

**Oral History Interview of
Ty Powell**

**Interviewed by: David Marshall
January 12, 2017
Plains, Texas**

**Part of the:
*Agriculture Interviews***

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Transcript Overview:

This interview features Ty Powell as he discusses a wide array of topics, including ranching, cattle, and weather.

Length of Interview: 02:50:05

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Keywords

Ranching, Wildlife, Weather

Ty Powell (TP):

I'm good at that. I'm really good at that.

David Marshall (DM):

[Laughs] The date is January 12, 2017. This is David Marshall along with Tai Kreidler interviewing Ty Powell. We are two, two and a half, miles west of Plains, Texas.

TP:

North, Northwest.

DM:

Northwest of Plains, Texas on 380. Can you give me your full name for start?

TP:

Ty Earl Powell.

DM:

And that's Ty, T-y?

TP:

Yes sir.

DM:

Can you give me your date of birth?

TP:

November 4, 1944.

DM:

Nineteen forty-four. Okay. You've talked to us a couple of times about your family history and I wonder if you could start out by going back as far as you know, you can even talk about your DNA profile if you want to. Talk as far as you know about the family that especially came out to this country.

TP:

Okay, I'd be glad to. What I've always heard about my mother's people was that they came—I can go back as far as Tennessee. They were in Tennessee along about sometime in the 1890s I guess they worked their way west and came to Gainesville, Texas I think, as far as what I've always heard. That's where grandmother—not my grandmother, my granddad on my mother's side was born in the 1890 in Gainesville—in Cook County, I believe. They stayed there a while,

I guess, then came on out to Canyon, Texas. They lived there for two or three years, I think, on the T Anchor, what's now called the T Anchor Ranch. It was called the T Anchor Ranch then even my granddad said. His name was Murphy Luna and his dad was named W.J. Luna; William Jackson was my great granddad's name. This is just on my mother's side. I don't know much about the Powell side but we'll get to that after a while probably.

DM:

Let me jump in here and ask, do you know what they were doing in Gainesville?

TP:

I'm sure he had a little bunch of cows and he was probably farming a little bit I imagine because he's always had cattle, as far as I know. That may have been what he was doing when he came to Canyon—or out to the T Anchor Ranch. Anyway, then in 1905 I understand that he bought some land from the state of Texas here what is now Yoakum County; he bought seven sections. [clears throat] He actually made a trade, I guess, for two acres for one of what he owned in, I guess it'd be the Randall County or Potter County, I don't know which—where the T Anchor Ranch is. He supposedly, according to what my granddad said, he bought two acres—he traded two acres for—he traded one acre for two acres down here in what is now Yoakum County. Then he started working on trying to get a little town established in about 1906, I guess, and built a couple of buildings or so. I guess he had to go back to Plainview, maybe, to get the lumber to bring that down here. That's as far south as the railroad came from what I understand. He got a well drilled by my grandmother's people who were—whose name was Robert Hurst; he supposedly had a well drilled. He was already over here, he came over here—Robert Hurst came over in this area in what is now Yoakum County in 1903, I understand, and lived in a half dugout southeast where Plaines is, about a mile now. Evidently, he was drilling wells for all these ranches that were using Yoakum County for grazing. Great granddad Luna, I'm sure, got him to drill the first well here in what's—first windmill well in what is now the town South Plains.

DM:

Did you ever hear how deep they had to go to drill these wells back then?

TP:

No, but I'm sure they had to go eighty feet probably, sixty to eighty feet. I think you can hit a little bit of water standing at about sixty-five feet.

DM:

What's the case now?

TP:

It's probably that deep or deeper probably. There's a strata of water sand, I think, starting at

sixty-five right here by where this house sits. Then you got into blue clay at about a hundred feet. That's still the strata and it's still plenty of water for windmill, and for house purposes. Now irrigation, I don't know. Anyway, they drilled that well—he drilled that well and put up a windmill and then started building a building or two and trying to put in a little store and so forth. I think then he got the post office established probably in 1906 or '07 and he finally applied to the state to get the county organized in 1907, is what I understand and they built a courthouse. There's a picture on that little windmill there on the courthouse square now in, I think, 1908, of the courthouse standing in 1908. I think the Centennials—I think the County was organized in 1907. The post office probably came in about that same year I believe, in 1906 or '07. Then he would—to get the town promoted and get it started he would give everybody a block, a lot or a block, of land in Plains to get people to move here. That encouraged people off and on all along to come down to Plains. Of course, it was just bare old prairie land before that naturally. To go back now, I think that the Scarborough Cattle Company was probably grazing Yoakum County before the county was organized because my grandmother Hurst's brother worked for Scarborough Cattle Company and they had him living out here west, about ten or twelve miles in a little one-room shack in about 1904 or '05. That's why I think that the Scarborough's and the other big ranches were using Yoakum County just to graze it until it finally got organized. There were probably leasing from the state or just maybe even wildcatting it. My great uncle, my grandmother's brother, said one time in 1904 or '05 that he went all the way from sometime in August until Christmas day and never saw another human. Finally, somebody over across the state line, I think a fellow of the name of Ruth Roy, came over and saw his little shack from two or three miles away, came over and invited him over to Christmas dinner. That's about as far back as I know about Yoakum County.

DM:

Let me ask you, do you know of any remnants of dugouts in this area?

TP:

No, I don't know that I could take you to one exact—my great granddad, W.J. Luna, supposedly had a dugout right west of where Plains is now on the Sulphur Springs Draw, but I couldn't take you back to where it's at. Supposedly it was on the south side of the Draw facing north but I just don't know exactly where it was. I think that's what he lived in until he got a building built, a real house to live in is what I understand.

DM:

Also in regard to the early town, do you know of any early newspapers or how far back when they began Yoakum County?

TP:

The earliest newspaper I know of was called the Yoakum County Review. I think it was in

existence and being printed in the thirties when my mother and daddy married in 1934. I think there was an article in there about them getting married.

DM:

Okay, but you haven't heard of the existence of this before, like in the teens or even in the first years?

TP:

No, I don't. I understand that there was a couple of different banks in Plains in the teens. One of them was the First State Bank of Plains and I've got some of my granddad's bank statements from that bank. There's also a Cattleman's Bank Exchange—or a Cattleman's Exchange, I believe. I don't know who ran that bank but I think—but the first state bank, I think, was operated by Marshall Kendrick who later moved to Brownfield—he moved back to Brownfield. I think he originally lived in Brownfield and came out here and set the bank up for a while and in 1919 he went back to Brownfield, I think, and built the First National Bank in Brownfield.

DM:

Do you recall hearing about any other early businesses?

TP:

Let's see, there's—well, I started seeing—there was a business that I can't think of the name of it in Plains. I just can't recall it I guess.

DM:

Have you ever seen an old map, old town map, that would go back to the teens at least or even before?

TP:

No. I've seen some maps of this area and I think I may have a copy of the different ranches were located in this area back in the 1890s maybe, but I don't know of a map of the town section. I think I can pull that book out and show you a map of this area, of different ranches that were operating in 1890. My grandmother said when they came here, Mrs. **Lizzy Hurst** [0:09:39] Luna said she came with here with her daddy like I said before, in 1903. She said the JCross Ranch was operating east of Plains, a couple miles. I don't know how big it was but they had a building there east—or a house there east of a Plains, a couple of miles. It was a camp or a ranch house or something. That was the JCross that she always said. They had to go back and forth to Stanton to get their mail back then. About every three months they'd follow the Sulphur Springs Draw down to Big Springs and towards—and they branched off and went over to Stanton to get their mail about every three months. They came over here in 1903 from where Knowles, New Mexico was located. Knowles is a little community north of Hobbs, about fifteen miles. They were living

in a half dugout around the Knowles area. He brought his oil well machine over here, I'm sure to drill oil—to drill water wells for these ranches that were using this area. I'm sure there were several ranches, according to this map, that in the 1890s—there were several ranches per prominent around here. JCross was one of them and I'm sure Scarborough out of Midland was another big ranch that was in this area.

DM:

Okay. Anyway, I took you away from the story of your great-grandfather so if you could continue—

TP:

He just kept on—he lost his wife in 1906 and then ironically, Robert Hurst was here, living around here drilling the wells and then he passed away in about 1906 also, I believe, or maybe '07. Then his widow, who was Mary Hurst, married W.J. Luna. They both had families in which Murphy—this is an ironic situation I guess, kind of comical and kind of crazy. Later on then her daughter, Mrs. Hurst's daughter, married W.J. Luna's son. Theoretically, they were step-brother and step-sister, but of course, there was no blood connected obviously. It's just kind of a comical, ironic situation. Then W.J. and Mrs. Hurst—W.J. Luna and Mrs. Hurst then married—they were already married, I believe, and they moved to Lubbock in about 1909 or '10. They operated the Nicolett Hotel, which is on the south side of the square across from the courthouse. Then he passed away in 1942, I believe; W.J. did—or maybe '43. She continued to live in Lubbock up until—she was eighty-five when she passed away in 1948, I believe. They would come back and forth down here to see my grandparents and so forth. My granddad, Murphy Luna, told me that when he and my grandmother married in 1909 his dad had given him a quarter section over Southwest Plains, about a mile and a half, for a wedding present. He started building a house on that quarter section to get ready for his wife to live in. He had to go to Plainview to get the lumber for that house. I'm sure he did that all the year before in 1908 because that is as far south as the railroad came. He could either go to Plainview and get the lumber or go down to Big Springs or something where the railroad went through there but he did tell me that he went to Plainview to get the lumber. I've got a bank statement of his business where he used a bank at Gomez, Texas, just south of Brownfield. I'm sure that was Marshall Kendrick again who had a bank there and he came on over to Plains. I saw a bank statement of March of 1909 and had some checks in it so I guess he was using that bank to finance building his house I'm sure.

DM:

Tell me again what year that would've been that he built that house out there.

TP:

Nineteen-o-nine or 1908. I'm sure he started on it in 1908 because he had to go so far and make so many trips to Plainview to get the lumber for it. I'm sure he started a year ahead of time.

DM:

I think there was a Higginbotham up there at Plainview at that time. Do you remember hearing—

TP:

No, I didn't. He may have told me but I don't remember but I'm sure that's where he got the lumber. They were very prominent. Higginbotham Bartlett was a very prominent lumber yard owner there after I started growing up. I remember that name very well and I think they still exist.

DM:

They were scattered about pretty well too.

TP:

Yes, yes they were.

DM:

Is the house still out there?

TP:

Oh yeah.

DM:

Oh is it?

TP:

Yes. If you want to we can go see it after a while. It's not in living shape but it's still—the original two rooms are still standing and then my dad added onto it in 1944, the summer before I was born in November. It's not in living condition. We lived there from nineteen—of course I grew up there all my life till mother and daddy moved out to Fort Sumner, New Mexico in 1960. Whenever they moved out to Fort Sumner I moved in here where we're sitting now with my grandparents. It's my cousin—one of my cousin's on the mother's side lived in it until about 1980, I guess, or after 1980 when we moved in this house in 1980, which was built in 1941, of course. If you want to and we have time we'll go and look at it.

DM:

If we have time at the end of this we can see what our schedule works out.

TP:

See how it works out.

DM:

Who built this house?

TP:

My granddad did, Murphy Luna. He was the son of W.J. He acquired this land, I think, a couple of oil sections or a couple of sections, I think, here in the late twenties I believe. Then he pastured cattle over here for several years then after he and his wife we getting on up around fifty years old they wanted to move over here in some "tighter land" he called it and get out of the shinnery. Over there there's shin oak, that's a brush. You've heard of that I'm sure. They moved over here and picked this spot out then—he picked this spot out after the highway—I think the state decided to put a little bypass through here where the current 380 is now. He wanted to put it pretty close to the highway so he did, it's about a quarter mile. They were surveying the right-of-way for 380 about six months before he decided to start building this house. That's the way that worked out.

DM:

Was this area predominantly ranching back then?

TP:

Oh yeah.

DM:

Was there any farming, large-scale farming?

TP:

Not large-scale, there was just farms whenever the ranchers plowed up little spots of land to raise feed for their teams and maybe some to feed the cattle.

DM:

Maybe a garden crop.

TP:

Yes. All hundred acres or maybe something like that. My granddad plowed up a little piece of land there southeast of the old home place there about sixty or eighty acres. You can still see the imprints of the farm land now. Of course, it's all grassed over and turned back to pasture but you can see where the edges are blown up and piled up with sand in the pasture. Of course, they've covered over with vegetation. Everybody had to plow a little bit of land up to raise feed for their

teams. The years it was good, it was good, and the years it was bad, it was bad. I guess they had to haul feed in from somewhere else, I don't know. I'm sure they did.

DM:

Was there a pretty much standardized size for these holdings out here? Your family had some pretty large holdings but was quarter section usually what was operated, what was managed, by family?

TP:

I think it was probably—that would be the smallest, the quarter section would be. They could make a good living on it, and well it and it was just how much money they had when they come to Yoakum County is what they could buy.

DM:

In farming areas it sometimes becomes more standardized, like quarter sections' pretty common, because that's how much you can manage farming, but ranching it can go much larger.

TP:

Yeah, you had to have more land to do more ranching because this old land, year in and year out, this old land—the shin oak land where it's a little sandier, probably twelve or thirteen cows per section year in and year out is about as heavy as you can stock it. This land where this house is setting is hard land and it's short grass mesquite land. You can probably run eighteen cows per section on it and be safe. If you're going to run seventy-five or a hundred cows, you had to have four or five sections anyway. Some people were able to buy a part of that and lease the rest of it. I've seen checks where my granddad has given, for leasing sections of land, for ten cents an acre. I've seen several checks he's written out to absentee owners to rent their section of land for sixty-four dollars a year. Cattle were very cheap back then so ten cents an acre was probably a going rate and you probably couldn't stand to get much more than that. At one time in the late twenties and early thirties he was pasturing cattle for Slaughter's down at Post, and he told me he had fifteen-hundred cows of theirs out here that he was pasturing around different pieces of land. There's one ranch, the Bennett Ranch between here and Denver City was letting him pasture cattle on them. He didn't have all fifteen-hundred down there, but he did have several hundred I think on them that he was pasturing for, I guess that was the John Slaughter family down at Post. I've got some letters that John Slaughter's son had written to my granddad, Jay Slaughter. He would just write him a letter in the early thirties and late, I guess 1930s, when I saw the most letters there. He would just write him a letter and ask him how he's getting along, ask him how the cattle were doing, and how much rain they'd had down there. One letter he asked my granddad, said, "Do you want me to render these cows down here in Garza County or do you want to render them for Taxes down in Yoakum County. I guess they figured out something anyway, which county needed the most revenue [DM laughs] for tax purposes. I'm so glad that

my granddad saved all of those papers because it is really history. It's so interesting to pull a bank statement out from Gomez, Texas when the First State Bank—which I never even knew that Gomez had a bank. Anyway, there was one there. Gomez was settled before Brownfield was, I understand.

DM:

Is that right?

TP:

That's what I understand. They even had the courthouse records there in Gomez, and then later on because of laws or whatever they moved the courthouse records to Brownfield for whatever reason.

DM:

Did you ever get an idea of how much—how many cattle they could run per section over in the shinnery country as compared to over here?

TP:

Yeah, they probably—I think my granddad's always told me that he tried to run twelve or thirteen or maybe fourteen in the shinnery country. That's figuring it pretty conservative because that's figuring it to where you can stay year in and year out, whether it rained it not. You can maybe grow enough grass during the raining year that it would carry you on through the next year if it was dry. He told me he got to be a tax assessor in Yoakum County and I've got a certificate where he took the oath of office for tax assessor in Yoakum County in 1916. He told me after that when he'd go around and assess people, and ask them the number of cattle they had in Yoakum County for tax purposes. He said he assessed over thirty thousand mother cows, or thirty thousand head of cattle, in Yoakum County. He said he nearly knew that people wasn't turning in all of their cattle just because they didn't want to turn in all of them so they wouldn't have to pay any more taxes than what they had to pay. If that was the case then—there's nine-hundred sections in Yoakum, nine-hundred square miles—so if that was the case then that figured thirty head to a section, which was highly overstocked. [Laughter] Anyway, be that as it may.

DM:

Twelve or thirteen in shinnery and then how many did you say were here?

TP:

Eighteen or nineteen.

DM:

Quite a difference.

TP:

Or maybe twenty over here in this short grass area where the turf is thicker.

DM:

Is this mostly—is it buffalo grass and blue grama mostly?

TP:

Sideoats grama.

DM:

Sideoats.

TP:

Yes sir. That's about the three predominant grasses that's on this hard land. It's very strong grass, it really is. It's very strong grass. When it rains, what we call "when it rains right"—like we said, in 1941 my dad said that's the lightest cattle sold in 1941 because the grass stayed too sappy because of the excessive amount of rainfall, which was he said fifty-seven inches in 1941 here in Yoakum County.

DM:

That grass isn't prepared for that kind of—

TP:

No, no it's not. It's not adapted to that.

DM:

But it's so good in an arid area or semi-arid area. It survives so well. Have you ever seen any areas around here where it didn't make it because of drought?

TP:

Oh yes.

DM:

Oh really?

TP:

Oh yes. Oh yes. Oh yes. This turf will die out here on this hard land and it will over in sand too,

in the shinnery land. You bet the turf will die out. I've seen this pasture land blooming just like farmland and that wasn't that many years ago, probably ten years ago.

DM:

It wasn't from heavy grazing—

TP:

It wasn't from over-stocking, it was just because of extended drought years where the turf died out. When it starts back to raining, why the grass will come back faster than you ever realized. It's just adapted that way and it's just such a miracle. The first time I ever saw the turf die I guess was in the fifties and I wasn't paying much attention about it but the next year—the next time I noticed the turf died out pretty bad was in 1980 when we had a dry summer that year. Then in September we got seven and a half inches of rain in the middle of September from a hurricane that hit the Texas coast. About half the grass come back and the rest of the turf was dead. Then the next year we got a pretty wet year in '81 and so the turf then replenished back to its normal condition. I've seen it even in the nineties, and in the early 2000s of the turf died out, and the pasture would blow just like farmland. That's a sad site, let me tell you. It's just a sad site when you know—

Tai Kreidler (TK):

These result in what they call “blowouts” occasionally and be semi-permanent after the fact. You said a lot of it would turn and be all right but would some areas then continue to be sort of a wound in the landscape?

TP:

Yeah, it would last longer than normal but it'd eventually get something back on it. That's just the way soil recovers and vegetation recovers. Yeah, some places where the sand blows off of it and there's clay underneath it while there's not much vegetation that'll come back on straight clay because clay retains the moisture more so than sand does so it dries out quicker so the vegetation doesn't have a chance to come back on solid clay like it does sand. That's happened in some instances here in Yoakum county.

DM:

In your lifetime from what you've observed but also from what you've heard before maybe from your grandfather, can you talk about some invasive plants like mesquite? Was mesquite pretty bad in the early twentieth century or is it a problem now?

TP:

Yes, it's a problem now. I've been told that there wasn't hardly any mesquite up here until maybe the cattle from South Texas started making drives into Montana and they brought those

mesquite seeds with them, those mesquite beans with them, and scattered them then the mesquites got started. My grandmother says in the early 1900s when they first came to this part of the country that the red sage grass was as tall as the stirrups on a saddled horse. They were scattering mesquite then I'm sure, but even in this land north of the house right here, just a few hundred yards north of the house, mesquites have gotten much worse in the last sixty years. I started a mesquite spraying program, the last one in 2014, and I think it's going to be a worthwhile project because mesquites are so deep-rooted and they will just get any moisture that's available and they'll choke the grass out around them if they get thick enough. There's a chemical out now that will kill mesquites. They are a very noxious plant. Mesquites are tough to cope with. If one of them get thick enough they'll just about kill the grass out.

DM:

Have there been other ways of dealing them besides poisoning? Have people tried chaining them, or cutting them, digging them up?

TP:

Yeah, they haven't out in Yoakum County that I know of but further east of here down under the Cap [**Caprock**] they have. They've tried grubbing them with machinery, which that works all right and it gets it out permanently but you sure have a scar there where you tear that mesquite out of the ground and it takes a while for that to get seeded over but eventually it will. First thing to come in is weeds there where you disturbed the soil but the cattle like weeds just like—especially tumbleweeds—like they do the grass. Eventually you get grass to overtake it and you'll get seeds back. I guess they chose the spraying versus the mechanical because it might be a little bit cheaper, and easier to do, and it didn't scar the land so bad.

DM:

What about salt cedar? Any salt cedar in the waterways and the creek?

TP:

No sir. No, there's not any salt cedar. It's just a little bit too—well, it's just not a place for salt cedar to get started. We just don't have any live water other than what's—

DM:

Not enough.

TP:

—other than what's pumped by the windmills. So far there hadn't been any salt cedar problems. I understand over in New Mexico around up north towards Sumner and some of those dry creeks there where my mother and dad lived, there's lot of salt cedars there in that part of New Mexico

but down in here we just don't see it much. Maybe south of here, maybe in southeast, maybe there's lots of salt cedar there but not around here.

DM:

How about the shinnery, has it changed over time? Was there more at one time or is there more now or has it pretty well remained the same?

TP:

I think it's about remained the same.

DM:

Sandy country over there?

TP:

Yes sir. It grows in sandier country, semi-sandy I guess. It's got such a tremendous root system. I've also done some shinnery spraying back in the eighties and that's been very, very successful. [clears throat] At that time it costs about twenty dollars an acre to do it. Of course, I couldn't do that many acres, but I did enough to see the difference and make a lot of difference in the grass production. I'm going to say that where I sprayed the shinnery in '87 and '88 that the grass production increased four to five hundred percent.

DM:

Is that right?

TP:

Yes sir. Luckily those two years were good rainy years and so then the grass really had a chance to come on after I killed the shinnery out. Shin oak has the most extensive root system of any plant I think I've ever seen besides the mesquite. I've seen illustrations where they have washed the soil back away from shin oak roots and it's just like a net—yeah, it just like kind of a net underneath the ground. Now, I'll tell you something that happened in 2013, I believe. The shinnery always comes out about the first of April and gets fully leaved out. We had a killing freeze the 25th of May in 2013, I believe. We got down to twenty-seven degrees and it killed the shinnery back. I'm going to say it killed the shinnery back 80 percent. I've never seen that happen in my life. I've been here all my life and that's the first time I've ever saw that happen. I can take you over south over there toward—by the home place and show you land that the shinnery was probably killed out to 80 percent. Of course, the grass then has really come out. There's worlds of grass in that land right now, on that land. I guess that's a once in a lifetime deal. Twenty-fifth of May is the longest I've ever seen it go and still come a killing freeze. Our average—our last freeze date probably is the last week in April or something like that or maybe earlier than that. Two-thousand thirteen was a freak year.

DM:

Did people mostly graze their cattle on native grasses out here or did they plant other varieties.

TP:

They plant wheat and they plant some hay grazer. [Clears throat] There's really not too many native cattle—I say native cattle—there's not too many mother cows left in Yoakum County. The biggest percentage of the cattle that comes in Yoakum County are bought and brought in here and put on wheat and hay grazer in the summer time and wheat in the winter time. That's helped out the local farmers a good bit, naturally, for somebody to bring cattle in and pay them for that. That's helps their cash flow, obviously. The last fifteen years there's been more and more wheat planted in Yoakum County, or twenty years probably. Yoakum County is not a good wheat country. There's no saying if you can plant wheat for ten years and at the end of ten years you got to go back and buy some more seed because it never does raise enough to get your seed back hardly. You'll run out of planting seed. We have—our soil is shallow. We used to have plenty of water but not the water has really been pumped down, and the water tables have really lowered in the irrigation areas. This old soil is about three-four feet thick and then you get into caliche. We just don't have very strong soil here. Everybody's been able to cope with it somehow, you know, somehow.

DM:

Is it all cattle or are there other types of livestock that are raised here?

TP:

Yeah, it's all cattle.

DM:

And always has been or were there—do you remember any times where people brought in sheep or any other livestock?

TP:

I think back in the seventies or maybe the early eighties there's a fellow up in the northeast part of the county that brought in some Angora goats and tried them but then he didn't stay very long. I think the main reason why he brought in those Angora goats was because the incentive payment was good on the mohair. He didn't keep those over a couple or three years and then I think he got rid of them and went back to cattle. The sheep mainly are—the sheep industry was pretty big at one time over in Lee County, just across the state line west of here, and still is. There's still some sheep over there, but Yoakum County just wasn't much of a sheep country.

DM:

How about dairy?

TP:

No, no.

DM:

No dairy here ever?

TP:

No. There might have been just little bitty family dairies, was all, but nothing like a commercial dairy where they milked thousand or two thousand cattle there. They're over across the line in Lee County and there's more that used to be, and still is, maybe even more water in Lee County where they graze more—or raise more feed for the dairy. There is one dairy now, come to think of it, it was in the southwest part of the county but I don't think he milked over a hundred cows or something like that.

DM:

It's not there anymore.

TP:

No.

DM:

What time period would that have been?

TP:

I think they were—they probably operated from maybe the sixties until the nineties, maybe, or something like that. They eventually just sold all of their cattle and then went to town and got a job. Over Lee County there's several people from California that have come to Lee County, and bought land, and put in dairies. It's a big industry in Lee County now, where Lovington and Hobbs is. And on up there in Lamb County, there's lots of big dairies. They've come in the last ten or fifteen years. No, nothing big in Yoakum County.

DM:

What about beef cattle breeds here in Yoakum County, how they have changed over time. Was Hereford the predominant?

TP:

Everybody had Herefords, that was just the main breed back in the early days; everybody had Herefords. That was the predominant breed. Along about the fifties and early sixties, they started learning that crossing them with Angus was a good cross and did good in the feedlots so people gradually started cross breeding their cattle. I have gone to Angus—of course, the first cattle I

ever had was crossbred, that was back in the middle eighties—of my own but my dad always had Hereford and then when he and mother moved to Fort Sumner, New Mexico they bought some Angus out there then later he had Angus down here. My granddad always had Hereford cattle and he passed away in '66. He had bought a little handful of black cows the spring before he passed away but he always had Hereford cattle.

DM:

What about exotic breeds in the seventies or so, eighties, and started to see some—

TP:

Charolais, yeah. The most popular of the exotics that I know of are Charolais. They started coming in here in the seventies a little bit. They're a beef breed all right. They'll add lots of pounds to your cattle but I don't think they're—the meat quality is quite as good as Angus but they're just good for pounds. I even used Charolais bulls for several years here and I finally went back to Angus bulls because it's really a popular breed and the quality of their beef is really good, their meat. It does good in the feedlots. I've been please with Angus bulls and all of these cattle. I gradually bred them up from Charolais crosses and some straight blacks to more and more Angus cows.

DM:

It's pretty much a pure bred Angus?

TP:

Yeah, yeah. It's been proven that Angus beef is the finest textured beef of any of the beef breeds. I heard that back in the sixties from a registered Hereford breeder even, which I thought was kind of ironic. Anyway, I think it holds true that more and more restaurants are advertising certified Angus beef.

DM:

Did any people bring in Limousin or Brahma or any other types?

TP:

Even Santa Gertrudis. I guess the Brahmers—or Brahman is what they're really supposed to be called but we all call them Brahmer, that's the Texas slang. Brahmers don't do as well out here because it gets colder in the winter time and they're mainly a hot weather breed. Supposedly, Brahmers are the only breed of cattle that can sweat. That's why they're so well adapted to the Southeast part of Texas, South Texas, or maybe East Texas. Out here it just gets a little bit too cold for them to really do good. Now, Santa Gertrudis came in here for a while and they finally, I think, phased out because they're five-eighths Brahman and three-eighths Hereford, I understand. Limousin—there was some Limousin coming here for a while, not a very big scale,

but then they finally phased out. There's still some around but very few. It's still back to old mainstay of the beef breeds, of the American beef breed or the whatever.

DM:

Sounds like Yoakum County has been in the same pattern as most of Texas.

TP:

Yeah, I think so.

DM:

As far as this is concerned. How about now, are most people who raise cattle here raising Angus?

TP:

Yeah, I'd say so. They may be a few Charolais bulls in the area but mainly it's Angus. They kind of have to go toward where the market is, obviously, and raise what's most popular and sells the best. There's still a place for Charolais because they add a lot of weight gain to the cattle. I guess I'm just kind of hard-headed, I just like a straight Angus and I just try to improve on the Angus breed. I've been fortunate to be able to do that and increase the calf weights a little bit every year. Again, your calf weights off your cows is so dependent on the rainfall. You can sure raise a good calf with the right combination of genetics and nutrition, but it's got to rain. It's got to have some grass.

DM:

Have you seen or heard of any particularly bad parasitic problems, parasites or diseases in this area, whether now or in the twenties, thirties?

TP:

I understand back in the thirties and forties, the disease of blackleg, that's the common name for it, it was very bad. People starting vaccinating for that, and that's pretty well stopped, they had stamped it out. I'm sure there may be an isolated case of blackleg every once in a while, but I make sure I vaccinate for blackleg every year just as a safety precaution. I also give my calves Ivomec, which is a parasite controller for ticks and lice. I do anything I can to the cattle and I even implant them. I do anything I can to my calves to increase the weight gain because that's what I'm in the business for; to raise more and more pounds per cow. I couldn't qualify them as an organic breed but in—I'm still in the business to raise all the pounds I can, and if a calf gets sick I'm going to doctor them with some kind of antibiotic. I've been lucky the last couple of years, three years I guess, on weaning my calves and them not getting sick. So I hadn't had to give them any antibiotics, I've been very fortunate. That depends on the year I think, the type of fall—if gets hot in the day and cold at night, that's the kind of—that's really a good time for

disease to hit or respiratory disease. Knock on wood, I've been very lucky. Let's see, I can't think of any other cattle diseases. Let's see, there could be some tuberculosis that comes along every once in a while. Then there's some trichinosis, which is a reproductive disease, but luckily I haven't had any of that but I understand that there's some of that around.

DM:

Have there been any bad tick infestation years?

TP:

No, there's always been ticks around, but I don't think it's ever been very bad. Again, that's why I use Ivomec, to keep the tick population down and the lice population down. We have a problem with horn flies and heel flies. Of course, horn flies are just—they just come onto a cow or a bull—they're worse on bulls for some reason in the summer time [clears throat], and then heel flies. Heel flies—[clears throat] pardon me. Heel flies have always been around since day one and they sting the backs of the animals and it causes them to run; they get to running to try and get away from them. They lay an egg in the back of the cow or the bull, and of course, that devalues the value of the carcass because it makes a sore there.

DM:

I remember popping those grubs.

TP:

Oh do you? Well, I do too. The heel flies have been around since day one. It's kind of comical to watch a cow that gets by one because she'll start running and she'll stick her tail in the air. As the old saying going, "She'll put a figure nine in her tail and run for a hundred yards to try and get away from the fly. It's kind of funny. [clears throat] Anyway, it's a bad—they're a bad parasite but you can sure fight them with the use of Ivomec.

DM:

What about predators? You have any predators going after small calves?

TP:

Oh yeah. Luckily, I don't have that much of a problem but there's been coyotes around since day one and still they will—they're still around. They're around all the time, but if the mother is doing her job, she won't let that coyote get that calf. Still, the coyote kind figure a way sometimes to get a calf every once in a while, and I'm sure some people have problems with it and I may have more problems than I think I do, but I try to watch my cattle every day or every other day. I feed them every other day during calving to supplement them along. The first calves ever, I try to see them every day; the ones that are having their first calf in case of calving problems or something like that. Luckily, I don't think coyotes have been a problem for me.

DM:

They have to stay content with eating the afterbirth.

TP:

That's right. That's right. That's why they hang around they hang around the cows that are calving, for that very reason. If they get a chance—if they catch a cow not paying attention to her calf, they would get a calf if the occasion arises.

DM:

Are there any others that could potentially get a calf? You seen any big cats out here?

TP:

No, I've heard of them over in the east part of the county, but I've never seen a panther or a cougar out in this area.

DM:

Is it more rugged in east part of the county, places for them to hide, because this is [Inaudible 00:44:02]—

TP:

[clears throat]

DM:

—here.

TP:

I just don't know, I don't know. Maybe there's more farmland in Yoakum County period, that there's not much that they can feed off of. I hear the last two, three, four years ago I heard about a cougar or panther something in the eastern part of the county, but I never have seen one. In the last forty years we've had mule deer to move into Yoakum County.

DM:

How—forty years?

TP:

Yeah, I think in the early seventies they started coming in here. Of course, I grew up here, and I all I ever saw was antelope all the time when I was growing up. When we moved back in 1970 about a year, two, or three after that you started to hear deer being hit on the highway. I'm just nearly sure that those mule deer moved in here from the west, out of New Mexico, because the white-tail deer are all east here under the Cap and down south but these are mule deer.

DM:

Do you ever have any white-tail in Yoakum County?

TP:

No, I don't know that I've ever seen one.

DM:

Okay. So you're beyond that divide, there's kind of a divide there.

TP:

I guess there is. I guess they just don't come up that far up the Cap. We're ninety miles east of the Cap—west of the Cap. We're about fifty miles east of the New Mexico Cap between here and Roswell. I guess they just don't make it out this far west from out the east of here in Texas.

DM:

There's an intermingling, there's a lap over of their range and that applies around Lubbock and on up.

TP:

Oh really? [clears throat]

DM:

They even produce a hybrid every now and then.

TP:

I didn't realize that. I guess they would cross if the opportunity arose. That's about—there's still an antelope every once in a while. I don't think there's near as many antelope here now as there used to be.

DM:

I wonder why.

TP:

Well, I just don't know. I don't know whether the deer are running them out or what. We used to—back in the sand hills, back north here, between here and Morton, was mainly where all the antelope stayed. We just couldn't hardly see them down in here. Now you can go from here to Tatum and maybe onto Roswell and you'll see some, especially between Tatum and Roswell, you'll see a good bit of antelope or several mounts. [Phone activates 00:46:19]

DM:

I'll pause it in a second. [Pause in Recording]

TK:

I know they had reports of cats further north in Cochran County and it could be because, like you say, that's where a lot of the deer end up being heavy preponderance. It could be that's where the cats—

TP:

Where the bobcats.

TK:

Or the big ones, the big cats.

DM:

Mountain lions.

TP:

Yeah, the lions and cougars. That's right, that might have drawn them into that part of the county because of the deer moving in. The deer—very seldom will the deer cross this hard land. I did see—about three weeks ago, I saw a doe and a buck right here northeast of the house about a little over a quarter mile standing under a mesquite. It was in the middle of December, I guess, which you hardly ever see them in this open land. They're mainly over south where there's more mesquite and shin oak or up north toward the county line between here and Morton and Cochran county.

DM:

As far as you know, had there always been a decent of population of antelope even in the thirties and twenties and back?

TP:

Yeah, I've been told that. The antelope had been here since day one and they were pretty thick back in—oh, I guess since people have been living in this area.

DM:

Was the screwworm ever a problem out here?

TP:

Yes sir, in the forties and fifties.

DM:

Because that's what wiped out—that was one of the big factors of wiping out the white-tail back in the thirties and the early—then they took care of that. Eradication of the screwworm, has helped that population explode. Apparently, pronghorn aren't as vulnerable. Maybe they're not as vulnerable to the screwworm.

TP:

The antelope?

DM:

Uh-huh, antelope.

TP:

Well, I didn't realize that. I hadn't thought about it.

DM:

I don't know. If their population wasn't low—

TP:

Yeah.

DM:

That's interesting.

TP:

The screwworm business—the screwworm eradication really helped the beef industry, the livestock industry, in Texas, especially right here. I remember in the fifties we would brand—oh, sometime in April, May, something like that and then the brands would weld—after the branding there'd be some fresh blood on the animal for a few days and flies would really get on them and sure enough, in a few days you'd have worms in those wounds. We'd just have to put them in the corral and doctor them until they finally got healed up, which that set the animal—that set the whole calf back a good ways as far as gain ability goes.

DM:

Did you ever lose them because of it?

TP:

Oh yeah. Not too often but once in a while they'd just maybe get so bad—if you couldn't find them sometime in some of this rougher land it'd just overwhelm them. It really did help the livestock industry and the wildlife also. That was a big breakthrough whenever they sterilized the

screwworm fly.

DM:

How about golden eagles, do you have those in this area?

TP:

Not that I know of, I've never seen any golden eagles. There's some, what we all call—what I've always heard, "Mexican eagles," that are around here every winter. They'll be sitting on the windmills, that's where I mainly see them is sitting on the windmills. I've always heard them called "Mexican eagles." I don't know what variety they are or what their scientific name is but I've seen them. Here in the last few years there's been one staying up here, northwest of here about a mile and a half. There's a couple of windmills about three—about a half mile—three quarters of a mile apart and when I'd drive up to one windmill if he was sitting there he'd fly around, fly over one and finally wind up other windmill and stay there until I drove over there and then he'd come back. He just rotated back and forth. One time, I drove up to one of windmills and he had a prairie dog in his feet and just as soon as I drove up he started flying and he dropped that prairie dog. I guess he'd been eating on him, naturally.

DM:

Maybe that's what brings them up here or maybe small, young antelope. Have they ever bothered any small calves?

TP:

Not that I know of. Not that I know of. My dad said one time back in the forties, late forties and early—late thirties I guess, he and mother lived on the state line and he would pick up all of those kids coming into town that morning; he had eight or nine kids that he rigged up a little camper shell on the back of a 1937 pickup. One morning during the winter—it was an icy winter and it rained and froze two or three eagles wings and they couldn't fly, so he just picked them up. He put all the kids in the front with him and put those eagles in the back. By the time he got to school they was all thawed out and he had a little bit of trouble getting them out of the back of the pickup. [laughter]

DM:

Got to watch out what you tangle with.

TP:

That's right. He did that for a couple of winters just to, kind of, survive on. He said he'd give one kid there five dollars a month, I think, to open twenty-four wire gates twice a day, coming back and forth between here and state lines. That's when it was all ranch country, obviously. That's

the funniest eagle story I've heard. You'd see them iced down and when it'd come a freezing rain during the winter they couldn't fly because they had too much ice on their wings. [Laughter]

DM:

What about the quail population out here? Do you have a quail population?

TP:

Oh yes. All during the fifties there was quail everywhere. I guess in the sixties they kind of tapered off and I didn't see much of them. Then during the seventies and eighties they kind of died out and nearly got extinct, I guess. I think it was because of the virus, I heard, that went through them. Also, more and more cotton was being planted and farmed and people starting using more chemicals on their cotton. I've always heard that kind of killed out or kept the population down. [Clears throat]

DM:

Bobwhite?

TP:

Yeah, bobwhite and blue. The last three or four years the quail population has exploded and I don't understand that unless the virus is gone. I don't know if we're still using a lot of chemicals on the cotton, but the population has literally exploded on quail.

DM:

It's hard to explain these things.

TP:

It is. I just don't understand it. We always had more blues than bobwhites when I was growing up and now I believe there's more bobwhites than blues for some reason. It's been really something to see for me. It's been a total reverse of what it has been. During the nineties it was dry and you'd see a pair, but you never would see them with a little, bitty bunch of quail. I don't know what—maybe their eggs didn't hatch or something. I don't know what happened. Anyway, whenever things did get right the population literally exploded. That's been about three years now. That's been a welcome change, I guess. Back—well I love a quail, we used to eat quail, good night. My mother and grandmother always had quail for Christmas breakfast. That hadn't happened in a while. Anyway, then we ate quail two other times then eating holidays.

DM:

Maybe you need to go back to that if you're having a quail explosion.

TP:

That's right. I think about that, I sure do.

DM:

What about dove, are you getting more white-winged dove up here?

TP:

Yes, yes, yes. There were more mourning dove. I think we had a big—we've always had mourning dove. Now there's lots of ring-necked dove, has a dark ring around their neck.

DM:

Eurasian ring-necked color.

TP:

My grandmother always kept ring-necked doves in pen out here, and I guess other people did too. We're seeing a big population increase of ring-necked dove.

DM:

How about that little Inca dove, did you have them at one time? Little bitty things.

TP:

They seem like—yeah, I know what you're talking about. The whole time I was growing up I didn't see them or I didn't pay that much attention to them, I don't think they were here. I'm going to say the last fifteen or twenty years they've started coming in here.

DM:

Oh really?

TP:

Yes sir.

DM:

Because they pretty much disappeared from the Lubbock area, as far as I know. They used to be all over campus.

TP:

I don't see them near as much as I do the ring-necked or the mourning dove, but I do see some little bitty doves. They're kind of fascinating.

DM:

They stay on the ground most of the time?

TP:

Yeah they do. They do. I'm sure they lay their eggs—I don't know whether they lay their eggs in the trees or on the ground, I just don't know. Hadn't observed them that close. Right around this yard here where we got a lots of trees we have a big dove population. I hear them every morning cooing in the summer time. They'll just about wake us up cooing, we sleep with the window open. It's a pleasurable sound, obviously.

DM:

But you still do have a fairly healthy mourning dove population?

TP:

Yes sir. They're thick, they're really thick. I'm telling you, they're thick. I think they have a season on them during September but that don't seem to slow them down any. Of course, the last twenty-five years we've had grackles move in here.

DM:

Oh have you?

TP:

Yes. They're really a nuisance. I guess their cousin of the crow, and I think they fight the other birds around here. I keep them scared off around here in the yard because I hate for them to fight these birds here in the yard but I shoot them.

DM:

You'll run them off?

TP:

Yeah, I'd run them—I run them off too because there's a big population of them in Plains.

DM:

What other kinds of birds do you traditionally have around here?

TP:

Sparrows, I see some little orioles; I see an oriole every once in a while. Hardly ever see a blue jay, but there's getting to be a few more orioles, little orange birds. I think they're orioles.

DM:

So, you have scissor-tails and kingbirds.

TP:

Oh yes. Always had them around. We've had, I think, what the book calls them "cactus wrens". They're a regular size bird, maybe a little bit bigger, but they have a long beak. They're kind of a curiosity bird; they're kind of gentle.

DM:

They'll come up close. They're probably a thrasher.

TP:

Probably are.

DM:

It's called a curve-billed thrasher. It's got a beak like that and they're a pretty good sized bird.

TP:

They're very gentle. I've left my pickup parked in the driveway here in the winter down there in Sumner and I've seen where they've got in the cab there and sat on the steering wheel. [laughter]

DM:

They make themselves at home.

TP:

They do, they sure do. Of course, they leave their droppings behind so you can tell they've been there, and I know that's what it is. They're kind of a cute old bird, kind of a curiosity. I kind of like to see them. I guess I like any wildlife but I do like the birds. Mockingbirds, we have mockingbirds come in here and they'll sit and sing. When they're sitting—I understand while them or their mate are sitting on eggs, well they sing all day and all night as long as one of them is sitting on some eggs.

DM:

Those thrashers, those curved-bill thrashers, are actually related to the mockingbird. They don't look like them—

TP:

I didn't realize that.

DM:

—but they sing like them sometimes.

TP:

I didn't realize that.

DM:

It's a little more mellow song but it's—

TP:

I don't know that I've ever heard one of those sing.

DM:

They do different things different times of year. They'll do a [imitates bird sound].

TP:

Oh okay, I've heard that. I didn't realize—

DM:

you've heard that. That's them. They'll sing sometimes too.

TP:

--I didn't realize that's where it was coming from. I've never heard a mockingbird sing the same little verse over and over, it's always something different.

DM:

They're pretty good at that.

TP:

They really are. I've listened to see if I can hear the same one but I haven't heard it. [laughter]

DM:

That's right. Any other wildlife observations that you've seen and that might've changed over time as far population is concerned?

TP:

Well, we've always had porcupines here. You'll usually see your dog get into the them and the dog would come full of quills, and once in a great while you'll see a porcupine up in the top of some of these old Chinese elm trees. You just don't hardly ever see a porcupine but you do. The dogs will get into them every time; they just can't keep from it. Every once in a while you'll see

a badger, we'll see some badgers. I think a badger—I guess their cousin, the wolverine—I wouldn't want to get tangled up with a badger because they are a mean-looking thing, and they've got the long-toed claws. They claim—and I've never done this—they claim that they'll get away from you if they're a hole and you're trying to dig them out that they'll dig faster with their claws than you can with a shovel. They are a very mean animal. I don't know what they live off of, I'm sure they live off of rats and mice. They're a mean-looking animal. I used to hear old fellows tell about stories about somebody would catch a badger and take him around to different towns, put him in a barrel, and bet somebody that their dog couldn't get him out of that barrel without killing him first. I've never seen that happen but I've heard of stories like that as far as badgers go. I've seen a ferret, I've just seen one ferret, I guess, in this county and that was down southwest of here about five or six miles. That's the only ferret I've ever seen in Yoakum County. About seven, eight, ten years ago I saw a diamondback rattlesnake northwest of here about five or six miles, somebody had already killed him. That's the first diamondback.

DM:
Really?

TP:
Yes sir.

DM:
You don't have them right here?

TP:
No, we've always had sand rattlers but never a diamondback.

DM:
Golly. That's interesting.

TP:
I'm sure—well, I don't know which direction he had come from; whether he came from west over in New Mexico in those rocks or if he's come from the south or whether he's come from the Caprock down east of here. He's the only one I've ever seen. I've been here seventy-two years and I've never seen a diamondback until then, it's always been sand rattlers. We don't have coral snakes, I don't think. We've got a black, an orange and a white snake. I don't know what kind he is but, I saw one of those back there four months ago.

DM:
Banded black, white and orange.

TP:

Yeah, ringed I guess, ring, yeah. I don't know what he is.

DM:

Probably a kingsnake.

TP:

It might've been.

DM:

Probably a kingsnake—different kingsnakes but that's one type.

TP:

They're not very prominent here. Of course, we've had what I call "prairie runners" or "coach whips," we've had them forever.

DM:

How about bull snakes?

TP:

Oh yes, I've seen more of them than anything. I saw more—

DM:

Do you have one that's black and has a speckled gold on the top, kind of in a little bit of a diamond pattern?

TP:

No, I've never seen that. Now, they're always tan colored with spots on them, kind of typical bull snake but I've never seen—

DM:

This one would be—it's a desert kingsnake. That's how they show up in a lot of areas in west Texas.

TP:

Not to my knowledge, I just—the last two or three years I hadn't seen too many snakes. I killed two, three or four this spring when they started coming out and I've had several calves bit last year and this year from snakes.

DM:

Rattlesnakes you think?

TP:

Yeah, they'll just swell up in their nose. Of course, the calf is always naturally very curious. A cow's too smart for them, but a calf has just got to be curious and he's going to smell of him and that's when he's going to bite him right on the nose every time.

DM:

Just like a dog.

TP:

Exactly. I've heard this old theory now that the rattlesnakes—I don't hear them rattle whenever you approach them and some people come up with the theory that they've quit rattling since the feral hogs have moved in here because they didn't want the hogs bothering them. I've always heard that a hog will kill a snake or they'll just shake him to pieces and a rattlesnake bite won't kill a hog because he has too much fat on him. That dilutes the venom so much that they won't kill a snake—they won't kill a hog. That's just a theory, but I really haven't heard the rattlesnakes rattle much the past few years.

DM:

From your observations then, rattlesnakes used to rattle more than what you're seeing now. That's the case up in our area as well.

TP:

Really?

DM:

Yeah. One of the theories is that tendency, that behavioral trait, to rattle gets them killed. They can't pass on—they're dead so they can't pass on that trait to their offspring so the tendency is that more and more don't rattle; who knows.

TP:

[speaking at the same time] Well, that's right.

DM:

That's one claim.

TP:

That draws attention to them from other animals. I hadn't thought about that. Of course, they're

going to naturally rattle just to warn whatever's approaching them. Roadrunners—and I've never seen this happen—but roadrunners are pretty prevalent around here and they'll supposedly kill a snake, but they're so fast that they can peck them on the head before they strike. My mother told me that when they lived out on the state lines in the mid-thirties that she and my dad saw an old rattlesnake have some little ones around close to her and they alarmed her by standing around there and looking at her. She had some little ones there, she opened her mouth, and all those little ones ran in her mouth. That's the only instance I've ever heard of that happening. I've heard of happening, but she said she actually saw that. That was in the thirties back out on the state line. I've heard that's the way they protect their young.

DM:

I've heard that too. I've never heard of anyone that actually saw it, but I've heard that.

TP:

I was talking about Fort Sumner; I had an old friend that lived out in Fort Sumner and he was living there when mother and daddy moved out there, he was the neighbor. He said he and one of his yard hands one day saw a rattlesnake bite a cottontail and swallow the cottontail. They waited till the snake killed the cottontail then they killed the rattlesnake. [Laughter] Of course, the cottontail eat the grass so that was a detriment to the cattle, and then, of course, the snake was a detriment so they for one to finish the other off.

DM:

Let nature take its course.

TP:

That's right. [Laughter] I thought that was pretty interesting.

DM:

What about prairie dogs in this area? You mentioned some being killed by eagles.

TP:

Prairie dogs can ruin, and will ruin the pasture land. They will put it to blowing as quick as anything will because they eat every bit of the grass in their towns. If you're going to run cattle in Yoakum County you've got to keep the prairie dogs away. I've had that personal experience. I let them get out of hand for a while, and I had to hire a professional—whatever you call them I guess—a professional to come in and kill a prairie dog for me and at least keep them down. I've tried to keep them eliminated on this land because they will eat it down where the land is blowing and they will not a sprig of grass left in their towns.

DM:

Are there any areas in Yoakum County now that you know of that are prairie dog towns?

TP:

There was a big one out a mile east of town and they've been killed out. I can't think of any area—let's see—no, I don't know of any other areas in Yoakum County. There's a little area right up here at Five mile Corner, back east of there on county road 180 that a fellow does—he fights them but he doesn't keep them killed out all the way. He's a neighbor of mine and he has a little town of them just about all the time, but he tries to keep them controlled. That's about the only area I know of around here close. Out east and north of town there by—there was a big town of them, but then those people finally got them killed out, which that's helped.

DM:

How about where you saw the ferret? Because I understand that sometimes ferrets will inhabit prairie dog towns.

TP:

He was down southwest of plains about four or five miles.

DM:

Is that a prairie dog area?

TP:

No, he was just in the bar ditch there next to home there. I just happened to see him run out of the bar ditch back up in some of the mesquites and that's the only time I've ever seen them, and that's the first time.

DM:

You have turkey vultures out here, what we always called "buzzards" growing up?

TP:

Yeah we do.

DM:

Are they being displaced any by ravens or have you noticed anything like that because that's happening?

TP:

No, not that I know of. Ten or fifteen years ago they used to be forty or fifty of them around here. They would roost every night on the east side of Plains and the draw on some fence post,

there'd be one per post, obviously, and they'd be—one of the fellows that printed the newspaper took a picture one time and put it in the paper. There were, I'm going to say, thirty or forty of them on some fences posts on a fence running east and west. They always roosted there but you won't see them that often now for whatever reason. Every once in a while you'll see one flying. They just got pretty bad for a while, and I don't know why. That was close to a big prairie dog town too right there where they were roosting.

DM:

You see any ravens in this area—

TP:

Or crows?

DM:

—or crows?

TP:

Oh yeah, they're about as thick as they've ever been, they've always been here. They're around a few little watermelon patches I'm sure. They're everywhere: they're in the pastures, they're farmland, they're just everywhere. They're a common bird around here; they've been here forever.

DM:

Things are changing in the area between the Caprock and Fort Worth because it used to be all turkey vultures getting the roadkill, now they're a lot of ravens and you don't see the turkey vultures as much, which is good because the ravens are smarter about getting out of the way of your car.

TP:

Turkey buzzards are slower to move.

DM:

They are, they'll fly back into your windshield.

TP:

Oh they will.

DM:

Back in front of you.

TP:

They've caused some problems. It just seems like the population kind of comes and goes. They're just not as prevalent as crows are or ravens, I don't think.

DM:

You know something about the Native American movements through this country, don't you? Weren't we talking about that a few weeks ago?

TP:

A little bit. Over south of where my grandmother and granddad set up housekeeping over here about three miles there was—and you can't tell it was ever there now—there was a hunting ground. It was where they lived for a while because the land had some dark spots on it. It was kind of in the edge of where my granddad plowed up a field one time and used it for field. The sand blew off of it and you could see where they had campfires and so forth. Now, what time period, I have no idea. I'm sure it was three, four, five hundred years ago maybe or maybe not quite that far. I just don't know. They found arrowheads and they found old—what do they call them for grinding corn, the “matiya”?

DM:

Mano and Metate. Mano is this part and the Metate is the big stone underneath.

TP:

There was a Metate there. My daddy found it in that field after they started farming the land. He said used to help my granddad plant his farm and plow his farm. He said he knew it was there for ten years and he'd get off the tractor, set it over, and plow on through that then next year he'd come back and move it again. Finally somebody, I don't know which one of us, brought it home and it's sitting out here now.

DM:

Is it?

TP:

Yeah. My wife dropped it a few years ago and cracked it right in the middle but it's sitting right here.

DM:

I'd like to see it.

TP:

It's sitting right here on the front step, yeah.

DM:

Is it near a watercourse or a spring at all where this thing was found?

TP:

No, not really. It wasn't close to a natural watering spot, they just camped there for an indefinite period of time. They left arrowheads, and so forth, and so on. We just call that little area "Arrowhead Hill." It had blown off to the clay.

TK:

So was it a little bit of a rise?

TP:

Just a little bit.

TK:

So you could see fairly well around you?

TP:

Yeah, it was just in the edge of this old field. Right south of there just a few yards there's a big old sand hump where the farm had blown over the years and collected up. There was a little campground right there and it just kind of [blown] off to the clay and my granddad quit farming it and quit plowing it because it wouldn't raise anything. I'm sure that was Comanche's, I guess, or that's the predominant—

DM:

Or earlier, possibly.

TP:

Could've been, it could've been; we just don't know.

DM:

What about this little watercourse that goes through the town?

TP:

That's the Sulphur Springs Draw.

DM:

Any evidence there of—

TP:

I think there's still shallow water down in that draw. I think there's a windmill right west of town, between here and town, that my cousin drilled a well there several years ago and I don't think there's but two twenty foot joints of pipe in that well, so the water's probably nearly forty or fifty feet deep.

DM:

You have seen any Indian artifacts?

TP:

No, I hadn't ever been around that windmill well. There's some big old Chinese elm trees that was planted in the early forties, probably, where the park is now. I'm nearly certain those old trees' roots go down to water because they are really big Chinese elm trees for this area.

DM:

They sure know how to find that water.

TP:

They sure do, they sure do. I think on up the draw here there's a well there in the draw, and it's an old water—evidently it's called "Ulou" and that was put there, I don't know, maybe before the teens maybe; it was in the draw. I'm sure they're still shallow water in the Sulphur Springs Draw. It heads right up here northeast of Bronco in Yoakum County according to the map and it goes all the way to Big Spring.

DM:

How about any cottonwood groves or willow groves in this country that you know of?

TP:

No, there's not any cottonwood groves out here. There is some shin oak groves down more—there was some up here in the north part of the county in those sand hills then there's two or three down here northeast of Denver City. There's some kind of type of different oak—I don't know what kind—

DM:

Is it small like a shin oak?

TP:

Yeah, it's a shin oak variety but they got bigger for some reason. They were—you could ride up in them in horseback and still they'd be four, five, six feet of vegetation above you even horseback.

DM:

There's different varieties of that, they're scrubby but they're a little bit bigger than shin oak.

TP:

They're just kind of all scattered around, there's not that many of them left, I don't guess, but there still is some you'd see every once in a while. We call them "shinnery mocks."

DM:

Have you heard of any other places in Yoakum County where there's evidence of some Native American butchering site or camp site or anything like that?

TP:

I've never really done this, but up in east sand hills along about the county line between here and Morton people have found a lot of arrowheads up in there. That's the only place that I know of that Indians would've camped or lived a while following the buffalo, obviously. I guess there's arrowheads probably all over this county. I guess Indians have lived in this county, what's now Yoakum County since—

DM:

You can bet they've hunted it real well.

TP:

Oh yes, for thousands of years. You can find—you'll often find an arrowhead anywhere in Yoakum County just scattered because they've been here that many years, I guess, in the past centuries. It would be interesting to carbon date—well, I don't guess that would even tell how old that arrowhead because it would tell the age of the rock but there's not much way to tell how far back the Indians really were prevalent here.

DM:

Not unless it was with some organic matter, which you could—

TP:

Right. We all know about Quanah Parker and his trailing's around here and his travels around in this area.

DM:

There are ways—I mean, you can tell by the way the flint was chipped sometimes how old it is. There are some general distinctions you can make, thousands of year differences.

TP:

There's a museum up between—out southwest of Clovis and it's got a lot of artifacts in it about the Clovis Man.

DM:

Blackwater Draw.

TP:

I've never been to that museum but they have—I guess they have artifacts there that date back ten or twelve thousand years.

DM:

They have flint that was found embedded in mammoth bone.

TP:

Oh really?

DM:

Yeah, that's the Clovis point.

TP:

Okay, that's what they used to kill the mammoth?

DM:

Yeah. It's Clovis spear point.

TP:

I read one time where that point might've been originated on the east coast by some people that immigrated in here on the east coast or am I getting the story wrong?

DM:

Well, that might just be another theory.

TP:

It may be, but those people that came in here came from the east.

DM:

Clovis is usually kind of centralized there, and that same lithic culture can be found down into South America and well up into North America.

TP:

I don't doubt that.

DM:

That's kind of the dominant—that would be the dominant theory but there are plenty of other theories.

TP:

Would that Clovis Man have originated from the Orient?

DM:

Yeah, way back crossing in the Bering Strait and down into North America. We're talking maybe twelve-thousand years ago for the Clovis point, ten thousand.

TP:

The last forty to fifty years I've noticed that people come up here from Mexico working, and every once in a while you'll see one of those men that look oriental. And he's got to back to the oriental that came around by the Bering Strait and went on down through here and through California and went on through Mexico into South America.

DM:

He's part Native American—being Mexican mestizo, he's part Native American and Native Americans are oriental.

TP:

Yes, that's right. Even eskimos, I guess, are oriental to a certain extent or Native American.

DM:

They were later migrants into North America. Anyway, I was just curious about those—

TP:

I don't know of any other campgrounds other than that one there that was on my granddad's land.

TK:

Back in the day in that draw system right there in Plains proper itself, and of course, a little bit downstream and maybe further up there was a lot more water in that draw than there is now.

TP:

Oh yes, I'm sure there is.

TK:

That would've been attractive back, let's say, a hundred and fifty years ago.

TP:

Yeah, or two hundred.

DM:

Why is it different now? Why is there not as much water now?

TP:

Because of the irrigation, that's got to be it. I've kind of kept track of the water levels down here southwest on some land that my family's had for a long time. Thirty years ago—twenty-five to thirty years the water table set at sixty-five feet and now it sits at ninety-five feet. That's been thirty years now. That's southwest of here about six-eight miles as the crow flies.

DM:

Is there more farming down there?

TP:

Well, there's a good bit of farmland down there yeah, it's a good bit of it. Might've been broken out in the fifties and drilled irrigation wells on it. I've experienced that myself. My daddy bought what he called a "draw down gauge" when he started farming the irrigation back in the fifties. He bought this little gauge that you could run a cable down into the well and see where the static water level was. I've still got that same little gauge and I use that very religiously when I run my irrigation wells to keep from pumping air. All these wells have gate valves on them where you can—if you're pulling too much out of there it'll start pumping air and you can screw it down and stop the flow a little bit to keep from pumping air. I try not to ever let it pump air but all of these pump companies now put gate valves on these pumps now to prevent that. The water table has dropped.

DM:

It has dropped more down there but not so much here.

TP:

That's right. Of course, we don't have any irrigation wells for a whole mile or two, two or three miles I guess, right around here. I hadn't checked the water level right here at the house in a good while. I just hadn't needed to, I guess, or hadn't been worried about it. I try to watch it still. When I pull one of these windmills I try to see where the static water level shows on the pipe when you pull it out of the well because they'll have more barnacles on it, I guess, stuff like that.

DM:

But there was surface water down there in that area then.

TP:

Yeah, but I'm sure this draw, this Sulphur Springs Draw, it had to have run four, five, six, seven hundreds ago maybe, then it just gradually went down. Then of course, when irrigation came in here in the forties it really pulled all the water table down in the whole county eventually, but more so the last twenty-five years. During the 1980s—I guess I'm out in the atmosphere all the time, I watched the rainfall—during the 1980s it started raining—we stayed dry until about May 15, 1984 then we got three or four inches. Then three weeks later we got eight inches. I poured out thirty-five inches of rain the last seven months of 1984 down southwest about seven or eight miles. In 1985, it rained about twice the average rainfall. In '86 it was a very rainy year and in '87 and '88. That's five years in a row we got one and a half times, or twice, our annual rainfall. Then in 1990 it shuddered off for whatever reason. The El Niño effect, I guess, went away and it then it started the La Niña thing. In 1990, we didn't get a drop of rain here until the twenty-eighth of July then we got five and a quarter inches in an hour and a half. Then five miles west of here it rained a half inch so just one of them little old local clouds. That was the first of the rainfall of that year. It's been erratic all throughout the nineties and all through the 2000s. The early 2000s was very dry. In 2003 down there about ten miles southwest at one my little farms I had then, I poured out less than three inches that whole year, twelve months. It's just one of those situations. The weather patterns are definitely changing now, I don't know what's causing it. [Clears throat] I think the carbon monoxide from all of the automobiles is definitely having an effect in the upper atmosphere because worldwide we have so dang many of them. Now it may be part of nature also working there too so I don't whether the greenhouse effect is man-made or what.

DM:

It's a big question.

TP:

It really is, it always will be, obviously. Anyway, I've heard my daddy say that he was a great weather watcher, obviously. I guess I took that from him. He said in the early fifties when they were doing some atomic testing out in—around Alamogordo and out in there, he thinks that affected the weather here. All during the forties it would rain pretty good especially in '41 and after that. It rained pretty good. Since 1945 it didn't rain, it dried out in 1945. He swears that atomic testing out there around that trinity site affected the weather here in the early fifties. We had a three year drought in the early fifties.

DM:

How did that affect the population, especially in the town? Especially in Plains.

TP:

It didn't really affect it. The weather hadn't really affected the population of Plains like the oil business has.

DM:

It really affected farming areas—

TP:

It did.

DM:

—as you could imagine.

TP:

Everybody still tried to survive on the farms in my lifetime even during dry weather. They may have to go to town to get a job but they still tried to farm their farm on the side. The crops subsidy payment program helped everybody stay on the farm even though they had to go work outside, but they could still live on that farm and draw that subsidy. That was an interesting policy. I'd get on a soapbox pretty quick about the government subsidies as far as acreage goes because to me that's an insurance policy to furnish the general population of plentiful food and fiber. It helps the farmers and ranchers stay in business in good years and bad years. It also increases your standard of living, and gives people in towns the opportunity to spend less of their income on food. I'm kind of a—I guess I'm—[Laughs] I guess I've listened to the old timers so much talk about feast or famine. The agriculture subsidy programs have stabilized our living standards and improved them. Of course, they changed the farm program in the early seventies and it's not like it used to be. Of course, everything's changed since the seventies especially after the oil shortage was created in the seventies. I've got an opinion about that. [Laughs]

DM:

Give us your opinion because that's what we're here for.

TP:

I'll tell you what, I don't have anything to base this on but I kind of think that the American oil companies are to blame for the Arabs creating the oil shortage. Maybe I'm wrong, I'm hope I'm wrong, but it just happened for no reason at all. Of course, that jumped the price up. I remember when we had fifteen cent gasoline in the early fifties. You could slide into the gas station, buy a dollar worth of regular, and run your whole car all week on it. [Laughter] I remember that Bolton's Service Station had a little service station on the Brownfield highway just inside where the loop is now. I went to the Lubbock rodeo, Tech rodeo, in 1967 from Las Cruces, and I bought some gas for sixteen cents, put in my pickup. Of course, Lubbock always had gas wars

and we never could see them out here but Lubbock always had gas wars. All the towns around Lubbock always had higher gas prices because it took trucking—it had to freight charges in it to get it to all the towns around Lubbock; Lubbock was a central location for it. Anyway, I guess I get kind of radical whenever you get into a monopoly situation like that. All during the sixties, Texas had a **liable**. [01:25:50] The wells in Texas, or even around here, I've watched them and they could pump about eight days a month because they were controlling the supply of oil, I guess, and wasn't using up our supply, and we were importing it in from the Middle East. That was good business back then because we were saving ours and using theirs. Then all of a sudden in the early seventies it changed, and they had by the throat and they really exercised it. We were importing 35 percent of our oil, I understand, back in the seventies. Then the Arabs, I think motivated by the baby boomers—and I'm going to up end of the baby boomers. The baby boomers came of age in the late sixties and they wanted instant wealth and instant gratification. I and I'm going to up end them. I may be stepping on you boy's toes here but I could just see the boys coming out of college and they want to get a job and get rich very quick, real quick. It seemed like everything was operating just fine in the U.S. until the baby boomers come of age and then things went to changing; they went to changing laws, getting into positions of power, getting into congress and they deregulated everything. It just changed everything up compared to what I saw growing up, and we're still living with it. Of course, in '71 we went off the gold standard and that affected our money situation, our currency situation, and inflation had gone through the roof, naturally, because of oil and because of going off the gold standard. It's just perpetuated itself. I think the 1972 dollar, it takes—I'll put it this way: I read some statistics about this a few years ago that it takes a 1972—it takes \$2.71 to equal what a dollar would purchase in 1972, I'll get it right in a minute. That's how much our currency's devalued in forty years. Yoakum County has been able to survive one way or another somehow. Of course, we've always had this oil. From what I understand, we hit our first oil well in October of 1935 down there on the Bennett Ranch out northeast of Denver City, then that started the ball rolling. Then oil companies come in here and started really drilling and then Allred was a pretty prominent little town back in '37. If I understand, Allred—it's west of Denver City, about two miles. There's just a few houses left there now. At one time, I think Allred had three-thousand people in it. They were coming in there and working in the oil field, obviously.

DM:

A boom town.

TP:

A boom town. It even printed its own newspaper.

DM:

Oh really?

TP:

Yes. We've got a laminated copy of the *Allred Times* somewhere here in the house, Linda's got it somewhere.

DM:

Did it have a little hotel out there—

TP:

Oh yes.

DM:

—to accommodate these—

TP:

I'm sure they did. It had two movies theaters, I understand, and several restaurants, obviously, and had a school. They operated that school in Allred up until the middle fifties and then, of course, everybody relocated into Denver City. The supply houses relocated—I think the town relocated where the supply houses were. Yoakum County has been able to survive somehow, somehow during all these booms and busts. Now we're fixing to see another little boom in Yoakum County because of the horizontal drilling and the fracking. Two years ago, the land people got so thick around here leasing minerals that there were twenty or thirty of them operating out of the county clerk's office.

DM:

Really?

TP:

Yes. They were using the library computers just as well. We'd see them in all the restaurants eating every day during noon hour. I saw a map here last year of the northwest quarter of Yoakum County—I think it's nearly ninety percent of the northwest quarter of Yoakum County is nearly leased up from about four or five different companies. They're having to drill those wells to hold that lease within a three year period. The boom is fixing to come back to Yoakum County. Yoakum County—

DM:

It's all right.

TP:

It's all right. Since I've been involved with the county over the last fifteen years, I've learned that the oil companies pay 96 percent of the taxes in Yoakum County and the land owners pay

the other four, obviously. We are so dependent and we are so tied to oil that it's unreal. Of course, Yoakum County has got good facilities because of oil tax revenue; schools and the county equipment. There's a big bond indebted against schools and the oil companies are going to have make 96 percent of that payment.

DM:

It's quite a school.

TP:

It really is. The inner city is doing the same thing. Of course, all of our three buildings are—high school, junior high, and elementary buildings were all about the same age. They were all built in the middle to late forties. I guess they all wore out about the same time so the school board decided to just redo it, and redo the whole thing. It took a thirty-million dollar bond to do that then maybe a little bit after that. Anyway, Plains schools have got a big indebtedness behind them, but eventually they'll get it paid off and we'll go on. We've got to have schools. When a community loses their schools, well, they'd lose the community, we've seen that happen. We're so blessed in Yoakum County to have this oil under it and with the technology we're going to see a continued good standard of living in Yoakum County and a good cash flow because of the technology in oil. I understand that some of these horizontal wells are making from two to three to six hundred barrels a day. Once they get in that vein of oil, the sky's the limit on what they can produce whereas before on those vertical wells there was just the thickness of the oil and that's all there was. They've really learned how to slant their wells, slant their drilling, and get into those veins and jump ten or twenty folds of production. It's going to be something. It's going to be interesting to stick around here and see what all happens.

DM:

Is there any wind turbine activity?

TP:

No, no. I understand, we don't have any transmission lines and that's what's keeping us from getting any wind turbines in here. We just don't have any—we just hadn't—there's just not a company that's ever come in here and decided to put in a transmission line to export it out of here. All of the lines—all of the existing lines here are taken up, I guess, by Xcel and—Lee County Electric is the primary carrier for this area of Yoakum County, and into down into Gains County—but Xcel is the other big primary supplier, I'll put it that way. They used to be Southwestern Public Service; they sold out and the name changed to Xcel. Southwestern Public Service has been around here forever, I think since the early fifties as far as I know.

DM:

By the way, when did REA [**Rural Electrification Administration**] come in here, do you know?

TP:

Yeah, it came in in the early fifties. REA came in to this house, I think, in 1952 and then over there where I grew up it came in September of '53 because that's the first thing we did, was bought a TV. I never will forget that.

DM:

Did you have a TV before you had a light bulb?

TP:

Nope. [Laughter] Don't think so. Can you see all those vines on that tower right out there? That was the wind charger that my daddy put up—my granddaddy put it up. Six volt, he put up a six-volt wind charger right after he built this house—when he built this house, and that supplied electricity for this house.

DM:

There's your wind turbine power right there.

TP:

That's right. That's been taken over by trumpet vines, that's what that is.

DM:

I'll bet that's pretty when it blooms.

TP:

Oh it is. It's just solid, it's just grown up solid with trumpet vine. That was the wind charger and he had a six-volt turbine on top. He had batteries in the garage there and he had a little booster motor there whenever the wind stayed—in October—August and October was two months that the wind usually died down so he had to start his little motor and charge up those batteries in the garage to furnish electricity for the house.

TK:

Were they like the little glass batteries? In the early days they were kind of like square-block glass with little diode things up on the top, something like that.

TP:

Yeah. They were about a foot and a half square; foot and a half wide and a foot and a half—foot

and a half by a foot and a half was the way I remember them. You had to have twelve for just however much power you wanted to store up. You had to have at least ten or twelve of them or maybe more all tied together.

DM:

What did he run in here off of that turbine?

TP:

Just these lights, these ceiling lights.

DM:

Mostly lights then, not any kind of appliance?

TP:

No, no appliance.

DM:

Does it have propellers on it still or—

TP:

No, it's been taken down.

DM:

—just the stand?

TP:

It's just the tower there.

DM:

Forget about taking it down now because it's great for trumpet vine.

TP:

[Laughs] That's right. It was a two-bladed generator. I think maybe the windmill museum at Lubbock may have some of them laying around, I think.

DM:

Is that right? Yeah, maybe have the same type.

TP:

Jay Harris, is that his name?

DM:

Is that the brand?

TP:

The curator—no, he's the curator.

TK:

His name is Harris—

TP:

I was thinking it was Jay.

TK:

Jay was, like, the newspaper editor. I know who you're talking about; Harris.

TP:

[at same time as Tai] Harris. He made—what is his name?

TK:

It's Harris but I can't remember the first name.

TP:

it's Harris Anyway, he may have some of those laying around. I forget what brand—

DM:

Is there a brand? Oh.

TP:

I forgot what brand. They may have been Zenith brand, I want to say that but I just can't remember.

DM:

Do you know what year this one was put in?

TP:

Probably—[phone rings 01:36:16] this house was put here in '41 and I'm sure he put it up about the same time. [Pause in Recording]

DM:

Yeah, it's on.

TP:

In the early fifties, we had—my dad put up a wind charger that he'd got up at Reese Air Base after the war was over with. They were doing away with the wind turbines up at Reese so he went up there and bought one. It was six-volts and so he put it up at our old place there where we grew up, where my granddad and grandmother first setup housekeeping. My brother and I would go down to the Picture Show here in town, watch a movie and go back out to the house. Afterwards, if there was any breeze blowing he'd send me around to turn the wind charger on so he could turn the radio on and listen to Louisiana Hayride. [Laughter] This was about '53 and '54. When I think about that now I always have to chuckle about it—so it wouldn't pull the batteries down. That was during the winter time when it—even summer time too—when there's a late breeze, late breeze even up in the night.

DM:

Pretty good. You had a couple of more—

TK:

Yeah, a couple follow up questions, one about REA. When REA came in did they require y'all to disconnect, dismantle, unhook, unplug the cables to the batteries? Did they require you to do that? The reason why I'm asking, I've heard in some areas in Carolina [phone makes noise 01:37:39] when REA came in they wouldn't plug in until you disconnected your windmill.

TP:

[Inaudible 01:37:46] Turn it off. [Pause in Recording]

TP:

Go ahead, you were going to say—some areas what?

TK:

Did the REA ask you to go ahead and disconnect your windmill and just, kind of, take it offline.

TP:

I don't think that was a problem around here. I'm sure people did that because they were so glad to get a stable supply of energy. I doubt if there's even any way to tie it into your wind charger because it was so many more volts because—I just don't think that was even thought about around here because they didn't have the equipment to do that within; it was a much bigger power, much higher voltage, obviously. I think everybody was glad to shut their wind charger down because they had a much better supply of electricity, good night. But I know what you're

saying. Nowadays, there's been a law on the books for twenty years now supposedly that if you put up a wind charger then the power company has to tie into that and then when it starts turning whenever you're using the wind turbine electricity it runs the meter backwards, supposedly. Isn't that right or what's the deal on that?

DM:

Something about you could sell back excess power.

TP:

Yeah, that's what I'm talking about.

DM:

I'm not sure how it worked.

TP:

These wind turbines are so much better now, so much more sophisticated. There's a fellow in Denver City that lives on the northwest corner of Denver City there that has two of them up. He's the current JP down there, and he has two of the wind turbines at his place. I haven't talked to him about them, about what all—the arrangement he has with Xcel but I'm sure that he sells some excess back to them. I think that's the law on the books. Everybody was so glad to see the REA come in here. Gosh, it was so much nicer. Before they had wind chargers they had carbide plants. There's an old carbide plant over there at the old place [phone rings 01:39:33] my granddad put in, and it was already phased out by the time I come along. It was a tank down in the ground. Carbide is some kind of chemical—it's a granule chemical but it mixed with water and created gas and they piped that gas in the house. You could just reach up there and turn a little wick—not a wick but a little flint, and it would start a flame and that would give you your lights. That was after coal oil lights that you had to carry around.

DM:

They also had some small appliances that ran off of that like—I think they had an iron and things like that.

TP:

Really?

DM:

Yeah. Did they have any appliances that ran off of carbide or it was just lighting?

TP:

[speaking at the same time] I don't remember that. I'm sure my grandmother did but I don't remember. I bet that's right.

TK:

Just get a regular line of electricity. [Laughter]

TP:

Oh man, we really thought we were living when we got REA in here and it was—

DM:

Then you had to start buying appliances.

TP:

That's right. [Laughter] That's right, then we got a TV and later on we got a deep-freezer, Maytag deep-freeze that ran for—I know deep freeze will probably run for thirty years and we kept it on the back porch. Boy, we really could put up a lot of stuff and can a lot of stuff. My daddy always had a beef around, and he would kill the beef himself in the early fifties. We had a screened-in porch over there at the old place. Back then the winter stayed cold enough that you could hang a quarter of beef or two quarters of beef out on your back porch and it would stay good. Nowadays it gets too warm in the winter, I don't think it'd keep. Before that, even people would kill a beef and pull the beef up into the top of the windmill tower right in front of the old sheep. I never did see that, but I've heard about it. I know those beefs that he'd leave hanging in the back porch, mold would grow on them. I've seen mold probably that thick on that beef and he could trim that stuff off and cut the steaks off of it and you could cut it with your fork. The longer it stayed there and molded up, the meet got more tender. That's one for—believe it or not, you'd think when mold started growing on it was ruined but it wasn't. Anyway, when REA came in here, it was in the early fifties, and boy we thought we had really gone to town, dad-gum.

TK:

Quick question on your reference to—was it your father who said that after they did the tests in New Mexico he thought he saw that the weather patterns had changed slightly?

TP:

He always thought that. He didn't have anything to base it on, but he just said that after that atomic testing took place. I guess the first one was in '45 whenever they were at the Trinity site. I guess they—I've kind of forgot—but I guess they kept on testing atomic weapons after that but he just nearly swore that that's what caused the drier patterns to originate or to come about—

DM:

That was kind of—

TP:

—in the early fifties.

DM:

--That was a fairly well-aged theory by that time because they were rain making attempts using explosions.

TP:

Oh yeah, and rainmakers used to come in here—I don't hardly remember them but I've heard them talk about them—that people would come in here and try to put money together—to get people to give money for rainmaking. They were never successful. Of course, the jet stream travels from the West to East and so it was bringing that disrupted atmospheric conditions over across this area. He swears that it had an effect on our weather here.

DM:

That's interesting.

TK:

As you are a weather observer and then it follows that your father was as well that those tells that you see of a lifetime of watching of weather can't be thrown away summarily, you have to take them seriously. That's why we're here talking with you about what you remember. Now through your lens it's really interesting to hear what your father said about that.

TP:

I appreciate you saying that. I'm out in the weather every day so I can't help but observe it and remember what day this or that occurred and kind of what the year was. I don't know why I take interest in that, but I guess I'm so closely affected by it. I just happen to observe it. I don't guess I could pull out a calendar, point to a certain date in the past, and tell you what happened on that day. I guess I just remember weather events and associate them with what day of the week or month or what year it was.

DM:

You can't help but develop a level of expertise just from observation after observation.

TP:

I guess so, I guess that's right. In 1949, I just barely remember this, we had about six weeks of wet, rainy, freezing weather starting about in January, and it would rain in daytime and freeze at

night. There was about four or five inches of ice built up on the land during that period. I was just—I was about four years old but I remember daddy taking care of some cattle up here about where the Cap and the Cochran county line is, that's where he had some pasture leased. They would go up there and feed in the morning and while it was froze they could get around in their pickup and feed the cattle on that ice there. It'd thaw out, of course, during the afternoon, and it'd freeze at night. He said cattle got to where they wouldn't hardly walk because they'd fall down on that ice and they just got scared. Anyway, they was feeding cattle and he was pasturing some cattle for a fellow and had some of his own too. That was 1949 and supposedly that was El Niño—possibly the El Niño effect. I guess that's before they even named it. It associates with kind of a El Niño effect, but that was during the winter time. We may be seeing this thing come back now during this—if it gets cold and does some freezing rain. Of course, we've had freezing rain every so often since the beginning. Our power lines would go down and this, that and other during winter time. Anyway, I guess that El Niño effect of that heating up of the southern Pacific waters creates more humidity in the upper atmosphere. Since we've had our water district office here the last few years, we've had a gathering of meteorologists here at one time at the airport. I mentioned the El Niño effect to him and I asked him point blank if that was the case, where the water vapor increased as the ocean temperatures heated up and more water vapor escaped into the upper atmosphere and he said, "Yeah and it creates more turbulence." He said, "Yes, that's the right effect that it creates." Naturally, it gets up in the jet stream and we have more chances of falling moisture here, whether it's winter time or summer time. And how long that's going to last over there nobody knows. You'd think it'd be seasonal but it may go on for a year, two or three years. We had four or five—we had four years of average—in the eighties—of above average rainfall here in Yoakum County. I witnessed that. That was an El Niño effect and then, I guess, it turned to the La Niña situation then in the nineties, maybe. Nineteen ninety-eight was a dry year. I mean, it got dry here and we didn't hardly have a dew all year. I guess that was a La Niño effect—La Niña.

DM:

I've had people tell me that remember the drought of the fifties and the drought of the thirties. People reflected back and told me that some of those dry years in the nineties were the worst of all.

TP:

I don't doubt it. I don't doubt it. Maybe we had more involved and we had more infrastructure that affected

DM:

Maybe that's it.

TP:

Yeah, the thirties was bad I've been told.

DM:

It was so visible because of the loose dirt, because the dust storms.

TP:

The Dust Bowl, yes. That goes back to a deal that I've heard my daddy talk about in the thirties where the government started killing cattle. Have you—y'all have heard those stories. Old Dan Fields, who lives in Lubbock now, wrote a book about that. He was an old—he lived down in Higginbotham area and he worked and run a cotton gin down there for a good many years, thirty years probably. He was born down in Jones County, or somewhere down in there, and he wrote that book about the day they killed the cattle in 1934. He was born in 1927. We're good friends with him. I hadn't talked to him in probably a year. They killed cattle out here in Yoakum County because—they killed cattle in other places because nobody had any money to buy feed and we didn't have any grass either. The supply was too great too so it was a sad affair but it had to be done, I guess. Maybe eventually it created a positive effect on down the line.

DM:

They plowed up some farms too in that same—

TP:

Yes they did. Y'all have seen the PBS [**Public Broadcasting Service**] mini-series about it where they just couldn't—the people would come out and canvas and bought land and thought they couldn't go wrong by plowing it up. They showed pictures of everybody plowing the land up and then about that time the droughts hit and it covered up homesteads and everything else.

DM:

I was talking about that Agricultural Adjustment Act where they were killing cattle they would also plow over crops sometimes for the same reason, to diminish that amount being produced.

TP:

Yeah, control the supply. If you've got control of your supply, you've got control of the price. But agriculture, there's so many different operators in agriculture whether we're farming in Yoakum County or whether we're farming in Iowa. Everybody's got a different version. Everybody's got a different idea. The farmers and ranchers are all independent-minded so you can't ever get them together unless you put a strong act together and make them conform to that, to control the supply. In the sixties, they did have a controlled supply of—they called it "Sunnyside Acres". Especially in the fifties you couldn't plant but so many acres of cotton and if you planted more acres of cotton than what you were allowed to they would send you the biggest

fine you ever saw to penalize you for over doing it because they were controlling the supply of cotton. Then, finally, I think the shippers and warehousemen lobbied Congress to get those supply controls taken off because it was affecting their supply of goods that they were handling. But anyway, that's just the way it goes. That's what we've seen over the years. We're all tied to the weather, obviously, and we're all controlled by the weather. No telling what we'll see in the future. It's sure been nice the last few years to have all this rain. Two-thousand eleven was a very bad year, and 2010 was a good year compared to 2011. It started getting dry in the spring of 2011, and it blew out of the southwest all through the spring of '11 and stayed dry, stayed dry, and stayed dry. Then later in the summer, it kind of got out of the southeast and started blowing. Nobody had any crops on their dry land, it was all just bare ole land. Nothing'd come up on the dry land, very little irrigated stuff, what they could water with irrigation. I fed—for ten months I've supplemented my cows here every other day for ten months, from December until October. The calves weighed about two-hundred pounds lighter than they normally weigh because of the adverse, dry conditions.

DM:

Lubbock got just over five inches that year.

TP:

I thought maybe we had—I think we had five or something like that. I want to say seven at the airport.

DM:

It's probably your driest on record, it was Lubbock's driest on record.

TP:

Was it? Well, it might've been the same way. I think we finally started getting some showers.

We got just about a half inch in June, I think, just a little ole local shower. Then we finally started getting some more general rain in October. The shin oak didn't come out that year.

Finally in October then it started coming out from the roots, it'd be little olds shoots come out. I had some cattle—I had some other cows that was breed back with their calf that aborted their calf because they either ate those little shoots of shinnery or some green leaves on mesquites.

I've seen this once or twice in the past, that green mesquites in the fall of the year—green leaves on mesquites will abort calves. They're some kind of chemicals in those leaves there and cattle are hunting green. The cattle are naturally hunting green because they are craving it.

DM:

But it's not an issue in the spring, it's an issue in the fall you're saying.

TP:

It can be. It can be

DM:

It can be in the spring too but usually they have forage so that's the deal.

TP:

Yes. But after it gets dry summer, they're craving green and I've seen them eat mesquite leaves, and there's some chemical in there that'll cause them an abortion from the cow.

DM:

Makes sense.

TP:

And then they start eating beans, they start eating mesquite beans in the summer of 2011 because there wasn't any rain to wash the pollen of the mesquite blooms. I mean, that's what they finally always ate. I had some cows that I took to the vet and they tested them and said their stomach bugs was accustomed to digesting beans rather than grass. They would walk up into the middle of mesquite and pick the beans up off right in the middle of mesquite. It'd be seven-eight feet in diameter and they just wouldn't hardly eat grass, they'd just live on beans. It's just an unfortunate situation, but that just comes along with it.

DM:

To be able to survive a five inch rainfall year is a pretty good thing.

TP:

It's a challenge. It's a challenge. You either have to have plenty of old grass or you have to go buy feed and hay and you have a good talk with your banker. [TK laughs]

DM:

I'm just wondering how many people would've even been able to survive a five inch year in the forties, or thirties, or twenties. When you didn't have—

TP:

Help yourself there. We'll go down at the restaurant and eat dinner after a while too. I've got that planned too. Let's eat that cake. Get that big piece there.

DM:

I think I'll get a piece too.

TP:

Do y'all want some more coffee?

DM:

I'm going to go ahead—hey, did you have any other questions, generally speaking?

TK:

I have a question, just one quick question. Cowboy lore, what the old-timers used to do. Anything you can contribute to the things that some of the old-time cowboys, cowhands, liked to do, the things they were prone to? The one thing I keep running into—I asked some people and the answers varied—some cowboys alleged that during the day they never drank water, it's kind of like old football practice. "We never drank water; we just took the salt pills. We never drank water during the day; we just put the bandana on." What do you know about any of—

TP:

I can't help you there, Tai. I don't guess I know anything dang thing about it. They were just—all I can contribute to that is they were just trying to be tough guy. [DM laughs] They were just trying to be macho. I'm sure they wore a bandana to keep the dust out of their nose. No, I think they was just kind of bullying you there. I doubt if many people passed up a chance to drink some water if they was punching cows during the day. [Laughs] I've heard my daddy talk about—he worked—he was just about twelve or thirteen when there was still some big ranches up in Cochran County, and he was helping his foster brother. They had bigger pastures back then. They would go—if they was going to do some branding, cutting out, or sharpening they would use a horse. They'd get a horse out of the Bermuda, make the drive and get all of the cattle together then they would go change horses because that old pony that they used to make the drive on had about fifteen, twenty miles on it. He was worked down by ten o'clock in the morning. Then they would go change horses and then they'd come back to the herd and sort out what they wanted; get the cattle that they didn't need to brand out—then with another horse, with fresh horse—then they would do the branding, and then afternoon, I guess, they'd turn them loose. Anyway, they rode the heck out of their horses back then. They always—I'm sure all the cowboys got a drink every chance they got while they were letting their horse water.

DM:

Did you ever hear of them having to run off the antelope when they were rounding up cattle?

TP:

No.

DM:

Because antelope hang close to cattle sometimes.

TP:

Well, they will but then the antelope would stay far enough away that they didn't bother anything, I don't think. They didn't let them get that close, the antelope was just that shy. Do y'all want a little bit more coffee with that cake?

DM:

No, not me. I'm good.

TK:

I'm fine, thank you.

TP:

Anyway—

TK:

This is good, thank you.

TP:

You bet. I'll send this with y'all when we get through here. [Laughter] You bet and you can take it home and you can take it back to the museum. Whatever you want to do. My daddy said he was always working around his older foster brother, his foster brother. My daddy was an orphan. His daddy—his mother died when he was a year old, and that was out at Fort Sumner—and he had a twin sister. Their mother died with typhoid fever. There was a family living pretty close by, and so one family offered to take my daddy and raise him and another family offered to take his sister and so they did. The Harris family took my daddy and the Evans family took his sister, I think. He was raised by the Harris family even though he'd come back and stay with his dad every once in a while who was around Fort Sumner. The Harris' finally moved down to Bailey County from the Fort Sumner area and then on down in to Cochran County then down to Yoakum County. Here in Yoakum County is where he met my mother. All the time he was growing up he had to work around those old cowboys, especially up here where Slaughters is at Morton where the Slaughter Ranch was. He spent his early years there, I think five years old to about twelve or thirteen. He said—there was three windmills pumping in those big dirt tank there at Slaughter's there south of Morton, about two miles south, and he said he'd seen a thousand mother cows water at that dirt tank during the day in the summer time. They had three big ole cherry trees there and he'd get up in those trees, eat cherries and watch the bulls fight and the cows water. There were three big wooden Eclipse windmills pumping into that dirt tank.

DM:

Plenty of water.

TP:

Oh yes. That ranch in—I think it covered about three-hundred thousand acres that Colonel CC had. Colonel CC was an investor and a banker from Dallas, I think. He'd come out here in the 1890s and bought land. Anyway, his foster parents came there and his step-daddy was a windmiller and he worked at keeping up the windmills, then his foster brother was a wind-mille in the early twenties and he had to help him, my daddy did. He learned a whole lot about wind-milling and learned a whole lot about life there. He said one time there was always twelve-fourteen cowboys working there. The headquarters was kind of built in a "U" shape and they had flagpole out in the middle of these three building sitting in a "U" shape. My daddy could climb that flagpole, just scaling it up when he was about five or six years old. One day he said the cowboys went out and greased that flagpole and then one of them said, "I bet you can't climb that flagpole today," and he said, "Why, you know I can. I climb it every day." He had a little coffee can full of coins that he saved up and they bet him his coins that he couldn't climb the flagpole. He just took that bet right quick, just went out there and tried to climb the flagpole and couldn't do it because the grease. The cowboys made him give this bucket of coins to them for a couple hours, then pretty soon they'd give them back to him. [DM and TK laugh] He learned right there he couldn't climb the greased flagpole. He went with his brother windmilling—there was forty windmills on that place, I think. Everyone one of them had a name that they'd give them for whatever—maybe the location or whatever. One of the windmills was called "Count Slaughter." Yeah, one of the windmills was called "Count Slaughter," and one of them was "Mini Veal." I'm just thinking of the names that he told me they were named. One of them was "Gourd Vine," and one of them was "Scraped Out." Well, I can't think of anymore names. Mother said that he had named off twenty-nine of them one time and she wrote them down then she lost that piece of paper that she'd [written] them down on. He could think of twenty-nine of those windmills. His brother, his older brother, would talk to the cowboys. The cowboys would tell him what windmill—if Count Slaughter wasn't pumping anymore he'd go over there and fix it. They'd tell him again what other windmill was out. If Gourd Vine was out he'd go over there and put new leathers and checks on it. They just went around—he built a lot—he built several windmill towers while he was working there and put them up on new wells. My dad said that my uncle could build a windmill tower in a day and raise it with teamed of horses. He just was that good of a windmiller. I guess that's all he'd ever done. Anyway, he said it was quite interesting working on that old ranch as just a little kid. He was twelve years old—he got to be twelve years old and I guess he was bigger than the average kid his size. He was horse wrangler a while there. The horse wrangler is the one—he's the one that has the horses in a rope corral and the cowboys tell the horse wrangler what horse they want, and every one of the horses have names. He said there were those cowboys that'll call, "Catch ole Bleacher [02:01:42] for me this morning," and he would. One of them—he said one of them was named "Applejack," such as that; they was all named and the cowboys told him which horse to catch. He did that for a while and then—he said one morning there that Slaughters got a hold of a bunch crazy, spoiled horses. There was a fellow named Ed Eddings, Ed Eddings was his name; he was the ranch manager. There he told

everybody—somebody to call all of the horses. Anyway, every one of those horses bucked their cowboys off right there within fifty yards of the campfire, right there at the headquarters; they were camping right there at the headquarters at the wagon. He said that was the maddest man [Laughs] because everybody got bucked off. Everybody that got on their horse was riding the little spoiled horses. They just got a bunch of spoiled horses, I guess, during the time period there when nobody else wanted them, so Slaughter's bought them. Anyway, they were buckingest bunch of horses that you'd ever saw. He said that everybody that got on their horse that morning got bucked off. That made ranch manager so mad he couldn't get anything done because everybody was going catching horses, god dang. [DM laughs] Then pretty soon my uncle knew a fellow down in Dickens County right after all of this happened—he had a friend down in Dickens County named Tack Kennedy, T-a-c-k, I believe is what he went by. He wrote in a letter and said, "Come out here, I can get you a job on Slaughter ranch breaking horses if you want to," and sure enough ole Tack showed up out there. He wrote in this letter saying, "Don't let anybody know that you can ride a Bronc as good as you can, just wear some old bib overalls [Laughter] and some old shoes," some "old frog-eyed shoes" he called them. So he did, he showed up out there that morning and daddy—I can't hardly talk about this because it's so sentimental to me. Anyway, he said they called ole Tack a horse and he'd just come out of there just pawing at the rope. Anyway, they finally got him saddled and he got on him, I guess, then he'd just eat him up. He said he just rode that ole pony around the corral there and he had big ole hands for a big ole stout fellow. He said he'd buck by those cowboys there watching him. He said, "Well, this son of a bitch is going to run out of pitch after a while." [Laughter] I guess he worked there a few months then went on. Later that old fellow wound up out at Fort Sumner ironically, daddy introduced me to him, so I got to meet that old fellow. Anyway, he said that was quite a show that morning. That all happened there during that span of time when they was living there. Anyway, the Slaughter Ranch was in existence whenever the courthouse was dedicated in Morton. That was in 1925. They dedicated the courthouse in Cochran County and I'm sure all the cowboys went up there during that day, they had a barbeque and everything. He said—daddy said there was drunk cowboys all over the courthouse all day long [Laughter] during that celebration there. That was also the same year that Texas Tech was dedicated. He said he and his family went over to that dedication sometime in October, I guess, after ironically Cochran County was organized in that same year. He said that was quite a site there to go and they had a big barbeque and so forth, a big celebration the day that happened. He said there was drunk cowboys all over the courthouse all day long. [laughter] He said he saw a lot of things happen there at that Slaughter Ranch. It was something else. He was there, he wasn't but about four years old at the Slaughter Ranch, during the big, bad blizzard of 1918. That occurred on the tenth of January, just the day before yesterday—today's the twelfth—in 1918. He said it killed cattle, froze cattle, just such a bad blizzard. It came on down here and froze cattle down here, I've heard my grandmother talk about it. A mile south of Plains a lot of cattle wound up in a fence corner down there, and my grandmother and granddad just lived a mile west of there. I'm sure it killed some of my granddaddy's cattle too. Anyway, nobody had anything to salvage but the hides. She

said my granddad would go down there and pull cattle out of that pile of cattle with his team. He had a weak stomach but she said he'd skin a while and throw up a while. [Laughs] I have some tickets out there in the bunkhouse from his papers where took those hides to Lubbock later on in 1918 and sold the hides. It'll take me a while to dig them out but I can dig them out there. He hauled those hides to Lubbock and sold them, then they'd salvage a little bit of the meet out of them. That's about all they could get out of them, could be it just was such a bad blizzard. Of course, people didn't take care of their cattle like they do now. It didn't take much of a blizzard to kill cattle, smother them, and freeze them. Back to the Slaughter Ranch, my uncle was skinning some cattle up there after the blizzard had come through there, my daddy said. My uncle was using a team to pull those cows out of that frozen pile of other cows, and started skinning them. He would get them situated where he could take a knife, go down the back of their leg and start the hide coming loose. He'd—on one cow he started down the leg with a knife and that cow kicked him. She wasn't alive but he just—maybe she was—no, she couldn't have been alive but he hit a nerve; he hit a nerve with a knife.

DM:

That'd make you wonder, wouldn't it.

TP:

Hell yes it would. [Laughter] He said she just kicked him, I guess, right in the face or somewhere because he was standing pretty close, I guess. Just little ole things like that, it was some of the things that happened. He told me one story about, I guess, lightning hit—there was some cowboys around the headquarters there at Slaughter's, and they had an ole colored fellow there working there, around there. Anyway, this lightning hit and it hit those three—this colored fellow was standing there with them, with these cowboys, and of course everybody got excited; they all fell to the ground. Some of the cowboys grabbed—this is racial, but anyway it still happened—the cowboys jerked up these two fellows, white people, who were standing there with that colored fellow and took them in the house trying to get back well, and they both died but they left the colored fellow laying there. He was lying in a puddle of water and he survived. He survived that. Daddy told me that story and I guess that he lying in that water, that water could've drawn some of that electricity from his body and let him come back too. I know that's racial to go on this tape but that actually happened. That's the way it was back then. He said there was an ole fellow that worked at Slaughter's named "Nigger Bill", he called himself "Nigger Bill." Every once in a while he would catch that old man laughing about something and he'd say, "What are you laughing about Nigger Bill," and he said, "I was laughing about something that happened a long, long time ago." [Laughter]

DM:

Never would say what.

TP:

No. I'm sure he was born back—I'm sure he was old enough, probably, to have been back in the slave days before the civil war; he just was that old. He was crippled but anyway—I bet he was anyway. Anyway, he talked about him some. He'd tell stories about that ole fellow took care of the chickens and took care of the milk cows and so forth like that—carried the slop out, I guess, after each meal.

DM

I'm glad he told you these stories that you—

TP:

Well, I treasure them; the older I get, the more I treasure them.

DM:

You remember them really well.

TP:

Well, I'm just interested in this. He always said there were seven roads that left that Slaughter Headquarters and six of them doesn't go anywhere [Laughter] they just went out in the pasture somewhere. They had seven, eight, nine camps, I think, around or on that ranch and they all had a name. Have y'all ever heard of Jake McClure? Jake McClure was a famous roper back in the twenties and thirties. Jake McClure supposedly was born over here just across the state line in Lee County then he went to work—he and his brother went to work at the Slaughter's back in the teens and daddy stayed with him.

TK:

Oh, he's in the museum.

TP:

He's in the museum.

TK

I remember him.

TP:

He died in 1940. He drowned, supposedly, in a tank out there west of Lovington on his little ole ranch there. For some reason he and his horse got down in there, I don't know what happened exactly. He either fell with him and hit his head and he never did recoup. Anyway, he was working at Slaughter's and his brother was too. Anyway, daddy—they had him stationed at a camp or had him assigned to a camp living right east of Lehman; Lehman's on the road between

here and Morton. They had a camp—I don't know what the camp was called—and daddy stayed with him for four or five—or every once in a while then Jake gave him his first little rope. Anyway, he learned to rope with that little rope that Jake gave him.

DM:

Isn't that something.

TP:

Jake, later on, went on and started rodeoing in the early twenties with a fellow named Tom Staniford that worked around Morton and he could've worked for the Slaughter's too at one time. Anyway, they went to rodeoing and Jake later on became a world champion calf roper in the thirties. Anyway, daddy said that this little rope that Jake gave him—he'd come back to headquarters there and Mrs. Slaughter had brought some pedigree chickens out from Dallas to keep around the ranch. Daddy got the bright idea of roping the rooster one day. [Laughter] I guess he jerked him like he would a calf and he broke his neck. [Laughter] He was some kind of Rhode Island Red or Dominique rooster Mrs. Slaughter had brought out there. Anyway, his mother had to fix him for dinner. [Laughter]

DM:

Did he keep that rope?

TP:

Oh, I'm sure he did. I'm sure he did. She may have whipped him with it. [David laughs] I guess he kept it anyway.

DM:

I wondered if he passed it along to you or anything or if it was still around since it came from Jake McClure.

TP:

[at the same time as David] No, no. I'm sure it was—that was way back then. He probably—I don't think he was probably wasn't over six years old. He and his step-dad made trips to Lubbock while they were living at Slaughter's hauling cake, cattle feed, out. There was no oil mill in Lubbock, I guess, that made cake and meal, cotton-seed cake and meal. They would go there and get two wagon loads—daddy would drive a wagon and his step dad would drive a wagon over there and they'd come back to the Whiteface Camp. It's in the museum, it's on the grounds. That camp was out southeast of where Whiteface is now, about a mile; I think that's what daddy told me. They would stay all night in that, then come on into the headquarters with the two loads. I was with him whenever he and my brother took him out there to that and he'd

come up to that camp he'd say, "Well hell, I've stayed in this little thing before." The table was up on the upper—have y'all been in it?

DM:

Yeah.

TP:

Okay. There was a kitchen table up on the top part and the beds were down underneath in the bottom part of the dugout. They would come by there and stay all night then go on to—or stay awhile—I guess they'd stay all there at that old camp. There was some corrals there where they could unhitch their teams and so forth.

TK:

That's a pretty slick dugout, actually.

TP:

Yeah, it was really well. He said one time they'd come by there and it was a blizzard snow blowing and there was two boys staying there; Slaughter's had two boys staying there. He heard one of these ole boys—it was snowing and blowing and I guess it was going to freeze some cattle to death then too. One of the boys asked the other and said, "What are you going to do if all of these cattle freeze here and Slaughter's has to let us go," and he said, "I don't give a god darn if it does. By god, I'll just go to another ranch and get a job there." [Laughter] Daddy overheard that conversation between them those two ole boys. One of them didn't give a—he said, "God damn," is what he said. Pardon my language but that was the terminology back then. He said he didn't care if they froze all the cattle, he'd just quit and go to another ranch, get a job. [Laughter] He told me one about the big, tall windmill that the LFD's had northwest of Littlefield or northeast, I can't remember. Anyway, he saw it and he'd been up on that tower. It was—I guess it was a hundred and twenty-five foot tower. He said he'd climbed up on it one time.

DM:

He was on it, okay.

TP:

Yeah. I don't know how old he was. He probably was with his family, visiting, or something. I don't think he worked there. He said he actually saw that tower and got up on it.

DM:

They say there were some pretty tough Bronc riders that would never think about climbing that thing.

TP:

Well, he did make this statement—he said he heard the statements be made that any time they had an old boy there they wanted to get rid of and didn't want to fire him. [DM laughs] they would send him out there to graze that windmill and he wouldn't do it, he'd quit before he'd go out there to that tower and climb it.

DM:

Good story.

TP:

I'll bet you—

TK:

I've heard that here and there, the same one, so it's got to be true.

TP:

It's got to be true, that's right. That's right. Evidently, I've seen pictures like y'all have of it and evidently it was a big ole tower.

TK:

Clear that bluff.

TP:

Why sure, why sure. I don't know why they just had to have the improvements down underneath the Cap while they couldn't put them up on top. Maybe it was because they could get a water well there easier. The LFD's was quite a ranch back then too. I guess they covered part—all of—part of Hockley County and maybe part of north Cochran County. Anyway, they went on in to New Mexico, I think. According to history—I've read a little bit of history—they had a drift fence that they had built over and around the headquarters all the way down near to the Pecos River.

DM:

Really?

TP:

Yeah, I've heard that. There's some land over there that the Bogle family owns in Roswell now that was part of the LFD's in the very beginning and then the Bogle's got it as the years went by—passed. Anyway, it was one of their camps supposedly. I forget what it's called but anyway, it something. They built a little building over the well house or something and put LFD initials in

the cement, where they poured cement. So that's why they know it belonged to the LFD's at one time. I've just grown up here and luckily by—I'm just blessed by loving history. My grandparents told me a good bit about history here in Yoakum County, and I wished I'd asked them more questions. It's twenty-twenty hindsight. I wished so much that I'd asked my grandmother and granddad both more things that happened here in Yoakum County than what I did. They volunteered a lot of information, and my daddy did the same thing. He just enjoyed telling me little things, maybe he sensed that I enjoyed hearing about the things. He did, he told me lots of little incidents that happened to him during his life of growing up. Luckily, I guess, I think about them often enough that I don't forget them. I'm sure I've let some few things slip and I forgotten things but—

DM:

It's not often that I come across somebody that remember so much that their dad said so that's—

TP:

I guess I'm just blessed. I thank god I'm blessed that I love this kind of history. The older I get it, the more I value it, obviously. I've got a picture in there of my dad, I'll show you in minute when we walk through the house, that was taken up there at the Slaughter Ranch in about 1922 or '23 because that's about how old he is in the picture. Anyway, he came down here when he were thirteen in the northeast part of the county and went to working on these old ranches. He'd accumulated a little bunch of cows by that time when he was in his teens. He started saving a calf back—they let him do that—he was abled enough to find a little pasture. In the time he and mother married, he had accumulated about forty cows. There's a lot of this ole sandy land that nobody used up here in the county and they just wildcatted it. They didn't even pay lease on it, and I'm sure he worked for the old fellow that had that leased for a while and kept his cows there, maybe. After they married he was able to rent some more land and put his cattle in different places. Anyway, that's the way he kind of got along then he started raising horses. He was raising horses during the war, World War II, and I guess he sold some horses to the Army for the cavalry part even back then. He didn't ever have to go to the Army because he was already married, had a child and then was farming and ranching so I guess that kept him out of it; that exempted him, anyway. My grandparents did tell me a lot about Yoakum County and it's kind of about what I've told you, I guess. My granddad, my mother's dad, was curious about the oil business when it came into Yoakum County. He loved to go around the drilling rigs and so forth and just curious to see them operate. Other people were the same way. My daddy told me this story, my granddad didn't: he said people got to coming out to those drilling rigs, getting in the way, and getting around places like that and the owners were afraid they'd get hurt around rig so they'd get the bottom steps right there before you go in the dog house. At those steps they'd put a little mock grave there [Laughter] and put a little cross on it to kind of send people the message that, "By gosh, when you went up there in that dog house and got around that drilling floor, something could happen to you and it could kill you." My granddad would see that and

he'd look at it a minute and say, "You know, that's pretty clever," and just go right on up the steps. That didn't deter him a bit for getting up there and talking to the driller and the tool pusher. He just didn't pay attention to it. [Laughter] Everybody was curious about the drilling of the oil industry and the oil business. At one time there later on, he got a job gauging a well off down the oil rig road there north two or three miles and some company let him do that so he'd tell them about it. It was on a pipeline there and he had to go down there about every two days and gauge it; stick a gauge in there and see how high the oil was. If it was a certain height he'd open a valve and let it go on down the pipeline. He pumped an ole well at a company on his land that he owned—that a company let him gauge, and pump, take care of it for them and report to them about it. Anyway, they had to survive tough times, he and my grandmother. He loved to have a big orchard in the garden and so forth like that. They raised what they ate, and then he raised cattle and horses too. I've got a—they survived to early twenties whenever it was dry and times were hard then. Then they'd come through the thirties the same way. They didn't have much money then even so a lot of people didn't realize it was much of a depression on. But still, their values of every fell, the value of cattle and everything. I've got a copy of a contract where he sold his calves in 1937 to a fellow named Frank Corn. There's some Corn's over at Roswell, that's an old family that grew up around Roswell. I bet it was probably them, this ole fellow didn't give his address. He sold his calves. He sold eighty steer calves and eighty heifer calves to this Frank Corn—to weigh four hundred at eight cents a pound on the steers and seven cents a pound the heifers delivered to Seagraves, to the shipping pins. What they'll do, they'll just take the cows and calves over there, separate them off and bring the cows back. That was about a two day run. It's about twenty-five or thirty miles as the crow flies across the little shipping pins. They're not there now but they were on the railroad. The railroad came to Seagraves and, I guess, went off. It might've been the end of the railroad. Seagrave's was a big shipping point in the thirties and maybe up in the forties. During the decade of the thirties, I understand Seagraves's was a big shipping point for cattle.

DM:

Do you remember hearing about any obstacles across there, like drift fences that they had to deal with?

TP:

Well, there was already some farmers coming in there and already farming. They had to watch all that and keep the cattle out of the crops and so forth; go down the road with them. They knew of an ole boy that had a little trap fence there, a little trap—what they called a "trap small pasture"—that they could put their cows in—cows and calves in for the night. The next morning then get them together and go on down to Seagraves. I think one time my granddad was—they were going down through downtown Seagraves to the pens and somebody's dog ran out and went to barking in front of this ole pony and he was kind of goosy anyway. He got to bucking

and bucked my granddad off, and broke this outside bone in his leg there. I guess that's about the only mishap I ever heard of him having. But anyway, bucked him off.

DM:

I thought you were going to say there was a stampede in downtown Seagraves. [TK laughs]

TP:

Well, there might've been, I guess. I guess he had enough of these boys around here to help him. They kind of kept them from running away. That's pretty common knowledge. My daddy always said that the hardest fall he ever had was riding a bucking horse into a bunch of cattle and the cattle caused the pony to stumble. Of course, he just went to the ground. He said that's the hardest fall he ever had happen to him one time.

DM:

I can count about five broken bones and it's all due to horses.

TP:

That just has to happen, doesn't it?

DM:

It just happens.

TP:

It sure does, that's what always happens usually. My dad said he's had to stay out with the wagon at night and stand guard during the night when he was a big ole kid, thirteen, fourteen years old there in the summer time. He would work on those ole ranches up there and he'd take the night stand. They'd have to stand guard from midnight until daylight the next morning. He said on a calm, quiet night he and this other boy would—they'd smoke cigarettes and so they could see each other's cigarette lights in the dark of the night. They'd ride around there kind of and I guess they finally got used to the night and they could keep the cattle kind of up together. Of course, everything would lay down, kind of stay still, but they had just continued to go back and forth around the herd by keeping them together. They'd come and meet each other there, visit a minute, then turn around, go back and come around there and check to make sure all the rest of the cattle was quieting down and stayed there. Anyway, he said he's done that a few times, a really good many times. There's a place up here at Morton where this little ole refinery is on the east side of the road; there's a little ole bitty refinery it's not operating anymore. There's a draw right there north of that, and he said that they were holding a thousand mother cows there on that draw. I forget what name of the ranch this was, but anyway, somebody rode up to some other cowboy and give him a piece of candy. This ole boy was unwrapping this candy and threw the paper down, and that scared two or three cows, and they started running,

and it scattered the rest of them. There was a thousand cattle stampeding right there on that draw. It took them about two to three days to get those cattle back together. I forget what ole ranch that was. I think that was after the Slaughter's had already been dissolved and other ranches had come in and bought that land. I don't remember the name of the ranch but anyway, he said he saw that happen. [Laughs] Anyway, he just grew up punching cows. He always told me—of course, he's been around cattle ever since he was big enough to look at a cow—but he said, "I know what a cow's going to do before she ever makes her mind up to do it herself," because he learned their behavior. Anybody can do that if they're around them enough.

DM:

People say the same thing about horses.

TP:

Yeah they do, sure do.

DM:

It's pretty easy after a while to tell what they're thinking.

TP:

That's right. That's right. They're not stupid either, they know. He just spent his lifetime around cattle. He loved them and he taught me—I guess he taught me everything I know about them. Of course, I've owned my own cattle here for thirty-five years and I've learned a whole lot too after that. I'm a fanatic on gentle cattle. Wild cattle are a problem anywhere you take them, anywhere you have them, so I've even—I've been lucky enough to buy bulls from the people at Canyon. Hales Angus is where I've got the majority of my bulls from. Those bulls are breed gentle so they breed gentle daughters. I've got cows now that have learned—I'm always feeding them every other day with lumps of cake and they'll gradually be curious enough to come up and eat the cake, eat that one lump, out of your hand. Now I've got them coming up to the pickup window and sticking their head in the window now wanting a bite of cake. I've got this four door pickup, I got a bucket of cake right between behind the seat. I'd reach in there and get three or four lumps. Oh god dog, the other day here about a month ago there was one ole cow that stuck her head in there and I had my arm out the window, I couldn't get my hand out of there, and she bit down on that thumb and bent it back like that. I think it broke it but it's now healing back but hot dog I'll tell you, that kind of smarted, but hell, I brought it on myself. [DM laughs] She just opened her mouth and just run her tongue out there and grabbed it and got my finger with it. Stupid me, I just couldn't get my hand out of her mouth quick enough.

DM:

They see that pickup and go, "Yeah there's cake."

TP:

That's right. It's sure handy. Of course, I'm by myself and I don't have any help so everything I do, just about, unless I'm branding or something I do myself. It's handy to have them broke to a feed bucket too. They'll always come to the fee bucket, the pickup, and they all know me and the sound of my voice. I've got about two-hundred cows, a little over two-hundred cows, and so forth. It's a sweet misery, god dog. You get attached to them, they get attached to you and it's just a fun deal. I just love cattle. Of course, that's all I grew up knowing too and farming too, I guess. I guess I've catered to the cattle side of it. I'm not farming anymore because it got to be unprofitable because of the expense of farming and the water drop on the irrigation so I'm running cattle right where I used to raise cotton. I guess it's not feasible but I don't care, darn it I'm not having to spend money raising cotton.

DM:

It's great to hear your experiences but also your father's experiences and his impact on you. That's really good to hear.

TP:

Well, he was—he was a different kind of person. He grew up, kind of, as a halfway orphan even though his adopted family took care of him and raised him and he went by their name until my older brother was born. He went by Bill Harris. That was his—and the Harris family nicknamed him Bill. His real name was Dallas Earl. That's where I get my name, Earl and then that's where my brother got his name, Dallas. His twin sister was named Gladys Pearl so they had a couple of twins there that was names rhyming each other. Anyway, his adopted family named him Bill. They got him when he was a year old, obviously, and they raised him up until he was fourteen or fifteen and went out on his own. Anyway, he went by—everybody knew him by Bill Harris until my older brother was born and he had to adding Powell to his name to give my brother the right surname. [Laughter] Ironically, for some reason people around here nicknamed my mother Bill I guess because she was such a tomboy. She was the middle daughter and the older daughter, I guess, never did help my granddad much working cattle. Mother kind of took a liking to it so she helped my granddad work cattle and ride and more so. Her younger sister was the spoiled one so she didn't ever get in on all of the cow working. Anyway, everybody nicknamed my mother Bill. I've got a grocery ticket, maybe in here in the picture album, where they'd buy groceries right after they married and the ole boy in the grocery store made out the ticket to Bill and Bill. [Laughter] Mother saved that, but her name was Wilma.

TK:

She was a considerable cow—horse person.

TP:

She didn't rodeo or anything like that but she just grew up on the ranch riding horses and so

forth. When she and daddy married, she continued to help him working. Even after they went to Fort Sumner, she would help him—he didn't keep a hard hand out there, he and her did it. They'd done their own cow work on the ranch, so she was still riding even up into her middle fifties, I guess, or late fifties and so forth. She wasn't ever a rodeo hand. She'd got adopted into the cowgirl hall of fame, but she was just friends with some people and she got involved with it when it was still located in Hereford, before it moved to Fort Worth. She had some friends that was in it.

TK:

Was she good friends with Mrs. Formby? Clint's wife.

TP:

I think she probably had met her. Now, I guess the one lady that probably got her involved was Fern Sawyer who lived—

DM:

Brownfield, right? Around Brownfield.

TP:

Well, she was born—she was raised—she had family around Brownfield but I think Fern probably was born over in New Mexico. She and mother were about the same age so they'd run around together, I guess, or would see each other when they was growing up. Then later on they got back together, kind of running around a little bit together up around Ruidoso. Fern kind of got her to go to the meetings and then finally—so finally then she got in with some of the Board of Directors people and they put her name up and got her inducted into it. That was the highlight of her life too. She wasn't no famous rodeo hand or anything like that, she was just a common ole ranch gal that grew up on the ranch, knew it from ins and outs.

DM:

I'm glad that there are some people like that in the hall of fame.

TP:

Well, yeah, I guess that helps out. Money gets you into stuff like that—or money seems to keep—money keeps all that going, kind of like the Ranching Heritage Center. Mother and daddy were original—they were contacted by somebody when they started the Ranching Heritage Center and asked them if wanted to be members of it. So they did, they joined it, and they contributed what they could to it to keep it going. Thank goodness that it's there, to give everybody a history of the past. They're original members of it. They're not anybody special, they just paid their dues in the very beginning and kept on paying them. We do the same thing. I don't give them a whole lot. I give them a hundred and fifty dollars a year, I guess, in memory of

mother and daddy. I'm not like the lots down at Post and people like that, that can give them their whole—Rich Anderson, you've heard of him; he gives them a lot of money, I guess. So people like that—and the Formby's too. That's all right. That's All right They've got a lot of money so they got money for donations for tax write off. Thank god the Ranching Heritage Center is there and thank god it's got what it's got there and it continues to build and so forth. Well, I'm glad I've got to share a lot of my knowledge with you boys. I appreciate y'all asking me to share this information and put it on tape for posterity, I guess, and for people in the future.

DM:

It's been great information, we really appreciate it.

TP:

I know I'm forgetting something. I'm know I'm forgetting some little ole something that my daddy used to tell me, or my grandparents, but they told me so many things.

DM:

When you think of these things jot them down and when you get a few together give us a call.

TP:

Okay. They lived over there for so long that people—they had some people that later on became pretty well-noted that'd come by and stay all night with them over at the old place. They loved people and wanted people to stop by there and they were one of the few houses in Yoakum County. The Norfleet—have y'all heard of the Norfleet's at—okay.

DM:

Yeah, cotton center?

TP:

Well, they were Olton, I think. Frank Norfleet was an old fellow that helped organize Lamb County. He'd come down in here for some reason, for whatever reason anyway—but he'd come by and stay all night with Murphy and Lizzy for whatever reason, so they were pretty good friends. That's all I know about some people. There was a fellow named Bob Beverly that was a sheriff over in Lee County that worked for the XIT's back in the nineties. Where he came from I don't know but he wound up living in Lee County, I think, and maybe down in Midland County. He would come by—I think the Lee County museum has got a lot of information about Bob Beverly. He wrote a diary one time while he was working for the XIT's and I guess it's the museum up in Canyon now; they have an XIT room, I think. He was a pretty prominent fellow back then and I've heard my granddad talk about him. I'm sure maybe my granddad and grandmother might've known—might've met Charles Goodnight somewhere along the line. Of course, he died way back there, but I want to think that they'd come across each other's paths

one time. Of course, Charles Goodnight died in '29 I've read. That was when my grandparents were still pretty young, obviously.

DM:

Well, it amazes how in this great expanse people scattered here and there knew each other back in those days.

TP:

Well, they were just—they were a long ways apart but still they'd come by each other's place going here and there.

DM:

Right, it makes sense.

TP:

So that was just the closest neighbor. One thing that I want to tell y'all about, the road between here and Roswell. There's some more things I've kind of forgot to mention. It's sand—after you go off the Cap you get into the deep sand over there kind of like what you'd see between here and Morton; deep ole white sugar sand; there's about a string of thirty or forty miles of that. To get roads passable to go through there even with wagon teams that people from here would go over there and cut bear grass or maybe they'd cut them around here. They would haul them over there and put them in the wagon ruts to keep the wagon from burying down in the sands so much going from here to Roswell—going from the Caprock.

DM:

They would just laid in there?

TP:

Yeah. Well, those old wagon tires were about that wide and they were steel. Of course, they buried up in the sand and the deeper they buried up the harder it was to pull. I'm sure they needed four to six horses just to pull an ole freight wagon through there. These little ole buggies, these little ole two-person buggies, probably didn't have tires over that wide or wheels that wide. Of course that wasn't much of a big deal but still it'd take two horses to pull that through when it was burying down in that sand.

DM:

I'm sure.

TP:

Evidently, people got together and cut bear grass, took it over there and laid it in those ruts, those

ole previous ruts there, that previous people had made going to Roswell back and forth to make it easier traveling.

DM:

For about how many miles do you think that they did this?

TP:

Thirty, probably, thirty miles.

DM:

That's a lot, isn't it.

TK:

That's a lot of bear grass.

DM:

That's a lot of work.

TP:

Oh god yeah. You start into the deep sand right there at that roadside park. Do y'all remember where you fall off the Cap at?

TK:

Yes.

DM:

Mm-hm.

TP:

Okay, you go about another two miles or three and hit that roadside park. Right there is the beginning of the deep sand and then you'll go—it may not be over ten or twelve miles until you get into some tighter land where the LE's—you've seen those signs of the LE's there. Right in there is about where you get out of the sand I think. They used to take bear grass—now, that's what they told me, and I'm sure they did. Of course, people would go to Roswell. Mother said, I guess, when she was about ten years old—she was born in '14—but they went to Ruidoso one time in their old car and it took them all day to get over. You know where Riverside is when you fall off down into the river at the valley—it's just a big ole store and bar there that used to be operated. They camped right there, they stayed all night right there and went on into Ruidoso the next day. This was about 1924 or '25 but they were already in cars by then.

DM:

Still a long drive back then.

TP:

Oh god, yeah. Oh god, yeah.

DM:

Probably going, what, twenty-five miles an hour?

TP:

I imagine and then stopping about every ten miles fixing a flat, probably.

DM:

[Laughs] Laying down some bear grass.

TP:

That's right. Anyway, that's just some of the things that they'd do, I guess. They did that for entertainment, maybe, on weekends or something. [DM laughs] During the WPA [**Works Progress Administration**] Days my granddad ran the WPA program here, I've seen old time books that he had everybody's name down and hour many hours they worked that week. My daddy also told me that if you had your own wagon and team—and they had a little ole caliche pit opened up, kind of, where they just had picks and shovels to dig this caliche out of it. The government would pay you five dollars a day to take your wagon and team and load up caliche—

DM:

Well I'll be, I've never heard about that.

TP:

—and take the roads that they were building around here locally for the WPA day. Of course, you had to use picks and shovels to load it and unload but you got five dollars a day. The one person that was working on that WPA for a day, he got paid one dollar. He'd just furnished himself.

DM:

Right, he didn't have to provide the equipment and all.

TP:

No. But anyway, that went on—

DM:

So you could make a little money.

TP:

—during the WPA, that was the Works Progress Administration days. The CC camps—I don't know that there was ever CCC [**Civilian Conservation Corps**] camp around here.

DM:

In this area, okay.

TP:

Now, those bricks you see in Brownfield—you see those bricks—y'all come across them there—that was WPA work. They put those bricks around all the squares around—you see Lubbock, all of Broadway, is full of the bricks and that was WPA work.

DM:

You do see a fair amount of WPA in the Lubbock area.

TP:

Oh yeah. That was one of the projects. I don't know what else they used.

DM:

One of them was Silver Falls. You know Silver Falls, off of Crosbyton you drop down into the Cap. It was a big park. It was a really popular park.

TP:

Is that where they have an amphitheater now?

DM:

No.

TP:

We went to an outdoor place.

DM:

[speaking at once] Oh, that's—yeah, I know where you're talking about. It's at Blanco Canyon.

TP:

I've been there one time. I don't know much about Crosby County but—

DM:

Yeah, that's Blanco Canyon.

TP:

Anyway, that was some WPA work that went on around here. Tahoka's got it around their square. I guess we didn't have enough population to justify it out here. Tahoka's got it and Lamesa's got it. I don't think Seminole's got anything like that.

DM:

From now and then a building or a school—a school or some other building is a WPA project.

TP:

It was a product of the Depression. Roosevelt may have started some socialistic programs to get money in circulation. My daddy said people were pretty desperate even though they didn't have any money around here. People still were desperate for money, they just didn't have any. The banks—everybody was scared to spend anything. The people that—what few people had money were scared to spend it. Just like the banks would take two or three times their amount of collateral on a mortgage just to save it because the values of things changed so much. Anyway, the government started these programs to get money back in circulation. Supposedly, the government was broke when the depression hit and then they called in all the gold. Have y'all read all this? I've been told this stuff that they called all the gold in, and paid you twenty dollars an ounce for it. People had gold coins because everybody kind of traded in gold a little bit and you could go buy gold at the bank. The government called all of that in and got all they could in it and then paid you twenty dollars an ounce for it. Then after they got all it called in that they thought they was going to get, they artificially jumped the price to thirty-five dollars. That let them start borrowing money then to start paying on these programs, but evidently the government was just broke as everybody else. Of course, everybody raised their own food out here so they didn't see much of the hard times as much but people back east went to the soup lines; they started soup lines to keep everybody from starving to death back in the metropolitan area, I guess, on the east coast and so forth.

DM:

Fortunately, a lot of the population was self-sufficient back then.

TP:

Well, they were. Everybody raised what they ate.

DM:

What would happen now, don't know. I don't know very many self-sufficient people that live off the land.

TP:

I'm sure we'd see some shootings, some killings, robberies and so forth. Of course, I've seen programs on PBS like y'all have during the depression and the banks would go broke and steal the money that was in there that belonged to people. My daddy told me that about one time in the early twenties. He went with his dad there at Fort Sumner and my granddad went into that old bank there, that banker, and told that ole boy—he had probably a hundred, two-hundred, three or four-hundred dollars in that bank at Fort Sumner he said—he more or less threatened him that if closed that bank down and took that money that my granddad would hunt him down and shoot him. [TK laughs] Daddy said he heard that conversation.

DM:

Did he get his money?

TP:

Oh hell, that bank didn't go broke evidently. I guess he didn't take his money out of there, he let the money stay there. He just threatened that banker, if he closed the bank down and left, why—and that's what they would do, they would steal the money of people—people's money that was in there and so that just left you high and dry, obviously, before the FDIC [**Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation**] came in, you see. According to these mini-series on PBS, some of the people off up in the Midwest got turned on the sides of all the gangsters that was robbing the banks. They got—because the banks had already foreclosed on the people's land and took their land away from them and people just gradually turned against the banks and started keeping their money out of the banks. Whenever the bank went busted or got robbed, the people just—they just got behind the gangsters and kind of egged them on, like Bonnie and Clyde and Pretty Boy Floyd. [Laughs] I can't hardly imagine it but that's what they said on that program. I can kind of see that happening. There used to be an ole fellow that'd come here and buy cattle from Amarillo, he was an auctioneer up in the thirties in Kansas, and he took part in auctioning off land. He said they'd auction off land during the sandstorms, during the Dust Bowl, and his ole voice had gotten bad because of it and he was really raspy-voiced. He later on got to buying cattle out around Amarillo. He'd come down here and try to buy—he bought my granddads calves. Ray Barber was his name. He'd sit there and talk about it—but he was an auctioneer during the thirties and he helped auction off a lot of land up there no matter what the weather was. He said that's what hurt voice, was auctioning during dusty days.

TK:

Bad times.

TP:

God dang. God dang. Yeah. Then whenever Roosevelt started his New Deal, why, he started the FDIC, he created WPA, he created the farm programs, the ASCS [**Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service**] just to kind of help stabilize agriculture. Of course, that was the backbone of the county, obviously, and so forth and so on. But boy, I'll tell you, people out here now they were Democrats all the way. Of course, now, we're two or three generations away from the Depression era people so everybody's got a different mindset. Roosevelt saved—my daddy loved him, god dog. [Laughs] He thought Roosevelt hung the moon. He said he never would've been able to buy a new saddle if it hadn't been for Franklin Roosevelt.

DM:

They said in the thirties that a lot of people had a picture of FDR [**Franklin Delano Roosevelt**] and Will Rogers on their walls.

TP:

Yeah, that's right. Mother, my granddad, grandfather, and her sisters went up to Mashed O [Ranch] one time in the late, I guess in the late twenties, and saw Will Rogers. He was friends with Ewing Halsell who owned the Mashed O, supposedly, so they'd call him whenever they was going to brand there so they went up there. We've got a picture of him sitting on in horse there back in some of the pictures albums.

DM:

Pretty good.

TP:

Anyway, they'd go up there and watch him. He'd heal calves for them and then talk to everybody too at dinner time and so forth and so on. He and I have the same birthday, November fourth. It's Will Rogers birthday and that's mine and my daddy's daddy was born on that day too. Got a little bit of common ground with my daddy's daddy, which I never knew him, he died a year or two before I was born. Anyway, Will Rogers, you bet. He was a favorite of everybody's.

TK:

You know, he was a real good polo player and there was polo being played here and there in West Texas. Anything like that that you know about?

TP:

In the fifties they started a little polo team here and a little polo club but it didn't last too long. They play, with what I remember, something about the size of a basketball; it was a basketball.

TK:

It was that palmetto or what they called “cowboy polo?”

TP:

Yeah, cowboy—then it was Palomino polo in some places even. They didn’t last long, it just wasn’t that popular and people just didn’t get into it. They played it down here in the rodeo arena.

DM:

Tech had a polo club way back then sometime.

TK:

I think that’s right, Dave.

TP:

Back fifteen years ago we went down to Guthrie one day at the Pitchfork’s, and they were playing—some of the cowboys down there were playing polo and that ranch manager was playing polo. It was—I’m just not that interested in it. It was kind of a boring afternoon other than seeing the ranch, kind of the headquarters there, and being there, but I didn’t care that much about it. Anyway, it was all right. It’s all right, just depending on what your likes and dislikes are.

TK:

Will was a big—

TP:

Was he?

TK:

Yeah, kind of into that.

DM:

I didn’t realize that.

TK:

That’s cool that y’all had a family connection with Will.

TP:

He was friends with Ewing Halsell, and of course, ole Will Rogers was a world ambassador, I guess.

DM:

Yeah, and made a little trip to Europe before he died; met Mussolini.

TP:

Oh did he?

DM:

Yeah.

TP:

I hadn't ever read that.

TK:

I didn't know that.

DM:

Do you have any other questions? You ready for me to shut this off?

TP:

Whatever you think. I know I'll think of several things after we—

[End of Recording]

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