

**Oral History Interview of
Michael Bogard**

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson
April 19, 2016**

New Braunfels, Texas

**Part of the:
*Soil Conservation Services***

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Transcript Overview:

This interview features Michael Bogard. Bogard discusses his work with the Soil Conservation Service. To this end, Bogard talks about working with farmers and how the SCS changed over the course of his career.

Length of Interview: 01:13:59

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Keywords

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Andy Wilkinson (AW):

It's mainly your story and—

Michael Bogard (MB):

How far back in my life were you—

AW:

Well we'll start with your date of birth, but let me say before—you don't have to remember it.

[Laughter] Let me say first before we get started. Andy Wilkinson and Mike Bogard. And would you spell "Bogard for me"?

MB:

B-o-g-a-r-d.

AW:

Bogard.

MB:

Yeah.

AW:

And is it "Mike" or "Michael?" What do you prefer?

MB:

Well, Michael is the way I sign it, but my nickname is Mike.

AW:

And this is the nineteenth of April, 2016. We are in New Braunfels, Texas. We're going to be talking—or I'm going to be listening—Mike's going to be talking. What's your date of birth, so a hundred years from now people know which Mike Bogard we're talking about.

MB:

Well February 26, 1941.

AW:

And where?

MB:

In San Saba County, and that's where I stayed until I finished high school.

AW:

And where did you go to high school?

MB:

San Saba.

AW:

In San Saba?

MB:

Sure. The town is—the county seat's San Saba.

AW:

And did you grow up in the country? In town?

MB:

Yeah, I owned a farm out about six miles out west of San Saba.

AW:

Yeah, and what kind of farm?

MB:

Well, my dad had—did some farming. Had some cattle, but he—in, well, probably the late forties—he got—he had laying turkey hens.

AW:

Really?

MB:

Yes, sir. He didn't have a lot of acres, so that was his primary income actually until he got out of the business in the sixties. You know, you didn't have laying turkey hens for eating eggs. They were for hatching.

AW:

I had some friends growing up in Lubbock, the Praters, that had a big turkey operation. I'll bet they probably did some business.

MB:

Well I don't know. He sold those eggs up in Coleman, Texas one time and then down at Temple at one time, I believe.

AW:

And after high school, where did you—?

MB:

Went to Tarleton. Went to Tarleton for two years, and then I went to Tech and worked on the college farm. I met my wife up there. She was two years ahead of me in school. We met on a blind date. I was working out on the college farm at Tech, and a guy had a girlfriend up at the dorm and said she needed a date. "Okay, I'll go with you." [Laughter] When she finished—if she hadn't gone to summer school we wouldn't have met—she finished in August and went over to Crosbyton—and Tarleton—I drove back and forth dating her that fall. We got married at Christmas, and I drove back and forth from Crosbyton to Tech that spring. And then I dropped out of school after that. I wasn't too interested in it. Went back to the farm.

AW:

Now were you studying agriculture?

MB:

Yes, I was majoring in animal husbandry at the time. I stayed on a farm for almost three years, and said, "Hell, I don't know how this is going to work out." So I said I'd go back and get some insurance and get a degree. I decided to go to A&M. It took me two years to finish. I changed my degree that time to Ag education, and I was thinking that I might want to go to work for the extension service or teach Ag or work for the Soil Conservation Service. We'd had some guys come out to the farm and work with us some for soil conservation, and I worked for the what was called the Ag Country Stabilization Service for two summers while I was there on the farm. That's government work, and it looks pretty good. I decided I didn't think I wanted to go the extension route. They had to put in a lot of hours, and after doing my student teaching I didn't think I was cut out to be a teacher. That left the Soil Conservation Service. I interviewed with them, and they hired me, and I felt real blessed that it happened.

AW:

What year was that that you went on with SCS [Soil Conservation Service]?

MB:

I went on in 1967, and they sent me to Vernon for a year as a trainee. That's Wilbarger County. South end of that county is primarily covered by the King Ranch—not the King Ranch—the Waggoner Ranch.

AW:

Yeah, which just sold, didn't it?

MB:

Yes, sir. SCS really wasn't working with them at that time, but during the time I was there they setup a meeting with the—what was that guy's name that's running it—with some of our range people, and the decision was made that we'd start working with them. Soon after that—after I left, after that year—they moved a range conservationist in there to work with them. Then about half of the—about a fourth of the county was wheat, and about a fourth was alfalfa.

AW:

Now was it dry land wheat?

MB:

Yes, sir. The alfalfa was irrigated, was in some sandy soil, but the wheat was dry land. At that time, well parallel terraces were fairly new, and we were working quite a bit with those farmers helping them. Well, first you had to go out there and stake it out, and shoot it out, and design a system, and then lay it out.

AW:

Because that's pretty complicated, isn't it?

MB:

Yes, sir. It was a lot of legwork then, because we were just using a dumpy level and using a four inch by thirteen foot stadia board, and had to pack that thing right. Well first you had to go out there, and you would stake out plaster [inaudible phone rings 00:06:45]. Oh, pardon me.

AW:

That's all right.

MB:

That's Bailee again. [Answers phone]. Hello. Bailey? What do you need? Okay. Later. No problem. [Hangs up Phone] But anyway, we'd go out there with hundred foot tape, and put up a row of plaster laz and then use a right-angle prism, and go a hundred foot beside it and put another one. You had to have rows were you could line up in either direction, so you'd know where you was in the field. We took the elevation shot every hundred foot, and then you came in and you put contour lines on the map. From that, you could design your terrace system. And then you had to go out there and lay it out, and then the contractor would build them. Then you had to go check it, see that it met the specifications, because this building was planned as part of the cost. So there's quite a bit of work to it.

AW:

I was going to say, that isn't something that you just went out and throw some stakes in. [laughs]

MB:

No. Well nowadays they have what they call a "Total Station System," and you just go out there and set that thing up. Then you can just run out there anywhere and take shots, and it'll figure out the distance and elevation. The software will put it all on a map for you, and all you've got to do is design the system. So we've come a ways.

AW:

Well, after you left there—

MB:

I went up the road to Memphis, Texas.

AW:

Yeah.

MB:

Up 287. It was a little different country, of course. Stayed there a year and a half was all.

AW:

Now that—I think of that country as pretty much rangeland, but I know there's some—

MB:

Yes, there's some farm land there. We did quite a bit of work building parallel terraces around Turkey, in the southwestern part of the county.

AW:

Quanah? Not Quanah, but uh—?

MB:

Memphis is the county seat, and Turkey is the only other town that was of any size. Out west of town was Lakeview, and they had a watershed project going on then. At that point they was trying to—the waters running off those hills, mainly up in Donley county, coming down there in that flat country and was washing the heck out of it. A lot of those farmers had gone in there in the years past and put dikes up to block that water off their field.

AW:

But it's put on somebody else's.

MB:

Yeah, and they had many a fight over that. So they were trying to—and I don't know what's happened there—at that point in time they hadn't built anything, they were just trying to get the easements. They did have money appropriated to build a footwork controlled dams. I assume they've got some built since then, but I don't know.

AW:

That little town just south of Turkey right on the river, I know I have some friends from there, and they said it flooded all the time, you know. I mean, normally you wouldn't think anything of it, but anytime there was a rain up west.

MB:

Yeah.

AW:

But I think they had an old cotton gin there, so there must have been cotton that far south.

MB:

Yeah, on down around Paducah, there was a lot of cotton back then. And there's growing cotton near Turkey also. Of course, I left there. I went to Vernon in '67, went to Memphis in '68. In 1970 they sent me to Lamesa.

AW:

[Laughs] Okay.

MB:

So you know where that is.

AW:

I do.

MB:

I stayed there four and a half years. We were building—at the previous two stops we were building graded terraces, and at Lamesa we were building level terraces to you know, you was trying to hold all the water you could. The ground—the soil was—had enough sand in it. It would soak it up. So that was a different—the procedure is pretty much the same. The design is just a little different. Those level terraces, every so often you'd throw up a dike that's about two-thirds as high as the terrace, so when you got all that area flooded, it's still going to cross the terrace, and it'd run on down. Eventually it would go out, you know, when you had a real big rain. But most of the time you didn't even need a waterway.

AW:

Yeah, because it'd just soak it up.

MB:

Most of it soaked up. The farmers really weren't building those. They were supposed to have been building, as far as the government's concerned, for erosion. But they was doing it more for water conservation, quite frankly, which that's not all bad.

AW:

No, I was going to say. That's not bad.

MB:

Of course, that's all cotton. It was then. We worked a little range country down in Borden County, down towards Gail, there a little on the east side of Dawson County, but we weren't part of Borden county, so we worked with some of the ranchers down there. The [inaudible] farmers, and it was primarily, and we were doing a lot of work with irrigation water management with the farmers there, too. They were—it was kind of new installing pipeline. They were going to sprinkler systems.

AW:

Yeah, were they side roll or center pivot?

MB:

Well, they were going to the center pivot. The center pivot was kind of a new thing in the late sixties and early seventies, but of course, it became a big thing pretty quick.

AW:

Oh yeah, yeah. Well, I lived on a farm just north of Slaton when I was a little kid.

MB:

I see.

AW:

We had siphon tubes. [laughter]

MB:

Yeah, that's work.

AW:

[Laughter] Yes it was a lot of work.

MB:

There at Vernon in that alfalfa area, when I got there, well they were using a lot of side rows. And then some are just still just moving to pipe.

AW:

Yeah, we had some of that too.

MB:

You know, twice—

AW:

Gated pipe.

MB:

Every twenty—every twelve hours they moved them, and I noticed that alfalfa waved just like an ocean. So I asked the guy I was with—he's an older employee—I said, "What's the deal on that?" He said, "Well, where it's lowest, where it's watered in the daytime, the humidity is so much lower and you don't get near as much in the ground." At night it was—that was a fire.

AW:

[Laughs] So they get three cuttings off that at nighttime.

MB:

Well it wasn't quite that drastic, but it was very obvious that there was a big difference. I know when we were—when I was there at Lamesa, they did some setting out cans and catching it. It is amazing how much difference night and day was, because of the difference in humidity. And of course you don't have near as much wind.

AW:

Oh yeah, as you well know, in that country the wind is—it'll undo a lot of irrigation.

MB:

Right. The evaporation rate in the hot summertime daylight, you don't get much in the ground.

AW:

That was about the time that people were starting to talk about low-till, no-till, reduced-till. Was that—

MB:

We were pushing it, but—

AW:

Were there any takers?

MB:

Well, it was a hard sell. We were encouraging them to plant a cover crop in their cotton and keep from blowing in the winter. That was before Roundup came on the scene. They was real leery about planting wheat or some kind of small grains in there that had given them trouble in the spring. Of course, later Roundup came out. Well, they could go in there and spray and knock it down. But I don't know how much success they ever had. I left there in '74 to go to Groesbeck over east of Waco, and hadn't that much contact with that area since.

AW:

I just know my grandfather was—it just went against his grain to have a field that wasn't clean.

MB:

Yeah. You know a lot of them were sharecroppers, and their landlords—yeah they thought it had to be clean. That was the battle you was fighting with when you encourage any kind of a cover crop.

AW:

Yeah, so less the farmer, but more the landowner.

MB:

Well, in many cases that's true. Sure was. A lot of the farmers—you know a farmer. When that warm sun starts hitting him in the back in the spring, he wants to get out there on that tractor and plow. They want the biggest—they want something impressive to the big tractor. They want the big center-pivot system. [laughs] You know, it's an image thing.

AW:

Yeah, yeah. You don't want the farm next to you to have a bigger tractor. [laughs] So, in Groesbeck, how long were you, uh—

MB:

Almost thirty years.

AW:

Wow.

MB:

Went there thinking I was going to be there about two, because it was a lower grade. I was in charge of the office. I was the district conservationist, and literally changed their name. But anyway, six months after I got there they added some—they gave another office that was working part of the county, and they turned it all over to Groesbeck office, so I got a promotion in six months. Then later on they started teaming offices together, and they put me as the what they call a team leader at one time. I was in charge of not only Groesbeck, but the Waco and Marlin offices. I stayed there the rest of my career. Until I retired.

AW:

Now that was pretty well mixed country through there, too. You had some range, pasture, and some row crops as well.

MB:

Yes, sir. The southeastern part of it was heavy timber, and wasn't that great of soil. They had a stake in timber there. They went and knocked some of it out and turned it into pasture land. A big factor in that county—I went up there in '74, and I think in '78 Lake Limestone filled up. It's about thirty-five thousand surface acres, and that really changed that part of the work, because people started building lake houses around there. Then as you go to the west, you've got clay plant prairie soils east of those sandy soils back where the timber was. The clay [inaudible] prairie—you've got a real dense clay and about four- to six-inches of a sandy loam on top of it. No more soil—it's pretty drouthy.

AW:

Yeah, and it's really subject to erosion, too, isn't it?

MB:

Yes, sir. Many of the kind of starved out farming, and they just turned it out. They didn't plant any good grasses on it. Boy, it grows mesquite tremendously.

AW:

[laughs] Too bad there's not a market for that.

MB:

Yeah, and so that was a big issue fighting the mesquite on that.

AW:

In doing that brush control—and I asked someone earlier this afternoon—was it all aimed at pasture, or was there some nod or thinking about wildlife habitat in the way that the brush control was?

MB:

Well, earlier in my career there wasn't a lot of—you didn't pay a whole lot of attention to wildlife. That kind of came on later in my career, and of course it's getting bigger all the time. People realizing, "Hey, there's some money there." It's still not a big issue down there like it is in the hill country. In fact, I live now west of Waco at Gatesville. Groesbeck is thirty miles-forty miles east of Waco, and I'm forty miles west now in Gatesville.

AW:

In fact, give me your mailing address, if you would?

MB:

[REDACTED]

AW:

Two words?

MB:

[REDACTED]

I'll do better than that for you.

AW:

You got a card?

MB:

Yes, sir.

AW:

Oh, that'll be great. Thank you. So is that where you moved after you retired?

MB:

Yes, sir. I retired in '03, and my wife was reared in Gatesville and she inherited a little land there. My wife—my mother-in-law was having dementia problems, and needed some attention, so that's where we retired to. But getting back to Limestone County, the western portion of it was black land, and most of that is still farmed. Pretty far—pretty far farmland.

AW:

Yeah, and there was a fair amount of cotton in that, too, wasn't there?

MB:

Yes, of course that's diminished. When I got there there was a still a fair amount—there still wasn't any gins. The gins had all moved out, so they didn't go to adjoining counties. When I first

got there, they were growing more wheat, and then later went to corn. That's the primary crop there now.

AW:

Feed corn?

MB:

Uh yeah. Now back over around where I am now, there's a lot of us going into silage for the dairies in Stephenville there. I don't know that they're doing that—I know that they're raising a lot of—for silage in Hill county, just north of there, but whether they are in Limestone I'm not sure. That started after I left there.

AW:

When you were talking about brush control for mesquite, what techniques were you using?

MB:

Well, some dozing root plowing, but it was real tough with that dense clay down there, root plowing is tough go. And then of course some chemical control. It's all expensive, and if you don't really do it right it's not very effective, so it's a big battle.

AW:

Yeah. But you never did drag-chain or any of that?

MB:

No, that's more of a south Texas thing. I don't know how effective it was, but really out in that country, if you drug a chain all you'd do is just make it mad [laughs] and grow it more. Some of them would go in there and shred it, but that was really a mistake in my opinion, because it would just till her out, you know, suck her out. Oh you really had a mess then. It was almost impossible to control it by aerial spraying it then. You couldn't get enough—once you cut it off, then the top was much less than the root system, you couldn't translocate enough of the chemical in the roots to kill it. So I encourage people to aerial spray it if they possibly could if it wasn't too close to town or something. Even if they didn't get it all, get most of it. I mean even if they wanted to take the timber off, spray it first and try to kill it that way. Then doze your timber out, because it's real difficult just dozing it to get enough of that. You know mesquite has those growth buds that go way down in the ground. In fact, I'd tear mesquite as much as fifteen inches, and you've got to get down below that and get all of that out of there, or it's going to come back on you.

AW:

Yeah, and that's a lot of work for a—

MB:

Yeah, it's—You know it takes a tremendous amount of power, and it's tremendously expensive. That was a unique area, too. That part there in the southeastern part, a lot of Houston people were coming up there and buying that land. I don't know what those real estate people were telling them. [AW laughs] They thought that they could buy that land and they could immediately put a bunch of cattle on there, and make the payments on the place. They'd come in and talk to us. "You've got a problem here. It's going to cost you probably three hundred dollars to get this cleared off and get your grass planted. You don't need any cattle out here for three to ten years until you get your grasses tilled [?]", "Oh we can't do that. We've got to have something to make the payments right now." So they was in a dilemma from the get-go. It was interesting working—a lot of them you know had been in the city all their life, and they didn't know if they was going to grow marshmallows or—[laughter] It was interesting to work with, but you had to be careful with what you told them too, because they'd do it.

AW:

[Laughter] No joking!

MB:

Now you go on the black land—that was just farmers that farmed all their life. That was completely different clientele. We had a guy come in there—let's see, early eighties I guess—named Henry Tippy [?], and he lived in Austin. He was reared in Iowa. No telling how money that guy made. He started buying land up in the northwest part of the county, and I think he bought eighteen hundred acres first. When I left there in '03, he has over thirty thousand acres and still buying. I said, "Mr. Tippy, why did you decide to come here and buy land?" He said, "Well I did an analysis of the state, and I thought for what this land was costing and what it would produce, based on soils and rainfall, I thought it was the best buy in the state." And I got to thinking about, Well that guy is probably right. Because he started out buying that land for probably a little over three hundred dollars an acre.

AW:

Three hundred dollars an acre?

MB:

Yes sir.

AW:

Dry land?

MB:

Yes sir. A lot of us covered up mesquite. First, he'd have us survey, and then go in there and start building fences. We worked with him a lot. He started trying to get the brush off by spraying or dozing or combination. Planted some grasses—a lot of it he utilized the native grasses—and he did a good job of rotating his pastures and letting the grass rest like you should. I got him nominated for a conservation award for what he was doing, too. I think some of the smaller people didn't appreciate that, they thought, Well it's a rich guy, I guess. But he was doing a heck of a lot of conservation, so I thought he deserved the award.

AW:

Yeah, it must of looked real cheap compared to Iowa.

MB:

Well yeah, and he was there in Austin and he had a bunch of TV stations and radio stations, and he was into a lot of things. He bought four hundred acres around Georgetown, and he had three kids and wanted to get them out in the country on the weekend. But he said, "I got to looking at it and said, 'Ain't no way I can pay for land around here and ranch.'" He'd come out, and he said one time about buying that land up there was, "Was this a good investment?" He said, "Well, probably not," but said, "I grew up on"—I think it was forty acres dairy in Iowa—and said, "I always thought, If I ever got a hundred and sixty acres, boy I'd be great." And so, he's a little over that now. World War II got him, and he said he'd never been out of county. They sent him to the south pacific, and then when he got out, he found out the GI bill would pay his way through college, and he we went to Iowa University and got an accounting degree. Now they've got several buildings with his name on them up there. Iowa University has been a real benefactor of his. But he said, "Man you couldn't get a job," and he finally got a job in Chicago, I believe. He said he bought five thousand dollars of General Motors stock the first year out of college. He couldn't have been making a whole lot more than that.

AW:

No.

MB:

He wasn't particularly liking it, and these Matlock brothers up in Pennsylvania were looking someone. They had a big trucking company, and they were in bad shape financially. So they talked to him, and they hired him. He said they told him later, "We said we'd hire the first guy that didn't ask for directions on how to get here." [AW laughs] He got them back on solid footing, and they kind of brought him in as a family member, almost. He became very wealthy. He went to Austin in the early seventies, I think.

AW:

Boy, that's the time to have gone to Austin.

MB:

Yeah. He's got all kinds of investments. He's a real interesting guy to work with.

AW:

I bet he was. So you retired in '05?

MB:

Three.

AW:

O-three. And that's been sometime back.

MB:

Oh sure.

AW:

Are you back doing any farming-ranching yourself?

MB:

Well, my wife inherited some land, and I'd take care of it by fighting the brush. We actually don't run any cattle on it. I'm trying to improve the grass on it. Try to get it more back to what it was at one time. We've got a guy that runs cattle so much a month. Just let him run them in the winter when the grass is not growing, and make him get them off pretty quick. It'll go to our son someday, so I want to try to pass it on to him. It's close to it what it was—it'll never get anywhere close to its original state, but it's closer than it was when we first got there.

AW:

Yeah, no, that's a big job. And the world's changing to, so it's kind of hard to.

MB:

Yeah, well I do most of it by hand so I've more sweat equity in it than actual cash.

AW:

Yeah, well that's a good position to be in though, if you've got the sweat to put in.

MB:

[Laughter] I'm moving a little slower than when we first got there.

AW:

I bet. Well what kind of changes did you see in the SCS and RCS over your career?

MB:

Well, the computer era had come in in the eighties, and it seemed like more and more we were feeding the computers and less and less time getting out there—

AW:

Talking to people?

MB:

—out there on the land with them. At first there was a cost share program—well in west Texas we had the Great Plains Conservation Program with the SCS administering—but over in Limestone County we just had the ACP, Agriculture Conservation Program, which was administered by what was called the FSA. It's called ASCS then, called FSA now. We just did the technical work. They had handled us signing up, and approving it and all that, after we told them to approve it or not to approve it. We worked with the guy then on what we called a Complete Conservation Plan, and now the EQIP program—Environmental Quality Incentives Program. They just do one practice. They sign up and you get flooded with all these people coming in there and signing up, of course they're not all going to get funding, but you've got to go through all those applications. You just really don't have time to get out there and work with them. Newer employees there, I don't think they're getting up. Even the newer ones before I retired were better on the computers, so we had a tendency to turn that part over to them as much as we could. They weren't getting trained much on getting out there and working with the farmer and rancher, which was unfortunate. I would guess it's probably even going more so that way. It changed a lot, and it wasn't all good.

AW:

I've heard from several people at this event last year, just casual comments that struck me that there was something maybe in the mid-eighties—there was sort of a seat change, and people—

MB:

We got our first computers in the mid-eighties, and then we did this study back then too called PSUs—I don't even remember what that stood for—but that took a lot of time, too. In the county I was in they did a more intense study than they did in other counties, and so you just kept getting stuff like that that took more of your time than you'd like for it to take to work with a typical farmer and rancher. When I first started work, we did a lot of cold calling, if they weren't coming in to keep us busy, we'd go knock on doors. "Hey Mr. So-and-So, notice any erosion problems or brush problems? Maybe we could give you some advice that'd help you out?" Some of them would, "Get out of here!" But a lot of them accepted it. The latter part of my career, you

sure didn't have time to do that. They didn't come in, you didn't see them. We were still getting a lot of people walking in down there, because the city people coming in. They would get referred to us. They'd come in more than the old farmers and ranchers.

AW:

Yeah. They didn't have how granddad did it. They didn't have that.

MB:

No, they needed some help. I enjoyed working with them. Sure did as much as working with the traditional farmers and ranchers, really.

AW:

In your description of Mr. Tippy and that experience, that sounds to me like a success story.

MB:

Yeah, he was. You were telling that to conservation [inaudible], now we were going more so down there—and they probably are in West Texas now, I don't know—but a lot of them were going to the planters. You know they were still bedding it up and busting it out entirely. They were down there too when I first got there. They went to the—well, it wasn't necessarily a no till planter—I can't even think of what they called them now. They weren't even bedding it up, and then all that did was cut a little trench and drop the seed in and pack our wheels, pack it behind it. Some of them, not as much as would like to, were just going in and planting the whole stubble—the corn stubble, or maybe following corn with cotton, and wasn't ever plowing it. Of course, you've got the chemicals now for the weed control. I think they ought to be doing more than it should—than they are. When diesel fuel gets real high, that encourages that too.

AW:

[Laughs] Yeah, that's right.

MB:

And too the cost of the machinery, because you don't need near as much power to pull that kind of equipment as you did when you when you was breaking it, or even using a bedder.

AW:

Isn't it true that if you are irrigating it takes less water?

MB:

Oh yeah. Any time you plow it you're drying it out. And every time you plowed, too, you're destroying the soil structure. You're damaging it. The less you can plow it, the fewer times you run over it, the more you're going to help it. It's detrimental to the soil. That again goes against

what a lot farmers have thought over the years. They thought they were helping it by plowing. It's a temporary help, but as soon as that soil gets wet, it all runs back together. When you're breaking it up, that's a very temporary thing. The only way you're really going to break it up and keep it broke up is growing crop. I used to tell on their pastures, they'd want to get out there and renovating—kind of a chiseled deal—I say, “If you spend the money you're spending on that with fertilizer, and grow more grass—” I said, “that'll do you a lot more good than the renovating's going to do.” And every time you disturb the soil too, you encourage weeds to grow. So there's a lot of things bad about plowing. Still a lot of people have it in their mind that that's the way they've done it all their lives, and so they want to continue to plow.

AW:

Well and you've got that tractor. [laughs] You've got to do something with it.

MB:

Yeah, you're right. Yeah.

AW:

Another comment I've heard a time or two was that your generation, when you got into this work, it was as much a calling as it was an occupation. And the people who made that observation to me would say right after that people are getting into it now as a job, and not as a calling.

MB:

Maybe so. I don't know. Of course, a lot of them that are getting into it now don't have a farm and ranching background, too, is a big thing. You're going to learn a lot of working on a farm and ranch that's going to help you that you're not going to learn in college. Of course, you learn more when you get on the job and you have these older employees that teach you. That's where you're going to learn the most. Observing the farmers and ranchers and what they're doing and what's working and what's not working—you learn a lot that way too. There maybe something to what you're saying. I don't know about that. I'm not into psychology.

AW:

Would you do it all over again?

MB:

Oh yeah. I always thought I was real blessed that I was able to get that job. My wife always—she was a school teacher, which I told you I tried teaching—I readily admit it, she had a much tougher job than I did. She said I didn't have a job, I had a position. I really wouldn't argue with it. Most days I didn't feel like I was really working. I was just enjoying what I was doing. You can't beat a deal like that.

AW:

What should I have I asked you about that I haven't?

MB:

I've already told you more than I know. [laughter] I don't think of anything. Enjoyed talking with you.

AW:

I enjoyed getting to hear your story. One of the things besides these oral history interviews like we just did now that we really like to do is collect archival materials—physical materials—to go with it. So if you are looking around and you've got old training materials from your time, or photographs, or just all that—

MB:

I'll sure keep that in mind. My wife's always looking for a place to get rid of that.

AW:

Well, we'll find it a home. A hundred years from now, that's the only way people are going to be able to see that. We'll come down. We'll actually come by and pick it up. You don't have to—

MB:

Well, we'll figure out some way to get it to you. I really appreciate that y'all took all the stuff that the retirees were looking around for years.

AW:

Again we think of this as literally a hundred years from now, how would anybody know about this? Unless they get to hear you talking about it and see all of it.

MB:

I want to visit your facility out there.

AW:

We'd love to have you come up.

MB:

Baily told me about it several times about it. Yeah, I'd really like to see it.

AW:

Call ahead or email ahead, and we'll give you the cook's tour. Take you through and—

MB:

Are y'all trying to get some of that digitized where it'd be available online?

AW:

Um-hm.

MB:

That's got to be a tremendous undertaking.

AW:

Yeah, it is a huge undertaking. It's also more expensive. Everybody thinks, Well you can digitize it, and then it's free. But you know storage space on those computers—that storage space, although it's a lot cheaper now than it used to be—is still pretty expensive. You have to digitize it takes time, and then it sounds like an odd thing, but then you've got to figure out how to make it so people can figure out what you've got and how to see it. So we do that, and a lot of material we digitize for the simple issue of preservation. In other words, audiotape, or video tape, or film, or photographs—particularly color photographs—that fade, we like to digitize all that material so that we at least have a preservation of it at some point in time.

MB:

Are you 100 percent state funded?

AW:

Oh no. I don't think there's a university in Texas that's a hundred percent state funded.

MB:

Well, I know it wasn't for the students, but I didn't know what it might be for you. Were y'all dependent on donations then?

AW:

Donations, and we're part of the library system. So actually a part of the students'—

MB:

Tech Library System?

AW:

Yeah, so a part of the student use fees for the library go to our allocation. Then we go out and find [coughs]—excuse me—we find grant money and foundation money. You know, whatever we can come up with.

MB:

Well how long has this been in existence?

AW:

Well, when Texas Tech was started in 1923, just a couple years later—I think they opened in '25. It was passed '23 and opened in '25. Not long after they opened, Clifford Jones, who was what amounted to the Head of Board of Regents—at the time they called them the Board of Governors or something—and Elizabeth West, the first librarian, heard that the records of the Espuela Land and Cattle Company were about to be thrown in the trash. So they got in a Model-A and went out there and brought those back, and put them in the library. And that was the beginning. We have now today have probably the largest collection of ranching records in anywhere. And we have lots and lots of farming records. Of course, most of our farming records are pertinent to our part of the world, but we also—a project I started a few years ago—we've been building an archive on the American Ag Movement of the seventies and early eighties. Just because you know how interesting all that was, the last real populist movement in the US. So we have that sort of thing. We have all manner of other things. So it's a real interesting operation. The building we're in now is about twenty years old, but one of the great things is that it was built to be an archival building. A lot of archives aren't so fortunate. They get the hand-me-down old library building or the old classroom building. We have a really nice facility. Then in Lubbock—you'd find this interesting if you've not been there yet—out on east Broadway we have the Bayer Museum of Agriculture.

MB:

I haven't been there.

AW:

You would really enjoy it.

MB:

I knew—I forgot about it, but I'd read something about that. My wife gets the—y'all have got the alumni magazine, I think—and I see things like that. I would enjoy seeing that.

AW:

And right across the street is the American Wind Power Museum, and I love going over there.

MB:

We'll I've been—they call it the American Heritage Museum—where they have all the old farm buildings and everything. What's that called?

AW:

The Ranching Heritage Center.

MB:

Yeah, I've seen that. And I've seen another museum there. I don't remember.

AW:

Well, there's the Texas Tech Museum right there next to the Ranching Heritage Center.

MB:

Yeah, I guess that's what I was thinking. But I like museums anyway.

AW:

Well, we've got a pile of them.

MB:

You know I've always been fascinated with that one up in Canyon.

AW:

Yeah, the Panhandle Plains? That's a great museum.

MB:

It sure is. In my opinion, it's the best in Texas.

AW:

It's the best history museum in Texas. Everyone talks about the Bullock. Bullock is a beautiful place, but the Panhandle Plains Museum has the deepest widest collection, you know?

MB:

Yeah, I'm with you on that.

AW:

It's a great place. I love it.

MB:

I heard one guy said—one time about that museum—said, "Well, we got all this stuff sitting over in East Texas where a lot of this stuff came from. They're over there fighting over one single train. We've got all kinds of stuff out here." They are way ahead of the rest of the state on collecting that stuff.

AW:

Well, we were fortunate in that people were starting to live there full time. Lubbock's hundredth anniversary was only in 2009, so you've got to think about—we're starting to build all these facilities, and some of the people who were out there are still there. [Laughs] They're elderly, but you know. So you're really in close touch with sort of the beginnings of people living there full time.

MB:

Ain't been too many years ago that the Indians still controlled in that area.

AW:

Oh yeah.

MB:

1970s.

AW:

We're really closer I think in time than the rest of the state just because of how new it is. I think that's helped us. And then Tech has grown. We've been really fortunate with our—the last few years with our administration we've got—well, Senator Duncan, Robert Duncan, who grew up in Vernon. His dad—

MB:

He was my first boss.

AW:

Oh was he?

MB:

Yeah, Frank Duncan.

AW:

Well, I'll see the chancellor in the next week or so, and I'll tell him. That made a big impression on Robert. About growing up with his father doing that.

MB:

Frank's brother-in-law was a big Tech man. I can't think of his name. It'd been Robert's uncle—what was his name?—anyway I think he was regent at one time, maybe.

AW:

That could be. I'm drawing a blank.

MB:

I can't remember what his name was. He was a political. Into politics. I believe he was on the board there at one time, I can't really remember. Do you know Carey Hobbs?

AW:

Tell me what Carey Hobbs?

MB:

Well he's in Waco. He's got Hobbs Bonded Fiber. But he was on the board. He's not a Tech graduate—he never did finish—but he went out there. His brother I think finished, Terry, but Carey never did.

AW:

Hobbs?

MB:

Yeah. H-o-b-b-s.

AW:

Does he have a kin named Larry Hobbs?

MB:

A son.

AW:

Well, Larry's on the board of the Ranching Heritage Center.

MB:

He is?

AW:

Yeah. I know Larry well.

MB:

He's our son's—he and Larry are about the same age.

AW:

That's why I know Carey's name; it's was from Larry. In fact, they tried to hire Larry to be the director after Jim Pfluger retired.

MB:

Oh really?

AW:

Larry wanted to do it, but I don't think Cary wanted him to.

MB:

Well Cary sold the business, and I thought Larry was going to run it for a while for the company that bought it last I heard.

AW:

Yeah I think that's what ruined the deal for bringing him out to the Ranching Heritage Center. Larry is a good guy. I've just met his dad—I don't really know him—but Larry is a good guy.

MB:

They were in Groesbeck until they decided to get bigger. Well, they went to Mexia for a while, and then over to Waco. We still see them a lot. We run into them in Waco quite a bit. He was a big Tech supporter. I know that.

AW:

Yeah, and Larry, well he's just—

MB:

I don't know Larry. I don't know where he went to school, or if he did or not. I can't remember.

AW:

You know, I should know, but I can't call it to mind at the moment.

MB:

I don't remember. Kind of lost track of those kids. I think there was about four of them. His mother—Carey's wife passed away three or four years ago.

AW:

Yeah, I remember. I remember something about that.

MB:

Brenda. Carey flew through Phil Gramm—he had a plane and he flew Phil Gramm around many a mile getting him elected and keeping him elected while he was a senator, U.S. senator.

AW:

We'd sure like to get you up, and take you around and show you the archive.

MB:

Well, I can't get my wife to travel much anymore. She's having some health issues, so I'm not sure I'll make it, but I'd love to. Of course, we've still got friends out there. A good friend of ours, Becky Brown, I doubt you'd—she worked in the Tech—well, she mainly handled basketball tickets.

AW:

Really?

MB:

For years. She and her first husband got divorced several years ago, and she was single for twenty years. Finally remarried a guy named Mickey Hammons. He farms up around Floydada, and they live there in Lubbock. I guess both her kids went there. Our son graduated there, Cory. He's now farming with Mickey up there at Floydada. I'd like to get up there and see those kind of people.

AW:

In Floydada they've got a whole new crop out there now—wind turbines in there.

MB:

Oh I didn't know they had them there.

AW:

They're going up all north and east of Lubbock, Ralls and Lorenzo.

MB:

Oh didn't know that.

AW:

They're building—

MB:

Course I knew around Snyder and in that area.

AW:

They're a pretty good bunch of them going up around Floydada too.

MB:

Okay.

AW:

That's been interesting, because most of the growth of turbines in Texas has been in ranch land. So there on the plains in Parmer County, they have a big project going in, and it's all farmers. In south Lubbock County, near Wilson there's another project that still hasn't got off the ground yet, but it's all farmers. Of course, it's a lot more work. If you've got a ranch, you've got a lot of square miles. So the wind turbine people only have usually one person to deal with. When you've got farms, you're going to have a lot of different land holders.

MB:

Well, I'd have thought that land would cost too much to do that.

AW:

The thing is you can still farm around them once they get them up.

MB:

That takes out some of it though, doesn't it?

AW:

Oh it does, but it's a pretty small footprint in comparison, and then it pays monthly.

MB:

Well, I can understand why the farmer would want it. I would have thought the wind turbine people like you said go to rangeland.

AW:

Well, they do. What they want to do is deal with the fewest number of people they can. And rangeland is—I think most turbine power companies that are generating the power pay based on what the thing generates, not on what the land under it is worth.

MB:

That makes sense, but I'd think it'd be a lot more attractive to a rancher than it would a farmer, is what I'm thinking.

AW:

Although I was surprised. I went to a conference on wind energy and Floydada a couple of years ago. Here was the curious thing to me: I'd been talking to some ranchers who when they got wind they were getting rid of cows. One rancher told me, he said, "Why do I want to fool with something that is likely to loss me money and I've got to hire somebody to do it. They mark this up and down, and I've got these things—and the check comes in every month." Now those farmers I was talking with in Floyd county, I had more than one say, "When we get these turbines in, I'll never row crop again. I'm going to throw up some hotwire and put some cows on it." [Laughs] Here were the cows moving off one place and—

MB:

Well if they're trying to use center pivots, that wouldn't work would it?

AW:

No, when they're going into an area with center pivots, they just don't do it. Now Parmer County, they had a lot of center pivots. But Parmer County may be one of the areas closest to running out of ground water. So everybody that's up there that's been pumping, you know.

MB:

Now you're talking about close to Amarillo, aren't you?

AW:

No, Bovina. Out far west, right off of—

MB:

Okay. I've looked at the Ogallala, and there's lots of water up in the north part of the Panhandle, which it's so deep where the top of the water is, the pumping cost there, but there's lots of—Ogallala is thick up there, but it's just deep down to get to it.

AW:

Then where it's easy to get to it in the southern end, with us and especially over in Parmer County because they did center pivots—probably they were on the forefront of that and just everything out there was center pivots. And I mean they—

MB:

Pumped it all out.

AW:

—they've been pumping it all out, and they all know it. To them the prospect of going back to—and this, plus it's grains, and there's some cotton but not that much—so the prospect of doing

dry land, you know wheat, is not so scary as dry land cotton. Now when I was a kid growing up there were people with dry land cotton. If you had a good market for the cotton there in the southern plains, if you got one good year out five, you were okay. Cost even for dry land operation with cotton.

MB:

One out of five wasn't worth a dang. That's where you were reared?

AW:

Yeah, we lived on a little farm out by Slaton when I was just a kid.

MB:

You went to Tech then?

AW:

I went to Tech.

MB:

What was your degree?

AW:

My degree was in sociology, because when I was going to Tech, at night I worked on the police department. So I was in police work for twelve years.

MB:

And what'd you do after that?

AW:

I was in business for about ten, and finally quit and did what I wanted to do my whole life, which was I write plays and songs and books. The reason I'm here with Texas Tech is that they wanted me to come and build our collection of archival materials in the arts, but also I have a real interest in agriculture. We lived on a farm, and then a distant uncle of mine was a fellow named Charlie Goodnight.

MB:

Oh yeah.

AW:

Who was a rancher and trail man.

MB:

He's a distant uncle?

AW:

Five generations back. I grew up listening to my grandmother and great-grandmother talk about him. When I started doing plays and such I wrote one for a friend of mine—an actor named Barry Corbin—to portray Charlie Goodnight. It's one of the reasons I have such an interest in these archives. When I'm doing that research on Charlie Goodnight, it's real easy to find out what the big headline stories are. But the little details, they're not around. There's no recording of Goodnight talking. They weren't doing that yet. For someone doing research on soil conservation fifty, a hundred years from now, they can hear you actually talk about it.

MB:

That's scary. [Laughter] Have you had anything to do with the play "Texas" there in Palo Duro Canyon?

AW:

No, I've been to see it. One summer I had one of my plays we did on—"Dark Nights". A play that I wrote with Red Steagall we've done at that theatre a couple of times.

MB:

I've probably been to that half a dozen times. Loved it every time.

AW:

I don't even watch the play much. I just go hang out in the canyon and watch the fireworks and the stars. [Laughs]

MB:

I love the story. It's a tremendous story. That's quite a heritage, if you're related to Charlie Goodnight, I'd think.

AW:

As a little kid, I think I didn't pay as much attention to it as I should have. As I said, my grandmother and my great-grandmother—when they were little girls—they spent their summers at his—not the JA Ranch, he was already off that—at the Goodnight Ranch. I'd hear talk about that.

MB:

He gets a lot of credit for preserving the longhorns, doesn't he? Or buffalo? Buffalo.

AW:

Buffalo. And actually you know who got him started on that was his wife.

MB:

Really?

AW:

Yeah, but he really took after it, and was interested. In fact, between the two of them, the southern herd wouldn't exist—genetics of it—without the Goodnights.

MB:

That must have been a terrible sight back in the days of the buffalo hunters, and they just slaughtered those things by the thousands.

AW:

His wife Mary Ann Goodnight said—they were living in the Palo Duro Canyon at the time—down toward the mouth of the canyon was where the buffalo hunters were working. She had written that she couldn't sleep at night for the sound of the—

MB:

Guns?

AW:

—rifles, yeah.

MB:

You ever read any of Elmer Kelton's books?

AW:

Yeah, he's a friend of mine, or was.

MB:

I've read all of his books. Twice, as a matter of fact. [laughs]

AW:

Yeah, he's terrific. Another friend of mine named Lonnie Mitchell, a cowboy poet, and I for a couple of years had the rights to *The Time it Never Rained*, and we wrote a script. Never did get any love getting it filmed.

MB:

I guess *The Good Old Boys*, was that the one that had the movie made?

AW:

Um-hm.

MB:

Is that the only movie he ever had made of a book?

AW:

Yes. I think. Because Tommy Lee Jones made that. But *The Wolf and the Buffalo* and *The Day the Cowboys Quit*—I know Red Steagall bought the rights to *The Day the Cowboys Quit*, and he's tried many times to get that made and nothing has happened so far. I'd sure like to see *The Time it Never Rained* get made. Just a bit of trivia—and I think of this because we were driving down today and I was telling Monte, my partner—we came through Paint Rock. After I'd written the script I went down and visited with Elmer. I wanted him to look at the script and make sure it got his "okay" on it. I asked him, because at that time we had high hopes that we were going to get a movie made, and so I said I was thinking of Eldorado or someplace out south and west of San Angelo. I said, "Is that where you had in mind for that town?" and he said, "No. Paint Rock."

MB:

Really?

AW:

When you drive through Paint Rock you'll see—

MB:

The Time it Never Rained. You know, that's interesting because I had an uncle that was running a ranch out west of Eden, which is the same county, and back in the fifties. He told one story about the Ford dealer in town went on the ranch and one day came out there and he said, "Albert. What are those sheep eating out there?" "Well I don't know." He said, "Well I think I'll walk out there and see." He walked out there and came back and he said, "What are they eating?" and he said, "I don't know. It was all gone when I got out there." [laughter] It is that bad, too. Of course, I was a kid then. I was born in '41, as I told you. I was old enough that I can sort of remember what it looked like.

AW:

I was born in '48, but we were living on that farm out north of Slaton. My grandmother, who was the one that was Goodnight's niece, she'd grown up in Texoma up in the Panhandle. She was

right in the thick of that during the Dust Bowl days. We had enough dust in the fifties in Lubbock County that you'd see those big storms coming in. We certainly got our taste of it.

MB:

What I was getting at reading *The Time it Never Rained*—well that Eden area. Of course that's interesting you said Paint Rock. That's right where it is. Interesting.

AW:

So if you remember the book if you're driving through there, you'll see the wool warehouse and the county courthouse and that old saddle shop and the bank building, and it's just exactly like how Elmer described it. After he said that to me I went, "Of course!" I had it in my head that it was west of San Angelo.

MB:

I'd always wondered. He said that numerous times people said, "You wrote that about my daddy, didn't you?" [Laughter] But he said he didn't have a particular guy in mind.

AW:

He did tell me more than once that it was the favorite of his books—to him.

MB:

It's his most famous one for nearly everybody, wasn't it?

AW:

Yeah, I think so. I think so. Although gosh he's written so many books—such a good writer. He was a great guy too.

MB:

I'm sure you've read his autobiography.

AW:

Sandhills Boy?

MB:

Yeah.

AW:

Yeah, I love that. That may be my favorite.

MB:

It's close to mine.

AW:

I really like it. Especially having the chance—I didn't know him well, but I knew him well enough that we could sit and visit. That's exactly the way he talks is in that book. There's no trying to be another character. Talking about how tough it was, and he was such a rotten cowboy as a kid, because his glasses you know and all that sort of thing. So I think about that. I think, I'm really glad that he was rotten in the saddle.

MB:

He blessed us.

AW:

Yeah, he'd never been a writer, I don't think.

MB:

Well, I'm always thinking about reading that book and marrying that gal from Austria, and moving her to that ranch. Dear Christ. [Laughter] Oh man, that had to be a shocker. With the Germans taking them over in Austria and they were in bad shape, I know. So I guess nearly anything would look better to her at that time. Otherwise, she wouldn't have stayed out there.

AW:

No. I knew her, but she didn't talk all that much around me, so I never did get to—

MB:

He came to Gatesville, and made a talk and autographed his books. I can't remember—I think the museum got him down there. It was two or three years before his death. I went that. Really blessed to get to actually hear him in person. I'd have love to have gotten to visit with him some. I asked him a few questions that night in front of the whole group. I'm kind of bad about asking questions.

AW:

That's good. [Laughter] Elmer—you'd have to ask him a question. He probably wouldn't have volunteered anything.

MB:

He wasn't boisterous at all.

AW:

No.

MB:

He got amused because the local motel put some kind of sign up down there about him coming in. He thought that was pretty big-time. Gatesville, Texas. [Laughter]

AW:

Yeah, great guy.

MB:

Yeah, he wasn't too full of himself.

AW:

No, unh-uh, and hard worker. He wrote and he wrote and he wrote. He turned out—I couldn't even tell you the number of books. I used to know.

MB:

Well, I've read I think close to fifty. Our library—I didn't buy any of them—the local library has several, but what they didn't have they can get on interlibrary loan. So that's the way I got—I've gone through them twice now. Back on another author now. I don't watch TV, I read. My wife and I both, we don't. We'll watch a little weather/news, and there's a few things we'll record, like *Antiques Roadshow*.

AW:

Yeah, we watch that. [Laughs]

MB:

We watch those during our meals. We're not too carried away with television.

AW:

Yeah, me either.

MB:

Not much on there.

AW:

And in election year I'm not too keen on the news either. [Laughter] Now I like to read, and I like that. I've got another friend who's still alive, Max Evans. He grew up in Andrews and

Ropes, Texas, but then has lived most of his life up until now in New Mexico. But he wrote *The Rounders* and *The Hi Lo Country*.

MB:

Max Evans?

AW:

Yeah, and I think, boy he is the real deal when it comes to writing cow punch. He's not a farmer. Never. But I like his work an awful lot. He and Elmer were very close friends.

MB:

Oh?

AW:

Yeah, so you might—

MB:

I'll check him out.

AW:

Hi Lo Country would be the one I'd start with.

MB:

Okay. *Hi Lo Country*.

AW:

Then he's had some short stories, and they're very interesting. He's not at all like—he's not the same kind of writer as Elmer. A little edgier. He was in the second World War, and was injured. He was a painter for many years, and then went out to Hollywood and wrote screen scripts.

MB:

You talking about an artist or a house painter?

AW:

No, he probably would have house painted, but he was an artist and lived in Taos. In fact, he's turning ninety-two in August. He's got a new book coming out. It's called *The King of Taos*, which I can't wait to read. I'm pretty impressed that he's still doing his work.

MB:

At ninety-two. Well I'm sorry we lost Elmer. I can't remember what the last book he—but I've read it—had published. I don't know if he—I thought he might have some stuff hanging around there his wife might get published after his death, but I haven't heard of anything.

AW:

I'd be surprised, because he was sick there toward the end for a couple years.

MB:

Oh I didn't know that.

AW:

Yeah, he had heart issues. But Elmer—he was also such a disciplined writer—I'd be surprised if he had things that were—

MB:

Unpublished?

AW:

Yeah.

MB:

Well, he had a terrible time getting his first book published, he says in that autobiography. I think they bounced it back several times. But I think that's kind of typical of writers, what I hear of it. Of course, he wrote short stories for years before he—

AW:

And then he was writing for the *Livestock Weekly*. So he was writing all the time.

MB:

I asked him when he came there and talked, I said, "How'd you learn all this stuff? All this history—primarily Texas—that you put in your books?" He said, "Well I read everything I could get a hold of all my life." I thought that's the way you've got to learn. Or talk to people.

AW:

He had a great teacher in Crane, Texas, too, a fellow named Paul Patterson.

MB:

Okay, I think he mentioned him.

AW:

I got to know Paul, too, before he passed away. He was quite a character.

MB:

He was his inspiration in his younger years.

AW:

Yeah, well he took an interest in Elmer and saw that he had talent. Paul was a writer his whole life as well. I think it was a great opportunity for Elmer too, as he says in *Sandhills Boy*.

MB:

Well, in most small towns you wouldn't have a person like that who would have that kind of interest and knowledge to direct someone like him. I don't think we had anybody like that in San Saba when I was growing up. [Laughter] Of course, they wouldn't have seen any talent, so there could have been and I didn't know about.

AW:

I doubt that. He had a great—he was really fortunate.

MB:

I thought it was interesting of him pointing out that he was very apprehensive about talking to his dad about going to college and majoring in journalism. His dad was wise enough to let him do it.

AW:

His dad, Buck Kelton, is still a legend in that part of the country as being tough.

MB:

Is that right?

AW:

Yeah.

MB:

Well, what little I knew about him was what Elmer put in his—

AW:

I never met him. I heard all that—well, I not only heard it from Elmer, but other people would talk too.

MB:

Did he have two brothers, or three brothers?

AW:

I think two. Yeah, I think two.

MB:

I think both were cowboys likely. Elmer pointed out he was a poor excuse for a cowboy.

AW:

Well, I'm glad.

MB:

Well, we're all different, but you know in many cases parents—especially back in the old days—you just had to do what your parents did or you didn't have much choice. He got the opportunity and took advantage of it.

AW:

And we're the better for it.

MB:

Right.

AW:

Well, Mike, thank you very much.

MB:

You bet. I've enjoyed—hope I haven't bit your ear too much.

AW:

No, no, no. It's been great. I'm going to stop this, but I do need to get you to sign a release to let us let people listen to it.

MB:

Okay.

AW:

I'll say it again once more. Thank you.

[End of Recording]