

**Oral History Interview of  
Bill Bennett**

**Interviewed by: David Marshall  
December 17, 2014  
Lubbock, Texas**

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## Transcript Overview:

This interview features Bill Bennett, who discusses his early life, education, and experiences as a soldier and educator.

**Length of Interview:** 01:44:27

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### Keywords

Agriculture, farming, World War II, foreign travel, education, teaching

**David Marshall (DM):**

The date is December 17, 2014, this is David Marshall interviewing Bill Bennett at his home in Lubbock, Texas, and let's just start by getting your date of birth.

**Bill Bennett (BB):**

Date of birth was January 23, 1927.

DM:

Where were you born?

BB:

I was born in Plainview, Arkansas, in a little old town of about five-hundred people that is no longer there, I understand; but Plainview, Arkansas.

DM:

What was your family doing there in Plainview?

BB:

Well, they were still working on the farm, but immediately after that my dad had gone to school at Russellville Tech, played football there, he was a center, and his name was Sow. S-o-w, Sow, that's the nickname for him. (laughing) And he then eventually—we moved on to Stillwater, Oklahoma, where he did some masters work to become a vocational agriculture teacher.

DM:

At Oklahoma State?

BB:

Yes, Oklahoma State was where he did that, yes.

DM:

Did you say Russellville?

BB:

Yes, Russellville Tech was the name of the college at the time.

DM:

So he became a Vo-Ag<sup>1</sup> teacher?

BB:

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<sup>1</sup> Vocational Agriculture.

Yes.

DM:

Where did he have his first job?

BB:

Was Spiro, Oklahoma, and he taught there for eleven years, and we bought a little farm, he did, by the way—about eighty acres, which obviously is nothing by today's standards, but it was a lot of work then, and I learned quick like how important it was to be able to do farm chores, and I often tell people that we worked our full tail off, it was just routine. We did it, everybody else did it the same way, and we didn't think a thing about it. Gosh, we were happy as dudes, just doing what we had to do—but the little old farm taught me a lot about walking behind a pair of mules, and a pair of mares, or whatever happened to be it over that day, but it was an interesting experience for me.

DM:

How much of that eighty acres was cultivated?

BB:

Oh, I'd guess probably about fifty, and then the rest of it was pasture, and we had a small apple orchard, a small peach orchard, which took up then I think probably ten acres at the most, but it was principally cotton of course, that part of the country in those days, was the main stake crop.

DM:

Was there a [cotton] gin nearby?

BB:

You know, now that you mention that, I don't know, but there had to be, as much cotton that was grown in the area, there just about had to be there in Spiro. I don't remember it, just to be honest about it, I do not.

DM:

Did cotton move out of that area after World War II like it did down in Texas?

BB:

You know, I don't know because, I knew just very little about that, I didn't keep up with it. I don't know.

DM:

Just curious because, you know, it was in East Texas before the war, it moved out west after the war pretty much, generally speaking.

BB:

Went to pasture over in the pan-land country.

DM:

So your cash crop was cotton, and what other crops did you raise?

BB:

Well, I raised a little bit of corn every once in a while—and interestingly, we raised potatoes, and watermelons, and believe it or not, I used to get out with my friends and go looking for watermelons late at night, and we'd go steal some out of my dad's own watermelon patch. I don't think he ever knew that. (laughing) Now you know, obviously I didn't need to; it was just the fun of it. (laughing)

DM:

(laughing) That's right.

BB:

But mainly those crops, and oh, we had a garden and my mom canned [what] seemed like every other day in the summertime, with peas and whatever beans and on, and on, and on that we had, but it was a good life, I enjoyed it.

DM:

I beat you shelled some peas. (laughing)

BB:

We sure did, in fact we used to sit around and tell stories when we'd shell peas. I had three sisters and that was our chore, was to shell peas, you bet. (laughing)

DM:

(laughing) Did you raise any feed for your livestock?

BB:

Yes we did, in fact, we had some hay, come to think of it, and we harvested that and maybe some grain sorghum—milo—that sort of thing. But we put up a good bit of hay, both baled and loose hay, up in the attic of the barn, and yeah we did that. We had a herd of cows, let's see, where it would have been about, say, fifteen cows, I guess, that we milked, two times a day. Most of the



time my dad was home when we needed to milk, but there were times that he was not there and you can guess who milked all fifteen cows. But once again, just as far as I was concerned to have at it.

DM:

When you're milking fifteen cows, what time of the morning do you start on that?

BB:

Four o' clock, we got up at four o' clock, just routinely, it was just, you know, one of those things at that time, you had to do it.

DM:

What kind of dairy cows did you have?

BB:

Well, mainly Jerseys, Jerseys, we weren't into Holsteins yet, or Guernseys, but Jerseys yeah, primarily.

DM:

It seems like a lot of people had Jersey cattle early on but moved over to Holsteins somewhere along the way, does that sound right to you?

BB:

Well, yes, that is exactly what happened, is that—probably—these days in particular, the big dairy herds, they're what, probably ninety percent Holsteins? But yeah, I—and what the transformation was, why it took place, I don't really know. But it happened, not in my lifetime on the farm, but I don't know when that started. Let's see, I would think it would have to be probably '50 to '60, somewhere along in there, but yes it did, you're right.

DM:

Yeah, I wonder about that. You know, Jerseys give a little less but better milk, and Holsteins give a little more but maybe a little less cream in it?

BB:

That's it exactly, the cream content, that's why I'm just suspicious—we had Jerseys, and we would separate our milk each day, and take off the cream and, of course, give what was left over, we called it the blue John<sup>2</sup>, gave that to our hogs. Now you know today that blue John is sold as skim milk in the grocery store, they know it's too good for the pigs anymore, but that's the stuff a lot of our people are drinking, what we used to give to the hogs. (laughing)

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<sup>2</sup> The lack of fat in the milk makes it appear watery and blue-tinged in color.



DM:

How many hogs did you have?

BB:

Oh gosh, I guess probably, one, two, three, about five sows. And then of course, the little pigs that came along. One boar, and so yeah—

DM:

Did you slaughter your own hogs?

BB:

Yes we did; slaughtered our own calves, and did our own—of course, poultry, obviously, was handy. We had those around too, but still we made sausages and cured the ham, and Daddy would put the salt in with the hams, and on and on—so it was just the routine [in the] country back in those days.

DM:

Did you have a smokehouse?

BB:

Yes we did. Well. it was a well-house as well as a smokehouse, it was doubled as both. But then we also had the cream separator in there, so just a multiple-use house, you might say.

DM:

I love to hear about these very self-sufficient farms, from that period—

BB:

And that's what we were.

DM:

Are we talking about the thirties, pretty much?

BB:

Well this would be '27, '33 when we moved there, and we didn't much know about the recessions that we had back in those days, '29, '30, '31, because we had plenty of food. We never lacked of food, we didn't have any money, but we had plenty of food. Boy, was it adequate, I tell you. But anyway, we made it through the recession probably really pretty good, yeah, that helped.

DM:

Did you have beef cattle as well as dairy cattle?

BB:

No, even though we did have, oh I guess, probably had some calves that were beef calves that we bought some place. But no, no, we didn't raise any as the herds of the cows. No we didn't—

DM:

Tell me about the days you slaughtered the hogs, how did you do that? Did you scald them?

BB:

Yes, and the first thing, they were shot in the head, right between the eyes, and then immediately they were taken and put in the—the water was already scalding hot, I can tell you know something about it yourself. But then they would put that pig down in that hot water head first and, of course, pull it out and then scrape, scrape, scrape, and give it another dose, and on, and on. Scrape, scrape, scrape, and I am trying to think, before or after they removed the entrails, it must have been before, but now I don't know about that, to know just when, but anyway, or shortly thereafter, removed the entrails and, of course, Dad saved the heart, and the liver, and the brains, you know the story—we really didn't care for it much, but my dad did. and that's good.

DM:

And you said you cured the hams, and did you cure bacon also?

BB:

Yes, yes, oh yeah, the bacon, yeah, sure did.

DM:

Did you grind most of it into sausage? Most of the—?

BB:

The big—probably the front part of the hog, and then the other, almost the waste part, you might say, that's not good meat to begin with, but it's still good meat done right. But anyway, yeah, we did that, and it worked out good. Sausage was—and that's one of the one things that my mom canned too, was sausage, most tremendous. And we would always have that or bacon for breakfast, it was routine. (laughing)

DM:

During the Depression were y'all affected by the Triple A, the Agriculture Adjustment Act<sup>3</sup>, that had people plow over some of their land, and kill some of their livestock?

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<sup>3</sup> The AAA, a 1933 New Deal federal law, paid farmers to decrease excess production thereby raising crop value.

BB:

Not to my knowledge, David, not to my knowledge. Now, my dad may have been involved in it and I didn't have a need to know so, no, I don't know. I don't remember anything about it, but still, it's just—I kind of doubt it really, yeah.

DM:

Well, I know there was a lot of work going on, on the farm.

BB:

Yes there was, and a lot of people were saved because of it, it was a good effort I understand and all that, but still at the time knew very little about it.

DM:

Did you have a tractor before the war?

BB:

No, no we didn't.

DM:

Did you have REA<sup>4</sup>, electricity before the war?

BB:

Well, we had electricity now, whether it REA—our farm was right adjacent to the city limits, the town limits, and it may be that they came out there with it, I don't know. I remember, now that you mention, I remember the electrical lines that crossed our pasture, and I know it came from downtown, it had to eventually come from down there, it had to be.

DM:

Did they have poles across your—?

BB:

Yeah.

DM:

How high up were they?

BB:

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<sup>4</sup> The Rural Electrification Administration, a 1935 program providing for the installation of electrical distribution systems in America's rural areas.

Oh, let's say maybe twenty feet. Is that about average you think, for most—?

DM:

Maybe, maybe twenty, twenty-five now, twenty-five.

BB:

Yeah, but somewhere in there. Just the standard, more or less, they weren't the really big tall type, but just the smaller—

DM:

Kind of like a telephone pole you see now?

BB:

Yeah, that's it exactly.

DM:

Well, what did you use the electricity for? Well, first of all, do you remember a time when you didn't have electricity?

BB:

No, I do not, I do not. But, it was just—well, number one, the house, we didn't have electrical milking, unfortunately. But it was still in the, of course, where the separator and those other places were that had electricity there, but that's the only extent of it other than the house, just whatever was needed there.

DM:

Just lightbulbs and outlets for appliances?

BB:

The radios, yeah.

DM:

Did you have a washing machine that plugged in?

BB:

I would almost guess that we didn't. I can remember that—well, though, if we had a washing machine that was hooked onto the same—the basin where the clothes were, and if that ringer was there, then odds are it was hooked up to that—yeah it about had to be, the more I think about it. Yeah, it would have been early on, whatever size those were, and what they were, but no, I think we were, now that you mention it.

DM:

What was your water source? Did you have a well?

BB:

We had a well, and we also gathered rainwater from the roof, and had a cistern, and I might add that there were times when it didn't taste quite like it should have. (laughing) Now I remember one day a skunk got in there, killed himself, and it was a mess for a while, I couldn't guess how long it took before we could use it, but obviously a long time, but I remember that so well.

DM:

Did you ever have to stir that water? Do you remember stirring it?

BB:

You know, I don't remember it, I don't remember that we did, I had very little to do with it, I might add, but there was just no need to really do anything, as far as I know.

DM:

Unless a skunk got in there? (laughing)

BB:

Unless a skunk got in there, and then it was a sad, sad situation, amen. But we had the well obviously, and in fact, I would almost suggest that we probably used the well as long as we could, as long as it was available; but no, we used the cistern water also; [we used] both, yeah we did, yeah.

DM:

Did the well have an electric pump?

BB:

Yes, that one that was early on. But I remember that we had running water, you bet, in the bathroom, and in the kitchen for Mom, and the sink that we would wash ourselves—yeah, we had it running in the house, so it pretty much had to be pumped in, yeah.

DM:

Now, what about your heat source? How did you heat the house?

BB:

Well, coal stove, yeah; one big room that we lived in, and that was it. The rest of the house I don't know as we had any heat, because I know that when we went to bed it was as cold as all get-out, obviously in the winter time, and quite warm in the summer time, but that's a good

point. I hadn't really thought about that, but I can't remember any other heating source otherwise.

DM:

What about for the cook stove?

BB:

And the cook stove in the kitchen was wooden, and then later was kerosene.

DM:

Okay, wood, then kerosene?

BB:

Yeah, and it was kerosene pretty early in my lifetime on the farm, I remember that too, yeah.

DM:

Now, did you ever hear about your dad's Vo-Ag teaching and if he specialized in a particular area or if the students in that area had particular types of projects, like dairy cattle, or beef cattle, or crops? Did he ever talk about that much?

BB:

No, I just don't remember for sure, but I don't know that he did specify any particular group. I can just remember more emphasis on livestock than he had on crops, and I would imagine that's partly because the boys themselves probably enjoyed livestock, and therefore that was their special project. But I remember him going out to visit some young student's farm and his dad, of course. The parents were there, but there would be a half-dozen, ten, twelve of us go out to look at his projects, and it was just nearly all—I don't really remember going in there where someone was growing feed, it was just livestock, yeah, I don't think it was his emphasis as much as its just what the boys had.

DM:

Right, right. I've noticed that in Texas, and I'm sure everywhere, the emphasis really changes. So I grew up in ranching country, so people had beef cattle, but we could make better money off of hogs at a stock show, so we also had, you know, that kind of thing. And some other areas, like out here, crops are so important. Now, eventually you became a soil science expert, right?

BB:

Well, a soil scientist, whether it would add the "expert" on there it might be questionable. (laughing) That was my expertise, if there was any.



DM:

Have you ever reflected back on your farm, and could you give an analysis of what that soil was like, basically?

BB:

Oh yeah, I've thought of that many times, and how it was loamy, for example, and in good soil condition, and that's what Dad did to keep it that way. I didn't really think about that, but still, it was a nice, easy to farm, easy to plow, that sort of thing, sure was, yeah, that was evident. And I've thought many times about what I would liked to have know back then that I eventually knew now, early on in my career, would be of interest to know a little more about it, but still it was evidently good soil for example, on the farm. But, I've thought of that many times, sure have.

DM:

And, substantial rainfall too, in that part of the country—

BB:

There was, probably forty, fifty, maybe seventy, sixty inches, oh yeah—and fortunately, a good bit of that came in the summertime; well, spring and fall mainly, but still, enough came in the summer time to keep the crops growing good, and that sort of thing. So yeah, that was very fortunate, it was; like any farming community, you're going to have trouble a year or two here and there, either too little or too much, and all of that, but still in the main it was still good.

DM:

Where did you start school, at Spiro?

BB:

At Spiro.

DM:

First grade?

BB:

First grade, and stayed there until I was a junior in high school. I had completed junior training, and then moved to the town of Wilburton, to be with the Eastern Oklahoma A&M College, it was a junior college at the time, and he was in charge of the farm, and it was during the war years, this would have been in 1944, that we moved. And he taught in the department, it was a one-man department. It was—what I'm coming to say—he was a one-man department that was probably a three-man department before the war, so he taught, and of course, fewer courses, and worried about the farm. They had a farm supervisor that helped, and all of that. But it was a good year for me, graduated then from Wilburton High School.



DM:

What year would that have been?

BB:

In 1945.

DM:

Forty-five? Okay, tell me about school. What were your favorite subjects? Did you lean toward agricultural studies early on?

BB:

Oh yeah, all the time, without any question. I leaned a little bit toward engineering, and sometimes thought I may be that. I took Ag Engineering courses and thought sometime maybe I should go that direction, but I got a little more interested in agronomy, soils, for some reason, I really don't know why sometimes. Well, I think—almost know—it was the teachers that were involved; [the teachers] that I had in my agronomy course was quite a good one. I remember that, and he said, "Bill, we need you to major in agronomy," and all that sort of stuff. Influence, of course, that was important for me to get that attention, so I listened to it. But still graduated, actually, still a degree in agronomy, they didn't have a separate soils major, but still agronomy crops are soils, either one would come under that classification. So, that was my major.

DM:

Were you involved in athletics or any other extracurricular activities while you were in school?

BB:

No, no I was not. I don't know of any—well, I was in agronomy club and those sorts of things, and they are extracurricular, but still, it wasn't like I was on a crops judging team, or a soil judging team, or a livestock judging team. I wasn't involved in any of that, and I didn't go to any other universities for competitions of any sort; no, no I never did.

DM:

One reason I was asking is, you were so busy on the farm it sounded like, that I wondered if you would even have any time for anything like that, if the opportunity did arise?

BB:

Well, at the time I just didn't really have a lot of it, I just had very little to do off the farm. Sunday was always a special day as far as church and that activity was concerned, but still, during the week, no. I guess obviously I played basketball, I might add, but in high school. And we didn't have football, so we didn't have a football team, and so on, but still, obviously, that took a little extra time too, but I sure did enjoy it. I always tell everybody that I was the tenth

man on the basketball team, tenth man, and they would figure that I was bad, and I would tell that I got to play any time we were ahead by at least thirty points, I got to play the last minute. (laughing) But to me, it was just as important, it was important that I was on the team, in my mind, that was important to me, and I didn't feel a bit bad about it. (laughing) I was happy.

DM:

Where did y'all go to church?

BB:

We went to Metzler Methodist Church, pretty much Methodist all the way. Early on they were in the Nazarene Church, but when we went to Stillwater, there was no Nazarene, well, I think there was no Nazarene Church there, I wonder why there wasn't when I look back on it, but then they started going to Methodist, and have gone ever since.

DM:

Did Spiro have more than one Church?

BB:

No; well, I mean, Methodist, Baptist, Holy Rollers, they were even back then and so on—

DM:

So three separate churches?

BB:

Yeah, and there may have been another one or two small ones, but still—

DM:

Did they share a building or anything like that?

BB:

Not to my knowledge, no. Just the Baptist and Methodists were the two main ones, yeah.

DM:

What did you do for fun? I know you worked a lot on the farm, but did you have a place to go swimming in the river? Or did you have any kind of social events going on?

BB:

Well, we had social events, I know that, just how many and exactly what kind, I have difficulty remembering. We used to get together and play some card games on the weekends. And I might point out that early on, Dad was such that he didn't think we should be playing cards, and

apparently one day my mom said to him, “Joe, now we got to remember those kids—those things aren’t going to hurt a thing in the world, it’s what you do with them, that’s important. Get to gambling, now that’s a different story.” But she would talk him into going ahead and letting us play cards, but it was—I just don’t remember a lot of—well, FFA judging and that sort of thing. Going to County Fair, which we always took time to do that, and so one, so. But there was a lot of things like that the more I think about it that we did do. We were near close enough to Fort Smith, Arkansas that, later on in my life, at Spiro, we would occasionally go over there as kids, after sixteen, able to drive, and see a picture show even though we had one in Spiro. They were more advanced over in Fort Smith because they had a bigger city. (laughing) But still, not a lot of stuff on the outside.

DM:

Well, let’s talk about when you graduated, were you drafted into the army, or—?

BB:

Yes, I graduated on almost the last day of May, ’45, and about the fifth day of May, Uncle Sam had already called me to suggest I join them, which I did, obviously. And a couple of us from my hometown got on the same bus and went on that bus over to Camp Chaffee, Arkansas, and—well, we went somewhere else and got on another bus—but anyway, Camp Chaffee, Arkansas, was the first stop. That was my first military service right there.

DM:

Okay, that was your boot camp?

BB:

Yeah, well, boot camp with them for three years. And I might point out that prior to my junior year, my senior year, I had volunteered for the—what they called the Air Force Reserve, Air Corps Reserve they called it back then—with the idea that if you joined up with that group then you would be given the opportunity to be a pilot, or a bombardier, be involved in the airplane, which was intriguing to most of us, to be able to do that. And so when they called me then, and why they sent us to Camp Robinson in Arkansas—an infantry basic training camp—I still don’t understand. But, after we had been there and got checked in and everything, they put us on a train, headed to Camp Robinson, which was in Little Rock, Arkansas.

DM:

Camp—?

BB:

Robinson.

DM:

Robinson, okay.

BB:

Robinson. And we asked the guy, my friend and I said, "Why are we going to Camp Robinson?" He said, "Oh, I don't know." He said, "Don't ask me. I don't know that type thing." We told him that we wondered and he said, "Well, when you get there, talk to them." So, we got there late Friday afternoon, and then got in the barracks and that sort of thing. And then the first thing Monday morning we went in to see the officer of the day, this friend of mine and I, explained to him our plight, and he said, "Well guys, with all due respect, to your abilities to become a famous Air Force pilot, you know what I'm going to say. You understand what TS<sup>5</sup> means." And we said, "Yes sir, we do." And he said, "I'm sorry, but I just don't know if there is anything I can do." So we were in the—and then we talked to our parents, and told them the plight, and I'm surprised that we didn't get shot at, but they called the congressman from our district and said, "Hey, our boys—", and all that sort of stuff, and after about three weeks of infantry basic training, we actually got shipped out to Biloxi Field, Mississippi, Air Force, and our parents—(laughing) and we often thought, "I'm glad we didn't see that lieutenant before we left." (laughing)

DM:

Who would have thought parents would have had any impact on the U. S. Army? (laughing)

BB:

Well, and I don't know either, but the congressmen apparently do. But anyway, it was still interesting, and I have often added and told many people that three weeks of infantry basic training was more than three months of basic training in the Air Force would have been. I mean it was tough. It was tough. I mean, boy, they had us as just boys, terrible. (laughing) But that's the way it should be, we didn't argue the point, but still it was just tough.

DM:

At this point Germany had surrendered?

BB:

Yes.

DM:

But Japan had not?

BB:

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<sup>5</sup> "Top Secret"

Japan had not.

DM:

Did you think you were going to be shipped out to Japan one day?

BB:

No, we really didn't think we would be shipped anywhere, because they had so many men at that time, without anything for them to do, and they just really didn't know what to do with us. We spent two months in Keesler Field, Mississippi, just almost sitting on our rear ends, waiting for something to happen. They would line us up, all of the people in the barracks, line us up on—and this was in the—Biloxi Field was on a seashore, sand, built on sand. They would line us up on this side of the street, this side of the block, and we would go across there and pick up pine needles, pick up pine needles until we got them to the other side, and then they had to go back, (laughs)—just to keep us busy. Keep us busy, that's all they were doing, but boy we had a laugh about that one, but we eventually got our instructions to go to Scott Field, Illinois—

DM:

Scott Field?

BB:

Scott Field, which we appreciated the opportunity of thinking that was going to be some of our training that we would become as a pilot still, but we got up there and they said, "No sir, this base is for"—what they called cryptographic school, it was the code, you learned to do things by code, and radio and all that sort of stuff. And so they said, "No sir, we don't do pilot training, we're sorry for you," but said, "That's just not in our hands." So we finally gave up on that and eventually realized they didn't have a need for us, and a couple of them told us that, that "We just don't have a need for pilots, and there is no use in training you if you're not needed." And so we accepted that, and those things, but still we never did go to cryptographic school, nothing. And then about, I don't know, about another month or so, they shipped us overseas, and this would have been in December '46. Now wait a minute, no, December '45. That was in, other words, right around six months, that we took the basic training and then did nothing for three months, and so on, but we went overseas then and took a cruise ship, courtesy of Uncle Sam, all the way over and—(laughing)

DM:

Well, that's pretty good. (laughing)

BB:

And at least two-thirds of the people were lined up on the side of the ship doing you know what—(laughing)



DM:

Well what about you? Where were you?

BB:

I was there. I was there in the darned—they had bunks in there in the place we were staying, four deep, and four on this side, and four on this side, in one little old room. And I want to tell you that the liquid in the bottom of that floor, in the bottom of that room was at least six inches deep, oh listen, it was sad. But, so what?—

DM:

You grew up on a farm in Spiro, Arkansas—

BB:

Well, no just that we were so sick ourselves that we didn't—

DM:

You weren't used to the sea though is what I'm talking about.

BB:

That's right, no question about that. But still, we got over there, and we were shipped into Le Havre, France, is where we landed. They shipped us by box cars, by train, we were in a box car, about thirty people; it was in December, was cold, cold, it was cold. They had one wooden stove in the box car where we were located, and boy it was good to even get near that, but it was kind of difficult to go—it was kind of—one of the interesting points is that [when] we went across France, occasionally the train would stop at a town, and there would be French people coming and waving at us saying, "Thank you, thank you, thank you." And it was just kind of gratifying really to hear that, and so on, but they sent us on over across on in to Germany eventually, and so I stayed there for about ten months, army of occupation.

DM:

Where in Germany?

BB:

A little town of Erlangen. The base, I don't think it had another name other than at Erlangen, except that it was the 40<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing of—there was a headquarters, and headquarters squadron of the 40<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing of the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force. And that was basically Europe, the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force, but we were headquarter squadron, and, of course, we had—I don't think we had any generals, but we had several lieutenant colonels, in other words, enough that a headquarter squadron would have to have, you know the story there. But we worked about half day, I ended up being a clerk-typist, of all things because I had taken typing in high school and it was on my transcript, they

had the records that I was a typist, so I became clerk-typist, in headquarters office. And every month, every day, we would report on the number of people, the roster, of everybody that was there, and then all the other little things that they needed to know, and so forth. And we would be through, easily, in three hours of that day, and the rest of the day we had to spend playing pool, or table tennis, or dominoes, or something. (laughing)

DM:

(laughing) Better than picking up pine needles.

BB:

It was better than having to shoot a gun at somebody too, I'll tell you. We were prepared, I might add—we didn't have any arms that we had on ourselves, but I know that we knew they had arms nearby that we could have if we needed them. Guns, in other words, but still I didn't touch a gun the whole time I was over there. We were there in case we were needed, and I guess that was the important thing. I often tell people, I'm so ashamed as to what I did, that it was nothing, nothing, but still I tell—but still I was ready, in case we had to. And all the others were too. There's no question about how they felt, and we stayed on the base.

DM:

You didn't get out at all?

BB:

Didn't get out and flirt with the *frauleins* or anything. (laughing)

DM:

Did you hear about any difficulties with the local population?

BB:

Did not, did not. And I kind of think, David, that the southern part of Germany was probably a little—and any historian would probably tell me I'm wrong but—it felt that they a little more considerate of the presence of the Americans than they might have been on up in the north. I don't know that for sure, but still we thought it, and we wondered, but we never did hear of anything.

DM:

Did you see much sign of the devastations of the war?

BB:

No, no, because we didn't get out see, if we had gone to Munich, which was nearby, we would have seen it, but no, we didn't.



DM:

Well, you even landed in a very pretty part of Germany, Bavaria.

BB:

Well yeah, Bavaria, we went through there, yeah it was. I remember that—even though I don't remember too much about the landscape, but still—there were kind of small hills, that's about all there were, there weren't any mountains by any means. That's a good point.

DM:

Did you pick up on any of the culture? For example, did y'all eat any German food, or was it all just American food just brought in?

BB:

It was American food, I wouldn't doubt, but what there may have been [was] some German food that we may not have really realized it was German food, as far as that goes—but no, it wasn't apparent.

DM:

You lived on a little American island in Germany it sounds like.

BB:

Exactly, exactly, and everybody was happy not to be going anywhere, and nobody ever fussed, I know that, just happy as lark, so to speak.

DM:

And by the way, by the time you arrived over in Europe, you were Air Force instead of Army Air Corps, is that right?

BB:

No, I'm not sure when it became Air Force, I think that we were still Army Air Corps, even though when you stop to think about it, it was the eighth Air Force that we were in, so maybe by that time, David, you may be right, it would not be of any consequence, I might add, to us to know—

DM:

Well you were in two branches of the service, Army Air Corps and Air Force. (laughing)

BB:

When you put it that way, yeah, yeah.

DM:

Even though you had American food, you were on an American base with Americans, you were still overseas, and here you were from a farm in Arkansas, I assume, before the war did you go many places?

BB:

No, not as far as travel was concerned, no. I mean, we went to places in Arkansas and down into Scranton, down there to my Dad's folks, parents' farm, and we'd go down there twice a year and then visit my old kinfolk in Muskogee, and up to Oklahoma City, and McAlester. But still, no, we didn't do any lengthy travel.

DM:

But now you've been to Biloxi, you've been to Illinois, and now overseas on a transport across the Atlantic, through France, a man of the world.

BB:

Well, I never did think of myself as a man of the world. But it's kind of interesting, you know, I don't—I look back and I often realize just exactly what you're talking about, but at the time, it didn't dawn on me that I was seeing the world, it really didn't. But I thought later on, that it really was a good experience for me to have been—

DM:

And I tell you, most people will say that, they say, "I was just busy with what I was supposed to be doing and I thought about it later." That's often the way people react to that, in fact I talked to Alan Bean one time who was one of the moon landing astronauts, and I said, "Wow, what was it like to stand on the moon?" And he said, "I didn't think about it at the time, I was busy. We had a list of things to do and later on I,"—so that's the standard answer, you know, so you're like the normal person.

BB:

That's a good way to put it, yeah.

DM:

But did it change you at all, in the long run, this experience? Being overseas, you know, being through the training? Did it make you a different person, you think?

BB:

Well, it's kind of one of those things that I don't, at the time, really realize that it might have. But I still look back on it, I remembered with time that it was an experience that I would never forget, and it would always be with me, And it was pleasant, even though, still, to say your [time

was] pleasant in the military is kind of difficult, to think of it that way—but still, they were good experiences and not bad experiences.

DM:

Do you ever on what would have happened if the atomic bombs had not been dropped? I mean, some people say this war would have continued for some time. Have you ever thought about that much?

BB:

No, at the time we didn't. Even though subsequently, in what, ten years later, twenty years later it had finally dawned on me, "Gosh, what would have happened?" We'd have been over in Japan fighting those dudes or the Philippines, or somewhere, or Germany. Well then, depending on the time, it would have been Japan, no question about it. But no, not until it was many years later that it dawned on me that, that was—well, that didn't come to me all of a sudden out of a blue sky but—just, over time—and you heard more and more, the older you became, the more you heard about the importance of the bombing of Japan. It was—the reason for the good stuff and so forth, so it was a good realization, I think, that came on me.

DM:

When did you receive word that you were going back to the U.S. after the occupation?

BB:

Well it would have been in—I don't know the exact date, I often think I need to go back and look that up, but somewhere around November, early November.

DM:

Of '46?

BB:

Yeah, '46 that we were ordered back to the U. S.. What prompted it, we don't know; or whether they had closed the Erlangen base, we don't know. But they said, "Here, you're going to leave tomorrow"—type thing, and of course, we said, "Gosh we're happy to do that." So we took the trip back by train, even though it was in November, which was pleasant, back to Le Havre, of all places, got on one of those cruise ships and took off, on a freebie-type thing, and so—

DM:

Well, how did you do this time?

BB:

Well, much better, but still there were a lot of others, and I had some slight problem, but still I had—and I might add that the seas were not near what they were going over, for the fact that it was December compared to November, but still it was just a lot more pleasant from the standpoint of water, so that had to have, I think, some effect on us.

DM:

Where did you arrive in the U. S.?

BB:

In New York, again, well actually, I say we departed earlier, I said departed New York, actually it was New York Harbor, we were actually boarded on the New Jersey side, and we came back and landed on the New Jersey side, but I still talk about New York City.

DM:

Everybody does, it's such a —

BB:

And I was shipped then to San Antonio, where I was subject then to discharge, and they always give you a physical, to make sure everything is all right, that you can be properly discharged, without coming back and saying "You should have been taking care of me," but that happened, and I guess down there, don't know—at the Air Force base down there probably three weeks in the process of doing that—and, "Goodbye folks, I'm headed home," and came back to Wilburton.

DM:

Okay, you were out of the military at that time?

BB:

Never had anything more to do with them in terms of anything official, I had two brothers-in-law, that were in the war later, but other than that—and then, of course, the usual news and that sort of thing.

DM:

They were in the Korean War?

BB:

One in Korea and one in the Vietnam War.

DM:

Well, what did you do then, when you got back home?

BB:

Well, I got back about in November as I say, say middle of November, but back in time. And back then the semesters were well on into January, so I was able to get into the fall semester at Eastern Oklahoma A&M, where my dad had taught, and my mom was still there. So I got that semester, and then a spring semester one year, and then my dad had passed away in the meantime there. And so my mom had to become a house mother. But then, when I completed my first year—and see, I had two younger sisters, she had the idea of going on to Stillwater where my older sister was just in the process of graduating. And so we moved up there, and she got a job, and bless her heart, put all three of us through school. It helped that I had the GI Bill, and boy, without it, I don't know how we would have made it. I bet we would have made it because she would have seen to it, one way or another, but still. And I worked cleaning a nursery school there for example, and brought in a little extra money. But it was a good life. We enjoyed Stillwater and mom was very considerate, and did all she could to help us kids, So it worked out good. And I graduated there in, gosh, when would it have been? Almost in 1950. We started back to there in the fall of '47, '46 and '47, at Eastern—then three more years, in other words.

DM:

Forty-six and '47 through the fifties?

BB:

Forty-six and forty-seven we were at Wilburton. And then '47 through '50 then, that would be four years. But I know it took me a little while longer to get through school and working as I did.

DM:

Can I ask how much the GI bill paid?

BB:

Oh, ninety dollars, ninety dollars a month. Well, listen, back then that was a bunch of money. (laughing) Without it though, I tell you—and if I remember that right, now—let me put it that way. See, it's been a couple years ago. (laughing)

DM:

Well I think I said Oklahoma State earlier, but it was Oklahoma A&M?

BB:

Oklahoma A&M then, I graduated Oklahoma A&M. When they changed it, I don't really remember. Probably ten, or twelve, or fifteen years later, but [I] went on to Iowa State

immediately. From Stillwater to Ames, Iowa State College; Ames, for a Master's degree; I was there, took a couple of years for that. Moved to Cedar Rapids to manage a university soil testing lab. Was over there four years—no, for two more years, then back to Ames for my Ph.D. And then the next thing you know, I was down at Texas A&M. I don't say that very loud, you understand, but went to Texas A&M. My very first real job, I might add. And I'll say quick-like I loved A&M, we really enjoyed it, and I appreciate them so much really, because they were my first employer and I loved to work there. But that was kind of towards the end of my training, I just had finished my Ph.D., finished the thesis, so, got that done.

DM:

Let me make sure I have the dates right. You said 1950 was your bachelor's degree?

BB:

Yes.

DM:

And that was a bachelor's in what?

BB:

Well, the master's then to '52.

DM:

And this was all soil science?

BB:

Yes, well, it was actually in agronomy. My major for the MS was agronomy, but then, when we got to the soil science, the Ph. D. specialized more. So, '52 the MS, then '54 was the employment at Cedar Rapids. And then four more years then, and then went to A&M—actually, it would be three more years, '57.

DM:

Fifty-seven was your Ph. D. from—?

BB:

From Iowa State.

DM:

Your training at A&M, your work at A&M had fallen in before the Ph. D., is that what you're saying?



BB:

No—

DM:

You got the Ph. D. and then—

BB:

Then A&M, yeah A&M, we went there, and if I can get it straight: '50 to '52 MS; '52 to '54 employed over in Cedar Rapids, Iowa; '54 to '58 Ph. D.—no, '54 to '57, then '57 to A&M.

DM:

Where you hired as a faculty member there?

BB:

Yes.

DM:

Where you teaching?

BB:

Well, I was in the extension service, if you are familiar with the extension service. I ran a soil testing lab there. And the country agents and all others concerned with helping farmers would send soil samples and have them tested, and we would recommend a certain amount of fertilizer, or limestone, or what other case might have been, or nothing.

DM:

That's great experience.

BB:

Yeah, it was a good experience for me, I'll tell you, just amazing how much good I—and I will always look back on it, what an opportune thing for me to be involved in, where I could learn so much about soils statewide; that if it would not have been for those samples coming in. And I could see all the way from black soils to red soils, to grey soils, to whatever color soils you could say, almost, and what those colors meant, as well as all the way from a sandy soil to a heavy clay soil.

DM:

And from all over the state?



BB:

Yeah, from all over the state.

DM:

So what a variety.

BB:

Oh, well, listen it was learning—I didn't have—realize at the time it was a chore. (laughing) But by the time I was through there, then my next opportunity came in '63, to move to Dimmit, Texas, to join a fertilizer company. When I was in the soil testing lab, I had a call from the gentleman who was with Elcor Chemical, fertilizer company out of Midland. He called me and said, "What do you think about the need for sulfur in the state of Texas?" And I said, "Well, as far as I know, I said, to tell you the truth, I don't really know, it's just one of those things that's out in the air, sometimes we think we do, sometimes we think we don't," I said, "That's about all I can say about it." But anyways, he ended up hiring me; [I] went to Dimmit. And he told me a couple of years later, he said, "Bill, I called three agronomists down at A&M, and visited with each one of these guys." He said, "The first two I visited with said, 'No sir, Mr. Roy Kimmel, we do not need sulfur for the state of Texas'"—I should have said that they were a sulfur company, they were a sulfur company. Elcor Chemical was for sulfur as well as for other fertilizers too. But he said to these first two guys, "Do we need sulfur in the state of Texas?" They said, "No sir, we do not." And he said, "At least you said you don't know." And he said, "That left you open to planning on if we need sulfur, you'll say we need it, if you don't, we won't." And I said, "Amen, that's why they hired me." (laughing)

DM:

They needed an objective view on this?

BB:

That's the point, that's the only thing that I can think about is that—and there was work going on by the researchers in the college, and they were beginning to find out that the eastern part of the state was starting to need sulfur, where the western part of the state was not, for an obvious reason. Well, not an obvious reason, but still, and I could have gone into detail with him at the time, but I—that [was] still preliminary research, and I didn't want to really pull out any concrete thoughts on it, without knowing some background, that's why I left it open-ended.

DM:

They established a plant then, at Dimmit?

BB:

Yes, they built a plant, they built a—an anhydrous ammonia plant, which is a nitrogen fertilizer, you know that. And then in addition to that they built a sulfur plant, in which they used ammonia to make ammonium sulfate. Which is the primary sulfur fertilizer used today. And there was only one other company in the country, out of Phoenix, Arizona, that made ammonium sulfate, and they made it out in that part of the country. Whereas we could make it up in our part of the country, and we could move it probably a little cheaper than they could bring it up here. But anyway, we were the two companies that were all of the primary sulfur fertilizers in Texas, and well the western part of the country, but it was an interesting experience for me to be involved in it.

DM:

This is great experience that you're picking up in different areas of expertise. Now let me ask you about this, the Texas City disaster, in the 1950's, do you remember that? A ship blew up in Texas City, and they blamed it on a fertilizer that was potassium—

BB:

Ammonium nitrate.

DM:

—ammonium nitrate. Some people say, no, no the ship was full of weapons. Would ammonium nitrate create an explosion like that?

BB:

Yeah it would, without any question. The nitrate, and I don't understand the chemistry of the thing, and I probably shouldn't even say anything about it, the chemistry of it, but still, the nitrate part of it is the critter, and subsequently laws were passed that you could not accumulate ammonium nitrate in too big of quantity, at any one spot, you could have ten tons here, a hundred tons, I don't know what the limit was, and then the other one over here, the other one over here, but you couldn't put them all together.

DM:

Yeah, I don't even remember how much they had in that ship, but I know it was a lot.

BB:

It was a bunch, and you know, those ships are pretty big. (laughing)

DM:

It's a shame it takes a disaster like that to start thinking, and learning, you know, we can't do this anymore. Kind of like the school explosion at New London, Texas, I don't know if you remember that, but it was natural gas under the school, blew the school up.

BB:

Oh yeah, no I don't—now I thought you meant it was another fertilizer, but no—

DM:

No, this was a different thing, but it was a learning experience that said we can't do that anymore.

BB:

Right, I do remember that. I don't remember much detail on it, but yeah, you're right.

DM:

Well now, what about after you—how long were you at Dimmit?

BB:

Was there four years, and moved to Midland for the fifth year for Elcor Chemical, because they were wanting to get more into nationwide use of sulfur, rather than just the high plains, and West Texas, and so I joined them.

DM:

Elco?

BB:

Elcor. E-l-c-o-r. Elcor Chemical. The plant in Dimmit was called the West Ammonia Corporation, and they had a national sulfur company, there were two or three other minor operatives that they had, but those were the two main fertilizers. So, I was there then at Midland for one year and was beginning to travel nationwide, a little more than I really cared to be doing that, and we had family that was out of Dimmit. My kiddos would have been a freshman in high school and an eighth grader, and I felt a need to be with them, quit traveling so much, so, about the time I was beginning to be concerned about that, I received a call from Doctor A. W. Young, former chairman of the Department of Agronomy, and he said, "Bill would you be interested?"—

DM:

At Texas Tech?

BB:

—At Texas Tech. And without going into details we eventually said yes, I would be, and all that sort of stuff. And in the meantime, Elcor Chemical was having some financial problems also, which caused me to be more interested in something along that line, and I talked to the President, the same guy that had hired me, and told him the predicament I was in, and I said, “Will Elcor recover?” And he said, “Bill I think it will, but I don’t know, I’ll be honest with you.” And said, “If you have a chance to move on to Texas Tech, I would almost suggest to you that I would encourage you to go, don’t tell anybody, but”—(laughs)

DM:

Well, that was nice of him.

BB:

I thought it was, he was always honest with me on everything. So anyway, but moved up here, and I might add that the same summer that Dr. Young called me, was the year of the Vietnam War protestations, and kids were marching around Memorial Circle around here, you remember that? And so, he asked me if I would be interested in coming to Texas Tech, and I said, “Doctor, I don’t think so. I don’t care for those darn protestors out there circling around that circle,” and he said, “Oh Bill, now, that’s a half percent of the population of Texas Tech.” Said, “All the rest of them are good kids, are good people, always will be.” And he said, “Don’t worry about them.” And I said, okay, we’ll come and talk, and of course it ended up being we came. (laughing)

DM:

You were already used to West Texas? Did you have any interest in this because your dad had been involved at the university level?

BB:

Well no, not really, even though I’ve often thought that in the back of my mind I let it influence me some, but still I never did really connect it, there where it might have been. I don’t know, I don’t much think so, but still, I wondered.

DM:

Were you hired then as a professor?

BB:

Yes, and it was hard for me to believe that, but they offered me the professorship, not the associate, or assistant, and they offered me tenure, and when the dean told me that I would have tenure, I said, well what is tenure? (laughing) And he said, “Bill, you don’t know?” A says, “I know that tenure means a long time,” and he said, “Well, that’s what it means, you’ll be here a

long time if you want to be.” And then they explained to me what tenure was, and I said, “Well, that’s fine, whatever is the norm.”

DM:

You know, your experience must have really helped you because very few people have been hired with tenure and full faculty status, that’s something you work for, for years and years.

BB:

And see I had been on the fertilizer end of it, then a full ten years, and so fertility was my specialty, of course, and they needed someone in that particular position, and so it worked out fine.

DM:

Now, suddenly you’re teaching though and that’s a different kind of life.

BB:

Yeah it was, and it was a good life, I enjoyed that. I enjoyed the classroom, enjoyed the students, got to know them all, that sort of stuff. They were a nice group of young people, just as Dr. Young had said, and they were very cooperative in terms of the situation.

DM:

You began in ’68, is that correct?

BB:

Yes.

DM:

And you taught until—or you were in that position until when?

BB:

Well, until 1997. I need to interject though that, in 1970, the then dean of Agriculture invited me to consider becoming the assistant dean, for academic programs. And he explained that to me and I didn’t know much about what that was either, but he explained it to me, and it did sound good to me. So I took that job, two-thirds in the dean’s office, and one-third in the department, I still taught one course a semester, which would be a third teaching load, of course, or a normal teaching load for a third of the time. But stayed in that job then until 1984, and had told the dean I needed to return to teaching or something because I had been in the job for ten years, and nobody should stay in an administrative job more than ten years, I thought, at the time. And I was serious about it, and he said, “Oh Bill, I’m not going to accept your resignation.” Said, “Just wait a minute.” Anyway, I eventually went into fund raising until 1997, ’84 to ’97, then was



involved in asking people for money, and the good thing about the College of Ag is that there are a lot of people out there that are willing to give, and all I had to do was ask for it, it was that simple. I mean I maybe had to talk them a little bit into it, but still, they came and it was a very fruitful effort, I enjoyed that also. Still was a third teaching, all that time, but it was a good role to play.

DM:

Did you say you were still teaching a little bit at that time?

BB:

Yeah, teaching a third, two-thirds dean's office and a third departmental.

DM:

During this time, from '68 to '97, when you taught, do you think that students generally changed at all, or did they pretty much remain the same?

BB:

Well, I'm going to say pretty much remained the same. I know the population changes depending on the things that impact culture, and they did change with time, but still, the basic idea of who the students were continued to be the same, really, they were still interested and they wanted to do the best. By the time they got into a senior level course, you knew they were there for a reason. If they weren't they wouldn't stay there that long, but still the fact that they were real interested in knowing what to do, when to do it. I don't think they really changed all that much, I don't know. I almost want to ask you what you think. (laughing)

DM:

Well I'll tell you after the—(laughs) People have different perspectives on that. Some do say that they changed a bit, that earlier on they were more self-disciplined, later on not so much, some compare for [the time] after '97, because of the change in technology where they e-mail their professors now, you know there's e-mail, there's a constant communication and that created a great difference, but you missed out on that part. (laughing)

BB:

Well, I missed out on that. And in fact, it was about that time I was teaching a correspondence course, or handling a correspondence course on soil fertility, and just as I was about to retire, I received a call from the service that handled the correspondence courses and they said, "Listen, we need to get that course online." And I said, "What do you mean?" (laughing) They told me, and I said, "Listen, I'm retiring in one year, less than a year, and I said I'll just be honest, I don't want to do it." And I didn't, and I maybe should have but I just didn't want to go to all that trouble of learning. And there came along somebody else that could have done it a lot quicker

anyway, because he was better informed on the computer and what all that meant. But you're right, there has been a real change in culture in terms of—but still, and I have a son-in-law who handles some online courses, three online courses with, oh, what's that university in Maryland? Not the University of Maryland but one of the other major universities. Anyway—and he was a top notch scientist, without any question—but he thinks it works just as good, but he said, “It still depends on the student.” And he said, “There are students that I know full well are getting more out of the course than some of the others. Some of them just want to pass.” And he said, “There's always been that, but still basically the same hope to do good type of thing.”

DM:

I'm going to pause this a second actually—

*Track 1 ends; track 2 begins.*

DM:

Well, it sounds like you kept busy with teaching, and administrative work, and then fundraising, did you have any time for research?

BB:

I did some research, only during the first two years, I had a responsibility for research, and officially that was terminated, but I still ended up doing follow up research on what I had started. I thought we needed three years of information to come out with any recommendation, but I just did some field work on fertilization sources, rates that would be the most desirable, that sort of thing.

DM:

So you did field work, you said, in what area?

BB:

Oh, primarily in the northwes, up in—primarily it was in vegetable research, primarily up in the potato country, up south of Olton, in that area, and then some cucumbers, well also south of Olton, primarily in that vegetable area through there. And what other vegetables, I don't remember, but I remember those two, and it was primarily potatoes but the sources of research was from companies that grew vegetables, and they were supporting it. Decided how, and when, and what have you to apply fertilizer for potatoes.

DM:

Let's take cotton, since cotton is the big cash crop around this part of the plains, and tell me, do you think that it is a sustainable crop as far as the soil quality is concerned? The way they are fertilizing? The way they are dealing with the soil? Is it going to continue if the water supply



continues?

BB:

Well, I think there is no question, it will continue, and it depends more on the need out there, if somebody quits making blue jeans all of a sudden it may be a problem. But in terms of, if the need is there, then this country can grow it, and then it can also be grown. Dry land, as you well know, [is] obviously not near what it could be with the irrigation potential, but still—it will continue to be a crop, I don't know, long enough that I'm not going to remember it any more. (laughing)

DM:

Have you ever seen any areas out here that—and I say out here, I mean West Texas—where it gets to a point where you just can't add anymore fertilization, or there's nothing else you can do with the soil? Have you ever seen it completely exhausted, in this part of the country?

BB:

No, I can't really call it—there are some soils that should not have been broken out because they were too sandy and too subject to erosion and those sorts of things, and you know about the CRP<sup>6</sup> program that is used to hopefully put those lands back into [growing] a [helpful] crop, [so] that there won't be any erosion taking place. But outside of some that should not have been farmed in the first place, but these others, all the way from the sandy lands to the southwest of us, to the silty clay loams to the northeast of us, there still are good soils, no question, they will be good there for a long time.

DM:

We were talking about learning from disasters; well, the Dust Bowl taught us maybe we should take on a program like CRP.

BB:

Yeah, maybe it will help. And what about a year or two years ago when we had that real black cloud that came across Lubbock from the northwest, and we all were kind of a little bit worried? Well, we are not going back to those bad days, but of course it moved on through, and we didn't see it again. And of course, another thing that you know full well, I know, [is] that compared to what we had twenty, twenty-five, thirty years ago, you could hardly drive a car in this country without it getting sand blasted—but boy, you don't see that, you don't hear that anymore. And the average wind speed that we run into is probably not the average. The average length of blowing sand, blowing particular matter into the air [today] would be sixty hours a year, when it used to be a minimum of three weeks a year. And so the CRP thing and the fact that farmers are now using minimum tillage, and leaving even crop residue on the surface; all that has helped.

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<sup>6</sup> Conservation Reserve Program, a USDA program to aid in the retention and enhancement of soil.

And, I don't know who knows; it may have been [that] there is not as much wind speed either as far as that goes; even though I haven't read, or seen anything of that—but other than that, the fact that that can be controlled is a point that has helped, there's no question in my mind.

DM:

And this [cloud], that happened a couple of years ago is obviously an anomaly because we had a five-inch year, you know. That's the lowest on record I believe, so what do you expect?  
(laughing)

BB:

What do you expect? I didn't think of that, but it's very true, no question about it, good reason for it.

DM:

Five-inch, followed by twelve-inch, I hope those years are over.

BB:

Well, we will both hope that but, darn it anyway, I'm afraid that in another twenty years we're going to see them, darn it anyway, but still.

DM:

What's going to happen with the water?

BB:

You know that thing, I guess that really concerns me as much as anything, and it was in the A-J<sup>7</sup> this morning about how the Ogallala<sup>8</sup> was down from eleven to thirteen, another foot or so average across the area. But sooner or later, darn it, the underwater Ogallala's just going to play out, there's just no way it can keep from it, and when that does happen—and of course, then municipalities are going to have to have some source of water if they can't have it from lakes and what have you around, hopefully they'll get filled again and we will still have a source of water from that. But still if it doesn't, then so what? What will we do? People will have to rely on water, underground water for their sources or they're going to leave.

DM:

And you have to worry about a metropolitan area like Lubbock, a quarter-million people—

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<sup>7</sup> The *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, Lubbock's main newspaper.

<sup>8</sup> The Ogallala Aquifer, shallow water table beneath the Great Plains in the United States.

BB:

And if there's anything that does happen detrimentally along that line, it will be a very slow process, we know that. It's something that I won't be having to be concerned about, obviously, I think—(laughing) I see obviously you're smiling (laughing)—but still, the point is, that it's a worrisome thing. And what the outcome is, and, you know. I'm all in favor of what the farmers, landowners own the rights of water under their property, I'm just all for that too—but still, who knows what might have to be changed to do it, I don't know, I have no answer. I don't even want to say that I do. (laughing)

DM:

Well, I suspect that individual water use has gone up dramatically since the time that you were a child, for example.

BB:

Oh yeah, gosh it's just, population alone.

DM:

I bet you didn't take any thirty minute showers, when you were a kid.

BB:

(laughing)

DM:

You know people do now, it's anyway—

BB:

That's a good point.

DM:

Well, let's talk a little bit more about your teaching. What were some of the courses, what were the courses that you offered?

BB:

Well, my main course was one on soil fertility, fertilizer use, crop production, impact on crop production, that sort of thing—basically the chemical part of the soil. There's the physical, chemical, and biological properties of the soil. And this one was primarily the chemical composition, even though chemical, and fertilizer practices are influenced by physical and biological also, so they obviously get involved. I don't want to play that point down too much, but still, primarily along that line, soil fertility, fertilizer use, and crop production. I also taught an introductory freshman-level agronomy course, covering just basically crop production and a

little bit of soil science to go with that, but primarily crop production, and then moving on, and those were the only two courses that I ever taught. Well, I take it back—as associate dean, I was responsible for a one-hour introductory course for all entering freshman.

DM:

Oh okay, I've heard about that course.

BB:

It was Ag-Science 1111, Ag-Science eleven-eleven, but it was to teach them about agriculture.

DM:

This was a beginning agriculture major's course?

BB:

Just to teach them about what agriculture and—and we talked about the needs, just the relationship to other sophomore, junior, senior-level courses, talked about those, but still, basically the ag industry, and all the way from the livestock end of it to the crops end of it, to the cotton gin and almost, you might say, but basically—and I did very little of the teaching; I often brought in a visitor to talk about the ag industry as a whole and then the segments of it, the cotton ginning industry. So, a lot of it was—still, it was an effort to get—well, still had to bring those people aboard to have them there—so, but it was a fun course, it was a fun course, no question about it.

DM:

Now, you were at Tech from '68 to '97, what were some of the big changes you saw over that time? I know you came kind of in the middle, I think, of a big boom, a big expansion, under Grover Murray?

BB:

Oh yeah, it was growing, growing very rapidly, and he was the president at the time. But, you know, still to say, what big changes. There was just a—oh, a couple of presidents came along that weren't very good, between you and me and the gate post, everybody knows it, knows who they were, but Grover Murray—oh and who's this guy that went to Tulsa University? Bob? Anyway—was president over there and president here, but he did a great job, and the recent president seemed to be quite good, relatively speaking, and I think this guy we that have aboard now seems like he's going to do a good job. Still, I don't know that I saw anything other than, well, the growth that came along—I was starting to say other, “than the growth.” Along with growth came other changes, no question about that, but those changes increased number size in the dorms and all the buildings, and the changes in the curriculum, and what have you, getting more teachers aboard—was the responsibility that they all had, those concerned with it, but they

were just changes, I guess, that I almost would say would just be naturally-occurring, rather than anything just popping out of the surface. It was just a gradual change, they had said we are going to make these changes to stay abreast of things, and of course—I guess I should never downplay the fact that in any course like fertility, there was going to be changes in fertilizer use, and fertilizer materials and on, and on. And the seed industry and the courses that had the seed industry, and the progress they made in plant breeding and on, and on, and the GMO<sup>9</sup>, and all that sort of stuff that's in there. But that's true whether it's engineering, or no matter what, those changes are going to take place, so obviously the professors had to stay abreast of what was going on, or else say goodbye to them, one way or another. But it was just one of those types of things I think.

DM:

But I do suspect that in this particular area there was a lot of change between '68 and '97, you know, in soil fertility and that topic. Changes in fertilization and things like that.

BB:

Basically, and almost any course—and that's going to depend on the course whether this fits or no—but there are certain basic principles of fertility and of soil science, that are always going to be there. We're finding out more and more what those are. And classification, when that first became well known, was an important step forward. So, we always had to adapt new teaching to the courses that had those. So sure, there are things that come along that will have to be adapted, and if you don't stay abreast at what goes on—and that's the reason why you go to professional meetings of the Soil Science Society of America, or chemical engineering, or whoever, whatever, you go to learn and to stay up and that helps you, there's no question. And anybody that would be very critical of me going to that annual meeting out to be whooped, because there's no question—and I went to the meeting, I went to the meeting. I didn't go to mess around and go sightseeing, but it was most helpful for me to stay abreast of what's going on. And they had certain sessions on soil fertility, usually at least a half-dozen throughout the day, plus agronomy, and on, and on, so, they were important. You had to stay up, no question, that's part of the change that comes along too.

DM:

Well it's good that Texas Tech, as far as I know, has always supported that kind of professional development, you know, keeping up.

BB:

I don't know that they've ever discouraged anybody, you're right.

DM:

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<sup>9</sup> Genetically modified organism.



One of the challenges right now there is the expansion, you know, the student enrollment increasing and new facilities, and new faculty hires, and this kind of thing, And I know that it has—I know it was a big thing when you first came on and it's continued.

BB:

Just keeps on, just keeps on, no questions about it, and the role that Kent Hance played in the system, and how important he was at getting resources and doing some of the things that he did, that was important to all of us. And the new chancellor, Bob Duncan was one of our College of Ag majors, by the way—knew him well—and he turned out to be president of the students organization on campus, and all that sort of stuff. So we watched him quite closely when he was in there politicking, and he's been a good one ever since.

DM:

Well good, you're the person that can tell us then. Do we have a good one in place?

BB:

Well now, what else do you expect me to say? (laughing) I'm sure not going to downgrade him, but you know, he was just one of these kids that stood out, he never was a straight-A student, I hope he doesn't mind me saying this, but he was a good B student, good solid B student, but still, he had these other extracurricular activities. And mind, he was a member of the Ag Council, was very active at it, was on committees, and it was just interesting to watch him grow and become president of the Student Association, it was just interesting. And you could have almost said, if anybody wanted to say it to you, "Will this guy do anybody any good?" We could have almost said, "You bet." And if you want him to be a man that could handle your efforts that need handling in Washington or Austin, we'd say, "You better take him, amen." Yeah I'm quite confident, I really am, in spite of my interest that he is a College of Ag major. (laughing)

DM:

If anything goes wrong, we'll blame the College of Ag. (laughing) No, I'm kidding. (laughing)

BB:

Hey now, wait a minute, you've got to promise to not to call me. (laughing)

DM:

Well tell me about Honor Flight, when did you go on Honor Flight?

BB:

Went on the Honor Flight, let's see, when would that have been? In October, you probably know better than I—



DM:

You went on this most recent one?

BB:

Yeah, the most recent one, if I could go find my piece of paper I could talk about it more specifically. But it was one Wednesday through Friday activity, and we left Lubbock at 6:30 in the morning, flew to Washington airport—now wait a minute—it was Baltimore airport, I guess. Yeah, but anyway, from there on just stayed busy, busy, busy, all the time we were there, and it was interesting to me. One of the things that impressed me the most was how these people did the planning for that plane to have unloaded. When I left and got out to the airport, with my luggage, and I opened the trunk of my car, a uniformed person asked me, “Are you with the Honor Flight?” And I said, “Yes I am,” and he said, “Well sir, we’ll take care of your bag, your name, give us”—and so forth, and I never saw that bag again until we got to our hotel. Now that, you know, that took a lot of planning, just that alone. I was so impressed by that, but the whole trip was like that. Just so well planned, and I give these people here locally so much credit, and of course, they had people in D. C. that helped on it also, but it was just amazing. Everything timed, and even though we ran a little late on a couple of occasions. And the thing that I often tell people is, of the eighty-four veterans that were on the flight, twenty-four of those were in wheelchairs. Including me, I might add, and boy, to take care of twenty-five wheelchairs, and get them on and off buses, it took time, to stay on schedule at that. I’m sure they took that into account, some planning, but still, to do it would be quite a different—but still, the highlight of the trip were the things that we saw, things that we did. The highlight of the trip to me was the Arlington Cemetery. And you’ve heard, and we’ve all seen the television, and how they have the changing of the guards, and all that, every year, the Armistice Day, and what have you. But the thing that impressed me most is the size of the place, almost a full section of land. And there was row, after row, after row, after row, of the white crosses, just a boy you just—and I didn’t realize in my mind that that existed. All I remembered was changing of the guards, and I saw a few silver crosses, and that was it, period, that I would see on television. But then after we were there—amazing to me, amazing to me. And then they had the changing of the guards while we were there, and they let some of our honor guard participants carry the wreath, put the wreath on the [Unknown] Soldier’s tomb, and that was nice of them to do that. There was six of us—no, of them. I never did get to do it, but there were six that were chosen to do that, those that had been in the service longer, and the older veterans, and rightly so, and it was quite good, and some of them had been injured in service, and they selected them also, and rightly so, again, I was pleased that they did. The other thing that impressed me, the most, second most, is the Space and Air Museum. And we were talking a minute ago about the bomb being dropped in Japan. They had the Enola Gay, the old Enola Gay, was present in that space museum. Amazing, just to be there and to look at that full thing, was just, boy it really, there are not many things that brought a tear to my eye, but that one did, I want to tell you, I just could not believe it, and to ourselves, we just stood there and gazed at it, (laughs), for a long time. But they showed planes that were the

Lindbergh Plane, all the way back, all the way back until they got them today, and some of the spacecraft that they used, and whatever you call those way back then when they had the space flight, and that sort of thing.

DM:

The Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo.

BB:

Yeah, there you go, all of those, and it was impressive too, no question about it, but that was it. But then the Air Force Museum, and the Vietnam Wall, and the Korean War, and there was a museum of women in the service, and that was impressive. Just all of it was—I don't want to downplay anything. But still, the two that were most impressive to me were the Arlington Cemetery and the Air Space Museum, it was great, but it was—

DM:

Those priceless exhibits, just priceless. What about the World War II Memorial? Last time I was there it was under construction, so I've never seen it completed. What did you think about the World War II Memorial?

BB:

Well now, if it's the one I'm thinking of—

DM:

It's right by the Washington Monument—

BB:

Yeah, it's there, and we saw that, and it was in a semi-circular type of thing, and had big columns in the back, and a lot of, oh I want to say, writing along on the walls in the front, and had one particular place that you went up and could see the museum and then you walked back down, and we did that and saw it and that sort of thing. And they took a picture of us, I might add, everybody lined up in front of that, not lined up, but would be pictured in front of that—it was quite a picture, I might add; but yeah, it was impressive too, it really was, I just, you know, had about forgotten about that one, but I remember it now.

DM:

Well there's a lot there. (laughing)

BB:

Oh yeah, there really is, there really is.

DM:

Did they take you over to the Capitol, and White House and everything?

BB:

Yeah, and guess who came out to visit with us, and who had his picture taken with us, and on and on. And he subsequently sent each one of us a flag, and bless his heart, I'm sounding a little bit sarcastic, and don't really mean to be that way, but still, it's interesting how a politician can make—how should I say—assure that everything is well known. (laughing)

DM:

Absolutely, scored some points there. (laughing)

BB:

And we went into the chamber, and he came into the chamber, and listened to us, took some questions and I know I voted for him, I don't mind saying that quick-like, but still, he is a politician, *numero uno*, you know. (laughing)

DM:

That's right, cashed in on the fact that you guys were there. (laughing)

BB:

That's it exactly, in a nutshell, no question about it, but he just glad-handed and on, and on. But it was a nice trip, and we saw the inside of the Capitol, and the dome, that you could look up at the dome, and a beautiful thing, no question about it. And just the tour of the Capitol, which I never made, but it was really nice, amen to that, no question.

DM:

By the way, did you ever go back to Germany after having been stationed there?

BB:

Never did any foreign travel—well, now, I take it back. When I was in the Dean's office, we had a project with Niger, in the sub-Saharan Africa, and it was a project, a five-year program which was to study cereal crop production, in Niger, well, the sub-Saharan Africa. And I went over on three different occasions during those five years, I might add, with Grover Murray on a couple of those. But we went over on about a three-week trip to see what's going on and wanted to know how the project was going.. So I went to a half-dozen of the African countries, and we went through Europe on the way, Paris, down to the, down to— Niger was where we landed. What would be the Capitol, do you know there? But anyway, landed in Niger, and I might add, that the first flight we made down there, the minute that we got into Niger, in the airport, the capitol airport, we were immediately surrounded by armed forces men. And boy, we didn't know what

to think, we didn't know what to think, and then the pilot came on and said, "There's been a disruption within the country of Niger with regard to political party." And said, "It won't be no problem for you people on the plane just relax and we'll be there, everything will work out," and so forth, which it did. But still, boy it scared us, I tell you, we—(laughing)—we had no idea that was going to happen. But I worked on that, and I had an opportunity to go there, and I spent a couple of years in Argentina, was down there—what am I trying to say?—well, went down to assist the—what was the big ranch in south Texas?

DM:  
King?

BB:  
King ranch, the King Ranch of Argentina, went down there with the idea of assisting them on how to produce sorghum. They had wanted to take some of their ranch land and turn it into crop production, sorghum production, for obvious reasons, they can grow great sorghum in that country. But for two or three years they were unsuccessful, ever, in getting a decent crop of grain sorghum. So why they knew about Texas Tech I don't know, except that we were in a grain sorghum country, but they called and said, "Could you send somebody?" So he called on me to go, so I went down. And I was down there only about a day or two and they showed me the land that they had prepared for their grain sorghum and on, and on, this and that, and what have you, and I said, "Well, how early did you plow that land up, the grass, before you planted the grain sorghum?" They said, "Oh, four or five days." And you already know the answer to the story, and I kept on and on, talking about this and that, but I already knew the problem, but I didn't tell them for two or three more days. (laughing) I was going to be there for five days, see, and I wanted to be sure though to be truthful, but they just needed to have time to accumulate some rainfall, pure and simple, and it's the same way out in this country. When you're growing dry land grain sorghum, you have to accumulate a little moisture in the soil, and so, and so it was easy for me to tell them what was the problem. And then I went down a couple years later to follow up, and they wanted me to come down and just fine print the thing, to get everything just like it should be, and—

DM:  
Five years later, did it look better? (laughing)

BB:  
Oh yeah, I think, it was growing fine, and I had to end up telling them that, "Really I think you guys are doing a good job, you might do one or two little things like this, and be sure that you have accumulated enough moisture in there, and if you do, plow under the grass, six months in advance, but if you're not going to get any rainfall, then so what? It's still not going to be of any help to you, so you just need to obviously—" and they said, "Well, they knew that," and so on.

So it was all more courtesy call than anything, but it was still—it was a nice experience for me to be able to assist King Ranch. So anyway, went to Argentina, and I guess, of course, to Mexico and Canada, but other than that—

DM:

Well, that sounds like quite a bit.

BB:

Well, that's quite a bit, yeah, it was, and I look back on it and I enjoyed those sorties that we went on, it was good intellectual fun, yeah.

DM:

Well, it's an interesting comparison between this area and Argentina.

BB:

Well, it's identical—

DM:

Even the latitude, north and south only difference, but the latitude is about the same—

BB:

And they have low rainfall just as we did, and how, at first, it was initially cattle, it was cattle out here, and on, and on. So you're right, it was just interestingly to me, when I did a little study on it before I went, for obvious reasons. But still, to read what I read about it, and I had always heard of the pampas in Argentina, and knew that that was cattle country and so forth. But still, I knew very little so I did some reading and it helped a bunch, and Dr. Young, A. W. Young, was [a] help to me also in his knowledge of the area, it helped.

DM:

Nice to be at a university for those reasons, isn't it?

BB:

Yeah it would have been, would have been, you're right.

DM:

Lots of resources—

BB:

Yeah, I was very pleased that they elected to invite me to come, it was—or invited someone to come, and I was the chosen person for it.



DM:

No regrets?

BB:

No regrets, none at all. It was a good trip.

DM:

Well, I have exhausted my questions. Is there any area that I have missed?

BB:

Oh boy, let's talk about since '97. (laughing) Well, let's see, no, there really is not a lot to tell about, but I just lived in Brentwood Circle for another—let's see, I moved out here in 2011, so that would have been seventeen years that I lived with, my wife and I, and she passed on with Alzheimer's, I might add. And I guess I stayed about six months in the house by myself, and finally said, "Bill, you need to move on buddy, and I was beginning to get lonesome." I could tell it, so I decided I'd start looking, and in fact, it was long before I moved out here. But I started looking here five years before I ever moved, and in the meantime just gave it a lot of thought. "Bill, is it really right for you to do this?" And I finally made my decision, and a couple of other places in town would have been good too, as far as I was concerned, but I liked what I like about Carillon, I'm not trying to do a commercial. But it's one of the few places in the southwestern part of the United States that has continuous life care. We can move here and they take care of us and feed us, and give us a place to sleep, and on, and on, and on, but then if we get sick, then they will take care of us in an assisted living where we need minimal care, or if we need actual nursing care then they move us to nursing care. If we have Alzheimer's, they will put us in memory care, or something; you break a leg or what have you, rehabilitation, and they have got this all under one roof, so to speak—not literally—but still, that's what sold me on it at the time.

DM:

You know you're going to be taken care of regardless.

BB:

Yeah, and the other thing, you're not going to print any of this and I don't mind a little commercial but, they charge us an entry fee, which is relatively sizeable, but then we move in at a certain monthly rate for this apartment. Then if I stay here at least two years, before I need any type of health care, and would need to move to the healthcare part of the compound, then my room rate will stay the same, or practically so. It would be a little minor adjustment, say ten percent more, but for practical purposes—well, here, it costs—say, maybe when you move over there \$2500, while at some places it would cost \$6000 a month. Or if you moved over there and came here without having lived the two years, it would cost you \$5000, and while it would cost us \$2500—and that's attractive buddy, I'll tell you, it's attractive, no question about it. And of



course, they made money on us because we put down a pretty large deposit, which is theirs, it's a deposit, I might add, but still, it's theirs, and they can make money on that and not making much these days but their still drawing interest in investments and that so—

DM:

Well, one thing I'm impressed with here is all the social contact. They have presentations, and they have get together kinds of things, I've talked to a lot of people here at Carillon, and I've just never heard anything negative about it, and I'm not doing a commercial either, it's just a reflection on—(laughing) but—

BB:

But that's true, you can sit in your room and watch television and nobody will bother you, and read your murder mystery, no matter what you could do that, or you can play bridge every day of the week, you can play dominos almost every day of the week, we have the happy hour once a week, where they furnish the food and everything, the social hour, then, where we furnish our own snacks, and we buy our own drinks, and well we have to buy our drinks at happy hour too but it's nice to do that, to get out there. And there will be anywhere from five to fifteen people around the two tables, and there will be another group over here around another table, and why people go over there, and people sit with us, I don't know that there's any difference; it's just where you first sit when you come out there I guess, but still, the point being. And you know, you're right—and where did we go last?—Sunday night, at the First United Methodist Church, they had their December Christmas Choral. And they took the bus, took two buses, and took us down there and let us off at the front door. They were there to pick us up when it was over and bring us back out here, and all of that. That's just, you know, and the point is. And another one they took a tour of the Carol of Lights, not the Carol of Lights, not Tech, but where they went off to Ransom Canyon and, you know what I'm talking about?

DM:

I'm not sure what they call it, but yeah.

BB:

But anyway, you can drive it, but still, they took a group there, I had seen it so many times that I didn't care to go anymore, but still, the point being—and one group went up to north of Amarillo to some shrine up there, and you know, you've heard it all, and so then you're right.

DM:

That's really nice.

BB:

Well I'm just glad I'm here, I really am.

DM:

Tell me your wives' names.

BB:

Audrey, was her name; now, I had a first wife named Millicent, and she had cancer, and passed away at what would have been our anniversary of thirty years, and then I re-married. Audrey was—her husband was on the faculty at Tech when he passed away, and even though we didn't know each other—her, that is—we became acquainted later on and found it good for us to be together, and I've told so many people that there's a total difference in your first love, and your second love, there's just no question about the difference. Your first love is still always there, and your second—we loved each other, but not with the passion that the first love did, but it was a good second marriage and I was, I guess four years in the process before I started thinking about it. (laughing)

DM:

Okay, and do you have children?

BB:

Had three children, one a daughter who passed away with cancer. A son who had a brain seizure, and then I have a daughter and her husband in Baltimore, Maryland. Not Baltimore, it's actually out in Hagerstown, Fort Detrick. He's a DNA specialist that graduated in the department of Biology here with his Ph. D., and that guy can go up and I'll say, "Well, tell me about your work," and within three minutes he's already over my head. (both laugh) He takes all this DNA and tangles it with the rest of the DNA—well, it was in the microorganisms-type thing, the viruses and what have you—and he was working on developing anti-viral bacteria that could be used, and they had some DNA involved in there, and I still don't know what he did, but was looking for something to worry about if we were attacked, from the standpoint of an organic-type thing, they could maybe, maybe combat it-type thing, but he has amazed me I tell you—(laughs)

DM:

Well, what else do we need to put on here?

BB:

Well, I don't know, I could tell you all about my grandkids and how smart they are and you could ask me how cute they are. (laughing)

DM:

(laughing) I'll just assume that that's the case. (laughing)

BB:

You'll assume that's it—(laughing)

DM:

Well, I might have some more questions along the way, I might call you sometime, if that's all right. You're a neighbor, you know, I'm just right over here on campus, at the Southwest Collection.

BB:

Now, what was your last name again?

DM:

Marshall.

BB:

Marshall, and I wrote that, and—

DM:

I've got a card here.

BB:

—what I saw now, what I had in my date book, I can see it now plainly is “Marshall,” and I had made out in my mind the first part, “Marsh,” yeah and I then just scribbled the rest of it in, with the “David” it was clear. And I had almost hesitated to tell you this, but two days ago I was kind of looking at my calendar for the rest of the week, and I came across your name, 1:15 today, and I said, “Bill”—(laughs)—I said, “Come on guy,” and this morning, this morning, it was the first time that I could remember who you were, didn't remember your last name, but had you're David down, I don't know why I said A. J., I still wondered why I said that when I first saw you, I knew good and well because you were talking about the Southwest Collections. But anyway, boy it just, I just, well came so close, and you know we're both, we're all out here at the point where we have to look at the paper every morning to find out what date it is.

DM:

Well I do too, you know, the first thing I asked you before I started the recording was, “What is today?” Sometimes I don't think about it until the middle of the day. (laughing)

DM:

And, by the way, speaking of such things, let me make sure I gave you the right card because sometimes I grab someone else's card, and I stick it in with my card, so, no that's me.

BB:

So there you go. So it is David Marshall, yeah it says it right there, plain day. And you're the Associate of Archives?

DM:

No, I'm Archivist now, we have the levels, we're faculty so we have the same levels, so it's assistant, associate—

*End of interview.*



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