they'll be eighteen couples square dancing, and it's pretty. It's an interesting sight.

KG:

That's usually the sponsors, and they're all dressed alike—the men got white shirts on and the women all got long dresses and everything. Pretty neat to watch them.

CP:

I got to come for the first time last year, but unfortunately we had to drive back to Lubbock, but I think next year we're going to get a hotel nearby and that way we can stay for the whole event.

MG:

Get it now.

CP:

Get it now?

MG:

Yeah, get it now, I'm serious.

CP:

Okay, I'll have to look into that then. Well, is there anything that you all would like to add about maybe something we've overlooked or something you want to add about the—let's let that truck pass—the Cowboy Christmas Ball that you think needs to be said?

KG:

Is there what?

CP:

Is there anything you want to add about the Cowboy Christmas Ball we haven't talked about or just anything you'd like to add that you think needs to be said about the event itself?

MG:

I think everybody should come once.

CP:

Just come once?

MG:

Just come once and I think that would be—

KG:

And they'll come back.

MG:

—and they'll come back.

CP:

I have to say that I agree with that.

KG:

Of course, a lot of people used to come and would set up in the stands and wouldn't dance, but they loved to watch all the rest of us dance. They'd come sit up there in those bleachers and just watch. Now most everybody probably that comes dances unless, of course, some of them's not crippled up and not able to dance, they'll still sit over there.

CP:

I noticed a few people last year when we were here, they just kind of sit up there and watched.

MG:

And it's fascinating.

CP:

It really is. That grand march is impressive.

MG:

It is and it's very impressive.

CP:

Well, I want to thank you for your time and sharing your stories about Cowboy Christmas Ball.

MG:

Well, you're welcome.

KG:

You're welcome.

MG:

Enjoyed visiting with you. I hope you come back.

KG:

Yeah, it was a nice visit with you.

CP:

We will. Like I said, we'll have all this information at Tech, and Sue Anne is giving us a bunch of pictures and things that she has, and we're getting that all into a collection so that people can come for years to look at that stuff.

MG:

And where will this be?

CP:

It's at Texas Tech University at the Southwest Collection, and did you get that card that I brought? We're a regional archive and special collections library, so it's our business to take the area's history and help preserve that and save it. We have a specially designed building that is environmentally controlled. The temperature and humidity are regulated. We have an air handling system that changes out the air about every twenty minutes. Old newspapers and things like that, you know how they turn yellow, well they also give off gasses, so what we do is our air system takes out all of that bad air and helps bring in new air to keep things preserved. So that

building is especially designed to house historic—mainly not artifacts like museum stuff, but papers and photographs, film, and we have some cold storage vaults and things like that we keep film and things.

MG:

And it's on the campus of Tech?

CP:

And it's on the campus at Fifteenth and Detroit right by the main library, just north of the main library.

KG:

When will this be where we can go up there and see it?

CP:

It's ready right now. Sue Anne gave us the stuff, oh a couple months back, and we've started putting things into folders. We have acid free folders and acid free boxes and special holders for the photographs and things like that, mylar. We put everything in there and put them all in order, and then we'll have finding aides, so you know, Oh box I, it'll tell you what's in there and what's in that folder and then the particular thing you want to go look at.

MG:

How neat.

KG:

We need to come up there and see that. We got an old ranch out here, leased, we've had about fifty years. The land owner donated that windmill, and it's up there and it's there.

CP:

At the Ranching Heritage Center?

KG:

Uh-huh.

CP:

Okay yeah it's grown a little bit up there, you should definitely make a trip.

KG:

I'd like to come up there and see that, see if we can find that old windmill.

CP:

Yeah, okay. All right well I thank you for your time.

MG:

Well we've enjoyed it.

CP:

Thank you, sir.

KG:

Thank you.

CP:

Thank you.

MG:

Mhmm thank you.

KG:

Good thing you're not left handed like me, you'd be—

CP:

I know it. I'd be out of luck.

End of recording

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