

**Oral History Interview of  
Jim Bertram**

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson  
May 22, 2019  
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:  
*Lubbock History/ 1970 Lubbock Tornado***

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### Recording Notes:

*Original Format:* Born Digital Audio

*Digitization Details:* N/A

*Audio Metadata:* 96 kHz/ 24bit WAV file

*Further Access Restrictions:* N/A

*Related Interviews:*

### Transcription Notes:

*Interviewer:* Andy Wilkinson

*Audio Editor:* N/A

*Transcription:* Elizabeth Groening

*Editor(s):* Kayci Rush

## Interview Series Background:

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

## Transcript Overview:

This interview features Jim Bertram as he discusses his career and projects with the city of Lubbock's Park Planning and Development section. Jim elaborates on the city's sign ordinance, and how the 1970 tornado worked as a catalyst for changing the city. Jim also describes in detail the Canyon Lake Parks project and the lake systems there.

**Length of Interview:** 01:26:10

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### Keywords

Park Planning and Development, Lubbock, City Council, Jim Bertram Lake System

**Andy Wilkinson (AW):**

Let me preface this by saying this is the twenty-second of May, 2019. Jim Bertram and Charlotte and their beautiful home in Lake Ransom Canyon in the afternoon, a hot afternoon, after yesterday was nice and cool.

**Jim Bertram (JB):**

And windy.

AW:

And windy. Still windy out there.

**Charlotte Bertram (CB):**

Still windy. Yes, it is.

AW:

Yeah. But Jim has just shown me one article called, "Lubbock, Building an Image," that he wrote in 2002, April eighth, about the rebuilding—and you've got a couple of other things, so now, we're live. So just keep talking.

JB:

Okay. Something I mentioned in that paper was that one of the things that happened after the tornado was the city council was looking at building a new civic center, which you were aware of. And when they built the civic center, they were so impressed with the beauty of it. And all the utilities were underground. There was landscaping—just lush landscape around it. All the private redevelopment around it had a new set, a very forward-looking set of standards. Very discrete, sign standards. No billboards, lots of landscaping. And in fact, all the parking for the civic center, at the time, was recessed. So when you looked at the building, you weren't looking through a sea of parked cars. You were looking at the building, you know?

AW:

Now, the—I hate to interrupt you, but I will. We always attributed those standards to you.

JB:

No. Well, the one for the civic center, there was a team of architects. Actually, all local architects.

AW:

Really? Who? Do you remember?

JB:

A lot of them approached the council wanting to be the architect for the civic center. Well, several of them got together and said, "This is so big. Why don't we form a team?" So, I don't remember who all. I think it was Bob Messersmith, MWM, and several—several—

CB:

Was it Parkhill?

JB:

Hmm?

CB:

Parker?

JB:

Parkhill, Smith, and Cooper. I think they were engineers. They may have been involved in some engineering. But anyway, it was a team of architects. And there was also a fellow out of Waco, who was really involved in urban renewal projects. But between them, they came up with a design. But once they came up with a design and the city council saw it, they were so taken by it that they said, "Well, why can't the whole city look this way?" You know, "Why just the civic center?" And so, they appointed a zoning ordinance revision committee. And I was the director of planning at the time. And so as a part of the zoning ordinance revision, a complete update, there were—they looked at updated parking standards. There were no landscape standards in the city at all when we started that, and there were very little sign standards. I mean, it was—I could show you slide presentation sometime of what the city looked like back in the seventies. But they appointed this revision, signed a revision committee, and each council member got to appoint a member to it. Well, some were very, "Rah-rah. Let's make the city better than it was." And one of the council members, who is since deceased, was a member of a billboard company, so he wasn't so anxious for this to take place by any rate. They worked for, I think, four years off and on. And unveiled it and the new zoning ordinance had all street parking standards. It had landscape standards. Up until then, I don't know if you remember, most commercial buildings, there was street, sidewalk, paved parking lot, and building. They didn't have to have landscaping, so I would say 90 percent of them didn't.

AW:

They didn't. Yeah, right. Yeah. We—gave us the ugliest strip centers in America.

JB:

Absolutely, yeah.



AW:

JB Jackson, you know, the philosopher on architecture and space, from University of New Mexico—photography was a big thing. You know? He—one time—in fact, in the seventies, after the tornado—I think, after the tornado. But he came to Tech to do a presentation. He said, “This is the future of America,” and he wasn’t being kind, you know? Talking about those strip shopping centers.

JB:

Oh yeah.

AW:

But also, actually, he was not being mean either. He was—one of the things he talked about was the big wide streets that were straight—north, south, east, west—and said, “This is the future of America, to build cities like this.”

JB:

Yeah. Well, it—and I talk about this, “building an image,” and it was like they had done—and I mention it—I think it was the Chamber of Commerce did some surveys about, “What is Lubbock’s image?” Down state, around. And the reply really came back as, “You really don’t have an image. We don’t think you’re bad, but we don’t think you’re good. You really don’t have an image.” So it’s—the article was building an image, you know? And a lot of the talk after the tornado was, “Let’s don’t build the city back like it was. Let’s build it back better than it was.” And so, “Let’s build an image.” And there was a quote from Louise Maedgen. She was in—she was the chairperson over the goals for the seventies on cultural—culture development. And they recommended a commission on architecture urban design. Well since then, we’ve actually created an urban design commission. Historic preservation and urban design commission. Well, that came out with goals for the seventies. But it was very fortunate that the city had just finished a comprehensive goals program right before the tornado. So the goals—Lubbock goals for the seventies became the blueprint for rebuilding Lubbock. One of them was, “Let’s clean up the canyon and build a series of recreational lakes. And let’s build a civic center. And let’s have a commission on architecture and urban design.” There was a lot of language in there about what they think the city ought to look like, and so we picked up on a lot of that with the zoning revision committee. But when they got through with the revision committee, basically, what they said was they were very restrictive on billboards. Very restrictive. And all signs had to be in proportion to the amount of frontage you had. If you had a lot of frontage, you could have a bigger sign, but the bigger it was, the further back it had to sit, so that that sign didn’t cover up the other sign, so. And then the smaller the lot, the smaller the sign and if—and the smaller the sign can go closer to the right-away. But the closer it got to the right-away, the lower it had to be so they weren’t blocking each other. But before that, it was like, you drive

down the street and it was like looking through a jungle of freestanding signs trying to find something and then that result was just utter chaos.

AW:

Yeah. Go to Amarillo. [Laughs]

JB:

Yeah, exactly. Exactly.

AW:

Yeah.

JB:

Well, after—what they did that was very unique—and we were kind of on the cutting edge, in terms of sign control. One of the things we did, which the legislature has since passed law that prohibits you from doing, is we said—we put a six-and-a-half year abatement period, or what we called an abatement or amortization period. Within six-and-a-half years, every sign in the city that wasn't—

AW:

Had to conform?

JB:

Had to conform with the new standards. And so—

AW:

No grandfathering.

JB:

No grandfathering. They had to come in compliance. Well, at the end of six-and-a-half years, I would say close to 90 percent of all the commercial signs in Lubbock had come into compliance. None of the billboards had, though. And so this billboard company filed a lawsuit to keep us from enforcing the code on them and they took us to court. And I think they had like twenty-six pleadings in their case. Well, they lost in the local district court. They lost in the fifth circuit court of appeals. And they wanted to appeal it to a Texas Supreme Court, but they wouldn't hear the case. They said, "No. The lower district court, appeals court, did a good job reviewing it and we won't hear your case." So it was law. Well, one of the immediate effects is—and I remember I was in the planning department, people would come in from out of town, developers, asking about this track and that track to development. They'd say, "What do y'all here different here in Lubbock?" They said, "Your city looks so clean." [AW laughs] And we soon discovered—we



said, "Well, I don't know. We don't do any better job of sweeping our streets than anybody else does." I said, "We have a pretty progressive sign ordinance." He said, "That's what it is." And what we discovered real quick is they equated cluttered with dirty. And we had removed seventy years of clutter and replaced it with uniform sign control.

AW:

So are—Shirley Schleuse.

JB:

Schleuse, yeah.

AW:

She always attributed this description to you. A billboard as being "trash on a stick."

JB:

Yeah—no.

AW:

[laughs] Was it?

CB:

Litter on a stick.

JB:

Litter on a stick, yeah.

AW:

She just changed it, but she would tell me, "He's the one that said 'trash on a stick.'" And I said, "Well, I agree," [laughs] you know?

CB:

That came, actually—

JB:

Yeah, it came from, I think—Scenic Texas.

CB:

Scenic Texas. They are a wonderful resource. Scenic Texas and Scenic America.

JB:

Yeah, they are. But anyway, we—after we won the lawsuit with the billboard company, within about four years, I think they took down over a hundred billboards. And a lot of them, they—

AW:

How did the few remaining remain?

JB:

The ones that were remaining were—they let them—they would let them keep them if they would take them off the telephone poles and put them on single. They were allowed. I mean, they weren't prohibited. They were allowed in heavy commercial zones. Well on a lot of our thoroughfares, like Q, and most of the heavy commercial—

AW:

Yeah, 19<sup>th</sup> and University.

JB:

Or state, or federal highways.

AW:

Oh, so you lose the—

JB:

Yeah. But what we later did was when we put I-27 in, and the Marsha Sharp Freeway, we created a new district, new zoning district, called Interstate Highway, and we prohibited billboards—period. Carte blanche. You can't put them—so the ones that are on I-27 were there when it got widened. The one on Marsha Sharp were there and outlying. And we recently had a new billboard company come in, Choice Media, from Amarillo, trying to gut our ordinance. And they filed like seven or eight zone cases simultaneously that would've put them on Frankford, and 4<sup>th</sup> Street, and 19<sup>th</sup>, and 34<sup>th</sup>.

CB:

Slide.

JB:

And we went—bunch of the pro-sign regulation people went down there and fought it and got everyone of them defeated. Well, they filed lawsuit on us. [Laughs] Took it Judge [Sam R.] Cummings' court—district court here—and he turned their suit down. I mean, he denied their suit, so I don't know if they're going to appeal it or not. But it's kind of a constant battle. But the whole attitude in the city after the tornado was let's don't just build back Lubbock, let's build it

back better than what—and let's be a model. And so, the Canyon Lakes came out of that, you know, it was six-and-a-half miles—other than Mackenzie Park, which was right in the middle—basically six-and-a-half miles of just clutter, and open caliche pits, and—

AW:

Trash.

JB:

Dump ground. There were over three—there was several. I think, it was either three or four. It may have been—I've lost track now. Wrecking yards. Several wrecking yards. We relocated, moved over three thousand wrecked cars out of canyon. And in fact, we had federal grants and no one had ever relocated a wrecking yard when we did our project.

AW:

Really?

JB:

They didn't know—there were no federal regulations on how to do it. What do you pay for them? What relocation do you pay? So we actually had to write the regulations for a HUD [**The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**] and get them to approve them before we could move the wrecking yard, so.

AW:

Yeah. I recall, maybe a talk that you did one time, talking about the Canyon Lakes as being, maybe, the longest city park in America?

JB:

It's one of the longest—it's one of the biggest linear parks and, I think to this day, it is still the largest recreational reuse of reclaimed water.

AW:

Oh, wow. Yeah. Well—

JB:

Yeah. And most people, maybe even today, as much as we talked about it, don't realize it. But when—prior to the goals—getting the Canyon Lakes project in the goals for the seventies, we went out and talked to civic clubs. We did a colored slide pres—that still would've used thirty-five millimeter slides on that carousel.

AW:

Yeah, carousel.

JB:

And we went out and talked—

AW:

Which, I just might say the opponent's PowerPoint worked a whole lot more on the PowerPoint.

[Laughter]

CB:

Oh yes.

JB:

Yes, yes. I think they—who is it? Murphy's Law? I think Murphy had PowerPoint—man, when he—

AW:

Yeah.

JB:

But anyway, we went out and talked to civic clubs and we told them, we said, "Lubbock doesn't have any—any lakes, and free-flowing rivers, or anything." I said, "But we do have a resource and that's our reclaimed water." So we were upfront and said, "We recommend that we build a series of lakes using reclaimed water." And there was a city out in California—Santee, California, had done it on a small-scale. One little—

AW:

Santee? That's S-a-n-t double e?

JB:

Right. Santee, California. And they had done it on a small scale, but their treatment of the water was an implant treatment. It was like a third stage treatment of—most sewage affluent is treated to a secondary affluent, I mean, and then, it's—and then, they treat it to a point where they can release it into the stream bend. Well, ours, we'd been putting out on an agricultural farm.

AW:

Right. The Gray Farm.

JB:

Gray Farm, for like forty—forty years.

AW:

I drove right through it today.

JB:

And we had—and what had happened over the years, we built a dome, an artificial aquifer under that.

AW:

Plus, nitrite issues, right?

JB:

They were high. Yeah they're high, nitrites. But we said, rather than implant treatment, which was like—I think it was like thirty-five cents, a thousand gallons. We said—

AW:

Oh yeah. That's above and beyond the capital cost, right? Of building a plant?

JB:

Yeah. Yeah. Above and beyond the—but what we suggested was—that's land treatment of the water. You know, there's no such thing as new water. Most wells are in water that's been used. I used to—it's kind of a gross example, but I used to say, "Some of the water you may have been—the molecules of water you may have been drinking was urinated by Navajo Indian forty years ago," you know? But—

AW:

Yeah. I did a series of articles for the *Avalanche Journal* in the eighties about—the city was going to—they had a permit to be able to deposit as many as nine million gallons a day into the Yellow House Canyon, down from here, just past four hundred. And so I was—I thought, Well, this is interesting. So I interviewed a lot of people. And I interviewed—I can't remember now who it was, with a water treatment city. And he said, "You know,"—and I love this—he said, "You know, we can take everything out of it, except the idea." [Laughter] He says, "We can get rid of everything else, except the idea." That's why we have so much trouble.

CB:

Yes.



JB:

And after I went to—moved out of Ransom, I was meeting with the city council. We were in a planning process one day. The city was talking about, you know, bypassing buffalo and putting reclaimed—well, they could even bypass Ransom, or they could release it into Ransom. And they were going, “I don’t know if we want a reclaimed water like that.” And I said, “You’ve been getting it for about forty years now.” I said, “The water in the Canyon Lakes project is reclaimed water.” I said, “It’s been coming over the dam at Buffalo for forty years and the water you’re been getting is reclaimed water.” And they went, “Oh.” As much as—like I said, it still amazes me—as much as we talked about it, it’s not that well-known that the water in the Canyon Lakes is reclaimed water.

AW:

Yeah. Well, I mean, where’s the river?

JB:

Yeah.

AW:

You know? [Laughs] It’s got to come from somewhere else, you know?

JB:

Where does it come from?

AW:

Yeah, yeah.

JB:

But anyway—

AW:

Well, let me interject something real quick before I forget it, which in my case, it means I might not ever ask it. But it strikes me that the council, right before the tornado that came up with this plan for the seventies, and the council that was through and just after the tornado when all of these things were being put into place, may have been a more proactive and forward-thinking council than we’ve been blessed with in many of the years since. Is that a fair assessment?

JB:

Ah.

AW:

And I don't mean to denigrate any particular group of people, but it seems like this is pretty far thinking, pretty open-minded.

JB:

Well, it—you know the councils after the tornado, that—it took a lot of courage for them to pass the revised zoning ordinance, which had very innovative landscaping and sign standards that we couldn't—we could point to some cities and say, "They dabbled in this." But, you know, amortization, things like that. And I have—and I have to admit, and I told Charlotte about this—it's one of my moments I look back on and have to really smile. You know the little corner there at Broadway?

CB:

Oh, I love this story.

JB:

It's the northeast corner of Broadway, where the little park is? The entrance park?

AW:

At Q?

JB:

Yeah, at Q. There used to be an old service station. An old Humble—or not Humble.

AW:

I don't remember what it was.

JB:

Anyway, it was abandoned after the tornado. Well, there was a billboard facing the Broadway traffic and there was a billboard on there, facing the Q traffic. Big billboard, like industrial-size billboard. Well, that was the entrance to downtown. And so after the tornado, when we were doing the downtown—the Broadway plan. We were doing a Broadway landscape plan. I went to the council and I said, "Why don't we acquire that parcel there? Now, since its business is closed, why don't we acquire it and make an entryway park? A gateway park into downtown, there? And maybe put a little memorial to the victims of the tornado?" Like, twenty-six people killed in the tornado. Okay, so they put somebody on—hired somebody. You know, they always get someone to go do the negotiating so they don't know it's the city that's—

AW:

Yeah. Right, because the price goes up.

JB:

Yeah, because the price goes up if they know the public wants it. So anyway, they bought it and after they bought it, we did a little research and found out that the lease that the billboard company had with the prior tenant had expired over a year ago. So they were still just putting their billboard stuff up there. So, after we bought it, I drafted a letter to the city attorney office and they sent him a nice letter. It said, "The city has recently acquired this. We've investigated in our due diligence, we discovered that you had a lease with the prior owners, but that lease expired over a year ago. And we would like you to now remove your billboards from our property." And they wrote this nice letter back and said, "Well, we'll move them, but you're going to have to acquire them." And we went, "Really?" And so, we sent them a letter back. Said, "No, we don't have to acquire them. You have them on property. We don't want to renew your lease any longer. Please remove them.", "No, we'll take you to court unless you acquire them." So I went to the council and executive session and I said, "Look, we're playing poker with these guys." I said, "I've talked to a steel construction company in town [phone rings] and they can have both of those removed within twenty-four hours. You give me the go ahead, and I'll contract with him, and they will go out there at eight o'clock in the morning and by five that afternoon, they will have them down. We will take the parts, and we will stack them at municipal hill, and write them a nice letter, and tell them their billboard is at—is on municipal hill, and we're going to be charging their rent until they come and remove."

AW:

[laughs] Oh, good. Yeah.

JB:

So about three o'clock in the afternoon, they were taking them down, the guy from the billboard company sees them. He happens to see them taking them down. [AW laughs] He calls—calls me, "What's going on?" And I said, "Well, we tried to do this the nice way and let you remove them, but you refused to take them off our property, so the council has authorized them to be removed." And so, they took them down. We wrote them a letter, you know, and they said, "You can come pick them up. Here's where there'll be, at municipal hill." And they threatened lawsuit, but never did. They couldn't have won and they knew it. But we went ahead, then, and tore the building down, built our park. But it's just—it's just another example of how obstinate the billboard people were. Don't quote me on all this because—

AW:

Well, this will go into our archive for people to listen to a hundred years from now, so it's—

JB:

Okay.

AW:

Well, you know, they were in an industry that was disappearing and I'm sure they were, you know, in a lot of ways—

JB:

Well, they are relentless though, Andy. They are. Like, right now, they're down at the Texas legislature trying to get the height increased from, like, fifty feet to eighty-five feet on our interstate highway, so they can get them up above the trees. So many of the other billboards are blocked by trees, you know? And people don't want them cutting the trees. Said, "Well, we'll just get them high enough where they're above the trees now." And I hope that doesn't go anywhere, but. The—my paper there really kind of—it kind of lays out basically what I've been telling you, but it does it in—you know, in a two—and this, this talks about the billboard thing.

AW:

And this one's called, "Signs, Standards, and City Image," and this is from 2010, September.

JB:

Yeah.

AW:

Great. These are going to be terrific.

JB:

And then, this was—I forget what this was, but I said, "Note: The Lubbock timeline events recorded in life in Lubbock in the Sunday, June 4, 2006 Edition"—if you can find that at the Avalanche Journal—"Provided a good start for this PowerPoint presentation." I was doing a PowerPoint. I forget what it was for now. "But that ended in 1990, and did not include a number of key events prior to 1990, and following 1990. Some additional suggested events are: securing the Lake Meredith water source for Lubbock." That was part of—

AW:

CRWMA [**Canadian River Municipal Water Authority**].

JB:

Yeah, CRWMA.

JB:

"The May 11, '70 tornado and following recovery projects—one, civic center, Mahon Library, Canyon Lakes, NDP urban renewal, tornado, and Lubbock International Airport expansion." It was called Lubbock International then. "1997 Reese Air Force Base closure and subsequent

redevelopment is one of the most successful base redevelopment projects in the U.S. Opening of I-27, ribbon cutting for the Marsha Sharp freeway. Two thousand census population: over two hundred thousand. Silent Wings Museum, Wind Power Museum, Museum of Agriculture opening. Lake Alan Henry water supply.” So if you go back and get that article, it’ll list a lot of the—

AW:

Yeah. Yeah, we should have that in our building, actually.

JB:

Key events. And that was—my suggestion was these are some that could just be added on.

AW:

Well, one of the things that’s occurred to me and to—and not just because I’m a smart guy, but a lot of other people have thought this up too—that if you look at key events that have shaped Lubbock, you have to talk about how active our business community was around 1900, that wound up in the—incorporation of the city, you know?

JB:

Yeah, 1909. Yeah.

AW:

Within the decade. And then, Texas Tech.

JB:

Texas Tech.

AW:

And then, the tornado.

JB:

And then, the tornado.

AW:

[Laughs] You know—

JB:

The tornado was one of the most tragic catalysts, but it forever changed the image of Lubbock. For—and—but for the tornado, I don’t think—I think the canyon would still be six-and-a-half mile—other than Mackenzie, six-and-a-half-miles of caliche pits, wrecked cars. You couldn’t



come into Lubbock from the north without crossing the canyon and there wasn't any part of the canyon you could cross that wasn't the ugliest part of the city. You know? And sometimes, people say, "First images are the most important, the most lasting." Well, after—even after the tornado, there was a wrecking yard, where Atzlan Park is now, had cars stacked six, seven high. I've got a PowerPoint presentation I'd like to show you sometime. The before and after.

AW:

Yeah. Could you send that to us? Could we have a copy of that at our archive?

JB:

I've got it on a thumb—I think I've got it on a thumb drive. In fact, let me go get my—

AW:

Yeah, I think I have thumb drive with me.

JB:

Let me go get my—let me go get by laptop and see. **[Long pause]** I'm sure you're much more literate with computers than I am.

AW:

I don't know.

JB:

I don't even know how to transfer something to a thumb drive.

AW:

Actually, do you have a service like Drobox? Or box, or—

JB:

I don't think so. Let me get my—

AW:

Those are cloud services where you put things.

JB:

I don't even—yeah, I don't even know if this thing is charged. Let me hook up my power chord to it. Probably can't even turn it on.

AW:

I do have a thumb drive that I use to transfer things from my computer to my laptop—my tablet,

my iPad. And I think it would work to hold this till I could get it to my office. But—so if you don't have a thumb drive, I can try that.

JB:

I do. I can just let you take my thumb drive with you.

AW:

Yeah, and I can bring it back to you, or—

JB:

Just a second. That may be the best way to do it. Let me see where—[unzipping noise]. No. [Long pause] No.

AW:

Do you have a SD card slot on that computer? Because I might.

JB:

Um.

AW:

I don't see one on this side.

JB:

What did I do with—maybe I don't have a thumb drive on this.

AW:

Well, there was a thumb—those are both thumb drives.

JB:

Yeah, those are—I know they're—I've got them labeled. They're different.

AW:

Oh, got it.

JB:

No, it's—well, let me just—maybe the best I can do here.

AW:

Let me look on the other side of your computer and see if you have a SD card slot. Just—yes, you do. It's right there. And let me—

JB:

Let me get this thing.

AW:

Let me see what's on this card. We might be able to put it on this SD card if you wouldn't mind doing that.

JB:

Let me turn it on. I haven't had this thing on.

AW:

I need to turn my—I'm going to turn my recorder off on this drive and check my other SD, so we're stopping for a moment.

*[Pause in recording]*

JB:

Caliche pit—we looked at that and we thought, It'll take most of our money. We only have two-and-a-half—2.6—2.8 eight million dollars and the estimate was the project would cost us over six-and-a-half million. So we had less than half of what we would need. And when they hired me back, the city manager said, "Jim, just start and do what you can do with what we have. Make as much progress as you can." So we started filing for bureau of recreation grants and HUD grants. And one of the things that we were going to have to do is we were going to have to dig the lakes deeper because they're—if we'd just built dams and backed up on shallow water with the whole thing, the entire canyon would've been covered with cat tails because of the shallow water. So we looked at that pile of debris up there, and so we took bulldozers, and compacted that debris, and we went to—

AW:

This is debris from the tornado?

JB:

Tornado, yeah. And we went to—what was it? What was the name? Yellow House Canyon Equipment Company that built these sixteen-and-a-half yard scrapers. And we knew that where they built them, they tested them. I guess they put stress gauges on the different members and things while they're—and so we knew they test—so we went to them and said, "How would you like to test your equipment in our project?" [AW laughs] And they went, "Yeah, we would." So, they said if we would set the cut stakes and supervise the work, that they would provide two sixteen-and-a-half yard scrapers. They would provide the fuel and the drivers if we just show them where to put the dirt. And so they—they deepened the lakes, and took the fill, and covered

up all that tornado debris. There's probably four to six, eight foot of dirt that we dug out of the lakes and covered that tornado debris. And what we ended up doing—the original—if you're looking at canyon cross section, it would've been like this with the caliche pit. Well then, they piled the debris in there. Well then, we filled over it and we reshaped it where the canyon now looks about like it did originally. You know where the little pavilion is up there across from Buddy Holly Park?

AW:

Yeah.

JB:

There's a little placard there—

AW:

So there—so not only are the berms out at Ranching Heritage Center debris, but the shape of the Canyon Lake at Buddy Holly Park is a debris.

JB:

Is debris.

AW:

Was it anywhere else along the Canyon Lakes, or just?

JB:

No, that's primarily where they dumped most of the tornado debris.

AW:

That's very interesting.

JB:

But it was like, how can we do this? If we try to take all that debris out of there—and when we take it out—

AW:

Where are you going to put it?

JB:

We're going to have a caliche pit again, which we don't want. So why don't we just use that as fill? And put the debris—since we have to deepen the lakes, why don't we use that borrowed material to cover the tornado—

AW:

Do you have any idea how confusing this is going to be to archaeologists a thousand years from now? [Laughs]

JB:

I know it, I know it. They'll think, What kind of civilization was this?

AW:

[Laughs] That's really interesting. That's a great story. I—

JB:

Well, anyway. There we are—oh, and instead of hiring contractors to do a lot of the reshaping and cleanup, the rough work, not the digging of the lakes, would've cost a small fortune. So we went to the council, we had a grant. We said, "Why don't we buy the parks department a front-end loader, a small bulldozer, a grader, and a sixteen-and-a-half yard scraper? We could buy that for them."

AW:

Don't bite my finger.

JB:

Kitty. So we bought that equipment and the parks department became our cleanup contractors. And they have equipment after we were through for their—

AW:

Yeah, to keep.

JB:

To keep. So the council did that. And there they are. There's those up on lake—the end of Lake One. See the shape in that lake? And there's a cut—

AW:

Yeah, because that's almost—almost like a playa. It's so shallow.

JB:

And the cut stakes are set at what we wanted the spillway elevation to be on the dams. So when the water got up to that level, it would start going over the dam, so. There's some of the caliche mines that the little parks department used their equipment to reshape. There's a lot of the tornado debris. There's some of the cleanup up on the upper end. And then, the construction. So we had before cleanup, and then these are the construction pictures of actual doing the—that's



where they were digging the foundation up on Lake One, I think. Digging the trenches. We had to do an archaeological stake. We had some bones, so Tech shut us down. We had to do a complete archaeological—

AW:

Um-hm. Eileen Johnson.

JB:

Eileen Johnson. Yeah. There we go. And there's the footing for the first—first dam. And there's the retainer walls in the Buddy Holly area, you know, with the little—the little defined river area. Kind of like the river walk. Well, that's what they did. They came there and put those walls—reinforced concrete walls in there and then backfilled behind them with debris—I mean, with borrowed material. And see, there's where the little bridge went over right there. And right now, where all those trees are, is where the—where the—and have you been down to that interpretive center since they put the little signs up down there?

AW:

Not at the Lubbock Lake, but at first—

JB:

Canyon Lake?

AW:

No, I haven't.

JB:

You need to go. The park—I guess it was a parks department—put these little low profile signs with a history of the Canyon Lakes project.

AW:

Oh, how nice. No, I haven't seen those.

JB:

Yeah. You need to go. Pretty cool. There's the little bridge going over up on Lake One. Of course, all the lakes have been renamed now. Vaquero Lake and I can't—there's the—you can see how much barrow was done by those scrapers because there's one of the little fishing piers with a car sitting for scale. There's dam number one. Rather than letting the water go over the full surface of the dam, we cut little notches in it to let it go through, so people could walk across the dam—actually use the dams as a walkway, except in high—you know, high watering periods. There they are. I think that was lake two. They had to dig down and fill—they filled that

area under the dam with soil cement, a mixture of soil and cement. And then, they built the core of the dam with soil cement. And then, coated the dam itself with actual concrete. And there's—I think that's Lake Six. That's the deepest lake. And then, this is completion sections of it that were—

AW:

Is Six the one east of Martin Luther King?

JB:

Yeah. And there's Roy Bass doing—the day of the dedication. And funny story, too. The little waterfall—yeah, this waterfall. Got to tell you this. I don't think it's in my comments there. John Offord [?] [0:38:21], who was the director of parks and recreation the day we had the ribbon cutting down there. There were a lot of people down there and he saw this guy standing, rubbing his chin, looking at that waterfall. And he told John, he said, “You know, I've lived around these parts here for forty years now.” He said, “I never knew there was a waterfall.” [AW laughs] Because it looks so natural.

AW:

It does.

JB:

What they did was they brought that pipe up, they drilled twenty-six wells in that agricultural area out there. Twenty-six wells, collected the water, brought it to a pump station down below Lake Six, pumped that water upstream to an overhead tank in Mackenzie to get head pressure on the water. And then, the water flowed out. That gave it enough head to push it all the way to the front lake up there. And then, it put a stand pipe up in this—it was a little caliche area. A little caliche mine area up there. They put this stand pipe up there and then drilled into it with several pieces of PVC coming out. And then, actually built the waterfall around it. So when the water comes out, it looks like it's just flowing out of the rocks there, if you've ever seen that little waterfall.

AW:

Yeah, so it was convincing.

JB:

It was. [Laughs] Yeah, convincing. That guy said, “I didn't know it there was a waterfall.” That's just an aerial view of lake—

AW:

Yeah. So when we're talking about our panel and whatever we're going to do on the Saturday

before the fiftieth of Monday, May eleventh, what—it might be a really nice idea for you to just give this presentation.

JB:

Yeah.

AW:

I mean, this is—this is great information and I think people would find it of interest.

JB:

Yeah, I could. Yeah, I could do that. If I—I don't know how much time y'all have.

AW:

Well we're—we're planning the thing now. Could you do this in an hour?

JB:

Oh yeah. Yeah, I could. See, there's the water.

AW:

Yeah.

JB:

Right after we built that first dam, there was so much water coming down, it totally went over the full length of the lake—I mean, of the dam on lake one. That's before we had—and we didn't have enough—there's Atz—that's that Atzlan. I mean, the strip park on the—on the—what would that be? Northside of Guadalupe, which was heavily damaged by the tornado. And there was the old bridge. That's another interesting story. The old Austin brothers' bridge. It was an old steel trust bridge that before University was widened and put through there that was the way people got across the canyon there. And when we found it, we went back and checked the records where the county had built that thing in 19—11, over somewhere in there, for like, it was less than two thousand dollars, the girders. And the company that made the bridge was still in business and we got replacement parts. And we said, "Well, instead of taking it down, let's just build a little abutment there so when people are jogging or walking up around that area, they don't have to get out on University Avenue to loop around. They can use that as a pedestrian bridge." So we kept the bridge, and restored it, and put a wooden—wood planks back in it, which is what it was originally, you know? It was like one-car-bridge across there, but we just—we kept a piece of history there.

AW:

Yeah. Well, I'd always thought that it looked old, but I didn't—

JB:

Yeah, there you go.

AW:

Yeah.

JB:

That's after—right after we—and that's before we had done any landscaping over on this side. And you see the little shelter there?

AW:

Um-hm.

JB:

Yeah, this was the one section of the project that had, kind of, a San Antonio River feel because we had the hard, hard edges to the water and, you know. And remember the tornado—they used to—right after they finished this—remember the tornado jams they used to have out there?

AW:

Yeah. Oh yeah. I went to most of them.

JB:

Yeah, and I don't know why they quit doing those. I think—

AW:

Well, there was a—

JB:

I think it was because they always left it so torn up. [Laughs] Oh yeah. There's a good—there's a good picture of the Austin bridge with a wood floor in it.

AW:

The current council is—at least two members of the council are talking about bringing the tornado jams back.

JB:

I think it'd be a great idea. Well, you got—you've got a good setting for it. You've got a natural amphitheater up there above the—

AW:

Yeah. And I think just by how you organize it would keep it—

JB:

Yeah. There's the—there's the waterfall.

AW:

Yeah.

JB:

Yeah. We brought it down and then put a pipe under the Canyon Lakes Drive, and let it flow under the road, and then going down, and go into the lake there. There's Lake Six. One of the team—I think it's Channel Eleven, for the longest time, used to—their sign on the picture was a view down Lake Six looking back toward the skyline of downtown Lubbock. There's a couple of planners walking across the top of lake—dam number six. The water there is the deepest in the—I think it was around sixteen—twelve to sixteen foot deep, I think. There was old Manicapelli, which was the land—I can't remember.

AW:

Landwer.

JB:

Landwer, first. And then, the Manicapelli. I think the Manicapelli's owned it when we acquired it. Or maybe it was the other way around.

AW:

No. I think it was the Manicapelli's. I think it was originally Landwer.

JB:

Landwer? And then Manicapelli??

AW:

I think. I think that's—

JB:

And there's a little sail boat on Lake—Lake Six. And—another catamaran on Lake Six. These are just after, you know?

AW:

Um-hm.



JB:

But anyway, that's—

AW:

Well, that would be—that would be very nice. I would still like to get a copy of that for the archive, but there's no hurry in it.

JB:

Well, you want to go back and see if your little thing ever showed up, maybe?

AW:

We can.

JB:

Is your—is it still in there? Or did you—

AW:

Yeah, no. You've still got it in there.

JB:

Well, I can't—

AW:

You just close this PowerPoint and then—because all we need to do is drag it. See if it'll drag onto the SD card if the SD card is showing up. Now, it may not show up. It's hard to say.

JB:

Let's see. I tried to drag that up there and I can't. I don't have a steady enough hand.

AW:

Well, you can just close it and it'll start over.

JB:

Where do I close it?

AW:

It would be up here under file. And then, close. And then, go down here to go back to your desktop. And let's see if it—I'm just looking to see if—

JB:

Recent files. Canyon Lake.

AW:

My card is not—

JB:

I don't see it showing up. Oh, how about over here?

AW:

What does that say? SD? Yeah.

JB:

Let's try that.

AW:

Yeah, click on that.

JB:

This folder is empty.

AW:

Yeah.

JB:

So what do we want to put on it?

AW:

Well, if we can get a clear desktop, where we can see that PowerPoint, we can just drag it on there and I think it will copy on.

JB:

Okay.

AW:

But I don't know. [Laughs] I don't know how to do that. Let's see. Maybe—maybe where it says, "Window?" What does that do?

JB:

I don't know. [Laughs] Um—what's that—trouble control panel.

AW:

There's—

JB:

Applications. Oh—no.

AW:

May just try—

JB:

Oh, PowerPoint.

AW:

Yeah. That's your program. We don't want—we want the file. And I remember that we saw—  
oh, here's "Canyon Lake's Policy."

JB:

Well no, that's policy.

AW:

Okay, is there a Canyon Lakes PowerPoint showing up?

JB:

I don't see it.

AW:

Yeah. I'm not quite sure. If I could see the PowerPoint file, we could drag it onto that SD card.

JB:

Let's try. Want to get out of this see?

AW:

Yeah. Get out of that.

JB:

Get out of that one, too.

AW:

Okay. Now, then.

JB:  
Click on—

AW:  
Is that your Canyon Lakes presentation?

JB:  
Yeah.

AW:  
Okay. And—but now, we don't see the—

JB:  
Let's see.

AW:  
There's just a little myth that I don't see the—

JB:  
You can go to this PC. Want to try that?

AW:  
Yeah, but then we won't see the—

JB:  
Or control panel.

AW:  
Well, let's see—

JB:  
Yeah. There's your—

AW:  
Where is it? Your file. I'm going pause this. We're getting a lot of—

JB:  
Oh, desktop. Here's—well, no. Doc—oh.

*[Pause in recording]*

AW:

For our file here, what's your date of birth, Jim?

JB:

3/1/41.

AW:

And where?

JB:

Skidmore, Texas.

AW:

S-k-i-d?

JB:

M-o-r-e.

AW:

Where is that?

JB:

Skidmore is a little town about halfway between Beeville and Corpus.

AW:

Okay, so right on the south. Did you grow up there?

JB:

Unh-uh. I grew up in Beeville.

AW:

In Beeville?

JB:

Um-hm.

AW:

And where did you go to college?

JB:

Tech. Texas Tech.

AW:

And when did you graduate?

JB:

Sixty-six.

AW:

A degree in?

JB:

B.S. in Parks—actually, Parks Administration. But I went that route wanting a profession in city planning, but they didn't have an undergraduate degree. So, you know, Urbanosky was an open landscape architecture. Put me through their program. I got my architecture courses, and my city planning courses, and my—and I had transferred in there from civil engineering. So I came out of civil engineering wanting a degree in planning. And then, later after I got my degree, I went back and got—I did graduate work in city planning at Tech. Urban design city planning.

AW:

Oh, at Tech?

JB:

Yeah.

AW:

Where did—where were you between '66 and '70? Because you told me that over the phone—

JB:

Between '66 and '68—I went to work as an assistant planner in '66.

AW:

In Lubbock?

JB:

In Lubbock. City of Lubbock Planning Department. Sixty-seven, I was hired. I was promoted to associate planner. And then, in early '68, I was promoted to senior planner. I was senior planner when we were doing all this Canyon Lake stuff. And then, I left in '68, September of '68, and went to Wichita Falls as their director of planning, their city planner. Stayed there almost two



years to the day. And the—after the tornado hit here, Bill Blackwell, who was the city manager, he called me and asked me if I would—I think Bob Burr, who was the director of planning, he was leaving. He didn't—he didn't much care for federal grants, working with grant programs, and that's about all there was after the tornado. I think Bob recommended that they contact me. And so, Bob—Bill Blackwell asked me to come back as director of city planning for Lubbock. And at the ripe old age of twenty-nine, I came back and—I told them, I said, "At first, I wasn't really sure for a city this size." And I would've been out of Tech for—what? Four years. Wasn't sure I was ready for it, you know? But he—he had Urbanosky call me. Said, "You can do this." And he had Bob Burr call me, "You can do this." So I said, "Okay. I'll tell you what, if the bond issue passes—" they'd already had the bond issue in the mill then—I said, "If the bond issue passes and the money's in there for the Canyon Lakes project, I will come back and take the director of planning job." So the bond issue passed and I came back.

AW:

That's great.

JB:

Became director of planning.

AW:

I was a young police officer at that time. I was—should've been on duty the night of the tornado, but I'd taken the day off to get some wisdom teeth cut out by Dr. Henry right downtown. In fact, the downtown was my beat and I would've been on duty when the tornado hit. So it was the smartest sick days I've ever taken. But I remember—and my father-in-law was JT Alley, Police Chief. But I remember thinking, at the time even, even as a very young person, that Bill Blackwell seemed to be a really progressive manager.

JB:

And his background was civil engineering.

AW:

Oh, it was? No, I didn't know that.

JB:

He was a civil engineer. His background wasn't in management.

AW:

Yeah. Well, I just think—those of us on the police department thought very highly of him. He was a—

JB:

But you know, it was kind of an anxious moment. I think a year—less than two years after I got back here, they fired Bill Blackwell. You remember that?

AW:

No, I don't remember. I should've.

JB:

Jim Granberry fired him.

AW:

Oh, well—

JB:

Well, the council fired him.

AW:

Yeah. Was it led by Granberry on the—

JB:

I don't remember. Lonnie Hollingsworth, Jim Granberry, Bill—Jack Baker, Deaton Rigsby. I can't remember who all—but anyway, they fired him and I was feeling kind of vulnerable at that point because Bill had hired me, you know?

AW:

Yeah. I don't remember the cause.

JB:

Turner. I think, Mo Turner—

AW:

Mo Turner?

JB:

Took Granberry. He ran for mayor and took Granberry's place. And Mo was the one who was mayor when the Civic Center was built, and when the Canyon Lakes was being built, and when the sign ordinance was. And Mo—I don't—off.

AW:

Yeah. Just hold on a second here.

*[Pause in recording]*

AW:

One of the things that—you know, we talked about the importance—even though it was a tragedy, the importance of event of the tornado. But it wouldn't have been an important event if it hadn't been for what had just gone before with that planning and then the attitude of the council afterwards. So can you talk a little bit—I mean, and so you were with the city after that until you retired, right?

JB:

Um-hm.

AW:

So can you talk just a little bit about if there's a difference between that time period and later time periods and the attitude of either the government or the citizens in terms of wanting to be progressive in—as you said—in the image of the city and the way the city was governed with those codes?

JB:

I think that ten year period following the tornado probably was one of the most dynamic periods in the history of Lubbock because there was so much change going on. And so much of it was like cutting edge change for Municipalities, in terms of sign standards, and a new civic center, and an expanded airport.

AW:

And we were on the—kind of, the end of Grover Murray's—his dramatic tenures at Texas Tech, you know?

JB:

Yeah. And there was a lot of—there's nothing we can't do if we set our minds to it because they had just seen all these goals that the community had said they wanted to achieve and the tornado became the catalyst to make it possible. And I think what happened, the further we got away from that ten year period, the more generations came up, and more people moved in that didn't have that history.

AW:

Or experience, yeah. Right.

JB:

Or experience. And began to take for granted what we have and don't—didn't realize how easy

it would be to go back where we were, especially in the area of land use planning, and sign control, and things. So there grew up a lot of people that were anti-signs and kept picking away at it. You know, "Let's change or do away with the sign ordinance." And it was like—and we would have to pull out our before pictures a lot of times to show new appointees to the planning commission and to the counselor. Do we really want to go back and look like this again? Because we can and we will if we just start picking away at it, you know, a little at a time. And quite frankly, the administration we got now is not—not as adamant about good zoning control. And zoning laws are only as good as your willingness to enforce them, just like the law, you know? They're only as good as our ability and willingness to enforce it because if you don't, then it's—you know, you just kind of gradually slide back into—

AW:

Yeah. As a home-owner, one of the things that—and living in a—I live just off the—at the intersection of 46<sup>th</sup> and Joliet, so right in central park. And Lubbock housing is cheap compared to Austin, and Houston, and Dallas. And so the overpopulated college rental is a big issue for those of us that live in older parts of the city because you have to have that enforced all the time, you know?

JB:

Like six college students wanting to buy a single family residential unit and—which is a clear violation of zone ordinance. But if you don't enforce it—

AW:

Right.

JB:

You know? And I see a lot of—I see a lot of things driving up and down 50<sup>th</sup> Street now. Outside storage and sign—People in violation of the ordinance, they'll take a little—it almost looks like U-Haul, a small U-Haul trailer, and put their advertising on it, back it up to the curb. Well, they never use that—once in a year for their business. It's a clear violation of the sign law, but I don't see it being enforced. And the less you enforce it, the more of it you're going to see. During these billboard cases, I was pointing out the staff—had kind of a mediocre planning staff at the time. They were in transition and they were pointing out how, "Well, a billboard is probably not so bad an idea because you've got these heavy commercial uses already on either end of the—" And I had to point out, "Those are not heavy commercial uses. Those are permitted in C-3's districts, which don't permit billboards. The reason they look like heavy commercial is because there's zone violations on both of them. [AW laughs] They're not being enforced." One of them is a tire store that has tires stacked twenty feet out from the building and almost up to the ceiling. I said, "The law doesn't allow them to have any outside storage, except within three feet of their building." I said, "It's a clear violation." I said it at the planning commission. I said it at the

council hearing in front of the city manager, the full council, and the mayor. And three months later, it was still there. And I thought, What is wrong with this picture?

AW:

Yeah. Is it allowed?

JB:

They turned the zoning down. You know, I went against the staff's recommendation and turned the zoning down, but then, no one followed it up and corrected the zone violation.

AW:

Yeah. So it is a lack of staffing or a lack of will?

JB:

When I was there, zoning enforcement was a high priority. And zoning was under planning. So it wasn't a question. You will enforce the zoning ordinance. And if you won't, then we'll get inspectors that will. End of discussion. So they enforced it. And you know, being a police officer, you know enforcement isn't always easy. It can be very distasteful, in fact. Well, the inspectors zoning—you know, had to go up, and knock on his business door, and say, "Look, you've got a zone violation out there and I'm going to give you—I'm going to give you whatever's reasonable—six working days, ten working days, to correct it.", "What if I don't correct it?", "Then I'll file on you at municipal court and every day that you don't correct it, you're subject to a two hundred dollar a day fine." You know? Well, that—you know, that—then, they get—you know, a lot of them get cussed out by them. A lot of them just don't like the conflict. Well, if they don't like conflict, they shouldn't be in enforcement because that's a built-in part of it, you know? And—but—I got off your question.

AW:

No, that's right on.

JB:

I just saw the further we got away from that ten year period, the harder it was. We had to go back and re-school people about what goals for the seventies was. And then, we had other goals programs, where we tried to kind of build on that and set new goals, you know? But it made me—as a planner, it made me a firm believer in the power of goals because if what you're trying to do is a consensus already of the community, then the people that are fighting you—look, this isn't my idea. The community said they wanted to do it. If you—we have elected officials who have—who support this goals program. If you don't want this done, well that's why we have elected officials, but I've been tasked with getting them done, getting the goals done. And until I'm told differently, that's what I'm going to do, you know? I appreciate your opinion and what



have you, but this is something we're doing by community consensus, and I think that's the way—is a good way to do planning. So it was always helpful—very helpful to me that we had a goals program because that took a lot of the subjective-ness out of what I was doing, you know?

AW:

Um-hm, um-hm. Well, a related question and I'll make this the last one until the next time we visit because I know I'll have more questions, but how does one—and I mean that type of citizen, like you or I, or a professional, or a council member, anyone—how do you, without a catalyst, like the tornado, or some other kind of catalyst—being voted to host the Olympics, or whatever it may be—how do you build that same kind of spirit that you had during those ten years, that decade after the tornado? How do you do that without a catalyst? Or can it be done?

JB:

I don't—I think you have—there's power in numbers. I think you have to align yourself with like-minded people and have enough of them. And when you have enough like-minded people, try to find organizations, who also are like-minded because there is power in organization. I know when we went out and showed the Canyon Lakes slides about—you know. What they'd ask us at the end was, "Hey, we like this. We think it was great. How do we get it done?" Well, at first, we didn't—we hadn't gone out, you know, trying—we didn't have a plan of action to execute. But we just said, "Well, why don't you just write a letter to the council and say, 'We're really enthralled with this idea?'" And so, that's what began to happen. These civic clubs began to write letters to the council, saying, "We think this Canyon Lakes idea has got possibilities. Why don't we try it?" Well, it kind of rocked along until the Chamber of Commerce had the goals for the seventies. Well, by then, there was enough stir in the community. "Well, what about the Canyon Lakes? Why don't we just make that a goal?" Well, the goals are not talking about how we get things done, but what we want to get done. So, well sure. Put it in there. And I remember, I was working with the planning department right out of Tech. I was working with Dudley Thompson at Tech and the other planners. We had to project—as a basis for projecting future traffic volumes, we had to do a land use projection. Well, when we were doing—we started at the core of the city and kind of worked our way out. And that canyon was in there, but mostly, it was heavy industrial, except for Mackenzie, that little green spot right in the middle. We said, "What do we want to with this canyon area?" And we said, "Well, that really could be one of the prettiest places in town. Why don't we?"

AW:

Should be. Yeah.

JB:

Should be. "Why don't we just show it as open space? It's a plan." We don't have to—in the plan, we don't have to say how we're going to do it. Just say what—it's kind of like—a plan is



kind of like a goal statement, you know? So, we showed it as open space. Well then, we had some planners that were aware of this thing in Santee, California. He said, "Well, why don't we—why don't we show it with lakes in there?" And we said, "Well, how can we get lakes? We don't have enough rainwater to keep them full." He said, "Well, I've been studying this thing up in Santee—out in Santee, California, where they're reusing water. Reclaimed water." I said, "We'll do a little research. How much reclaimed water do we have?" Well, we have fifty-two million gallons a day going out on this farm out there. I said, "Well, okay. Let's put together a slide presentation." I went to Bob Burr, who was a director. I said, "As a part of this land use plan, we're—we would like to kind of float this idea of maybe someday reclaiming this canyon and we've come up with an idea to maybe reclaim water." At the time, the only example we had was Santee, which was implant treatment, but. So we put this slide present—we had some architects do some—you know, some elevations, renderings, and showing the lakes, and sailboats on it, and the dams. You know, we always built the dams just upstream from the next thoroughfare, so it wouldn't flood out the thoroughfare. The water would back up behind the thoroughfare, come over the dam under the thoroughfare, and then start filling the next one, so on and so forth. So it came—I actually had eight in the initial concept. Well, when I told you—but back to your question, "How do you get interest?" I think you find like-minded people and getting something—if it's something really big, it's good to get it in a goals program. Make it part of the community. Somehow, if you can get it a part of an official community goals program, that made a huge difference because once it was in the goals program, then there was enough. Some—some—there'd been enough talk about it, that someone had a big piece of property just downstream from Mackenzie. Apparently, they needed a tax write-off. It was a big portion of land, twenty-five or thirty acres, I think, but it was down in a canyon. They came to the council and said, "Think y'all will ever do that Canyon Lakes project?" Said, "I'd like to donate this to the city." And it was like—the council said, "Well." I remember Jack Kastman was on the council then. He looked at me and he said—of course, I was the planning director—and he said, "Jim." He said, "Is this thing a real possibility, or is it just a pipe dream?" And I said, "Well, until we start doing something about it, it's going to be a pipe dream." I said, "Worst thing that could happen—accept it. If the project never happens, you've got twenty-five acres we can use for something someday. It's going to be open space either way." So okay, they accepted it. And eventually enough interest came filtering in that they had enough of these letters—says, "Well, why don't we—why don't we—instead of the goals program, why don't we do a feasibility study?" So they contract a twenty-five thousand dollar feasibility study with Freese, Nichols, and Interest—Endress, which was a water resource engineers out of Fort Worth. And they did a feasibility study on all eight lakes. Six inside the city, one between the city and Buffalo, and then a big one downstream from Ransom. And said, "Yeah, it's feasible. Cost you about six-and-a-half million dollars and we recommend that you drill the wells out there, rather than doing implant treatment," because they had done their research. And they said, "We can buy the water back from Frank Gray for a cent and a half per thousand gallons out of the ground. You know, we can pull it up for a cent and a half per thousand gallons and if we do implant treatment,

it's going—after you capitalize the capital cost and everything else—operating cost—it's going to be more like thirty-five cents.” So that was a no brainer. So they publish the study and about that time, I left Lubbock and went to Wichita Falls as director of planning. Then, in that period, [clears throat] the tornado hit and the number one goal, in part, in recreation, in goals for the seventies was, “Let's implement the series of lakes and the Canyon Lakes project,” you know? It was—so the mayor appointed a blue ribbon committee following the tornado and what the bond package should include and Canyon Lakes was one of them, but they said, “You know, with the civic center and our match to all the urban renewal projects, and the airport, and everything else, we can only afford two-point-eight million for Canyon Lakes. Well, the engineers had said it was going to cost six-and-a-half. So, like I said, that's back to my—

AW:

Yeah. So is—does that do in lakes number seven and eight?

JB:

There wasn't enough money. Oh yeah. Yeah, because we didn't even have—as it turns out—to do any road system or recreational. It wouldn't have done any good just to build the lakes and there was no way to get to them with cars, and launch boats, or have picnics. So we said, “Let's postpone. Let's build lakes one, two, and three. We've already got a lake in Mackenzie, in the middle. Let's postpone Lake Four and Five and build Lake Six at the very end because it'll back water all the way—on most of them, all the way up to Mackenzie.” I said, “Let's take the money that we would've used for those dams and let's build—let's build some of the park's improvements up on the upper end, which is mostly Hispanic, and let's build some on the lower end, which is mostly black, and then let's work toward Mackenzie over a period of time,” and that's what we did. And everybody bought it, but they're talking about now, building Lake Seven. I mean, I've heard the city council talk about building—in fact, if you go online and look up—well, you knew they named the lake system after me, after—

AW:

Yeah.

JB:

Well, anyway, I was driving home. After I moved out here, I was going home, or coming back out here from the city one day. You remember where Rimrock City used to be?

AW:

Oh yeah. Yeah, we all took our dates out to Rimrock City and got attacked by hordes of mosquitos. [Laughter] It was—

JB:

Well, I don't remember how long that thing lasted there. Anyway, up on the rim of the canyon, they had kind of a metal frame that used to say, "Rimrock City," up there. Well, it's long since gone. But I was driving along, I looked up there, and it said—a big plastic sign up there—a big one, I mean, big. It said, "Just say no to Jim Bertram Lake Number Seven." [AW laughs]  
Apparently, the council had already approached them.

AW:

Named it—and named it for you. [Laughs]

JB:

Well, it's part of the Jim Bertram Lake, you know? I guess.

AW:

Yeah, right. So it wasn't going to be specifically a Jim Bertram Lake in the Jim Bertram Lake System.

JB:

It was—they named the lake, The Jim Bertram—the whole system was named the Jim Bertram Lake—then, they had individual names of lakes. But when they were referring to it—and Tex—I mean, all the state agencies and everyone, even Lake Eight, they still refer to it as the Jim Bertram Lake System because it was—Lake Eight was part of the original plan, you know? So was Lake Seven. But now, if you go online and look up, "Lake Seven Jim Bertram Lake System," it'll show you a picture of the lake. And I told Charlotte, I said, "This thing looks like a Scotty." You know, I have a little Scotty dog. I said, "This lake shape looks like a Scotty and it looks like it's about six to seven times bigger than Buffalo."

AW:

Wow.

JB:

But upstream from Buffalo, before you get to the—to the little culvert—you know where you—on 50<sup>th</sup> Street, you cross that little culvert?

AW:

Yeah. That olive.

JB:

It'd back water all the way up to there.

AW:

Oh wow.

JB:

Yeah. But anyway, I went—so I went online and looked. In fact, I called the city manager and I said, “What’s this? I just—” Said, “My neighbors out here at Ransom are asking me what that sign means.” [AW laughs] And I said, “I don’t know what it means.” They said, “Well, the council actually talked about it and they kind of sent some trial balloons. They’re talking to the landowners—if they’d be willing to sell, which implied that eventually, there’d have to be a bond issue.” Boy, this thing’s hot.

AW:

Yeah, that’s what they do.

JB:

Did you get your little?

AW:

Yeah. You can—you might want to shut that down and we’ll pull that card out.

JB:

Yeah. Oh yeah.

AW:

Usually, if you pull it out while it’s—just push it in one time and it’ll pop out.

JB:

Yeah, there you go. But anyway—

AW:

Thank you.

JB:

So I think—it’s in the state water plan now, I think. Lake Seven is. Lake Eight—it was—Lake Eight downstream from—

AW:

Ransom?

JB:

Ransom.

AW:

Before four hundred?

JB:

It would've backed water—it might've flooded four hundred out. They might've had to build—to get the dam—to get the dam the size they wanted, they may've had to build a causeway across that end of the lake because I think it would've flooded out four hundred. I know before I left, Bob Burr—you remember Leroy Elmore?

AW:

Um-hm.

JB:

Okay. Well he owned that ranch down below Farm [to] Market 400, back—he owned all that back—

AW:

Oh, before it got to Forest Ranch, which is on the other side of the—

JB:

Yeah, yeah. Well, he owned the other side. And before I left, he invited Bob Burr and I out there, who was the director of planning. Leroy Elmore brought us out to his old ranch house and he had three horses out there. We got on those horses and kind of rode that area down there. I think he was—he was supportive of the project.

AW:

Yeah, because didn't he—didn't Looter [?] [1:16:34] own that after that?

JB:

I don't know. Leroy—of course, Leroy passed away, I think. And I don't know what happened to—to it after that. And someday, it may still be built. I mean, I watch every time—every time we have a big rain in Lubbock, it's got to fill Buffalo first. But once it comes over the dam in Buffalo, it fills. Ransom Lake's got to fill. Once it starts going—I've seen water go three foot deep for two days over that canyon.

AW:

Yeah. So wouldn't it be—ecologically, wouldn't it be an improvement in things to have that



eighth lake built?

JB:

Oh yeah. Can you imagine what would happen to land value? You saw what happened at Lake Allen Henry. Well, this lake could be bigger than Lake Allen Henry.

AW:

Oh really?

JB:

Oh yeah.

AW:

That is a big lake.

JB:

Yeah. I wish I could find that—if I could find my original report that was done by—it's up in the attic in my boxes up there, but the—the feasibility study by Parkhill, Smith, and Cooper had the—had the height of the dam. You know, had all the elevation. Had a USGS [**United States Geological Survey**] map up there showing the elevation of the dam. And the water—the spillway—the spillway elevation showed the shape of the lake backing up from the dam. And it was a huge lake. I mean—

AW:

Wow. Gosh, that would be interesting. So you mentioned that you have stuff upstairs like that. You know, we like that kind of stuff at the Southwest Collection. So when you're ready to unload it, we're the place.

JB:

Well, I may just—I don't know. My kids probably wouldn't know what most of it was, you know? The plaques and things that I had hanging on my wall for different things—in fact, interesting story, after we did the—we were updating the conference of planning the sign ordinance. Who was it? NB McCullough. Remember? He was the city manager that took—Bill Blackwell's place, I think. Didn't he? Didn't he follow Bill Blackwell? I think he did.

AW:

Or precede him. He was right around that time. Because he was an older fellow, right?



JB:

Yeah. Yeah, he was. He was over at LP&L [**Lubbock Power and Light**]. He was executive director of LP&L.

AW:

That's it, yeah.

JB:

But anyway, he called me in his office one day and he said—who was it? Bob Messersmith was an architect there. And he said, “Bob Messersmith has just told me—he said that you have won an award from the Texas—Texas Branch of the American Institute of Architects.” And I said, “What for?” And they said, “For your work on the comprehensive plan update, and the zoning ordinance, and sign ordinance update.” So it was called a citation of honor, but I had a—I still—it's up there, too. It's like a—it's on the—like a backdrop of the Texas flag, but the Texas chapter of the American Institute of Architects, they give like a citation of honor every year to people around. Well, the local chapter had nominated me because of the work on the comprehensive plan and the zoning ordinance. So I got the citation of honor from the—so I always—but anyway, we were talking about plaques and it just reminded me. There's stuff like that up there that the kids might want, but most of those reports and things—

AW:

Well, we—we're less interested in the plaques than we are the reports and things.

JB:

That's what I'm saying. My kids would be interested in the plaques. That's what I'm saying. But the rest of it, they'd look at that like—

AW:

Yeah, right. We—we—sadly, I mean, not that we're not interested in the plaques, but we don't have a place to display them, and they take up room. We would rather—we'd rather have the reports. We'd rather have things like you just gave me and then that planner you described.

JB:

I assume that, but that's why I said the stuff I've got up there, the only thing my kids would interested in would be probably some of that stuff, the plaques. But the rest of it, they wouldn't have any interest in and might like—might likely end up being thrown away.

AW:

Yeah. Let's don't do that. We're professional hoarders at the archive. You know? [Laughs]  
That's our job.

JB:

In fact, there's one thing in there I may never throw away and that's on the Marsha Sharp Freeway—interesting story. We had, like, six or seven route studies done about how that—what final route that thing would take. The one they settled on required the relocation of the Fort Worth and Denver railway because it cut across the Tech camp—you know, parallel to the Brownfield Highway and it'd cut across the Tech campus. So the final negotiations—I was the city's representative on that thing. And that was—there were five parties to that contract.

AW:

Wow.

JB:

City of Lubbock, the—Texas Tech, the State Highway Department, the Federal Highway Administration, and the railroad. There were five parties to that contract and all of them had to agree on who was going to get what and who was going to do what.

AW:

That sounds like juggling knives at the circus. [Laughs]

JB:

Of course, the railway—railway has the power of eminent domain, the same as cities do. So we were over barrel, you know? If we wanted them to move that rail, we needed their right away. But during that process, the railroad just hung us out, you know, in the negotiations. And finally, you know, John Montford was the—I think he was the—

AW:

Was he chancellor?

JB:

He was the governor. No, no. Not the governor.

AW:

No, state senator.

JB:

State senator. Yeah, state senator.

AW:

Um-hm.

JB:

Well, he—he just pretty well—you know, he kind of—he wanted to get that project done while he was the senator, you know? And so at one point, he just said, “You know, we’re negotiating, negotiating, negotiating, negotiating.” And in one of the meetings, he called all these parties down there at his office. We sat down, “Okay, what are the roadblocks?” And everyone kind of told their—well, I can’t do this, and I can’t do this, and I can’t do this. And he listened to that for about an hour. And then he got up and left his office for a minute, came back in, he was sitting there. His secretary came in, stuck her head in the door, and went, “The senator—the governor needs to talk to you on the phone. It’s urgent.” And he looked at everyone. He said, “Okay. Here’s the deal.” He said, “I don’t know how long I’m going to be on the phone with governor, but when I get back in here, I want this worked out. Does anyone have any questions about what I’m saying?” And everyone looked at each other—I guess not. [AW laughs] And so, he leaves. He leaves and he’s gone probably thirty minutes. And everybody just starts screaming. “Okay, what can you give on?”, “What can you give on?”, “Okay, well.” So we’re taking notes on—okay, when—here was a problem. We got it worked out now because so-and-so’s going to do—anyway, it was kind of the outline of a contract of how we could live with this thing. So he walks back in, he goes, “Okay.” He said, “What do we got?” And so I forget who the spokesperson was. May’ve been the district engineer at the time for the textile. But anyway, “Here’s what we’re going to do,” he said, “and everyone can live with this?” He said, “I don’t want to get—I don’t want to adjourn this meeting and hear a week from now that you’re backing out or you’re backing out.” He said, “Everyone’s solid on this thing? We can write this up as a contract?” “Yep.”, “Yep.”, “Yep.”, “Okay.” So we adjourned the meeting and everybody kind of filters their way out. On the way out, Montford—I’m walking out. He comes over and he’s got this sheepish grin on his face, he puts his arm around my shoulder, and he said, “That old gambit about the call from the governor gets more stuff done than—[AW laughs]—there’s no more call from the governor that—” [laughter]

AW:

Politics at its finest. [Laughs]

JB:

And I just shook my head. Well, if it works, it works. You know? It’s like, “Folks, I’ve got more important things to do than sit here and watch y’all bicker with each other. The governor wants to talk to me, so you better have this worked out.” [Laughter] It worked.

AW:

That’s a great story.

JB:

It worked.

AW:

I love it. Well, I—on that happy note, I'm going to say thank you for this phase. I'm sure there's going to be more things I'd like to ask you. So if you don't mind, I'll call you.

JB:

Sure.

AW:

And then, be thinking about those papers.

JB:

Lord willing, if I'm still around.

AW:

Well, listen. I'm seventy years old. I'm not very far behind you. I make that qualification every day. You know, well maybe, by the end of the week, I'll still be here. You know?

JB:

On March first, my seventy-eighth rolled around.

AW:

Yeah.

JB:

When I turned seventy-six, I looked up the life expectancy of U.S. males and it's seventy-six.

AW:

Yeah. You'd already beat it.

JB:

Yeah. I'm thinking, everything after that, I'm on borrowed time.

CB:

Here's gravy. Everything's good.

AW:

All right. Well, I'm going to put a stop to it and then I want to tell you a story about similar.  
Thank you very much.

*End of Recording*

