

**Oral History Interview of
Betty Wheeler**

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson
November 21, 2017
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:
*Lubbock History***

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Interviewer: Andy Wilkinson

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Interview Series Background:

The Lubbock History Series interviews document general life histories and other topical stories that chronicle the history of Lubbock.

Transcript Overview:

This interview features Betty Wheeler as she recounts her childhood growing up in North Carolina and then in Lubbock Texas. In this interview, she describes what it was like growing up on a farm, the day Pearl Harbor was bombed, and then her college experience at Texas Tech University.

Length of Interview: 01:48:31

Subject	Transcript Page	Time Stamp
Background information	05	00:00:00
Betty's father	13	00:11:38
What it was like growing up on a farm	18	00:20:45
The day Pearl Harbor was bombed	27	00:33:03
Her parents meeting and separation	31	00:40:17
Her grandfather trading his land and moving to New Mexico	40	00:53:58
Lubbock childhood	46	01:07:35
What inspired her to major in sociology and Spanish	52	01:17:50
What Lubbock was like when she was a young girl	59	01:26:15
The jobs she has held since she was a teenager	65	01:34:00
How she met her husband; Porter oil	71	01:44:41

Keywords

Lubbock, Texas, World War II, Family life and background

Andy Wilkinson (AW):

We've already said things that were really interesting and I don't want to—

Betty Wheeler (BW):

Well I'll come back to them. I just wanted to kind of give you a hint on where we were going.

AW:

You bet. And let me say, since I've turned this on, this is the twenty-first of November. My goodness.

BW:

What a day.

AW:

2017, yes. Andy Wilkinson.

BW:

Yeah. I thought about that when I woke up this morning.

AW:

Yeah, I didn't until when we said it. I didn't think about it, but Andy Wilkinson here with Betty Eller Wheeler in her beautiful home on 55th Street. I grew up on 55th, but on the other side of University. When we moved there, the Oakwood, when I was in 5th grade.

BW:

That was a wonderful, and still is, a wonderful part of town.

AW:

Yeah, just—we loved it.

BW:

So you probably went to Bayless and Atkins.

AW:

Yeah. First, as a little kid, I went to Hodges, and then because we lived over—

BW:

Further over.

AW:

Yeah, further over, and then I went to Bayless and Atkins and Monterey. I'm about to explain—we're getting ready to do an oral history interview and I've got the release form. I've got two copies, and one I'm going to leave with you. And one, I will take with me to the archive and the reason for this is to let, first of all, you know what we do with these things and then later on, thirty years from now, your grandchildren will find this copy in your papers and say, "Oh, grandmother did an oral history interview at the Southwest Collection. We can go listen to it." It also gives us permission to let people listen to it. And to, if necessary, put it on the web for people to—most of the time, we put it on for them to read because we transcribe the interview. So that's what this is about and I'll get you to sign it when we get done. And then, I just want to tell you that when we do these interviews, we—the intellectual integrity of this interview is dependent upon us not changing it so we don't erase things. We don't alter things on the interview itself, but if we get to a question or something and you say, "I want to think about that." Just say, "Can we pause this a minute?" We'll pause it and then we can go on when we get back. So that's about all. We don't have many rules, but that's about it. So if that's okay, I'd like to get going.

BW:

I'm anxious to be a part of this.

AW:

Good.

BW:

And thank you for the opportunity.

AW:

Well thank you for taking time, especially this time of year and especially on this day.

BW:

It's a special time of year. This just is a good time to reflect back on all the things we're thankful for.

AW:

Oh, good. Yeah. I think you're right. Let's start off and get a little bit of basic information. We'll start with date of birth. I know it's impolite to ask a lady, but I need.

BW:

It's all right. It's 2/21/38.

AW:

Okay. And you said you were born in North Carolina. Where?

BW:

I was born in Elkin, E-l-k-i-n, North Carolina.

AW:

Okay. Did you grow up there?

BW:

My first five years were there and then one year, as a teenager. Elkin was not our home. That was the closest hospital.

AW:

Where was your home?

BW:

My home was in Ashe County, North Carolina. And our county seat was Jefferson and our community, which was a church on the hill, was Clifton.

AW:

Clifton, C-l-i-f—

BW:

t-o-n.

AW:

Clifton Community. All right. What did your folks do there?

BW:

Well I was going to say, and our post office was Warrensville, North Carolina.

AW:

This is pretty confusing.

BW:

Right up the river.

AW:

Warrensville?

BW:

Warrensville. Uh-huh. My folks were both very active. My mother was a banker in North Carolina, in West Jefferson.

AW:

Really? Now, in the thirties, your mother was a banker?

BW:

My mother was a banker.

AW:

That was groundbreaking, wasn't it?

BW:

My mother was a banker in the twenties in Texas.

AW:

Really?

BW:

Yes, but she was a banker in North Carolina and I'll go back to her heritage, maybe in a little bit later.

AW:

Oh yes, I'd love to hear that.

BW:

But mother was a banker. A bank officer in the First National Bank in West Jefferson, North Carolina. And my father, who was a native of Ashe County, North Carolina, was involved in many, many things. He was school principal of Riverview School and that was first grade through high school. He was the city—I mean, the county sanitarian. He was active in getting a hospital built there after I was born. The Ashe County Hospital. He was very active with that. He was active in getting the first library started. Daddy was a graduate from Trinity College, which became Duke University. He got his master's from Duke, or from Trinity College, and was extremely active in politics and daddy was very conscientious about the poverty, the backwardness of that particular part of the country. We were up in the mountains, where there was very little communication and all. And he—during—well I don't know if you want me to stop there on where we were.

AW:

Yeah. No, no. No, this is your interview.

BW:

But during the early time—well you asked about my parents—but during the early times of the German War and all. Start in the—

AW:

The First War?

BW:

World War II.

AW:

Two.

BW:

During the early times there, I remember that, even though I was very young. Daddy was—represented President Roosevelt and helped him to get the Blue Ridge Parkway built through there.

AW:

Really?

BW:

And the Parkway, initially, was—well it eventually started down toward Asheville, North Carolina, and went all the way up through Virginia, but it was conceived initially, as I understand it, as a being built on the top of the Blue Ridge mountains with overhangs so in case the Germans invaded, or the enemy, as whoever it might've been. But in this case, the Germans had invaded. There would be stations up along the top of the mountains where the army could go and defend the interior of the United States for that southern part of the country.

AW:

Right. Kind of—much of the same motivation that Eisenhower had in starting the interstate highway system.

BW:

That's exactly right. So daddy was very active in that.

AW:

Yeah, you were showing—you're holding up a book, which I'll hold up for the recorder that can't see it, but—

BW:

No, you can't, but I got it out to show you. It was actually an amazing venture, if anyone wants to go there. There was the Biltmore House, which is down in Asheville, but the Parkway is one of the most beautiful places in the world.

AW:

Oh, that is. Yeah, that's—what a—

BW:

And one of the, indeed, privileges that I have to be thankful for was that I got to be on it a whole lot and the scenic, the beauty of this country was so real to me.

AW:

Let me take down the title of this.

BW:

Okay. You're welcome to borrow it and read it if you'd like to.

AW:

No, I just—we could probably order a copy for the archive if we like.

BW:

You can.

AW:

Blue Ridge Parkway Road Discovery. And written by Jay Scott Graham.

BW:

Jay Scott Graham.

AW:

And Elizabeth Hunter. Elizabeth with a 'z.'

BW:

C. Elizabeth C. Hunter.

AW:

And a 'z' before that.

BW:

I'm sorry.

AW:

That's great. Thanks. And you'd also, before we sat down, while you were kindly fixing me this nice cup of copy, showed me a book called the *People of the New River, Oral Histories*. And you mentioned that your father was a historian, as well as a—

BW:

He was. He was a genealogist and unfortunately, my father was already deceased when that book was written, but he's mentioned in it and many of my relatives are—have presented an oral history in that book.

AW:

Oh, that's great.

BW:

So my history is sort of before me in print, as well as in memory. I would add that I was born on—our house was overlooking the New River and New River's one of the oldest rivers on the continent. A beautiful river that runs—

AW:

That's interesting that it's called the New River.

BW:

Yeah, it is. I think they found one and then they found it and so that was the new one. But it runs through the Virginia and North Carolina and is just a beautiful place to enjoy in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

AW:

I'm just taking down the title of this book, which is—and adding an 'E' to Ashe County. *The People of the New River: Oral Histories from the Ashe, Alleghany, and Watauga Counties*. Watauga, is that right?

BW:

Um-hm.

AW:

Of North Carolina. Leland Cooper and Mary Lee Cooper. What a nice book. This is something I wish we did at the Southwest Collection. We have mainly been collectors and not—in fact, we've never done books, but it would sure be fun to do one.

BW:

Would it be appropriate for me to get those books for you as a donation?

AW:

Oh, we'd love it.

BW:

I will attempt to do that.

AW:

Yeah, we'd love that.

BW:

I will do it, if it's possible. I don't mean, "I'll attempt." I'll be sure they're still in publication.

AW:

Yeah, and we'll include—what we'll do is include it in your collection.

BW:

Okay.

AW:

We have what's called a non-circulating library in the Southwest Collection, meaning people can only use—

BW:

Come there.

AW:

They can come there and use the books at the archive, not take them out, and the other really important part about a non-circulating library is that we don't get rid of books because people don't use them, whereas they do that in a regular library, you know, just for the obvious reason.

BW:

Right.

AW:

So this is really interesting. Your father was a native of—

BW:

He was born in Ashe County and lived there until—he actually had a stroke and we moved him to Mountain City, Tennessee. To the Veteran's Hospital there. Daddy was a marine in World War I and so he had veteran's benefits and spent his life in the house where I was born until he had his stroke and then we didn't have the appropriate—we did have a hospital then, but it wasn't capable of long term care so we moved him to Mountain City, Tennessee, and he had a wonderful experience as a veteran there. It was an incredible facility.

AW:

Is that where he lived out?

BW:

He lived out his last six years.

AW:

Oh, six years. Yeah.

BW:

With this stroke, and he was nonverbal at the time, but we went back and forth. I have a sister and brother, which I'll talk about, but we all were in different parts so we kind of shared times going back and forth to be with him, but anyway, that was—he was born in North Carolina and I'd like to give you a little bit of his history.

AW:

Sure.

BW:

His—well let me start at the end. He is buried in the Eller Cemetery, which is on the hill across the river from where I was born, where I lived, along with his parents, his grandparents, and his great-grandparents.

AW:

A lot of years of Eller's.

BW:

There are a lot of years of Eller's and they're all in that cemetery so when I go back, I can show

my children my great, great grandparents from the 1700's, my great grandparents from the 1800's, and then my grandparents, who married in the late 1800's and were buried in the 1900's.

AW:

Yeah. Where did the Eller's first come from?

BW:

Germany. They were of German decent, as were most of the people in that area.

AW:

Oh really?

BW:

That was a major—Peter Eller was one of the first ones coming over from Germany and his history is great in those mountains.

AW:

I think—when you mention it—I think on my father's side, his mother, my grandmother's side, is how I'm kin to Charlie Goodnight.

BW:

Oh.

AW:

And the Goodnight clan, I think they came in three different waves of groups of brothers, but I think North Carolina was one of the places they came and that would explain that, that there were already people from Germany in that area.

BW:

Well we'll have to look it up, see if we can find him in daddy's.

AW:

Yeah. So—well so it sounded like he, your dad, would've known.

BW:

He would've. In fact, his collection, his genealogical collection, his children, the three of us, donated that to the library there that he had been instrumental in getting started in Ashe County.

AW:

In library in the—oh good.

BW:

So it remains there as a permanent collection.

AW:

Yeah. That's good.

BW:

And has been extremely popular for people looking back to find their families, so we'll look for Goodnight next time we're there.

AW:

Yeah. I'd like to know.

BW:

We'll look for Charlie. I don't know whether he has—he probably has some—

AW:

Well he was born in Illinois. His father was—I think—was one of the—there were—I'm trying to remember. There were at least three brothers and there may have been four and they came at three different times, which was pretty typical too. One person would come and then they'd get established and call for the next. You know, immigrants do that from all kinds of places and so I know that they came in different waves and we all know this because Charlie Goodnight didn't have any children of his own and so when I meet someone whose name is Goodnight, we always have to track back and see what set they came from. [Laughter] But you mentioning the German side of settlement there, so let me ask this, was your father the first college educated Eller? Did that go back further than his generation?

BW:

No. In his family, he was the first and because there were so—that part of North Carolina was extremely primitive. I'll dwell on a little bit of how it was when I was born, but daddy was instrumental in getting the first schools all out in the area where we were. So when he was eight years old and was born right across the river from where I was born, there was no way to get him to a school in the area. So he was sent over to Appalachian State in Boone, North Carolina. There was an academy in Boone, so when he was eight years old—

AW:

So an academy. Not a college, but an academy for younger.

BW:

Not a college, but an academy for eight year olds.

AW:

Wow.

BW:

Because he had been home schooled or been schooled at home. I don't know that home school was a concept then, but it was an actuality. He went to Boone, North Carolina, and lived with a family there and until he graduated from there, and then he went to Trinity College, where he had a scholarship, and went through that. As I mentioned, that became Duke University. So he was one of the first to have a college degree and therefore, when he came back, he was immediately declared a teacher. You know, Mr. Wade was a teacher. I'm not sure I gave you daddy's name. It's Wade Edward Eller Sr. Wade, W-a-d-e. Edward Eller Sr. So he was Mr. Wade from the time he came home. His college roommate was one of the state senators and so they were all into politics. Of course, at that time, they were working with President Roosevelt, so they were democrats and very active in getting the politics of that county going and trying to bring in the libraries and the hospitals and schools and all that.

AW:

Sure. What would his parents have done for a living and his grandparents? Is that farming country?

BW:

They were farming and cattle.

AW:

And tobacco? Is that?

BW:

Tobacco. And daddy had a—

AW:

Cotton?

BW:

I was born on a farm and we had cattle and we had tobacco and we had our own garden and we had the river with fish.

AW:

So when you say cattle, were these dairy? Beef cattle?

BW:

They were dairy.

AW:

Dairy.

BW:

Very seldom.

AW:

No beef? You weren't raising beef cattle?

BW:

We were not only raised with beef, but I didn't have beef until I got to Texas. I was raised on pork.

AW:

Really? Yeah. So you had hogs.

BW:

And chickens.

AW:

Yeah, and chickens.

BW:

And we had hogs. Uh-huh. And we had them on our ran—our farm. There was—ranch was not a concept. We had our farm.

AW:

Right. Well just looking at the photographs of the Parkway, it doesn't look like the kind of country where you'd have row crop cotton or that kind of thing because it's all hills.

BW:

That's right and they say that all the cattle and horses that live on these farms had longer legs on one side than on the other because they went around the mountains.

AW:

I believe it. I believe it. [Laughter]

BW:

So anyway, everybody had their own milk cow and everybody had their own chickens and everybody had their own garden. So it was a very successful way to live with very little money.

AW:

Yeah. You know, it's sad that in today's world, you'll hear the term, 'subsistence farming' for that thing and I think, when I was young, and we first lived on that farm outside of Slaton, where my grandparents were, the whole idea of subsistence was that was the best stuff you could do. You know, your garden and your own—we had hogs and we had chickens as well.

BW:

That's right.

AW:

And it was, I thought, a great way to live. So subsistence farming doesn't really describe it for me.

BW:

Yeah. Well this was—everybody talked about the Eller farm or the Goss farm or the—you know, whatever farm. There was a dairy farm up the river from us and we enjoyed going up there and watching them milk the cows. They milked them. Back then, they didn't milk them on machine.

AW:

Yeah. No machines. Yeah. What was it like growing up in that place for you?

BW:

Let me describe the physical bounds, maybe, because people don't believe me on this, but when I was born, we had a house on the hill. We had no air conditioning. We had a potbelly stove in the living room and we had the old iron cook stoves in the kitchen that we put wood in to cook on. We had the outdoor johns up on the hill behind the house, which I always thought, I wish they had been down below.

AW:

Yeah, right.

BW:

I never understood the plumbing after I got older. Anyway, we had no refrigeration.

AW:

Did y'all have an icebox?

BW:

We had no—we had an icebox, which I have out in the garage.

AW:

Really?

BW:

I recovered the icebox. And the iceman came once a week. We had a spring and we had a springhouse that was attached to the house.

AW:

So you had a spring up on the hill?

BW:

The spring was up on the hill behind us.

AW:

Wow, yeah.

BW:

That spring came down and the water came through our springhouse and the springhouse had a trough in it and our food and butter and all those things were kept in big glass jars and sat down in the trough in the water. It was cool coming out of the mountains.

AW:

We did that with—

BW:

Summer, winter, spring, and fall.

AW:

We did that with a windmill house with my great grandparent's house up in the Panhandle. You had that same trough and the water would pump out and pump through and you did the very same thing.

BW:

There it was.

AW:

Yeah, and it seemed to work.

BW:

We had no electricity when I was born and soon after I was born, I remember the coal oil lamps and all that we used for light. But soon after I was born, REA came through, the rural electric.

AW:

Right, which is a credit to President Roosevelt.

BW:

That's right. Absolutely. We got electricity at our house. It still wasn't across the river at grandmother's, as I recall, even being five years old. She still had the coal oil lamps. We had one car, which was a '36 Chevrolet. And one truck that they brought timber down for firewood and all that at the mountain and we had horses and many times, the horses had a sled behind them and they brought timber down out of the mountains. We had a garden up on the hill that we had everything that you could plant. All the rutabagas and turnips and potatoes and sweet potatoes.

AW:

Yeah. My granny called them 'rooty-bakers.'

BW:

Rooty-bakers. We had an apple orchard. It was wonderful apple—the mountain grown apples were so good, and then we had our chickens and turkeys and rooster, and we had eggs laid up on the hills. My job as a—up 'til I was five, was to go up and pick up the eggs that I could find. In the spring, we had wild strawberries.

AW:

Were they in a coop?

BW:

There was in a coop, but they liked to go out in the—

AW:

So they might be laid somewhere out?

BW:

Just wherever.

AW:

So this is like an Easter egg hunt for you all the time.

BW:

Yeah, it was. It was just—and I had a pretty good size basket, so anyway—

AW:

I would think having gathered eggs in a coop, it would be less dangerous to get them out off the ground because those hens were—

BW:

Some of those red hens were—

AW:

They were not too happy to see you in there.

BW:

I have a rooster story for you.

AW:

Good.

BW:

That in the springtime and summer, when I—as a preschooler, was the one that got to go out and get the eggs, but I also got to pick the wild strawberries to come in for the strawberry preserves. Our whole mountainside behind us was full of wild strawberry plants and sun kissed the best in the world.

AW:

So can you describe a wild strawberry? I'm only familiar with the kind we grew.

BW:

Wild strawberry is a green plant that grew and just—it was a strawberry, but you didn't plant them. They just—they grew.

AW:

So it looked like a strawberry that you'd plant now.

BW:

It looked just like a strawberry.

AW:

So no difference. Wow.

BW:

No difference, no. They were a little bit smaller.

AW:

Did they grow in big bunches?

BW:

Well they did, but they just kind of covered the mountain side. I guess the birds maybe spread the seeds or something. They were all over so I got to cover the trail to pick the—

AW:

How many of those made it to the house when you picked them?

BW:

Some of them didn't. [Laughter] Some of them didn't. I'd pick one and eat two, probably, but they were wonderful. But that was my job as my brother hauled the wood and my sister helped with the housecleaning.

AW:

They were both older than you?

BW:

They were both older. My sister was twelve years older and my brother was fifteen years older.

AW:

And what were their names?

BW:

My brother was Wade Edward Eller Jr. My sister was Christina Eller. She had no middle name and so they both—

AW:

Did you have a middle name?

BW:

Carolyn.

AW:

C-a-r-o?

BW:

Carolyn. L-y-n.

AW:

L-y-n.

BW:

And just to digress a bit, all three of us were Tech students at one time.

AW:

Really?

BW:

Uh-huh. My sister and I both graduated from Tech and my brother was in Tech and got called to the war, which is another element that we can talk about, but I was going to tell you one other thing about North Carolina. We didn't have running water, as I said, in the house. And we had a number ten washtub, which came out in the middle of the floor on Saturdays. And each of us got our turn in the tub.

AW:

Were you last?

BW:

I was first.

AW:

Oh.

BW:

I have thought so many times how lucky I was that I was the baby and I didn't have to wait on my yucky, dirty brother to get in last. But no, he was definitely not that, but I always thought, you know, I was really lucky that I got to go first since I was the baby. But anyway, that was sort of my first five years.

AW:

Before we move on, what sort of wild animals were there, besides your domesticated animals? Were there deer? Did you have mountain lions? Did you have any bear in that part of North Carolina?

BW:

There were very few bear. There were some, but not often. We had a lot of fox.

AW:

Fox. Those were the trouble for the chickens.

BW:

Right. And it was a problem for the chickens. They kind of lived—the stream came right by our house and they liked to come down the stream to get to the river and so we had a lot of fox. We had lots of squirrels. We had lots of raccoons and the smaller animals. Digressing, there was—daddy had two men, two mountain men, I say that lovingly. Laborers, who lived across the river on grandmother's property and their name was Tom and Earnest Sawyer. Tom and Earnest lived in a little log cabin that had been on the property since the 1700's and they were barefoot summer, winter, spring, and fall. Every Saturday, they would come down out of the hill and across river, with their squirrel guns on their shoulders. And later that day, they would walk home with their catch, whatever they were, up in the woods behind our house. That was their food for the week and they were very self-sufficient and daddy used them, you know, in his log gathering.

AW:

Did you ever eat the squirrel?

BW:

No, I did not. Because of the river, I ate frog legs, but not any more often than I had to.

AW:

Oh, you didn't like them?

BW:

Well I liked them okay until I got to go gigging frogs with the teenagers and I saw them killing them and then we took them home and for some reason, even—well I'm jump shifting because I spent a year in my teenager there. I had to go home and clean them and cook them and watch them quiver in the pan and that just about did me in. I don't order frog legs here or anywhere else in Lubbock. But anyway, we had, you know, the chickens and the roosters and all of that, which we ate. You know, it was—I don't know where I got off now. Where were we? Oh, you were asking about the animals.

AW:

We're back. And we were—yeah.

BW:

We had a few deer, but not many. There were very few deer. It was more of the beavers and the smaller porcupines and skunks and all of that. So—

AW:

Yeah. Were there snakes in that part of—

BW:

Yes, there were.

AW:

Timber rattlers, I think, in the east.

BW:

There were timber rattlers and there were—they had black snakes.

AW:

Black snakes? Were they like egg snakes? They would eat eggs?

BW:

I think they would've eaten people if they caught us.

AW:

Oh really? I don't know about a black snake. Can you describe them?

BW:

Yes, I can. There's a trail. We went across the river on rocks and got on a back trail going to grandmother's house and my sister and I, after we were older, like twenty years old, we went across the river and went down to grandmother's house on this back trail and the trail was just wide enough for a buggy to have gotten down it. The hill was over here and trees were kind of canvassing over the—is that the right word? Over the road?

AW:

Yeah.

BW:

And all of a sudden, we looked up in front of us and there was a black snake that had—it was wound around this tree and he came across the limb right over our head and was hanging down looking at us. And I guarantee you, his head was as big as a can of oil. I mean, it was just this massive—

AW:

So these are big snakes.

BW:

And if you have ever seen two twenty, thirty-year-old women run, you couldn't have caught us.

AW:

I had no idea they were that big.

BW:

They were horrible and when we got down the road and talked to our cousin, he said, "Nobody goes down that road anymore because of the black snake."

AW:

Really?

BW:

Yeah, and he said that he has lived there for years and years and years and he hangs off of that tree.

AW:

Oh, that particular snake?

BW:

Uh-huh. Yeah. That snake has been there for as many years as—I mean, my grandmother had told them—

AW:

You'd think Tom and Earnest could've shot that snake. [Laughter]

BW:

You would've thought Tom and Earnest would've shot it, but now, I know why they went around the other way.

AW:

Gosh.

BW:

But anyway, he was hanging out there. Of course, they just got the biggest kick out of the fact that we had survived the black snake. That was probably my infamous being from that trip.

AW:

I'm going to have to look up a black snake now.

BW:

I mean, that one was really big and really old. They thought it was probably over a hundred years old and whether—I can't testify to that, but I can assume that maybe the mountain tails were true. But there were lots of guarder snakes and just, you know, all kinds of snakes in that area, but nothing that—a lot of people had bees. Had beehives for the—

AW:

Oh yeah. For the honey.

BW:

Most of the farms had beehives.

AW:

Did you have one?

BW:

We had one and I was not allowed out of the house when daddy had his paraphernalia on.

AW:

And was disturbing the bees.

BW:

I knew not to go out, yeah. Maybe I could sort of wind up this part of my first five years in North Carolina.

AW:

Sure.

BW:

Probably, the most memorable thing, or one of the most—well, maybe one of the most memorable things is that one Sunday afternoon, or one—yeah, it was on a Sunday afternoon in December and daddy was listening to our big console radio that was stood on the floor and was up here. And I was laying on the couch. We had been to church and I was laying on the couch and daddy said, “Shh.” And he went over to the radio and he said, “Oh no. Pearl has just been bombed.”

AW:
Really?

BW:
And I was nearly four years old at the time. I guess I was three or four. But anyway, my—I didn't know what bomb meant, but I knew it was bad and my caregiver, who stayed with me while mother went to the bank and daddy farmed, my caregiver's name was Pearl.

AW:
Oh, and you thought she had been bombed.

BW:
And of course, I had no clue about Japanese or Pearl Harbor, but I knew something bad had happened so I broke into tears and daddy said, "Honey, don't cry. You're going to be safe." And I said, "But what about Pearl?" And he looked at me and said, "It's not your Pearl." And I was so relieved, but that was my introduction to World War II and Pearl Harbor and you know, on that fateful day of December 7, 1941. So anyway, it was an interesting time and lots was going on. Immediately after the Germans invasion had begun, my brother left Appalachian State, where he was in school, and enlisted in the infantry in the army and came home and told my parents that he had done that. And he and his friend, who were both not quite of age, but almost, had gotten enlisted before the family could do anything about it. So there's a big story about my brother too, but that was the beginning of sort of a new world for our family.

AW:
Yeah, so were your parents proud or upset or both?

BW:
Both. You know, scared for him. Proud of him. Shocked about the war, you know, of course, and all. There was some fear of, at that point, the Blue Ridge Parkway had been built and daddy had talked to me because I was—I didn't understand where Germany was or what. But he said, "You remember that Blue Ridge Parkway. If anything, we will be safe because our soldiers will go out there and they're not going to come into the mountains that way."

AW:
Yeah. So the thought of Germany invading the U.S. was not farfetched. People were—

BW:
It was not farfetched and it was scary and I remember dreaming about the Germans and I had a nightmare as a four year old about the Germans coming across the river. We had big rocks in the river and you could jump from one—down below the dam. Jump from one to the other. And I

was screaming to my daddy. I said, "The Germans are coming. The Germans are coming." He came and I said, "They're down there on the rocks." He woke me up. I said—he took me out and said, "There's no Germans coming, honey." And that's when he reassured me again, but there was a big fear. That's a personal story, but I don't think anyone after that era has had the fear of invasion like we had in that part of the country at the beginning of World War II.

AW:

Yeah, I remember as a—

BW:

It was real.

AW:

I was born ten years after you. Just ten years. And so I remember very little about the Korean War, but I remember a lot about the fear of—the first big fear was Polio. The next was the bomb and people had fallout shelters and bomb shelters and it was a—even for a little kid, it was palpable because the adults were frightened of it. Yeah, so it must've been something and particularly, on the eastside of the country. Not so much worried about the Japanese, but what was going on in Europe.

BW:

Yeah. Worried about the Germans and it was a real fear and it was what it was all about. I might add one more little sonnet.

AW:

Sure.

BW:

My grandmother lived across the river from us where daddy was born. And there was no road across the river when I was born and they finally built a little dam up the way and you could ride the horses across it.

AW:

Rode over the top of it, yeah.

BW:

But when we went to grandmother's, we got in the row boat and rowed across.

AW:

Really? So the river was that big?

BW:

So the river—oh, the river's huge.

AW:

The stream was the one that you could on the rocks.

BW:

The little stream came down the river. I mean, down the mountain and dumped into the river.

AW:

So you could go across the stream on the rocks, but the river, you had to go on a row boat.

BW:

Well the river was a real river. A real mountain river. And the dam was right in front of our house, and the power plant, which they built, was right in front. Just below us, right across the highway below the house. So below where the river had been, there were big, huge river rocks and because the water had been backed up by the dam, the rocks were exposed down below and so we could jump across those rocks.

AW:

On the river, but otherwise, you had to—before that, you had to go with a rowboat.

BW:

You had to go up. If you were above the dam, which was right here, and then here's the power plant and the tailgate with electricity. The water running through, we could either go across the rocks or we went across in a rowboat and grandmother would row to our house and we would row to hers.

AW:

Really?

BW:

It was very primitive.

AW:

Was it fun or frightening to go across the river in a rowboat?

BW:

It was fun.

AW:

Yeah, I would think so.

BW:

It was fun. It was fun. And sometimes, the river would freeze over and we'd get to put on our galoshes and go ice skating.

AW:

But without blades, just with your galoshes.

BW:

Yeah, so it was. And sledding, you know, was the winter sport. It was a beautiful place to grow up and there was so much poverty there that it was—we were so blessed that daddy was one of few that had a college degree and so we had a lot of expectations from our family that we were—

AW:

That you were going to also have a—

BW:

Yeah. We would also be productive.

AW:

You keep talking about up 'til the time you were five. What happened when you were five?

BW:

When I was five, we had a very sad experience, in that mother and daddy separated. Mother was born—well, let me answer your question and then I'll talk about mother.

AW:

Or—okay. You can start however you want.

BW:

Let me say that they separated and mother came to Texas, where her family was and daddy stayed in North Carolina and I'll talk a little bit about their marriage, before I really talk about mother's beginning's. Mother and daddy had met in Dallas. Mother was working for the Republic Bank in Dallas. They married, I think it was in 1921. They married. Daddy was manager of a clothing store in Dallas and it was a chain of men's clothing and they had stores in Kentucky and Virginia and Dallas and Tennessee. They also had Tennessee location. So when mother and daddy met, they were happy in Dallas for about a year. They married in the Adolphus Hotel and about a year after they married, with mother still working at the bank and

daddy with his clothier. The clothier moved them to Kentucky. To Ashland, Kentucky, where daddy had a clothing store—I mean, one of their stores. They lived a nice life in a typical Kentucky community, where they had friends and churches and a car and heat and things like that.

AW:

Yeah. Electricity.

BW:

And then he got transferred to Roanoke, Virginia, to the store there.

AW:

What was the name of these stores? Do you know? Just curious.

BW:

I will know, but I can't tell you.

AW:

No, just curious. I was just curious.

BW:

It wasn't anything we know today, but you might have known it from then. I hadn't—it was a long time before I was born.

AW:

Yeah, right. So now, they're in Roanoke, Virginia.

BW:

But they're in Roanoke, Virginia, and my brother and sister were born there. They were in school there and then daddy—they moved daddy to somewhere in South Carolina and then to Mountain City, Tennessee, and then back to Roanoke, and daddy, they were moving around so much that daddy decided to buy out his store that he had. I mean, that he was working for. They let him buy that store and he had made his first six months, I think it was, of payment on that store that he had purchased and the Depression broke out in the middle thirties.

AW:

Nineteen twenty-nine.

BW:

Yeah.

AW:

When the stock market crashed?

BW:

When the stock market crashed and then it started moving down into the rest of the country and daddy's family, which had owned the property where he was born, they were losing the farm. And daddy said to mother, "We have to go to Ashe County. I can't lose the farm that our family's been on since the 1700's." Well when mother got into those mountains without heat and air conditioning and all those things, it was—

AW:

It was a big change, wasn't it?

BW:

It was a major change and she worked at the bank, but she finally just couldn't do it any longer. It wasn't getting better and to work and to have a house where you didn't have any electricity or any plumbing or any heater and one car for the whole family and it was just tough. Mother had had a tough life. So mother—

AW:

Before that?

BW:

Before that.

AW:

Yeah.

BW:

Which I'll move into momentarily. So mother and daddy separated. They never divorced. They were friends to the end, but mother just said, "I can't live here like this. I don't want my kids—I'd like to have something better." And daddy says, "I can't leave." So they parted ways. Mother and I got on a train and came to Texas in 1943.

AW:

And where did you come in Texas in 1943?

BW:

We came to Lubbock.

AW:

To Lubbock? Why Lubbock?

BW:

Because my grandmother was here and my grandfather had died on my fourth birthday and so when I was five, mother and I came on the train. My brother was in the military, in the army, in the infantry at that time.

AW:

And your sister was?

BW:

My sister had come to Tech. She graduated.

AW:

Because of your grandparents?

BW:

Because well she wanted to come to Tech and of course, the family had come back and forth because my grandparents lived here.

AW:

Yeah, and what were your grandparent's name?

BW:

Smith. John Smith. How's that for uniqueness. John and Tempie.

AW:

How do you spell it?

BW:

T-e-m-p-i-e. Her middle—her maiden name was Renfro. R-e-n-f-r-o. Smith.

AW:

What did they do here in Lubbock?

BW:

He had an auto parts business and a tire store. He died in 1940—let me think, 1943. February of '43. Anyway, he died and grandmother was here by herself and my sister had come that summer. She graduated from high school that year in North Carolina. She came and she wanted to go to

Tech and she could live with her grandparents here and she wanted to do that. So she, when granddaddy died, grandmother was by herself so she came that summer and lived and then mother brought me and we were here and lived with grandmother. We lived—

AW:

What part of town?

BW:

We lived at 2304 3rd Street.

AW:

Really?

BW:

And that house is still there. I drove by it the other day to be sure. It doesn't look like it did because there was apple orchard next door when we were there. But anyway, we came here and of course, daddy was sad, but he was with his family and mother ended up with her family. Now, I'd like to talk about my mother.

AW:

Sure. I'd like to hear about her.

BW:

We'll get back to North Carolina later.

AW:

Yeah, because you come back later as a teenager.

BW:

I come back later. And I just feel like I'm talking too much.

AW:

No. This is—

BW:

Are we?

AW:

This is perfect.

BW:

Would you say, "Hey, guys."

AW:

No, I'm not about that.

BW:

"The tape is about out."

AW:

No, I love stories so this is—

BW:

Okay. Well the story is that we came on a train from North Carolina. I was five years old and we were on a troop train and there were soldiers on that train and we would get bumped because they'd be taking new groups of soldiers.

AW:

Yeah. So it must've taken you a long time to get here.

BW:

We finally got to Texas. They had the bed—what am I trying to say?

AW:

Sleeper car?

BW:

The sleeper car. And so we had a sleeper car on one of the trip—I mean, on one way. So we did get some rest and of course, they had the wonderful food. Pullman cars, where they had the food service.

AW:

A diner, yeah.

BW:

But I remember one of the—I guess the first memory of the war is that when—and I can't remember for sure where we were. We were either in Little Rock or Memphis and I didn't worry about where we were until just recently and there's nobody I can ask, but we were in our car and I was sitting by the window and there was a train stopped on the track next to us and it was full of German soldiers.

AW:
Really?

BW:
Yes, and they were in their uniforms and they were, I guess, going to—

AW:
Prisoners of war?

BW:
Prisoners of war. And the German—I was looking at them and waving out the window and my mother reached over and grabbed my arm and she said, “You can’t do that. Those are Germans.”

AW:
Wow.

BW:
And the soldier that I was waving at, I think, realized what had happened and I looked at him and he had big tears coming down his face.

AW:
Wow. That’s some memory.

BW:
And I did too. And mother said, she said, “That’s the enemy.” And I didn’t understand all that, but mother’s son was in Germany fighting, you know?

AW:
Yeah.

BW:
And that was one of the lessons of my early life.

AW:
Yeah.

BW:
Of how bad war is.

AW:
Yeah.

BW:
And how bad it was on people and how bad it was on humans. He was a nice little blonde, blue-eyed German boy that I'm sure was somebody's son and maybe one of my relatives from way back then.

AW:
Exactly, yeah.

BW:
It's worried me a lot. I mean, just the fact that—

AW:
Well at least, as a prisoner of war, he wasn't—

BW:
I don't condemn mother for that.

AW:
Yeah, no. But this is a prisoner of war, he wasn't—he probably lived out the war.

BW:
He probably did. Anyway, it was another time when we were on a train, something similar happened, except that one of the German prisoners—this was another experience about a year later when we went back and forth to North Carolina. One of the German prisoners had jumped out of the train and tried to escape and right at the end of our car, one of the guards shot him and that was tough for me too.

AW:
Yeah, did you know that?

BW:
I knew that. I didn't actually see it happen, but I heard it and someone said, "I had seen him run between our car and he was running and there was a guard following him," and so I didn't know whether he died or whether he didn't. But anyway, he was shot and I heard the shot. But it was wartime.

AW:

Yeah. Did you go back and forth in summers? Or not?

BW:

When I was ten years old, we made a road trip back and actually, that time was prior to the time that we moved here. That would've been a trip, I guess, the year—one year before, when I was four years old. So anyway, I didn't get to go back to North Carolina until I was ten. We were all—nobody had any money. You know, and mother was with First National Bank here.

AW:

In war, you couldn't travel.

BW:

No. You couldn't. We couldn't buy tires. We couldn't buy gas.

AW:

So your mom went to work for First National Bank here?

BW:

Yeah. Let me tell you about my mother. My mother was born in a dugout close to Sayre, Oklahoma, which is up in the Northwest corner. She was the middle. There were—

AW:

And what was her name?

BW:

Dempsie. D-e-m-p-s-i-e.

AW:

And her first name?

BW:

That's it.

AW:

Oh.

BW:

D-e-m-p-s-i-e Smith. No middle initial. Eller. E-l-l-e-r. Okay. Dempsie was born on December the 16, 1900. She was born in this dugout. Her daddy had a livery stable.

AW:

In Sayre?

BW:

In Sayre. She had three older brothers and she had four younger brothers. The one immediately younger than she died as an infant with cholera or one of those early diseases. So mother grew up with three younger brothers, who babied her, and three younger brothers, who adored her. So she was spoiled rotten from the beginning.

AW:

I'll bet.

BW:

Lovingly spoiled rotten. They were all close until they all died and she was the last to die, after the baby, of course, had died. Granddaddy got tuberculosis and started having problems being able to run his business. They took some time between Weatherford, Oklahoma, and Sayre, and I'm not sure exactly how all that worked, but they finally moved into a half dugout and then they had a house with the livery stable. A livery stable as I relate to it with sort of a motel for horses. When you were travelling across the country, they would stop there. For historical purposes, I'm saying this. They would stop there, sort of, where there horses could rest, get unharnessed, feed. Maybe water down.

AW:

Yeah, you had to have a place for them.

BW:

And move on. Well a man from New Mexico came through with his horse and granddaddy was struggling trying to physically overcome his illnesses and this man said, "I will trade you some property in New Mexico, close to Lee County, New Mexico." South of Hobbs, which wasn't there at the time, but anyway, in that area. "I'll trade you even, if you all want to take that land and you can work cattle and whatever and you won't have all this." So granddaddy, sight unseen, traded his livery stable in Oklahoma for the land in New Mexico.

AW:

In Lee County?

BW:

In Lee County, and took his six children. His six boys and one girl, his seven children. With him to New Mexico. It took them six weeks to go by covered wagon. It would've been—and I'm not sure of the date, but I think it was probably 1913 or '14. Somewhere along in there. When they

got to this land, it was barren, caliche. There was no grass and no water. They somehow maneuvered another dugout cave place to live until there was no wood. There was no timber. You couldn't build a house. So they've unhitched and sort of lived in the wagons for a period of time while they were trying to figure out what to do and they got some timber in and finally got a little hut built. The boys had their horses that they brought from Oklahoma, so the two older boys went into either Carlsbad or Lovington and brought water back to the family and they'd go in once a week and bring water, which was what the water was that they had. Of course, there was no school out there, so during the school months, all the children that were school age went to school in Carlsbad. The oldest two sons had joined the army and went to the El Paso, guarding the border, in the World War I thing. So the two oldest boys were there. Then mother and the younger ones went to Carlsbad, to school, and lived in a boarding house and then went home on the weekends. All of this was horseback.

AW:

Yeah. What was your dad—I mean your grandfather, what were they doing for a living? Were they raising cattle?

BW:

Well they were trying to raise cattle and they were having a hard time. Of course, he was—

AW:

Yeah, with no water.

BW:

Yeah, no water. I mean, so they were trying to make do.

AW:

And probably, his tuberculosis was still an issue, I would think.

BW:

It was an issue and they were living off the land, literally. You know, and the boys were doing day work. Some of them worked for some of the ranchers around to help and they made it work. In the meantime, when mother was seventeen years old. Well, when she was sixteen, she got an opportunity to live with a family in Lovington, New Mexico, which was about fifty miles from where they were homesteading or where they were living. I say that generously. She went in and was in her senior year in high school and she got a part time job at the bank in Lovington, and was going to school and paying her room and board with the family. Six weeks before school was out, the middle of March, when she was seventeen years old, in 1917, the bank president came to her and said, "Dempsie, would you be willing to go to an—there's an oil boom going on in Texas, down below Abilene and they need a bank over there and the young man," whose

name I don't remember. It's in mother's information, but I can't remember it offhand. "But I would like for you and," I'm going to call him John, "to go down and open up a bank for me."

AW:

And she was seventeen?

BW:

She was seventeen years old. And she said, "But I want to finish high school." He said, "But this will be an experience that you will never forget and it will be an educational experience that you will learn an awful lot from." They went.

AW:

Where was this?

BW:

I'm going to have to add that to later because—

AW:

That's fine.

BW:

I am so emotional about that happening that right now, I've forgotten, but it's a double name. But anyway, it was right down—

AW:

Near Abilene?

BW:

South of Abilene. There was an oil boom. So mother told her mother what she was doing and her mother was like, "And you and John are going?" "Yes, mother, we are." So they went down and opened a bank for the oil field workers and it was very successful and while they were there, grandmother decided she would go down and opening a rooming house. Boarding house, as they called it, and feed the oil field workers. She was not happy about her daughter—

AW:

About her daughter being there all alone.

BW:

Her daughter being there all alone.

AW:

It's all those oil field workers.

BW:

I can promise you that everything was on the up and up. You know, I just know it was so I'm not—but grandmother was just concerned so she came out of New Mexico and went over and opened a boarding house and fed them and then of course, mother stayed with her. While mother and John were in the bank one day, a group came up on horseback and robbed the bank.

AW:

Really?

BW:

They did. They put mother and John in the vault and locked them in and took the money bags. Canvas bags. And took off on their horses and someone screamed for the sheriff's posse and the sheriff's posse took off after them over into the brush and one of the bags broke and they followed the coins. Follow the money, as we would say nowadays. Followed the coins and they caught the guys off somewhere. Let mother and John out of the vault and the next day was just like normal.

AW:

Gosh.

BW:

But a friend—I told that story to a friend of mine, who died not long ago, here in Lubbock. Some kids I'd gone to school with. We were talking about the good ole days and he had been to the museum in Abilene after that. Actually, that story was told at mother's funeral. He was at the funeral and he called me and he said, "Betty, there's a story about that bank robbery in the Abilene Museum." And I've got to go look it up. As soon as I catch up, I'm going to go down.

AW:

Yeah. Well I'd like to know about that too.

BW:

And I'll see if I can get you a copy of that story.

AW:

Or just the information. I'm sure it can be tracked down, probably through the Texas State Historical Association. They have a great website.

BW:

You're exactly right. I'll check that, but I'd like to get a copy of that description that's in that.

AW:

In fact, when you recalled the name of that town—I'll look it up.

BW:

It wasn't a town. It's not. It's a town. This is not it. Do not misunderstand me. But it's something like Dripping Springs. I mean, it was just a—

AW:

A community.

BW:

Yeah, a community that just sprung up. It was just in Wellfield.

AW:

They're still be—they're will probably still be some entry in the historical archives about that.

BW:

I want to kind of finish on that because—let me think where I was going with it.

AW:

Well they were in the bank.

BW:

Oh. Well anyway, they came—they were in the bank and they came out and they were there for eighteen months and grandmother went back to New Mexico and she and granddaddy and the boys moved to Lamesa, Texas. Mother went to Dallas.

AW:

So this would've been about 1919, or so?

BW:

Just a minute, let me think. Just a minute, I can tell you exactly. Let's see. Mother was seventeen, eighteen. She went—she was recruited when that bank and that oilfield closed. The Republic Bank of Dallas came down and recruited her to go to Dallas and work in the Republic Bank, which is still there. That was in 1919. That's when grandmother went back to New Mexico and they moved to Lamesa, and then one of the brothers stayed in Lamesa and some of the rest of them came to Lubbock and the younger boys, the two boys younger than—there were three boys

younger than mother. One of them went to a ranch, bought a ranch in New Mexico between Lovington and Carlsbad. Or Hobbs and Carlsbad. It's sort of a triangular. Anyway, two of them came to Lubbock and graduated from Lubbock High School, which was on 14th Street and Avenue S and T. The old building. So the families sort of headquartered then, here in Lubbock. Granddaddy had bought a tire—bought a building and had a tire and auto parts place down on Avenue H. Right a block off of the—a block south of the square in the courthouse. So oh, and the end of the New Mexico thing is—to kind of finalize that chapter, it wasn't all bad. Granddaddy saved the minerals off that property.

AW:

Oh, really?

BW:

And today, I get a check. There were twenty-six grandchildren.

AW:

Wow, and you still—

BW:

And we all got a check. Our parents got a check. That oil money took grandmother through the rest of her life when granddaddy died and of course, she had to sell the business. But the minerals off of that property, we are not rolling cash. Don't misunderstand me.

AW:

Right. Well even if you were, split it up twenty-six ways would've been kind of tough.

BW:

It was split up between the seven children and then the seven children split it to their grandchildren and some of those wells are about to dry up, but they're a hundred and seventeen years old.

AW:

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, that's pretty amazing.

BW:

Yeah. So that's a thankful thing of his foresight. I mean, there weren't oil wells out there then. But he saved the mineral rights on that property that he traded equal for.

AW:

That's a great story.

BW:

So yay.

AW:

Yeah. So how did your mom, the move to Dallas, that would've been a big deal too.

BW:

That was a big deal. They came in and asked mother and her—the man that was working with her. And I, frankly, don't remember whether he went or not, but mother went with the Republic National Bank in Dallas and met daddy and they married, as I said, in the Adolphus Hotel and went on their honeymoon to Galveston and they had a hurricane. And then they started the trek that I've spoken about. Probably, oh well, you're asking questions. I don't know. Do you want me to go to my childhood in Lubbock now?

AW:

Oh yeah.

BW:

Is that where we are?

AW:

Yeah. When I ask questions, you know, people are always saying to me, "What questions do you have for an interview?" I say, "Well I don't know those until I hear the story."

BW:

Well that's right. But I don't want—

AW:

What I do like to do is—[phone rings] That's alright. Go ahead and take that. I'm going to pause this long enough for you to—[pause in recording]. No, when I ask questions, it's usually to flesh out some part of the story you're working on now. So how this story progresses is all up to you.

BW:

Well I don't want to just sort of jump shift.

AW:

No, that's perfectly fine.

BW:

But I think we're probably—we've arrived in Lubbock at age five.

AW:

Yeah, and you're five years old and you're living on 3rd right off College Avenue.

BW:

We're living on 3rd Street. Yeah, one block east of College Avenue.

AW:

Yeah. See, I grew up in the 2300 block of 55th.

BW:

Oh, you did?

AW:

You know when I was telling you about living on 55th?

BW:

Yeah, living in Oakwood.

AW:

Oakwood.

BW:

Yeah. I started to say Oakland. Okay, so are we on?

AW:

Yeah. We're running again.

BW:

Okay. We're back again. Okay. During the year that I was five, my grandmother moved to 2306 Avenue U.

AW:

And you moved with her?

BW:

And we moved with her because mother was sort of her caregiver. Grandmother had to have help physically. She couldn't live alone. So mother and I moved with her to 2306 Avenue U, which was two blocks south of Dupre School. So I started first grade in Dupre and I had to walk to school by myself because mother had gotten a job at the First National Bank so I remember

walking down the street and you could almost see Dupre at the time from our house so grandmother stood at the door and watched me to my first day.

AW:

Yeah. You know, we—I think back when we lived on 52nd and D when I started school at Hodges Elementary, which was across Avenue H and back then, that was a highway and I walked to school.

BW:

Tahoka.

AW:

Yeah. And I walked to school. I had to cross the highway.

BW:

You'd cross the highway.

AW:

I think, at the time, it was not issue to me. But I think back on it now with children and grandchildren, I think, my goodness. How did we do that? Why did we do that kind of stuff?

BW:

Right.

AW:

So I bet your folks didn't think one thing about you walking to Dupre.

BW:

Oh no. No, they didn't. You know, we came—we had to come home for lunch because we didn't have a cafeteria and finally, they let us start taking our lunch. But that was later, but we went home at lunch and then walked home after school. There were neighbors and so we usually were gathered together.

AW:

What was Dupre Elementary like in those years?

BW:

It was the best school in town. [Laughter] It was. Dupre was a two-story brick school. Did not have a fire escape at the time. Had very steep stairs. My first three years were downstairs and then we moved up and by then, we had a fire escape out the sixth grade window.

AW:

Did you go out and slide up and down the fire—

BW:

I don't think that should be a part of the record. My sixth grade teacher may still be alive. Yes, we did, on occasion, crawl out the window and go down the fire escape, but we were good kids. It was the Dupre Dogies.

AW:

Dogies?

BW:

Dogies, uh-huh. Doggie was a little lost calf.

AW:

Right.

BW:

And so we were the Dupre Dogies. And they've changed that now, much to my chagrin.

AW:

Yeah. That seems like a pretty good mascot.

BW:

It was a wonderful mascot because it was a story about a little calf that was lost out on the range and was found.

AW:

And what better than for a bunch of little kids to have that story?

BW:

And it was a little dogie. Yeah, they were found. But they've changed it now. Anyway, Dupre was—I'm not certain of the count, but I'm guessing that maybe there were maybe six elementary schools in Lubbock. That may be a little bit of a stretch, but it is, as of today in 2017, it's the oldest existing school still being utilized as an elementary school. It still looks just like it did, except it's had some new doors and some add ons and they did build a cafeteria and that cafeteria came about when I was in the sixth grade. So Dupre was a wonderful school. It was family. It was—we had—we had a couple of students that came in a limousine to school. We had some that walked a long way. We had some that lived fairly close. It was the rich and the poor. It was a

wonderful conglomerate of kids that were very dedicated one to another. So many of them were still friends.

AW:

Yeah. So some names of your Dupre friends?

BW:

Dupre? Nan Kelly Wilhelm. Her husband, Jerry Wilhelm, was the doctor here. Nan and I were in the same class. Karen Key, her daddy was a doctor. Doctor Olan Key. Martha Anne Key, her mother was our sixth grade teacher. Jane Livermore Watford. The Livermore Oil Company. Hud Ray, who ended up working at First National Bank. Mickey—well I'm trying to think of Lubbock people that are still here.

AW:

That's all right. I was just curious as of some of the names of the people that you stayed with. Well so when you finished at Dupre?

BW:

We went to O.L. Slaton.

AW:

To Slaton and not Carroll Thompson?

BW:

Well some of our—in fact, half of our school was across 19th North. Half of Dupree was. They went to Carroll Thompson and we went to O.L. Slaton and while we were at O.L. Slaton, I believe we—I'm not sure if it was one or two years that J.T. Hutcherson opened.

AW:

They were roughly the same time.

BW:

So then O.L. Slaton, some of them moved.

AW:

Did you stay at O.L. Slaton?

BW:

And I stayed at O.L. Slaton and graduated—graduated? Finished there and then went to Lubbock High, which was right down the street from us on Avenue U and I had my sophomore year at

Lubbock High and had a great year. Went to summer school that summer. And the first day of school of my junior year, I went to school and got my schedule and I don't know how to explain this experience, but I looked at that and all of a sudden, I thought, this is your junior year in high school. Next year, you're going to graduate and you would like to graduate, speaking of myself, would like to graduate with my class and then go to Texas Tech and I turned around and walked out the door. I went home and I said, "Mother, what would you think about me going to North Carolina this year to school and being with my daddy, who I have not had a chance to ever be really with as a person?" And she said, "Really?" I said, "Yeah." She said, "Well let's call him." Two days later, I was on an airplane going to North Carolina. It occurred to me that I would never be with my daddy if I didn't go and why I hadn't thought of it, but it just was sort of like—

AW:

Yeah. Well and that's a pretty mature thought for a teenager.

BW:

An aura that came over me and I thought, "You need to go right now."

AW:

That's interesting, yeah.

BW:

And then you can come back and graduate with your class and go to Tech and you'll have a year back at home in the mountains. And grandmother was still alive and I hadn't—I'd known all of them and loved them, but I didn't know all the reasons why.

AW:

Yeah, sure.

BW:

So daddy said, "Come on." And so I went back and entered the school where daddy had been principal. He was no longer principal because he was not—he had retired. And had a wonderful year. The good news and bad news was it was Riverview High School in Fig, F-i-g, North Carolina. There was nothing there but the school and the Methodist Church, where daddy had been a minister and where I was christened. They had the post office and a little store. That was where I graduated from high school.

AW:

Oh, you graduated from there?

BW:

I, unfortunately—or fortunately, for me, as it worked out, when I got to North Carolina, I had all sorts of classes I wanted to take. They said, “You have enough credits to graduate.” I said, “Okay.”

AW:

So you graduated a year early?

BW:

So I graduated at the end of my junior year in North Carolina. And came back to—and started to Tech a year ahead of all my friends, who were furious because I got to go to Tech. So I entered Texas Tech in the fall of 1956.

AW:

Oh yeah, I bet they were envious.

BW:

That was in the fall of '55, excuse me. I mean, is that—yeah, '55. Fifty-five, fifty-six. And then I graduated from Tech in '58.

AW:

What did you study at Tech?

BW:

I studied—I was—sociology and Spanish.

AW:

Oh really?

BW:

Uh-huh.

AW:

Sociology is what I took my degree in.

BW:

Really?

AW:

What inspired Spanish? For that matter, sociology? That was a pretty—it was kind of a new—

BW:

Social work. We didn't have a school of social work here.

AW:

Got it. Okay. And why Spanish?

BW:

Why Spanish? Because I envisioned that maybe, I might go to—there was no such thing as the Job Corps then. I wish there had been. But I really kind of wanted to go abroad. When I was in Tech, I went to the course in Mexico City. Texas Tech had a six weeks course in Mexico City.

AW:

Really? So that's a long history of Texas Tech doing that sort of thing. I didn't know that.

BW:

Well when I was a freshman at Tech, I started—I had not had any foreign language and I started taking Spanish and I loved it. Dr.—he was not a doctor. Terrell Hamilton was a professor in Spanish and I didn't have him as a teacher, but I worked with him some. I was in the Spanish club and you know, whatever. And so he said, "Betty," he said, "I have a group of graduate students, or upper level juniors, seniors, and graduate students that go to Mexico and have six weeks of Spanish. We don't talk any English at all."

AW:

Wow, so total immersion.

BW:

And he said, "I would like to do an experiment." He said, "You're a freshman. You've had one year of beginning Spanish. Would you go with us with this graduate class and let me see how a younger student," meaning younger in age and younger in—

AW:

Student, yeah. Right, and less experience with the language. Yeah.

BW:

"In the language can do."

AW:

How did it turn out?

BW:

I made an A.

AW:

Did it accelerate—because, you know, immersing. People talk about that as being the absolute best way to learn a language.

BW:

We were immersed. I came home—

AW:

So did it accelerate?

BW:

Very fluent. Oh yeah.

AW:

It accelerated your learning then?

BW:

Yeah, absolutely.

AW:

This is really interesting.

BW:

So that was a wonderful experience.

AW:

So that was in '56, right?

BW:

That was in the summer of '56, uh-huh. We stayed in a hotel and spoke Spanish all the time.

AW:

What part of Mexico did you go to?

BW:

We were in Mexico City.

AW:

In Mexico City.

BW:

La Ciudad [the city]. Yes. And it was an incredible experience and that sort of perpetuated my going ahead and getting a double degree in Spanish and sociology because I loved working with the—we saw all the shades of being in Mexico. The good and the bad and the poor.

AW:

That would've been an exciting time to be in Mexico City. The art.

BW:

It was.

AW:

Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo. All that.

BW:

Oh gosh. Diego Rivera was all over the, you know—

AW:

Did you have time to get to—

BW:

Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

AW:

Gosh.

BW:

We spent every minute of every day.

AW:

How terrific.

BW:

And a whole lot of the nights.

AW:

Yeah.

BW:

Yeah, just going and doing and spent some time out at the university. Of course, we—I don't know where my phone is, but I took a picture the other day once Popocatepetl, the volcano erupted. I took a picture of it off the television. I've got it on my—we climbed to the top of Popo.

AW:

Oh, you did?

BW:

And you know, we did it all. We went to the catacombs and we went to Taxco, where the silver mines were and we saw the little children out on the highways. "Níquel, níquel." Won my heart for what I've spent my life doing. So of course, North Carolina was a big part of that too.

AW:

Sure.

BW:

So, because we had many poverty pockets still in North Carolina when I was in high school.

AW:

Right. Yeah, of course. What was Texas Tech like in those years for you? Kind of describe—

BW:

Texas Tech was warm and fuzzy.

AW:

Yeah. It wasn't that big then.

BW:

It was 5,600 students my freshman year. There were—not really my freshman year, but very soon, maybe the sophomore year, we started getting a lot more veterans coming back.

AW:

G.I. Bill.

BW:

And started building the population into a little bit of a different thing. But Tech was—I mean, everybody went to the pep rallies. Everybody rang the victory bell. Everybody went to the

games. You know, there was—we were in the old stadium that they picked up and moved forward and we were out there as they were moving it forward.

AW:

Me too.

BW:

Were ya?

AW:

I went to watch that, yeah.

BW:

I remember Dr.—he wasn't a doctor either. S.S. McKay taught history. He was one of the—everybody had to have a course under him, or you hadn't had a good experience—I mean, you hadn't had a full experience at Tech. I remember one morning, whether it was—I don't remember what day. I think it was a Friday, maybe. We got up to Dr.—to Mr. McKay's class and he had his arm stretched across the door and he said, "You can't come in. You've got to go downstairs." We had just been admitted to the Southwest Conference and the whole Tech—everybody in Tech marched down Broadway.

AW:

Oh cool.

BW:

You know, but he said, "You cannot come to class today. If you come in, you're going to get an F." [Laughter] Because he wanted to go with us. Everybody was looking forward to that day. I think that was the spring of '56, maybe.

AW:

Sounds like—I'd have to look it up, but that sounds about right.

BW:

I can't remember if it's '56 or '57, but anyway, it was—I guess for the lack of a better word, it was a family. Texas Tech was a family.

AW:

What was it like being a woman student in those years?

BW:

It was fun. I pledged Tri Delta and we had a wonderful pledge class and my pledge class, we were initiated in the spring of '56, and we still have an annual reunion. We are still all together. I mean, everybody is still very close. There were lots of mixers. The fraternities and sororities, you know, all had—there was a lot of fun. There wasn't—there were not a lot of politics. It was more just, you know, everybody enjoyed everybody. No matter who you were. You know, I don't like her because she's a, you know, whatever, whatever. It wasn't that competitive. It was more of a, you know, just different groups having fun and having mixers and everybody getting to know each other. I was on the freshman council, which had kind of—I had lots of good meetings with people on the campus. Involved in several of the different—what they called the SUB, the student union activities, where we played bridge every day at noon. You just didn't—you know, you'd get out of class and run over and deal all the cards and whoever was there sat down at the table and you know, it was just—

AW:

I, frankly, am glad that it's back to being a SUB because it was the SUB when I started there too.

BW:

It was a real SUB. It was the Student Union Building. Are you getting tired of that chair? These kind of get tired. There's a more comfortable one we can trade it if you need to.

AW:

No, I'm just fine. No.

BW:

Do you need to stretch your knee?

AW:

What time is it?

BW:

I don't know.

AW:

Let's look because we—I want to—

BW:

I can't see that. It's 10—

AW:

It's 10:30.

BW:

10:30, yeah.

AW:

Oh, past it. I want to get to because this is, I know right this minute, that this is going to take more than one day to get your interview, so I want to—what I want to do is work. Since you've got that thing to do a little later, I would like—

BW:

I don't have to be there 'til twelve.

AW:

Right. But I mean, I don't want to work you right up to the last minute.

BW:

No, it's okay. I mean, you do what you need to do.

AW:

No, what we'll do is we'll get up to a good stopping point and then we'll set a time for the next interview so that it's easier for me to take back up once we have space. So let's—something else I'd like to know is what it was like in Lubbock at that time period, too. Now, you're in college so a lot of what you knew about Lubbock was wrapped up in the college, but you're also—you had been here a long time.

BW:

I lived at home. I didn't live in the dorm.

AW:

Oh. So you lived at home?

BW:

Yeah, so I lived at home.

AW:

So what was Lubbock like? How much of a part of Lubbock was Texas Tech?

BW:

Integral. I mean, that's a misnomer. I mean, it was—

AW:

Yeah. They were one in the same in some ways.

BW:

They were Lubbock and Lubbock were Texas Tech, you know? It was just—it was so many things. The community, the city was trying hard to incorporate the out of town students and the foreign students into more of the community life. Into the churches and, you know, encouraging the students to be a part of Lubbock. I can't think of Lubbock without Tech and I can't think of Tech without Lubbock. I still can't, you know?

AW:

Yeah, right.

BW:

Fifty years later.

AW:

Well it's, you know, we—

BW:

Or sixty years later.

AW:

I've actually got a contract with Tech Press to write up a history of Lubbock that I've been thinking about for a long time.

BW:

Oh wow.

AW:

That came about when we were doing the Centennial, but you know, I've thought about that really there are two major things. One is where Lubbock is on this 12,000 year trail, you know, that—for this part of the world.

BW:

Absolutely.

AW:

So that, but the other thing is Texas Tech. And then, maybe the tornado. If you look at those three major things, you've kind of—all of Lubbock is wrapped up in that and without Texas Tech, Lubbock would be maybe Plainview or Brownfield. You know what I mean?

BW:

Thank you, Preston Smith.

AW:

That's exactly right. And whoever and Grover Murray and all the people that came along. But so yeah, it's interesting to hear you say that about how connected they were.

BW:

Yeah, it was. They were so connected and they were connected by bus. You know, there were lots of buses and students used those buses and we all—you know, you could get to school on the bus, or get downtown on the bus.

AW:

Yeah. What was your mom's work like? She was still at Lubbock National?

BW:

No. First National.

AW:

First National. I'm sorry. I thought it was—

BW:

No, that's—no, it was First National. Lubbock National was catty-corner.

AW:

Right, right.

BW:

They were across the street. Mother, when she first came here, she got a job at First National Bank and she was—what did she—she was their cashier. That's—no. She wasn't. She was their general ledger bookkeeper. She kept all the books for the bank and she sent out all the statements at the end of each.

AW:

That's a big deal, yeah.

BW:

And one of the things that I did as an elementary student is that I would get home and the bus was a block away and when mother had to put out the bank statements, you know, everything was manual. So at age six, I would take my nickel and get on the bus on the corner of 23rd and Avenue T and go down and get off at the bank, which was there right across from the courthouse at the time. The old First National Bank. The real First National Bank. I would go in their backdoor and go in and I'd put all the statements in the envelopes and seal them and stamp them. They had one of those old white things with water in it that you roll the envelope across. So at the end of every month, that was my job as an elementary student to go down and help mother get all the statements out. So I became one of their surrogate—

AW:

So you were in the banking business yourself?

BW:

I was in the banking business and Walter Posey was the chairman of the board and Roy Brittle was the president and they all took good care of all of us. You know, and I kind of grew up in the bank because I just kept helping mother and by the time I got in junior high, at age fourteen, I got a handicap driver's license because mother didn't have a way to get to work. I mean, Lubbock had grown so much that there wasn't any place for her to park and so the juvenile court allowed me to have a driver's license at age fourteen, which made the principal of O.L. Slaton very unhappy.

AW:

Really?

BW:

Because he had a student with a car, which he'd never had before. So I would take mother to work and go to school and go pick her up from work and we'd go home after school. So anyway, that was an early experience, but I was kind of connected helping her work and her helping me school. You know, we had—and taking care of her mother, my grandmother.

AW:

So I guess O.L. Slaton didn't have any student parking at that time.

BW:

They had one place that I was to park in and I was to take no other students with me at noon to the Edder's Rebel, which was right across the way.

AW:

Yes. I know it. So this would've been 19—

BW:

Let's see. That would've been about 1952 or '3. Somewhere along there.

AW:

Well we moved to Lubbock in '53 from Slaton and my mother didn't drive, but we would take one of the neighborhood mothers drove and we would go to the Rebel and I remember—

BW:

Yeah. Jerry Edder was in our class.

AW:

Was he?

BW:

Uh-huh, and he was on roller skates out there after school.

AW:

Well to me, it was the most grown up thing I'd ever done as a little kid because there were these teenagers and they were all handsome. The men were handsome. The women were beautiful. They would roller skate out.

BW:

Roller skate out. Well I had to get—

AW:

Now, you know, I heard—

BW:

I had to get parent's permission. I had to get letters from all the parents for the kids that were allowed to go with me in my car.

AW:

So I learned, in fact, in my office—when you're next down to the Southwest Collection, come upstairs. I have a photograph that I was given. It's an aerial photo of the Rebel just before it opened.

BW:

Oh really?

AW:

So it's just—

BW:

Oh, Jerry. Has Jerry seen that? I wonder.

AW:

I don't think so.

BW:

I'll tell him you have it.

AW:

Yes, please because we'll—

BW:

I talk to him about three times a week. They're living out at Raider Ranch now.

AW:

Well there—I understand that there was an exact duplicate on the north side of town called the Yankee.

BW:

The Yankee. And then they had the Etter's Why Not, which was around—you remember where Paul Inger's station was Avenue?

AW:

Oh yeah. Mrs. Inger was my third grade teacher at Hodges.

BW:

Well it was right there by Paul Inger—oh really? She taught lots of kids.

AW:

Yeah, and so we used to—she was one of my favorite teachers and we used to—we would go up to that store just because of—

BW:

Yeah, well they had that and then when they closed the one here, they had one in Ruidoso for a while.

AW:

Called the Why Not?

BW:

No. I think it was the Etter's Drive-In or something. I don't think it took sides in the Confederate War or the Yankee War. But anyway, we fortunately all lived through all of that and I don't know how we got off on that, but.

AW:

No, that's not getting off. It's a part of the story.

BW:

Okay. So I don't know where you want—do you want me to finish Tech?

AW:

Yes, let's finish. But did you, besides helping your mom at the bank, did you have any other kind of job as a college or high school student?

BW:

Let me answer that by telling you that I put money in social security every year since I was twelve years old until I retired and then I missed a couple of years and then I've come back to it. My first job—my first social security deposit was made from Hemphill-Wells Department Store, where I worked in their gift-wrap department during the holidays and I was twelve years old.

AW:

The grandmother that I'm talking about, the house that we're in now, when she was retired—excuse me—she worked holidays in a gift wrap department of Hemphill's in Lowery center.

BW:

Oh really? Well—

AW:

And it was—

BW:

I was downtown in the basement.

AW:

Yeah, well I think they stuck them in the attic over on—at Monterey.

BW:

Yeah, well I got to put them on the carrier. When someone had come to pick up their package, I went to get it and put it on the carrier.

AW:

So you didn't work year round, it was just the holidays?

BW:

It was the holidays, yeah. So that was my first job and then when—during the rest of the time, I worked at Franklin's Department Store selling women's clothing on the weekends.

AW:

Now, Franklin's was—

BW:

It was on Broadway.

AW:

Yeah, just down from the square.

BW:

On the opposite corner from—let's see. It was Nicners [?] [1:35:30] on this end and it was down kind of not—it's in the block. This side of S&Q Clothiers, I guess. I can't—I know where it was, but I can't remember. I think it was this side of Chris's too. It was on the corner this way from Chris's. S&Q was across from Chris's. Anyway, so I worked there for a couple of years while I was in junior high and then I babysat a lot. My sister was twelve years older than I was and she got married while I was in junior high. All of her friends had babies. I mean, they all got married and they were young couples.

AW:

Oh, so that was natural employment for you.

BW:

I did lots of babysitting. And then, let me think what else I did. I guess that was probably all the major stuff I did is in high school and then at Tech, I worked in the—you will relate to this—in the old journalism building for the—what was the publishing? Tech Press. For the Tech Press. I spent two years working with the Tech Press. Tooting the Tech Catalogue and all of their

periodicals and books and on that, they had a big round table and then they had a stapler that you worked with your foot. Anyway, I worked down there a lot of hours in between and I worked for Dr. Steglich in his office when he was head of the sociology department.

AW:

Who were the people in sociology? I'm just wondering if any of them—

BW:

Miss Smith. Mable Smith was one of them and then Dr. Steglich. Warren Steglich, who went from here to El Paso. Dr. Koos came in my last, my senior year. And someone from South America, whose name I can't call right now came in just as I was leaving. Those were the main ones that were there. Koos and Steglich and Smith.

AW:

Yeah, I think none of them were when I started in the fall of '66.

BW:

Well I started to get my master's and all of a sudden, Dr. Koos had a heart attack and died and they were without—I just had to walk away from it because they were—they didn't have graduate—the new came in. They put all in undergraduate and they didn't have any graduate level professors so I quit going to graduate school.

AW:

So when you graduated Tech, you went straight into a master's program?

BW:

When I graduated, I was going to went into it, but then actually never got credit because I had to dropout.

AW:

How long were in you in? A year? A semester?

BW:

No. Just part of a semester.

AW:

Part of a semester.

BW:

Yeah. And then I went, at that point, let's see. I was working for Porter Oil Company. I did

bookkeeping for—they were the Sinclair Distributor, so I did their office bookkeeping and stuff while I was going to go to graduate school. I have to tell you about my experience. We're jump shifting because in the meantime after, during that year that I was going to go to graduate school, I married and we—I'm going to jump shift and not get off on that, except that I married Stanley Wheeler, who was from Southland, Texas, and he was farming at Southland. He had been in the military. He was in the—what am I trying to say? Anyway, he had to come home and was needing to keep farming and I was working for the oil company so we decided to live that first year in Slaton until we kind of got going.

AW:

Really? And that would've been 19—

BW:

That would've been 1959-60. So we married in May and he was in the National Guard and he'd come home and we had Spanish together and blah, blah. So anyway, all of that is to say that we married in May and it was in the newspaper, back in the days when the *Avalanche Journal* said, "Betty and Stanley Wheeler married and they're going to live in Slaton." Well the superintendent from Slaton, Dr. P.L. Vardy, had put a sign on our front door and when we got home from our honeymoon, it said, "Please call Dr. P.L. Vardy." Because in the newspaper, it had said we both had college degrees from Texas Tech. [Phone rings]

AW:

That's alright. I'll just pause it. [Pause in recording]

BW:

Need to do that. Anyway—

AW:

I just ignore them.

BW:

Dr. Vardy.

AW:

How do you spell Vardy?

BW:

V-a-r-d-y. V as in victory. Dr. Vardy had put the note on our door that said, "Please contact Dr. Vardy." I thought, well okay. I'm working. Stanley's in the National Guard. He has six weeks of summer camp. He's farming. He has a degree from Tech. I have a degree from Tech. Dr. Vardy

said, "We need for you all to teach." I said, "I have absolutely no interest in teaching. I never took an education class. I have a job. I'm probably going to go back to graduate school when they get the professors." And Stanley said, "I can't. I've got to do National Guard."

AW:

Yeah, farm.

BW:

"I'm farming. We can't do that." So that summer, we took two weeks at the end of the summer to go see my daddy who was still alive in the veteran's home and for him to meet Stanley and we came home on the night of labor day and you know, school started on Tuesday after labor day back in the good old days.

AW:

Yes, which always seemed to me to be a logical time to start school.

BW:

It still is. You might want to make a note of that. It's still the logical time.

AW:

Yeah, that's right.

BW:

We got in about 2:30 in the morning with two weeks of dirty clothes and all those things and there was a note on our front door that said, "Contact Dr. P.L. Vardy." Well we went in the backdoor and I didn't see that note that night and at eight o'clock the next morning, the telephone rang and Dr. Vardy said, "This is Dr. P.L. Vardy. Where are you?" I said, "I'm standing in my house. What's the problem?" He said, "We have a group of fourth graders waiting for you and I've got parents in there." And I said, "Waiting for me to do what? I've got to be at the oil company at nine o'clock." And he said, "We had to have you all. You have to teach." And I said, "We can't." And he said, "Well what am I going to do? I've got parents in the room waiting with thirty-six low IQ students for you to teach."

AW:

Thirty-six?

BW:

Thirty-six.

AW:

Low IQ students?

BW:

Low IQ students. Ninety and below IQ.

AW:

So this is not only you've never had education. You've never had special education.

BW:

And I said, "I'll call in the oil company today and I will go in and babysit that class for you today, but you've got to make other plans because I can't do that." He said, "Well where's Mr. Wheeler?" And I said, "He's right here.", "Hello?", "Mr. Wheeler, we've scheduled you at the junior high for the eighth grade history and basketball." And he said, "I can't do that." He said, "I don't know what we're going to do." Well to make this story end, when school was out in May, after we both taught that year in Slaton, we moved to Lubbock because he was paying our way—I probably shouldn't put that in there.

AW:

No, that's all right.

BW:

He said, "We will pay for you all to get emergency certificates and go to Tech this summer so you can continue to teach. You can't teach if you live in Lubbock. You can't teach in Slaton." Or couldn't at the time. We moved to Lubbock that summer.

AW:

So you wouldn't have to go back?

BW:

So we did—you know, because neither one—

AW:

That is the darneest thing.

BW:

It was a wonderful year. I loved those students and I saw one of them last summer, you know? And here they are, sixty-nine years old.

AW:

Where in Slaton did you live?

BW:

545 Westland.

AW:

Because I was born in Mercy Hospital.

BW:

Were you? I've spent a lot of time—

AW:

Yeah. My grandmother—my granny, I never knew my granddad, my mother's father, but then my dad's mom—dad lived on the north side, a little farm on the north side. So I spent a lot of time in Slaton as a kid. I've never—that's quite a story about getting impressed into teaching.

BW:

We were.

AW:

How did you meet Stanley, a farmer from Southland?

BW:

A farmer from Southland and I had Spanish class together when we were both at Tech and he graduated ahead of me.

AW:

What did he study at Tech?

BW:

Government and history and ended up teaching history and went back and got his degree. I mean, his teaching certificate and he ended up as principal out at Cooper and at Roosevelt.

AW:

Did he teach in Lubbock ISD any?

BW:

Not after he did his practice teaching, I don't think.

AW:

Did he continue to farm?

BW:

He continued to farm and that farm is still being farmed. He died with lung cancer in the year 2000. So anyway, we divorced in the meantime. So we hadn't kind of gotten to that chapter. So but we've—that was our Slaton experience and we both loved it, but we were neither one prepared for it, nor had we planned on it. I mean, I had other—

AW:

Yeah. So did you ever go back to the Porter Oil Company?

BW:

That summer, I helped them out some, but—

AW:

After your teaching?

BW:

After that, when we were moving back to Lubbock and then the next fall starts my professional life.

AW:

Yeah. Let's—let me just ask a question about the Porter Oil Company. I think I remember—

BW:

Harry Porter?

AW:

Well no, I think I remember that the Porter Oil Company put out a map of West Texas that was a giveaway map that they printed up and gave to their filling stations, who bought product from them.

BW:

Sinclair.

AW:

And I think it's one of the few—if I'm getting Porter, the oil company right, it was printed in Lubbock and it was one of the few West Texas maps. It had all the little towns, you know?

BW:

Oh wow.

AW:

I need to research that.

BW:

I don't remember. I mean, I'm not familiar with that.

AW:

Oh, you don't remember it? Well okay, then it probably is a different oil company.

BW:

But they—I mean, they were here quite a while after that. They had all the Sinclair stations.

AW:

No, this would've been about the same time.

BW:

I, you know, had to collect money and do all the stuff. But they were wonderful to work—I mean, it was a wonderful experience for me, because there again, I wasn't prepared to do bookkeeping, but it didn't take me very long to learn because that was my job.

AW:

We grew up with it.

BW:

I did. So but anyway—

AW:

So your professional career starts the year after your being drafted into teaching?

BW:

I would say my professional career started with teaching and then—

AW:

Oh, well but I mean your other--

BW:

And then from then on in the direction that I was moving.

AW:

Okay. Then let's stop right now and take it up there because this would be a great place to pick up.

BW:

I want to give you something.

AW:

Yeah. Let me look. And that's about right. It's about eleven.

BW:

I made some copies.

AW:

Oh good. This is like a CV.

BW:

Are we off the air?

AW:

I can get us off the air and let me do that and say thank you very much for this morning and we'll set—when we get the tape recorder turned off—we'll set a time and date for our next session.

BW:

I am so happy to have been able to share some wonderful memories of Lubbock, Texas.

AW:

Yeah, oh this has been great.

BW:

And North Carolina with you.

AW:

That's been great. All right. We'll stop it there.

End of Recording