

**Oral History Interview of  
Dennis Barnard**

**Interviewed by: Daniel Sanchez  
July 18, 2017  
Idalou, Texas**

**Part of the:  
*Sports Interviews***

© Southwest Collection/  
Special Collections Library



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

**Southwest Collection/  
Special Collections Library**

15th and Detroit | 806.742.3749 | <http://swco.ttu.edu>

## Copyright and Usage Information:

An oral history release form was signed by Dennis Barnard on July 18, 2017. This transfers all rights of this interview to the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University.

This oral history transcript is protected by U.S. copyright law. By viewing this document, the researcher agrees to abide by the fair use standards of U.S. Copyright Law (1976) and its amendments. This interview may be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes only. Any reproduction or transmission of this protected item beyond fair use requires the written and explicit permission of the Southwest Collection. Please contact Southwest Collection Reference staff for further information.

### Preferred Citation for this Document:

Barnard, Dennis Oral History Interview, July 17, 2017. Interview by Daniel Sanchez, Online Transcription, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library. URL of PDF, date accessed.

*The Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library houses over 6,300 oral history interviews dating back to the late 1940s. The historians who conduct these interviews seek to uncover the personal narratives of individuals living on the South Plains and beyond. These interviews should be considered a primary source document that does not implicate the final verified narrative of any event. These are recollections dependent upon an individual's memory and experiences. The views expressed in these interviews are those only of the people speaking and do not reflect the views of the Southwest Collection or Texas Tech University.*

*The transcribers and editors of this document strove to create an accurate and faithful transcription of this oral history interview. However, this document may still contain mistakes. Spellings of proper nouns and places were researched thoroughly, but readers may still find inaccuracies, inaudible passages, homophones, and possible malapropisms. Any words followed by "[?]" notates our staff's best faith efforts. We encourage researchers to compare the transcript to the original recording if there are any questions. Please contact the SWC/SCL Reference department for access information. Any corrections or further clarifications may be sent to the A/V Unit Manager.*

## Technical Processing Information:

The Audio/Visual Department of the Southwest Collection is the curator of this ever-growing oral history collection and is in the process of digitizing all interviews. While all of our interviews will have an abbreviated abstract available online, we are continually transcribing and adding information for each interview. Audio recordings of these interviews can be listened to in the Reading Room of the Southwest Collection. Please contact our Reference Staff for policies and procedures. Family members may request digitized copies directly from Reference Staff.

Consult the Southwest Collection website for more information.

<http://swco.ttu.edu/Reference/policies.php>

### Recording Notes:

*Original Format:* Born Digital Audio

*Digitization Details:* N/A

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

*Further Access Restrictions:* N/A

*Related Interviews:*

### Transcription Notes:

*Interviewer:* Daniel Sanchez

*Audio Editor:* N/A

*Transcription:* Ian Fehl

*Editor(s):* Kayci Rush

## Interview Series Background:

The Sports History interviews encompass interviews conducted by members of the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library staff. They hope to document the evolution of sports and the role of sports in the social fabric of this region.

## Transcript Overview:

This interview features Dennis Barnard as he discusses drag racing in Lubbock and the West Texas area. Barnard describes how he got interested in racing, how he initially came to Lubbock, and the Lubbock Dragway.

**Length of Interview:** 01:13:49

Subject	Transcript Page	Time Stamp
Coming to Lubbock	06	00:01:54
The beginning of the Lubbock Dragway	09	00:08:26
How Barnard acquired the Lubbock Dragway	15	00:21:01
When he decided to reopen the Dragway	19	00:29:42
How drag racing compares to TV shows	23	00:37:23
People that impacted him along the way	27	00:46:07
The populations of people that go to the raceway	30	00:56:11
Improvements he's hoping to make	34	01:05:59

### Keywords

Racing, Lubbock, Texas

**Daniel Sanchez (DS):**

My name is Daniel Sanchez. Today's date is July 18, 2017. I'm in Idalou, Texas at Lubbock Dragway with Dennis Barnard. Dennis, thank you so much for agreeing to do this.

**Dennis Barnard (DB):**

Sure.

DS:

Could you please state your complete legal name?

DB:

Dennis Barnard. Live in Lubbock, Texas.

DS:

When and where were you born?

DB:

I was born in White Plains, New York, 1950, and moved to Massachusetts, and from Cape Cod I moved to here, to Lubbock, Texas.

DS:

Okay. Tell us a little bit about your family background, who were your parents, and what did they do for a living?

DB:

My father worked for New York Central Railroad. My mother was just a housewife. Anyway, my father did that until about 1966 then we moved to Massachusetts, lived up there, and then he was an outboard mechanic, and just an all-around mechanic type deal. He retired from that after forty-something years.

DS:

After forty-something years. And where did you grow up?

DB:

I grew up in New York, Hearthstone, New York, and also in Cape Cod.

DS:

What school system did you go through?

DB:

I went through Nauset Regional, which was actually Nauset High School back in the sixties and then—let's see, I went to Barnstable vocational school and graduated in '68.

DS:

Were you interested in racing back then, or what sparked your interest?

DB:

Yeah but I couldn't afford it. Well everybody-- all the kids my ages, we got *Hot Wire* magazines and the first we car had, took the air cleaner off—well, we didn't have the dirt there that we do here—you take the air cleaner off and listen to the engine [imitates engine sound] and you think that's a big deal as far as, like it'd run fast but you're not—all flathead Fords and stuff like that.

DS:

How'd you wind up in Lubbock?

DB:

Air Force. Got here in '69, and left in '73. I got in with a bunch of racers here, local racers, back in—I worked at a gas station at 34<sup>th</sup> and Quaker. Anyways, got—and that I met a whole bunch of different people. Being in the Air Force, I worked part-time during the day and stuff like that. Got to get involved in the racing and drag racing. There wasn't a drag strip here when I first got here. We'd just have to go to Amarillo, Hobbs, or someplace else to go racing.

DS:

Who were some of those guys you got involved with?

DB:

Les McDowall, John McDowall—he had McDowall's racing automatic—Jackie Mize, Rodney Edmonds, Jack Robnett, Cecil Bean, and Cecil—I can't think of the other Cecil. But anyways, it was just a bunch of the guys. We all hung around together. Wilson Applenath [?] [00:02:50], Malcolm Garrett, he was another one, had Garrett Realtors. They were all big into it, a little bit faster than I was.

DS:

What were you driving at the time?

DB:

Mustang.



DS:

Mustang. What year?

DB:

Sixty-nine. I had that and I had a '67 GTA before that, Mustang GTA. I got the '69 and, like an idiot, I took it off the street and went racing all the time or what I could afford to do. It wasn't probably the right thing to do but I did it anyways.

DS:

How successful were you?

DS:

Not very. I was still—you're not born into this, you have to learn how to do all of this stuff. I mean, it's a lot to learn at one time so you don't—you just—I never had anybody to ever show me until I moved here, then I had people show me. Even then, they didn't really show you what to do, you just had to watch, and then go out and do what you thought was right. If you did it wrong, they didn't explain it to you, they just told you that you did it wrong.

DS:

You mentioned the early mods that you were doing in New York, taking off the air filter. What were some early mods you did here?

DB:

Putting on headers on one, that was big deal and, then if you got somebody else's used slicks, or cheater slicks or whatever. You could only afford fifty dollars, and stuff like that was a lot of money. And that kind of stuff, it just—back when I lived in Massachusetts when I had a car and stuff, I couldn't afford the headers, the hot rod stuff and everything else you might do to the exhaust or something. You really couldn't afford to do that kind of stuff. As a kid couldn't, but then when I got in the Air Force I had a steady job, well I worked two jobs, so honestly I could afford but I did it.

DS:

And you went to your work and had a gas station. What was the name of it?

DB:

Dipples Texaco, 34<sup>th</sup> and Quaker.

DS:

Who operated that?

DB:

Ray Dipple, Ramon—Norman Dipple. I think their name was Norman Dipple.

DS:

Were the Dipple's involved in racing back then?

DB:

No, they had—there was a guy named Jack—his name was—Pat Robertson who had a Mopar there parked out in front of the building. He was trying to sell and that's—I got to meet him and became very good friends with him. We worked on his Mopar,s and he helped me with my Mustang and stuff like that, on some of the mods, and stuff like that, because where I lived in Carlisle, I didn't have a garage, or a lift, didn't have a jack for that fact to work on stuff. You could change a tire but that was about it.

DS:

That was a rough start, wasn't it?

DB:

Well, it really was, but we did it. A lot of time.

DS:

And tell us about the progression, when did you notice that it became more of a race-friendly?

DB:

In the seventies, '77, something like that. It became more user-friendly you might say. We went from class racing—and don't get me wrong, the class racing was actually pretty good, but it wasn't like it is today. Even class racing is handicapped racing. Well, that's what bracket racing, or ET racing, was called. We had it back a long time ago but it wasn't as popular, because you either went class racing or you thought of as an ET racer, you weren't thought of very good. You could run a pure start because there was plenty of Mopars, Camaros, Mustangs that were street driven every day that qualified for pure-stock, so you could have open headers. That's about all you could have. So that was kind of fun, you could—like today, you got a car that runs very fast off the dealership floor. Well, if we ran 1401, you thought that was pretty quick at a hundred miles an hour back then, running pure stock. I mean, everybody ran about the same except for some of the Mopars, they were pretty stout cars. It was fun. I mean, you could go—we had to drive a hundred and thirty miles to Amarillo to go race. You just pray to God you don't break an axle or something like that, because you got to have somebody to tow you back home. You didn't have any tow trucks like they do today.



DS:

What was their racetrack like?

DB:

Back then it was really, really nice. I always called that home track before this one here became popular or put in, because they always treated you really nice. It was fun. That's what you always want drag racing to be, I think. Be a family sport, that's what we practice here is family atmosphere, and try to keep the—just keep everything under control so you can bring your family out and have a good time. It's proven to work so we've increased the people here quite a bit.

DS:

Who was all the people up there in Amarillo that you got to meet?

DB:

Well, Herbie Edwards—I mean, the Walkers, Dale Han, numerous racers—Gibson. There's so many—Wendell Fowler was—not Wendell Fowler. There is a Wendell Fowler too, he was a racer, but Lindell Warren was what they used to call 'Coke Machine', he worked for Coca-Cola. He was a big Mopar—he ran a Pontiac that was very stout and stuff like that. He ran in the classes, and he ran around with a lot of people. You meet all these people back then, and it was just—everybody together kind of pulled together. If you needed something, they'd help you if they could, and stuff like that. It's still that way today. It's even more so probably now today, more friends.

DS:

You mentioned the Lubbock drag scene and the auspicious beginnings, when did the Lubbock Dragway begin?

DB:

In 1972. I believe it was March. There was a sandstorm, the first one, one of the Lubbock sandstorms. I didn't go to that one, my car wasn't ready. I made the second one. The car was ready but—the track was done but the pits weren't done yet, stuff like that, so there was still a lot more stuff they lacked. But yeah, it was coming along. That was a new thing in Lubbock because what I understand—and I wasn't here—but they had a deal out where Ten-Inch—they called it 'Ten-Inch Park' out by TI. There was a place out there where there was a road out there that they raced. They called it 'Ten-Inch Park' out where the baseball fields or softball fields are now, out in that area. There was a place out there, and that's where everybody went. We used to—we didn't—but the other guys use to go to Abernathy Airport. After the war, you could go to airports and go race. There wasn't an organized deal like it is now.

DS:

In fact, I ran across something like that the other day and I was going like, "Oh okay, that makes perfect sense because those strips were available."

DB:

Yeah, after World War II they were all over the place, abandoned. Like the city of Abernathy got theirs from the government and stuff like that. Lubbock had their airfield and stuff but they wanted to use—put their airport in so they did. That was—the Army Air Field was there. Racing didn't take off there but it just—but we needed something in Lubbock. John Offield, Dick Pollard, and there's a few other people got together and they put this in in 1972.

DS:

Offield, he's the one—the auctioneer, right?

DB:

No, that was his son Jack. John was the older man. He had a freight company and stuff like that in Amarillo but he lived here Lubbock. Very nice man. His son was the auctioneer, and Janny Janes, his daughter, had A1 trophies, and that out on 1585 and I-27, or Tahoka highway.

DS:

Did they ever talk about why they put it together?

DB:

Well, yeah. J.T. Alley was police chief back then. They all kind of got together because Lubbock—the muscle car era, which I grew up in, was big. I mean, everybody's doing it on the streets. The only difference between then and now is kids have more money now to get faster cars. When we had off-the-show-room-floor cars, you pull up to a light—it might be a GTX or something—that race is on. It was that wild. It happened more in the night time when there wasn't as much traffic because there wasn't as many people in Lubbock as there is today—go to the Hi-D-Ho's. I mean, there it was nothing to find hot rods all over the place. When I first got here there was—I mean, they were all over at nighttime. It's just like little animals coming out everywhere. And they saw a need for it, so they got together after the tornado in '72 they put it together.

DS:

You mentioned you came to the second race. Did you become a regular out here?

DB:

As much as I could, then when I got out of the service I went back home. I went back to Massachusetts for a couple of years, then I came back and I couldn't afford to race, so I worked

here at the dragstrip. Les McDowall was the tech director. Ben Escalan was the starter. Ben and I became very good friends, just like that. I couldn't afford to race so I worked. When I had a few extra dollars, we took my '69 Mustang, which I've still got, and we put a set of tires on it, we go tow it to Amarillo, and go race or we'd come out here and race. It was hard to do it at your own track or where you work. We'd come out and just play around, and just have a good time.

DS:

You mentioned you came back and started working. How had the dragway improved from day one to when you started working?

DB:

A lot of new updates like concrete starting lines, things like that came into effect, whereas before, was everything was all asphalt. One thing about this track that was—told what was the way to go, you might say, was not the way to go. They put in a sand-asphalt mix and it'd deteriorate very quickly. Nothing there to bind it all together. What they ended up doing is they had to scrape some of this off, and have it re-done again because it wasn't working. Cars couldn't grip like they should and stuff like that. Then they come out with the concrete starting line in '77.

DS:

In fact, I think Herb mentioned that—like, you would come off the raceway and then you had a sand pit to slow down in?

DB:

Well, not at this particular track because we had twenty-six hundred feet shutdown. This one here was the longest shutdown area in Texas, at least North Texas anyways, because every track that I've been to hasn't been as long. This was twenty-six hundred feet shutdown. A quarter mile was thirteen-hundred and twenty feet, so you got twice as much shutdown as you did. Of course, cars ran pretty quick.

DS:

Did you ever have any major races out here?

DB:

Yeah. Of course, the Offield's had funny cars and stuff like that come out, wheelstanders, and things like that, and I did that too. I used to have Double B's come out, alcohol, funny cars. Couldn't afford the Double A's and stuff like that. The Double B funny cars, and then we'd have the wheelstanders, we'd have Jet cars which you get on YouTube, we still have which is really neat. Just put in 'Idalou Motorsports' because I changed the name once because of the City of Lubbock Chamber of Commerce told me they didn't—at that particular time, Eddie was not the

president. I approached the other ones because it was Lubbock Dragway and I wanted it to be chamber—join the chamber. Well, when I met with them they just told me, they said they weren't interested in having me as a member. I thought that was kind of strange so I went to Idalou. Idalou was just starting theirs up and they said, "Heck yeah we'll take you." I've helped the economy of Idalou a lot. Then it came time for history—just like we're discussing now the time—I didn't want to lose the name 'Lubbock Dragway' so I went back to the original Lubbock Dragway and actually filed it as a historic site. We're supposed to be. Anyways, I did the proper deal for doing that.

DS:

So is that in the process or has it already been finalized?

DB:

It's already supposed to have been done.

DS:

Are you going to get a plaque or something?

DB:

I have no idea. I doubt it.

DS:

I was on the Lubbock County Historical Commission, so I was just wondering if you were doing it through the County.

DB:

I didn't do it through the county, I went through the state. That's because I had another guy that handles my website and stuff, he does that. But we did register it in case they—and this is crazy—but in case they want to make movies or anything like that, we had—at that particular time, we still had the old timing system, we old the old type scoreboards, we had the win lights like that. We didn't have all the new stuff we do now. It was a single guard rail, just like it used to be. We could've—it would've been a perfect time to go back to the early seventies.

DS:

Speaking of the timing lights, what kind of timing light were y'all running?

DB:

At first it was Neutronics and then I went to Compulink which is out of Colorado. That's the one that NHRA [**National Hot Rod Association**] and IHRA [**International Hot Rod Association**] both use at their national events. I went and got the best. I figured if I was going to spend the

money I might as well get the best. The tech support and stuff like that has always been there. I think I've only lost, maybe, one race due to lightning.

DS:

When you were up and running, how many people did it take to get it together?

DB:

Well, you have two people in tech, you have a person to hand out the ET slips, you had four people in the tower, and people in the concession stand, stage lanes [?] [00:17:00] was a couple of people. Then you got water burnouts, then you got a starter, then you got another person that helps the starter when they clean up, and stuff like that. I mean, it's quite a few people to make the function work at that scale. The one we're doing now, I don't have that many people but we don't run that fast, and it's mostly street cars than it is more of the real drag cars. We get them occasionally but not as much.

DS:

We'll come to now in a little bit but—because I was thinking about—Herb was—not, it was—Jim McGuiness was telling me about his egg drops and that's how they would—he had learned to make his car faster by—he would drop eggs every second and then figured out how many miles he was going.

DB:

I don't know about that one.

DS:

He goes, "That was the early days before we had anything set up on the—"

DB:

Timing systems, yeah.

DS:

He started talking about, I think, pneumatic timers were the first they had up there. You'd have a tube and a—start in a tub to end.

DB:

Yeah. There's different things they had. It goes back to a clock with a wheel on it, timer and stuff like that, and they all did a flag drop. Then they did the long Chrondek's Tree, which was really long. That was the first timing system, really, to go to national events. Anyways, it was—it's just kind of one of those deals. To be honest with you, I can't remember the egg drop deal.



DS:

I think it was just a personal thing he did.

DB:

It might've been, yeah.

DS:

Because he was talking about how he was trying to gauge if he was getting faster or not; so that's what he was doing.

DB:

We used to just do it by telephone poles. What we used to do when I was in the Air Force is—of course we did it on 4<sup>th</sup> street too. Before the hits [?] [00:18:49] came in we used to race from the Air Force base out into town. There wasn't anybody out there. It was pretty good road. We used to take a watch and—I mean, we had Dodge Demons, we had Mustangs and we had a little bit of everything—Chargers. Of course, the Air Force guys were known for—

DS:

And who had the fastest street car?

DB:

I'd like to think I did but I don't think I did. I think the Dodge Demon was probably the quickest. It was quick. Little 340 in it. Back then it was quick, but today it would seem awful slow.

DS:

I had a—my stock Trans Am will lose to my stock RAV4. [laughs]

DB:

Yeah. Exactly. Technology has just changed so much.

DS:

It's just, like, amazing.

DB:

I've got a 2012 Mustang, it's quicker and it's got an air conditioner. My '69 Mustang didn't have an air conditioner. No power steering and my Mustang's got power steering. It's amazing what's happened today versus back then. Everything was bare-grass roots and you might say—after—in the fifties, there was so much new learning of people. Everybody was—they'd come out of the service, they were trying to institute some of the stuff that they learned in the service and stuff. I think speed shops all started in California and stuff like that. I think Amarillo, at one time, was



probably the stoutest in this whole area because they had the dragstrip since '52 and the thing of it was, they had the people. They just enjoyed it, and they got the support by the city.

Everybody'd just support them. I think the closest real speed shop except Jackie's here was Amarillo. They had one of the best PNM—machine shop up there was probably the best machine shop to take your stuff to at the time. Since then it's changed, but back then it was the best place to go. Carroll Caudle another one up in Amarillo. I know you've heard that name up there. He was always a stout runner, very stout.

DS:

We were talking about this place. When was it that you took it over?

DB:

I took it actually over in '82.

DS:

What brought that about?

DB:

They were fixing to close it, and I had worked for John Offield. I went to his house one night and I said—and Ben Escalan, we're kind of partners and things—went over to meet John two or three times. I asked him what is going to take to get it. I think he knew—in fact, he told me later on that the reason why I got was because he knew my heart was in it. I wanted to see it succeed. I've been out here forty-five years. It's the longest job I've ever had. It's just something I liked. I mean, it's become a big job, it's a big money pit, but it's a big job. A lot of responsibility because you have people's lives, and now I'm on third generations of families that I'm seeing out here. There's a lot of reward to it.

DS:

You've probably met a lot of people.

DB:

Tons of people. Texas, New Mexico, Louisiana. We're talking all over I've met people. It's funny, one of the racers here just a while ago called me and—he was in Dallas at the Motorplex—he said, "Is there some place that people don't know you?" I said, "Why?" He said they found out I was from Lubbock, Texas. He said, "I have about fifteen people come over and say 'You know Dennis?'" I said, "I can't believe that." I've been around for a long time in different functions. I've even raced with people a long time. I still race to this day. I've stayed involved with all these people. I can go to Odessa, I can go to Hobbs, and people know me from all over—Dallas. It's just amazing. It's been fun.

DS:

You were talking about the number of people that come—that came the opening race day this year. Twenty-seventeen was twelve-hundred—

DB:

Twelve-hundred and twenty-nine.

DS:

How many were coming back when you first took over?

DB:

When I took over the big track?

DS:

Um-hm.

DB:

In '82. Back then we probably had sixty racers, probably, and those spectators. I thought I knew a lot, because working here for six years before I bought it, but I really didn't. I didn't think about business sense on how to get more people in. I was running it like a racer rather than a business person. Due to Mr. Offield, he saved me quite a few times, because I made wrong decisions. But I took it from low car counts up to—I used to average on the average a hundred and twenty-five racers every time. We were number one for a long time here. It was nothing to have fifty, sixty SuperPro, which is the real fast cars here. The next class we'd have fifty or sixty of those and then the next ones would come down. I'd have four classes. I really took it and built up the bracket program, and then junior dragsters, stuff like that; put a lot into it for them. Some of it's paid back by people just being nice, helping and stuff like that.

DS:

What were you doing to fill up the grandstands?

DB:

Well, what I learned—I went to Bandimere Speedway, I talked to John Bandimere, and asked him what he did. He was telling me about a little trick they did. They didn't have any spectators—and it's a beautiful track up in the mountains, and they didn't have any spectators. What they were doing is they let in everybody free but they couldn't bring their coolers with them, so they had to buy concessions. He'd fill up the grandstands because people were getting in for free. Well, I came back and I told my crew, I said, "We're going to try something new." I had a guy named Joe Perez that worked for me at the front gate. I told Joe what I wanted to do on the spectator side. He told me, he said, "No." He said, "You're not going to do that." I said, "But

this worked for them.” He said, “No, we’re going to charge them three dollars a person.” I went and charged them three dollars a person and started filling this place up on the spectator side. When you have spectators, you have sponsors because they want to see their name out there. And that’s what’s paid off. Then we kept the price down. Even today, we keep the price down so that we can do a volume of people, so that way spectators or your sponsors, and people like that will want to participate in the program and help you.

DS:

I mentioned the grandstands specifically because you have a grandstand in the old track but you just stand—

DB:

[speaking at once] I don’t have it here.

DS:

—over here?

DB:

This one here—it’s funny because people have their own spot—we don’t open the gates until an hour before going down to the track. There’s lines out there of people, spectators—they’re just spectators—that have their certain place they want to park and they will do anything to get their place. It’s crazy. I mean, there’s no fighting or anything but, I mean, it’s funny to have people come in and, “This is saved for such and such.” It’s like, “Holy Mackerel.” We’ll fill up the whole eighth-mile plus. It’s pretty wild.

DS:

It sounds like it. I mentioned to somebody one time, we’re creatures of—

DB:

Habit.

DS:

Habit. Once you sit in a chair somewhere in a room, that’s your chair—

DB:

For the rest of your life, pretty much.

DS:

Yeah. I can’t imagine what it’s like here.

DB:

It's funny because down at the big track, they did the same thing but I just didn't see it because I wasn't involved in it, because they were on the other side of the racetrack. This side here, they were on the side with us, so we're more interactive with them.

DS:

On the big track, how long were you trying to keep that up and floating?

DB:

Well, I redid it, went all concrete. I re-topped it back in '90-something, re-black-topped it. It was old, or was getting old, so I got the brainy idea. I said, "I'll go to the bank and borrow some money"—which I did—and had it all concreted. I got a company that I thought would—they came and recommended. Come to find out, they really didn't know what was going on, and then they hired somebody else to do it, do the concrete work. They did the dirt work and then they got the concrete work—that guy was going to pull a fast one, and he tried. Anyway, so we got in a legal battle, then that company had to rip up all the concrete again, and stuff like that. Then I was left with nothing.

DS:

Was the concrete not up to spec?

DB:

Yeah. They tried to blame me for some of it. They blamed me for 20 percent. They came afterwards—I, first of all, asked them if they were bonded and stuff like that, and they said they were then come to find out they weren't, that kind of stuff. That would've taken care of our problem. Then they came asking for plans after it was all over, and everything else, and never asked for plans to begin with. Told me they knew what to do. I told them what they had to do, and they didn't meet that qualification. So, it got to be pretty hairy there for quite a while. We had, I think it was, five or six races and had two wrecks from the same family, stuff like that. Then I hired in some dragsters and roadsters to come in and put on a show. Out of twelve vehicles, two of them got down the track even at eighth-mile. So, I closed the track up and didn't open it again.

DS:

What was happening to them once they were going down the track?

DB:

They couldn't get any traction, the surface was bumpy, and stuff like that. It just, it was coming apart.

DS:

Dangerous situation.

DB:

Huh?

DS:

Dangerous.

DB:

Oh it was terrible. I wasn't going to have somebody get hurt over that. It meant too much to me to do that.

DS:

So once you shut it down, how long was it shut down? [phone rings 00:29:33]

DB:

Well, it's still to this day not open, not that part anyways.

DS:

So when did you decide to reopen this?

DB:

I think it was 2010, might've been '11. I had a racer come to me, street racer, and said, "You got all this shutdown area. Why don't you at least make an eighth-mile deal out of it?" So, we tried it and it's been a success.

DS:

Like you mentioned, it's twice the size of the other areas.

DB:

It's twice as long, yeah, that's why it's the main track.

DS:

That's enough time to get going.

DB:

So, we only run an eighth-mile because of the shutdown of it. We didn't want anybody running off.



DS:

And how far past the shutdown area is the—do you own the land?

DB:

Yeah. Let's see, I only have—it's probably about a thousand fifteen-hundred feet until I get into my neighbor's backyard. They put that house there way after this track was built. They knew—we've only had one car go in their backyard.

DS:

That's not a good—

DB:

Yeah it was a dragster that—she lost her brakes and didn't pull a shute until it was too late.

DS:

So when somebody comes racing out here, what do they have to—regulations that they have to meet?

DB:

Basically you've got to have seatbelts. You're supposed to have slicks, you're supposed to have a helmet, stuff like that. Just some of your safety devices. The thing that I always tell people is, "What's your head worth? What's your arms worth," or "What's your"—especially in a racecar. Streetcar, you can drive it every day, but in a racecar, if you had a fuel hose come off or spray—that's how one person that died out here got killed, was a fuel line come off, and doused them, and caught them on fire. We couldn't get him out quick enough. That's the only fatality we've ever had out here.

DS:

What year was that?

DB:

I'm going to say it was 1974. Might've been '75.

DS:

Early on?

DB:

Yeah. It was John McDowall, that's who it was. He was a great supporter of the racetrack. He was, in fact, if I didn't have this, if he was alive, he'd probably be the owner of this. He was a very likeable person.



DS:

Once he got doused, what sparked the flame?

DB:

I don't know, maybe a header's, because the headers—the kind of stuff that he was running back then was racing fuel, so it could've been that. I don't know. His brother and I, his step-brother actually, we remained friends for—well, to this day. I haven't talked to him in a while but we used to work together and stuff like that. He stayed involved in racing too. It was a terrible loss to lose John McDowall. Herbie Edwards can tell you about that too because—there was a guy named Skip Burrows that used to be right next to John's shop that Herb used to spend a lot of time in there with him. But yeah, great guy. Very smart on Torqueflites transmissions.

DS:

So how tough was it to keep it going after it had an accident?

DB:

To be honest with you, I wasn't here at that time.

DS:

Yes, you were back in—

DB:

Yeah I was back home then. I did come back, that's how I found out about it. I think it was '74, something like that, when I came back to visit, because I married a girl from Lubbock and we came back to visit her parents. I talked to some people about getting a job coming back here. That's when I found out about it.

DS:

What was it about Lubbock that made you come back?

DB:

Well, first of all the economics. Second thing is the people. When I was in the service I met a lot of nice people, stayed in touch with them indirectly when I came back. I kept in touch with a lot of these people. People that own Key Auto Supply. There's so many people that really made me want to come back here. Anyways, it was the best decision I ever made.

DS:

You mentioned about—you're forty-five years into this now?

DB:

Yeah, forty-five years I've been here.

DS:

So where are we at now as far as yourself and the Dragway?

DB:

Well, to be honest with you, I'd like to sell it. Sixty-seven years old, and it gets me down a little bit sometimes. If I don't sell it, I'll keep going until I die. This is my life. I mean, I work, I work every day but this is still my life.

DS:

Where do you work?

DB:

Western Marketing here in Lubbock. I don't know what—I'm just crazy I guess, I don't know. I know it and I like it. There's times that I don't like it, but for the most part I like it.

DS:

You mentioned when you restarted this area back here, the first race you had, I think you said, forty people.

DB:

Forty people, that's it.

DS:

And now you're at twelve-hundred.

DB:

Yeah. Well, we average about six [hundred] now this year. You got to remember, that was for four hours we had forty people trying to make that work. I mean, that's a boring time. Your clock doesn't go very fast or it doesn't seem like it. But when you have six hundred and you have a hundred of them racing, and the others out there and liking what they're seeing, it's very enjoyable because you're having something perform for people. Racing, like any sport, even golf, fishing or whatever. Fishing you got to have the biggest fish. Where do you want your name? In the paper, on TV. Golf. Where do you want your name? What do you want, a plaque and stuff like that right? Money doesn't buy you, because only so many people know you got that money, but if you got on TV, you get in the paper, you got on the radio or something like that, your name—everybody, man or woman, you want your accomplishments. Well, racing's the same way. When you get your—I can give them a check for a thousand dollars but that

picture in front of the winner's circle and say that, "I'm the winner," with your wife, your family, and your car, and that check, and a trophy—it's a trophy you'll have forever—means more to people than anything. To get your name in the paper or to get it where other people can recognize it. Then when you go to another track and they hear your name over the PA system they're like, "Oh God, that's that guy that won in Lubbock," or, "That's the guy that won at Amarillo," or, "He's the track champion." It's an ego. Everybody's got an ego. That's just a known fact. You got the baddest car, got the prettiest car at a car show. If you don't win the plaque you're nothing, right? I mean, it's the same thing in racing. But it took me—what I did was I gave everybody everything I could like that. I'd put it in the national paper, National Dragster for NHRA, and then Drag Review for IHRA, I'd put it in those, and then—just anything I could. Now, of course, with the Internet, you can get it out and get it everywhere. "I'm the baddest dude." I mean, somebody else puts it in there. That's an ego deal because then when you're at the top there's only one way to go and that's down, because everybody shoots for you. When you're at the bottom nobody thinks about you but you start putting them out one by one, and they see who it is.

DS:

You mentioned the ego thing, about being out there. How does this compare to those shows that are going on like Street Outlaws and stuff like that?

DB:

Very similar. This is because there's no—you can take a car off the street and it's probably a little more truer than the ones the Street Outlaws are because—[coughs] or they—504, 405 or whatever. That stuff there, if you look, those streets—let's put it this way, you can't do what they're doing out on the streets without the cops knowing about it. DPS [Department of Safety], sheriff or somebody's going to know about it, and they're going to shut you down. But at there, they're not doing it. I mean, they got lights, they got full-enclosed trailers, they got all the lights out there to see, every camera crew.

DS:

They can't sneak in there. It's not 4<sup>th</sup> street.

DB:

Yeah, can't sneak in there. That's right. It's kind of a staged deal in Oklahoma. They're getting recognized for it and then those guys are too. They're calling it 'regular street racing'. Well, if you look at the tracks on there, yeah, it might be a street—it's not a street car first of all, and then the second deal is, yeah it's street but that's it. Look at how much rubber's there. So they're going to launch, and stuff like that. I'm sure mishaps happen, but there's no security deal. Of course, that's a big rush for everybody, is to do something that you're not supposed to be doing. If you don't get caught, that's a big deal.

DS:

And that might've been so they attract something that y'all had back in your day.

DB:

A long time ago it was. It was the same deal. Then, of course, even though today it happens. You see people buy these cars, the new Hellcats and stuff like that. You find them in junkyards right now because people either got killed in them, or they've wrapped them around a telephone pole or something because they couldn't handle them, stuff like that. Don't get me wrong, that happened back in the sixties too, because I had some of my friends get killed, and the speedometer got stuck at a hundred and ten, they went in to a curve, and they didn't come out. Stupid stuff but we all think we're invisible [sic] whether you're back in the sixties, fifties or 2010, 2017. We all had that—when you're young you have that invincible type deal. "That'll happen to him but it ain't going to happen to me," but it happens. That's another thing that here, or the type of racing that I will allow them to do—which I even did at the big track, we did a deal—we figured we had eight hundred kids back then who were doing really good. We ran that on the big track. I just charged them three dollars. They'd come out for four hours and they run. But I only had one person—me and my wife at the front gate just taking the money, and then they could have the reigns of what they wanted to do. Well, then it got to the point that if they had an anti-freeze leak or something like that, and they expected me to go clean it up. I'm like, "Not for three dollars I'm not." You know what I mean?

DS:

Um-hm.

DB:

Plus it's just me and my wife so I couldn't do that and that both, so I just kind of gave that up. Here they are getting in for nothing, and I asked them, "What'd you do on the street?", "Oh, just find another street." You can't do that. Anyways, we just cut that out. They weren't appreciative I guess you could say, whereas the stuff that we have right now, we have crews to clean it up and stuff, but the kids are willing to help. They want to do this and it's under a controlled environment. That's the whole thing about drag strips. Might be called street racing but it's still—it's drag racing because—and it's under a controlled atmosphere and environment, whereas street racing, street drag racing, actually on the street, is not what we promote. We un-promote that because we want to do it—and I had somebody in the city one time say, "Well, you just want to make money.", "You're taking this whole thing out of context here.", "Well, you're going to charge.", "Well, yeah I got to pay for the lights, got to pay for people to work out here and stuff like that so it's not free. Now, if the city wants to subsidize this then we can make this free, but my insurance is six-hundred dollars, lights are almost a thousand bucks a month so who's going to pay for that?" But the city—when I approached them, I'm doing a deal for The Race Against Drugs program to get kids off the street doing that—they wouldn't help. I even

took some other ideas that they did in California and these others places where they had a deal to give a—let's say that I'm a kid racing, they give him a card, get-out-of-jail-free, one card. They sign it, and if they got caught doing it again, then all the laws would be enforced on them. But on the get-out-of-jail-free card would be a deal, and they could come out here to the track—it didn't cost them anything—and race out for one time. I asked them to do that, they didn't want to do that. They thought I was going to make money. Anyway, they didn't want to support me but yet they want—and I even told them, I said, "I guess you want kids to get killed." I said, "That's what you're telling me if you don't want to try and help promote drag racing on the drag strip instead of on the street."

DS:

You mentioned the cars and the drivers briefly. What kind of drivers and cars are you getting out here now days?

DB:

A lot of street cars, newer type, a lot of imports. A lot of everything. A lot of trucks, big trucks. We're talking about four-wheel drive trucks. A lot of diesels. A lot of everything. It's a good mix and you're welcome to come out and see. You're going to be surprised.

DS:

In fact, I'm going to come to the race this Saturday night.

DB:

You're going to be surprised. We'll bring you right up to the starting line.

DS:

I might even bring my camcorder.

DB:

If you go on 'Lubbock Dragway' or on YouTube and stuff like that, you'll find all kinds of stuff for us on there. It's a—you'll be amazed I think, because this is such a basic program. They're all having fun and it's not perfect but it's going to be just like on the street. So I mean, it's a—and I have rules but it's not something that nobody could live with, couldn't live without it. You know what I mean? It just—

[pause in recording]

DB:

How do you like that picture?



DS:

It's a pretty good picture.

DB:

All that light in there.

DS:

So that was just a couple weeks ago, huh?

DB:

No, no, this is a couple of years ago. There's a whole bunch of them in there. This girl from California comes out and shoots.

DS:

You mentioned photographs that the previous owner had. How about yourself, have you kept a pretty good collection?

DB:

I've got some. Yeah, I used to have company's come from Oklahoma down here to take pictures and stuff like that. I've got—I think I still got them up in the old tower. I got a bunch of old pictures. You're welcome to go through that.

DS:

You might want to think about donating that to the collection as a collection.

DB:

That could be too, yeah

DS:

If you ever want to start that process—I can't bring in collections but our archivist Monty Monroe can. I'd send him your way, and Monty's an old gear head so he would jump on it.

DB:

Oh yeah he would. There's all kinds of pictures. I've still got some from '79, was the last one I have. A team program. We used to go to—this factory started in '77—Sears and Firestone had a deal for street racing. They backed it for the ET program. We used to go to Green Valley down in Fort Worth and race down there. That was a lot of fun but it was a team effort. It'd be seven-hundred cars there. There was no—you're lucky if you got two time trials the whole weekend. There was that many cars. It was unbelievable but it was fun. It was different. We didn't do real



well because we didn't race down that area. When you go from thirty-three hundred feet down to sea level or six hundred feet above sea level, your cars run a lot different. It's really wild.

DS:

We've talked a lot about this drag strip. Can you tell us about some of the people along the way that you met that impacted you.

DB:

I'd be afraid to list a bunch of them because—a lot of the older ones really impacted me to keep on – to do what I love to do. There's been so many people, and some of them aren't with us today, that really helped bring life to Lubbock. It wouldn't be fair because I'd leave somebody out. It really—I mean, because I can't say one person did more than anybody else. If I had to say anybody ever did anything else it was John Offield for taking the vision to do this in the first place. To bring this—there's so many businesses in town that were race related at one time, that helped bring me up to where we are today. So many of them aren't around anymore either.

DS:

One of them you mentioned was Jackie Mize, and I need to go drop in on his office.

DB:

He's got a wealth of information—wealth. He still has some of his old cars.

DS:

Did he always have the performance shop or was that a recent thing?

DB:

No, he's had it forever. Used to be down where—Texas Avenue where Burgesss auto supply is there, he was down there. He moved up on 4<sup>th</sup> street and John McDowall—got killed—he put in his speed shop in there, as Jackie's Automotive, and the he moved out on west 19<sup>th</sup>. Before that, there used to be another one up in there—it's funny because it went off to 4<sup>th</sup> street just a ways—it was John McDowall's Racing Automatics, there was Skip Burrows and then there was Gary Speed Shop—Gary Travis, which he ended up working for Raymond Beadle at Chaparral Trailers in Dallas. That was quite a deal back then. I knew Kenny Bernstein and I knew Raymond Beadle. We weren't friends by any means but I knew him. Of course, I was a guy in the service. I was kind of a nobody type of deal. The people you hung around with but I still—I didn't have any great accomplishments back then. So yeah, it's pretty wild though. I mean, I wouldn't change it for the world.

DS:

You came back to Lubbock because it was calling you, I guess.

DB:

Yeah, you could say that. I'd say I'm very glad I did. Living on Cape Cod, if your parents didn't have a lot of money—never used to be that when I was a kid, as a I got into it, if you didn't have a lot of money you couldn't afford to get ahead. I mean, I worked two jobs, sometimes three, just to rent. Just getting out of the service back in '73, you weren't thought of as a very nice person. Military wasn't appreciated like it is today—during Vietnam.

DS:

The Vietnam era.

DB:

I'll tell you a little funny deal. I went to go buy my grandparents' home—which I used to go to a lot when I was a kid—this is when I first got out—had a good job, everything else, and so I went to the bank that our family always dealt with. Went in there, sat down with them and I told them, I said I wanted to buy my grandparents' place which is—this is going to sound crazy but it was only thirty-three thousand dollars. But in 1973, thirty-three thousand dollars was a lot of money. This was their old home, which was great, had a big bus barn on it type deal, and then they had the old chicken coops where they used to have—they had like fifteen acres. That was quite a bit of land. Anyway, when I sat down with the banker, and I told them what I wanted to do and everything, and I told them I had the GI bill behind me and the VA [Veterans Affairs] and the whole thing. He just told me, he said, "We're not interested." I'm like, "What?" I said, "I went in the service to fight Communism, and yet you're telling me you don't care.", "Yeah, we don't care." I kind of made up my mind that at that time that I was going to find a way to go back here, because here people appreciated the military. It was just that way. I never found anybody that was disrespectful or didn't like me because I was wearing the uniform.

DS:

Did you ever serve in combat?

DB:

No I never did. I was stationed at Reese.

DS:

Because we have the Vietnam archives is also in our building.

DB:

Right. I haven't seen that but yeah.

DS:

So, if you had something that—a story that you'd like to share or—Kelly Crager who heads up the oral history program would love to talk to you.

DB:

Love that, yeah. It's funny because—I'll tell you a little deal. The guy that trained me in the Air Force out here at Reese, he was from Ohio—he lives in Oklahoma. Well, he was in Lubbock a few weeks ago, he called me up and he said, "You going to be around?" I said, "Yeah, I'm here at work." He said, "You mind if I come by and holler at you?" This is the guy that actually trained me how to work on jets and how to do our job. We sat down and we talked, talked, talked, and discussed a lot of the stuff. We had this adage—because when you go in the service back then you had no idea where you were going in the world. You had a dream sheet, and I put everything up on the northeast up in New Hampshire and up that way. I wanted to go because then I could be home and stuff like that. Well, what do they do—they ship you the opposite end of the world, so they put me in Lubbock, Texas, which I'd never even heard of. But the way we kind of looked at it was, we still went in the service, we had no idea if we were going to go to Vietnam, Thailand or wherever but the Air Force put us where they thought we ought to be, and we helped train pilots. We kept their aircraft going so that the pilots could fly. This base here flew more missions, or shorties, out of this base than any ATC [Air Traffic Control] base in the United States, and they closed it down. It didn't make sense. This was—there was a lot of GI's that are here that stayed here in Lubbock, or went to Oklahoma or some New Mexico.

DS:

What was your role out there at the base?

DB:

I worked on jets. I was a crew chief on 38s like the one that's in the front of the Science Spectrum, just like that.

DS:

What kind of expertise did you have before you started doing that?

DB:

Believe it or not, I went to vocational school in Hyannis, Mass [Massachusetts] or Barnstable for automotive. So that's the only thing I ever had. A lot of things are—in life, a lot things are similar. People get ideas on how to make this work that does one role, and they figure out how to put it in another role. They see this one thing function and they say, "They can do this with this and make it work." That's how things get invented and become better. I even taught school for a while at Texas schools when they were up and going. I did a night class. I did four nights a week and I taught students. You got to remember, I had—I cannot remember—I had to teach people that had no concept of all about automotive, not an ounce of anything. I had to walk them through. What I used to do was relate to them. "The way a carburetor worked is just like a commode. You got air—in this case here you got water running through—and it puts a vacuum. Okay, the vacuum is by the pistons. The valves let the air in and out, the fuel and everything

else.” I had to explain to people that had no idea, but they used different things in their life so I had to explain to them how an engine worked, how their transmission worked, rear end or whatever so they would understand—and it’s amazing how many people actually got to learn and actually turned out pretty good. In the Air Force I had an instructor that could do that, because I used to relate to things, like an accumulator. It’s just the word says, ‘accumulates’. Might be vacuum, may be air or whatever. I had an instructor in my One Phase in the Block that said, “No,” I was wrong because he was not willing to put it layman’s terms, you might say. I found out that wasn’t the way to teach so I taught the other way and I had more success with it. And life’s that way, if you can get it down so people can understand it. If you did it up here and they’re down here, you got to bring it down to here so they understand it.

DS:

Even like—for example, you mentioned newspaper. They’ve got a write to the eighth-grade level because if they write to the Ph.D. level—

DB:

They won’t sell any papers because nobody can read it. In the words, terminology, and everything else. And it’s funny because everything in life’s that way. Drag racing’s this way because nobody is born into anything, you have to learn it. That’s like I tell people. They say, “How do you—why are you good at it,” or, “Why are you like this?” I said, “I had to learn but I didn’t learn from one person, I learned from a lot of people because I went to a lot of places.” On vacations I used to just go to drag strips to see or sit down and talk to somebody like we’re talking about—talk about different things that they do that if they were successful or didn’t—weren’t successful. Now, west Texas is different but you can take a little bit from everybody, incorporate in your program and you got your own program. That’s how I learned.

DS:

When you were talking earlier about the racers and you mentioned some that were third-generation. Do you have a mix of those and people that are just coming into it?

DB:

I got some parents—well, their parents were here, but the sons, and their sons are coming, racing and stuff like that. I got a lot of girls involved now too. That’s the glory of this sport, you don’t have to be a guy just to race like it used to be. As thought of as a woman—but now we got woman in here that are just as good, if not better, than some of the guys. It’s not just a man’s sport, it’s everybody’s sport. And anybody can do it, that’s the amazing part. To be a golf—you can’t go on a—I mean, you go on an average golf course here, but if you’re not good, you’re not going to be thought of as very good because other people are going to want to pass you all the time because you’re taking your time and enjoying yourself. That’s the same thing that used to happen with this. I was on a schedule. You get done in so much time because time’s money. So,



what I did was I learned by—you got some people that are better than others, some people can react and do things quicker than others so you got to allow enough time for them, or make a program for them and then make a program for the others so one doesn't get mad at the other and say, "Those people are holding us up." Because these are still learners versus the pros, our own pros not the pro—like the Kenny Bernstein's or anybody like that—what we'd call our 'down home pros'. So, you have to allow for stuff like that. That's where like golf courses or fishing tournaments, they got them for kids because kids take longer than adults and stuff like that. It's just kind of a new deal. Drag racing has a Junior Dragster program where they have small—may be some out here this weekend, may not. They're eighth stale—five horse, actually, probably almost closer to ten horse Briggs motors on them. Used to be eight-years-old, now they can go down to, I think, seven or six-years-old in cars that are faster than my racecar in the eighth-mile. And they do great. They're fantastic. I mean, the kids are just unbelievable. Disciplined, the kids are not—they're very disciplined. To make a good racer that's what you have to be, is disciplined more than anything. Follow directions and just be disciplined.

DS:

[phone rings] Have you had any racers recently that have gone from here to go on to, like, the real race circuit?

DB:

No, that doesn't happen as much. There's a lot of them trying to get in Street Outlaws deal. Here again, you come into the money factor. I mean, there's some beautiful cars locally that they don't come out here because this isn't a real drag strip the way we have it now, but they do go to some others that are. They're beautiful machines that run fast, but you have to do it all the time to be good. In the Dallas-Fort Worth area, there was a drag race every night at a drag strip. Here, we do it every other weekend. Amarillo does it every other weekend. Hobbes does it every other weekend and stuff like that. It makes it kind of hard to get to that level. Plus the cost to do it in the sixties versus the seventeens is probably a hundred times higher to do it. Everybody had a funny car, everybody had a dragster, everybody had something like that and you could put together something. You can't anymore. It's just gotten to be too big of dollars.

DS:

I was talking to somebody and he mentioned how whenever he went, he would take eleven engines with him and just swap an engine out. Now an engine costs a hundred and fifty-thousand dollars though, you can't do it.

DB:

And that's a cheap one. The ones that are real pros are in the big bucks. I mean, they rebuild them every pass. You can't do that, not in what we do. If they didn't have sponsors—they have million dollar sponsors.

DS:

What do you think's the most expensive units that are running out here right now?

DB:

Right now [pause] racecars are probably about—probably have about a hundred and twenty-thousand dollars involved. Then the street cars, the highest is probably eighty-thousand to maybe just under a hundred because we got GTR's and stuff like that. [laughs] That's a lot of money to have.

DS:

It is.

DB:

Hellcats' eighty-thousand plus. GTR's are a hundred and nine, hundred and twenty-thousand. It's a street car, but they're fast.

DS:

I was amazed by one car I saw on the streets of Lubbock one day. I was taking my niece to Sonic to get a fifty-cent corn dog, and on 4<sup>th</sup> street along pulls up one of these Porsche's—it's a limited edition that's nine-hundred and eighty-five thousand dollars.

DB:

That's having more money than I ever will.

DS:

It's like, "Really?" [laughs] and it's on the streets.

DB:

If I had that kind of money you'd see a mini-Motorplex out here. I would be able to do some much, it'd be unbelievable.

DS:

How much money does it take to even keep this place going right now?

DB:

This right here, a year—there's no prize money involved. It's just maintenance and just upkeep: lighting, insurance, and stuff like that. It helps nothing compared to what everything else is. It runs about sixty-thousand a year just to keep it up, and people don't know that. I do have a guy that helps me. This year here he started helping me. Doesn't charge me anything. He wanted to know what I know, which he's learning. The guy, in fact, is the one who put these windows in



and stuff. He's amazed because he's been coming out here for a long time but he's never been involved, and now he's involved somewhat. He told me, he says, "Man, people have no idea what's involved." Just fuel, my fuel bill'll be thirteen-thousand dollars a year. It's unbelievable what everything costs. Traction compound is six-hundred dollars a drum. I usually order five to six drums at a time.

DS:

But how many do you use at an event?

DB:

At an event—I can go—one drum'll last me two events, so I can go—I have to order three more to hold me the rest of the year. I've already ordered six. We're spraying more than what we used to, and stuff like that.

DS:

We've probably gone just over an hour. Is there anything else that you want to add that I haven't asked?

DB:

No. This is the only thing I want to, probably, say is that this is the probably the safest motorsport if you wanted to do it. You can get hurt, but if you play it the way the rules and regulations are, this can be a very safe motorsport, and everybody can do it still to this day. It's one of the very few things you don't have to go fast. We have a timing system that's handicapped racing, so theoretically that would come out to—if the tree was to come down and it's handicapped, this guy here had the same reaction time as this guy here, this vehicle versus this vehicle, this one takes off first and this one—let's say he did an 001 light. That's reaction time, and this one did an 001 light, took off. Theoretically, at the finish line they would cross the same time. It doesn't usually happen that way, but it could, both of them have identical. I've only had it once happen where the timing—because it goes out to the hundred-thousandths. I mean, it goes a long ways out, and then it declares the winner automatically. But it's come down to where the mile-per-hour was the winner. You can choose how you want it to declare the winner if there was a tie. Just like everything else, it's become very sophisticated. Back in '86 when I bought the timer system it was forty-thousand dollars. [laughs] That's a lot of money back then even.

DS:

And then upkeep over the years.

DB:

I'd have to set a new computer, and get it—every two years at least, get it updated with new functions and stuff like that.

DS:

Does the software change then?

DB:

I don't know because he does it. The guy in Colorado does it, so I don't have any idea. I just get it back and if it's not—

DS:

[speaking at once] Because, you know, our phones update every other month.

DB:

I know. His wasn't quite that much, but I'm sure at national event level it did, but not on ours. In fact, that's what we're going to put in here. Not full blown but it's going to be part of the old system, and put it in here.

DS:

Are there any improvements you're hoping to do at this end?

DB:

I'm hoping that's—I've been to some banks and I got one bank that's interested, but it's going to take four to five-hundred thousand dollars to get that back up down there. I don't know. I'm debating because as old as I am, do I want to go in debt for that much because it took me twenty-two years to pay off the original loan. I just can't fathom. I mean, it makes money but you can't make that much money to pay that off all the time. If you get rainouts and stuff like that, you're kind of behind the eight ball. Personally, I don't want a handout but I just wish there was more people that would be interested and want to help. You always see people donate this, donate that, but it doesn't happen, not with racing.

DS:

Do a Kickstarter. [laughs] Well, Dennis, I thank you.

DB:

Thank you.

DS:

You just barely came on my radar the other day and I sent you—

DB:

Is that right?

DS:

Yeah, that's when I was—because I wanted to know about the Lubbock Dragway, so I put an email to your people and they said, "Contact Dennis. He'll be willing to do it."

DB:

That was to Cliff. Cliff Nichols handles my website for me. It's been an exciting roller coaster, up and down. Not everything's perfect but nothing's perfect.

DS:

But you've had a good ride.

DB:

Oh yeah. I wouldn't trade it for the world.

DS:

And that's what I'm finding, like, with all these guys. It's a part of them that they cherish.

DB:

And the friends you make—like I was saying all over, I made tons of friends. I'll tell you a little deal. At the Motorplex when we go down there for our bracket finals, when we used to be involved in that, I'd get up in the tower, and I used to be scared like everybody else. I wouldn't announce. I wouldn't get on that microphone for nothing. Well, then my announcer didn't show up one time, so I started going on there and I thought—I remember some other people listening to him announce and I thought, I'm going to try that. So I did and it took off. So anyways, I do it here, I would educate people to what was happening because they're sitting there, and they're like, "Okay, I see this happening. I don't know what's happening, I don't know who the winner is, I don't know nothing. I don't know anything that's going on here." So, I noticed that, so I started telling people over PA what is happening. They're pre-staging, they're pulling in the beams, they're doing this, they're doing that, it's going to be a handicapped start, this guy's going to take off first, this one here's going to be playing catch up, and the reason why, because this guy's got more money in his car than the other guy, or vice versa. This just runs a little bit slower car than this one is, so to be fair you got to make it—handicap it somehow." So, I explain to them what a breakout is when they run too fast, you have to have an even out type deal, I explain that. Well, when I got down to Motorplex, we're talking probably eight, nine-hundred racers down there, very few spectators, but there's family and friends that come along. I had a blast because you're talking about different cars of all different types, different configurations, knowing a lot of the stuff, and then the names, Caucasian names, I'd butcher them all to pieces

but everybody was getting a kick out of it. I'd tell them, "Yeah, this damn Yankee up here." I was just giving them all kinds of hell about me. I would pick on—I had another guy who was an announcer with me. I wasn't the main announcer, this other guy was the main announcer, and he was a black guy. He since died, he got cancer. His name was Lynn Nickerson. Great, great guy. Anyways, they had a guy that was a—he was a bodybuilder but he was a—what do you call it—bouncer type deal. He was down there, he was a black guy. I didn't know him for nothing. Anyways, I used to get—and cut up on Lynn and we'd play back and forth. This guy'd be down here, he'd be rolling in the ground because Lynn liked the women and I'd ask him, "Are any of your black folk"—I'm doing this on the PA. Everybody knew who Lynn was but I was giving him hell. I said, "I'm the only one that can make black guy turn red," and get like that. Everybody'd laugh about it, have a good time, because that's all it was, was a good time. Some of the stuff on the screens, you could read at today's screens. A long time ago you didn't, you had tech cards. This is funny, on the timing system, you pulled into the lights and stuff but the guy that you—Cliff Nichols, the one that does my websites, he used to be what we called our 'handicapper.' We had these dials left and right and you'd click the dials in of what the vehicles were. If you click it in, the machine would take over and it would handicap the tree automatically. When you got done with those and you flip them all back to zeroes, and then put in the next set of cars. We did that forever. [coughs] Granted, nobody showed me this, I had to figure this out. I put the tech cards in a flip chart, and at the bottom of it they put their card number. There used to be years I didn't know who the hell was driving a car. I knew the car, I didn't know the driver, because I never saw the driver. Afterwards, I started going out in the pits. I hired an announcer, stuff like that, and I'd go out in the pits and start meeting people. That really helped. All this stuff is mechanical in today's times. It's just like a home computer, you have a screen that comes up and it says, "Left lane." It starts blinking, you put in the numbers, you follow the characters, comes through and then you let it—once you got it all entered then you hit 'return', the thing takes over automatically, runs out, tells you all their times, incremental times, then it tells you who the winner is, how much they won by, and the other guy how much they lost by. And you can read that all off a screen, an announcer screen. It's just really neat as anything, and stuff like that. You learn to incorporate all that in there. That's versus—new versus old. The old, you made due with what you could. And today we still use flashlights every once in a while, and sometimes we'll do a hand-drop. We still do some of the old stuff every once in a while, just for the fun of it.

DS:

Just nostalgia, huh?

DB:

Yeah, just for the fun of it. Of course, you got to change the people that do the hand-drop because your arms get tired. We all like to live in the past because the past was fun and new, sometimes is fun. When you're older, it's not as much fun, but when you're young, it's fun

because you don't know about the old. That's what happening today for the young, it is going to be old to them later on. That's just the way it works. I'm sure your grandkids'll probably end up having them fly off the ground someday down the road. I'll never see it but do stuff like that. Who knows what's going to happen?

DS:

Who knows? You never know what's going to happen.

DB:

No and that's the whole thing is, innovation through experimentation has brought the world into where it is today.

DS:

Well, I appreciate your time young man. I say young because you're not that much older than I am.

DB:

Is that right? That's all right.

DS:

Yeah I'm turning sixty in October.

DB:

I wish I could go back to sixty. I'd change maybe a little bit.

DS:

Just a little bit. *Bueno*. Thank you so much.

DB:

Oh yeah Daniel, thank you.

DS:

Thank you, Dennis.

*[end of recording]*