

**Oral History Interview of
Arlin Ryals and Ann Hickson**

**Interviewed by: David Marshall
May 24, 2018
Lubbock, Texas**

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*General Southwest Collection Interviews***

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Transcript Overview:

This interview features Arlin Ryals and Ann Hickson as they discuss the area around Ropesville, Texas. In this interview, Arlin and Ann describe their family, living in Ropesville, the Ropesville projects, and the agriculture and ranchland around the area.

Length of Interview: 01:31:00

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David Marshall (DM):

The date is May 24, 2018. This is David Marshall along with Tai Kreidler interviewing Arlin Ryals and Ann Hickson at the Southwest Collection, Texas Tech, Lubbock, Texas. And we're going to talk today a bit about Ropes' history and how your family ties into that history. But let's begin with some biographical information. And Arlin, if you wouldn't mind just starting with your full name and date and place of birth?

Arlin Ryals (AR):

My name is Arlin Ray Ryals. I was born January 1, 1947 in Lubbock, Texas.

DM:

Okay. And then Ann, if you can add yours?

Ann Hickson (AH):

I'm Lucretia Ann Ryals Jackson Hickson. I was born October 25, 1942 in Lubbock, Texas.

DM:

Okay. Well, let's just begin and y'all just talk at will. Whoever wants to speak up first. Let's just get a little information about your family, the Dobson's. Your grandparents were Dobson's. And just give me their names, and tell me how they came to this country, where they came from?

AR:

Okay. Our grandparents were Robert Thomas Dobson. His wife Effie Leigh Holder-Dobson. And they come to the plains—off the cap. They come to Spur, Texas in 1912 as best I know. They stayed down there until he purchased a farm right in the southwest part of Lubbock County in 1919. They left their oldest son in Dickens County, and he moved the rest of the family to southwest part of Lubbock County. Ropes was just barely a town then. My grandmother Effie Leigh and her daughter Ora Leigh Dobson helped organize the Baptist Church at Ropesville.

DM:

I've got a date on that as 1921. Does that sound familiar to you?

AR:

Yes. Yes.

DM:

Is that right? Okay. That's Ora?

AH:

O-r-a. Um-hm. Leigh.

DM:
Okay.

AR:
One of their brothers, Roy Dobson, was one of the first deacons there, best we've found out. [Clears throat] Ben Dobson was another son. He helped—I've heard. Now I don't have this documented—but whenever the town of Levelland was organized he helped do that. And my mother, Robbie Dobson, was the youngest daughter of the family. She was one year old when they moved to Lubbock County. She lived her entire life on that farm. We still own that farm. She graduated from Ropes High School in—

AH:
Thirty-six.

AR:
Thirty-six. She was on the state basketball team there in 1935, I believe.

AH:
Um-hm.

DM:
State championship basketball team?

AR:
Yes.

DM:
Wow.

AR:
She married in '30—

AH:
Seven.

AR:
Seven. To my dad Alvin Ryals. And he also come from—they come from Harrison, Arkansas to Spur.

DM:

Oh okay.

AR:

And my dad was raised close to Harrison, Arkansas, but the families didn't know each other then.

DM:

Do you know what brought them from Harrison, Arkansas?

AR:

He had a brother that lived in Lueders, Texas. He was—Robert T.—was the tax assessor and county clerk in Harrison.

DM:

Okay.

AR:

And he didn't want to raise his kids. He had a big family. Had three girls and four boys.

AH:

Had six kids. Uh-huh. Yeah. Well, had seven. They lost one when he was twelve.

AR:

But he didn't want to raise his kids in town. He wanted to raise them in the country.

DM:

Okay.

AR:

He originally come from—I've got his birth certificate. He originally come from somewhere in Mississippi. It just says on his birth certificate "Mississippi." It doesn't say where.

AH:

Do you remember what day he was born? I think he was born June the thirtieth, but I don't remember what year.

AR:

Yeah. They—

AH:

And I don't know where he met Grandmother. Was she from there too?

AR:

They were from Harrison.

AH:

Her parents?

AR:

Her parents.

AH:

Okay.

AR:

And then she had—her maiden name was Holder—and she had two brothers that moved down here in this area. And he had purchased some land. His name was Jim Holder, which was her brother. And he purchased several different farms there in Hockley County and around this area. Around that area out there. He would keep them a few years and if he could make a little money on them he'd sell them. And I know of two farms out there that he owned at one time and sold them.

DM:

Is this the same family of Ted Holder from Levelland? That was police chief of Levelland for twenty-something years?

AR:

No. Not a kin.

AH:

Jim never did have any kids, did he?

AR:

I don't think he did.

AH:

Now Jeff did. Her other brother. Two girls.

AR:

Ben Dobson left in 1931. They bought some land. Him and his dad and brother. They bought some land in Dawson County. And he moved—he had got married. And he moved to Dawson County in '31-'32, somewhere in there. And I remember him telling me he was borrowing money at the Ropes bank, and he said, “I lived down there three years before there went the gin.” It was during the drought. During the Dust Bowl.

DM:

Right. Right.

AR:

And he said that the banker at the bank at Ropes was my granddaddy Robert T. was a director in that bank too.

DM:

The First State Bank?

AR:

Yes. First State Bank at Ropes. I don't know when it was organized.

DM:

Twenty-four is what I have, 1924.

AR:

This was in the early thirties. And he said the banker cut him off and told him he said, “Well, I'm not going to come get your team and plows and stuff because there's nobody to buy them. But I can't loan you any more money.” So he said, “It took me a long time, but I finally got him paid.”

DM:

Okay. Wow.

AR:

But anyway, he always told me—he said, “Well, if you get in bad shape don't give up. Just hang in there. It'll come around.”

DM:

Did he describe the Dust Bowl days?

AR:

Well, he said they had a couple of milk cows and had chickens. And he said, "We sold enough eggs and cream and stuff to buy groceries." But he said, "You know, we didn't make any crops."

DM:

What were his crops? Were they all cotton?

AR:

No. He said they raised cotton and milo. And I think they raised what they call red top cane for cow feed.

DM:

Okay. Did he run some cattle also?

AR:

No, I don't think he ever run cattle much. Other than milk cows. Roy Dobson, his brother, he was born in 1899 and he didn't get married until he was thirty-seven years old. And he stayed on this farm and worked it for his family. And then he started buying land around Ropes. He had approximately twelve hundred acres over there. Still got most of it in the family. They've sold some of it. His son—he got married at thirty-seven. They had two children. A boy and a girl. They're both still alive. The daughter lived in Dallas area. The boy lives here in town. You might want to contact—his name is Roy Bob Dobson.

DM:

Roy's son is Roy Bob?

AR:

Yes. He knows—he's got the abstracts to a lot of that land. His daughter does. Her name is Janna—

AH:

J-a-n-n-a.

AR:

--Henry. She lives in Shallowater. And she's got the abstracts to all that land over there.

DM:

Okay.

AH:

Out of those six children on Mom's side, there's only four of us left. My brother and me and then Roy's children, Bob and Caroline. And the rest of them are deceased.

DM:

Okay. Who was the daughter—Roy's daughter—that lives in Dallas?

AR:

Her name is Caroline Jane Faust.

AH:

Faust.

AR:

F-a-u-s-t.

AH:

She lives in DeSoto.

DM:

DeSoto. Okay.

AR:

And they put part of that land in a trust, and she is the administrator of that trust.

DM:

I see. Are any of these people that would be willing to talk a little more about family history, you think?

AR:

She knows very little. I stay in contact with her. In fact, I farmed that land for eighteen years in the eighties and nineties.

AH:

His son lives in Uncle Roy's house.

AR:

His son lives here in town.

AH:

Tell him about when he built that house.

AR:

My son, Randall Ryals, lives on part of that Roy Dobson land. And they built the rock house out there in 1940. And he lives in that house now.

AH:

And he has two—two girls.

AR:

He has two girls.

DM:

Did you say Randall?

AR:

Randall.

DM:

Okay. Your son is Randall. So who built the rock house out there?

AR:

Roy Dobson.

DM:

Okay.

AH:

I think it's really neat though because there was my granddad, then was my mother, then there was me, then I have a son, Len Jackson, then he has a daughter, Kaylie Durham, and she has two children, Duke and Briton. And that's six generations there.

DM:

Yeah.

AH:

And then he has six. So it's granddad, mother, Arlin, his son Randall, his daughter Randy, and her daughter Cami.

DM:

Golly, isn't that something?

AH:

Isn't that wonderful?

DM:

Yeah, for a family to stay in that area for that many generations?

AR:

And in 1943 my dad, Alvin Ryals, he bought this 320 acres from his father in law, which was Robert T. Dobson. He bought the land off of him in 1943. In 1992 I bought the land off of my dad.

DM:

Okay. 1943 is when the Ropesville Resettlement Project was starting to sell land to farmers, I think. Was that part of that?

AR:

No, it wasn't.

DM:

Are y'all tied in with that at all?

AH:

No.

AR:

No. All that land—

AH:

--is a waste.

AR:

From Ropes north and west.

AH:

Mom and Dad lived seven miles east of Ropes. But they were in Lubbock County. So Arlin and I went to Frenship school. Because the county line was the difference between Ropes school and Frenship school. And Frenship is there at Wolfforth. F-r-e-n-s-h-i-p.

AR:

But our parents always—my grandparents and our parents—always associated with Ropes people.

AH:

Um-hm. Yeah, they did.

DM:

Okay. Why did they come from Spur to Ropes. Were they looking for farmland?

AR:

He wanted some more land and I think they were—I've heard them say that they lived at Spur four or five years before he ever come up on the Cap. And when he come up on the Cap and he saw this flat land up here, he told his wife—he said, "I want to own some of that land up there." And he looked at the half section where the Covenant Hospital is right now, which was—I don't know—mile or two out of Lubbock at that time. And he could have bought it for the same price he get for this farm, but he said, "That's too close to town. I don't want that." [Laughter]

DM:

It would be nice to—

AR:

He was right.

DM:

It'd be nice to have now though, wouldn't it?

AR:

Now, that's an old story that I've heard, you know.

DM:

But down in Spur now he wasn't farming down there, was he?

AR:

The boys did.

DM:

They did.

AR:

My dad—my granddad—he had what they called a “club foot.” He was crippled, you know. He was a schoolteacher at one time, but he really couldn’t do physical work. But those boys were old enough when they moved out here that they did the farming.

DM:

Do you know what they were farming down there?

AR:

They had some pastureland on that place, but they raised cotton.

AH:

And our cousin, Donald Dobson, he died—what? About three years ago? Four? Anyway, he inherited—they had three boys. Coy [?] [0:16:56.4] did. The oldest child. And none of them ever married. And so Donald inherited the land. Lived on the home place. And he died about four years ago. And he farmed that land all the time that he was living.

DM:

Back in the—when your family was first in the Ropes area and farming, did they talk at all—do you remember any talk about the water situation? How deep they were drilling for water and other crops that were raised in that area? I assume it was probably—cotton was probably dominate, but have you heard anything about?

AR:

They—I’ve heard them talk about—windmill water was, like, sixty to eighty foot. They drilled house water. I know they got their—they had what they called an overhead tank at the windmill. That’s how they got their house water.

DM:

What’s the—how deep do you go out there now?

AR:

Well it runs—it’s different areas. Vary, pretty quick different areas up there. It’ll run—water basically is around a hundred eighty, two hundred foot. On this farm my dad drilled the first irrigation well in 1946. It would pump approximately eight hundred gallons a minute. We still run that well today. It’ll pump about forty gallons.

DM:

What was the original means of pumping it out? Was it diesel engine or—

AR:

Car engines.

DM:

Car engines. Gasoline.

AR:

I know Roy Dobson, I think he drilled his first well in, like, '38. And over there he had ten inch water at one time. Pumped about—I mean they'd run about a thousand gallons. I remember him talking that they would put a Flathead Ford engine on a V8 Flathead Ford—

DM:

Was it on a concrete platform?

AR:

Yes.

DM:

Okay.

AR:

He'd buy a new engine every year, because they said they'd run that engine. You know, they just pull it wide open and it took all it had to pull that water.

AH:

What were those wells that had—you remember Daddy had those up there on the Broadhead [?] [0:19:43.8] place? And that thing would turn around? Do you know what I'm talking about?

AR:

Yeah, yeah.

AH:

And he would say, "Don't get close to that," because if you got your hair in it, it would grab you.

DM:

Golly.

AH:

And it would kill you, you know? But what was that called?

AR:

That was a tumbling shaft.

AH:

Yeah. And they were all open, you know, then.

DM:

Uh-huh. Right. Right. Didn't have the safety considerations that we have now.

AH:

Oh no, no, no.

AR:

Mother went to—the first school she went to was about a couple miles from us northeast. There was a little school over there—a country school—called Foster.

DM:

Okay. Was it middle—

AR:

And that's where she went to grade school and starting school. And then when she got into high school she went to Ropes, and it was seven miles over there. So it was too far to go back and forth every day, so she stayed in a boarding house over there during the week. Then she'd come home on the weekends.

AH:

Seven miles. [laughter]

DM:

Yeah. Yeah. A long way. Well, that's been a characteristic of Ropes all along. This rural community coming into town. Instead of—I mean, we were talking about that earlier. The school district has several hundred students, I think. Does that sound right? But they're really spread out?

AH:

Yeah, they reclassified. They have what they call a six-man football team? Have you ever seen one?

DM:

Um-hm. Yeah.

AH:

Well, they stayed six man this year. But my son said the next time they reclassify they'll go up to eleven-man.

DM:

Oh is that right?

AH:

Because they're getting so many kids from Lubbock.

DM:

Oh really?

AH:

Coming out there.

DM:

Oh really? Okay.

AH:

They have a very, very good school.

DM:

Okay good. So the families live here in Lubbock but they're taking their kids out there?

AH:

Yeah, a bus comes up to Milwaukee, there at that baseball field, and will pick up the Lubbock kiddos.

DM:

Okay.

AH:

And they used to charge to transfer them, but I don't think they do anymore. I'm not for sure about that. Don't call me on that. But anyway, they—I think Lane said they had over fifty kids that had come in this year. So they're really coming out there. Because they know what good of school they have.

DM:

Right. Right.

AH:

All of our kids went to school there. And then all of our grandchildren have gone to school there. His are all out of school, and mine, I have two left in school. One a sophomore. He'll be a sophomore. And one an eighth grader. So they have real good athletics.

AR:

And then people are moving out. Buying acres out there.

DM:

So the population is increasing for the community itself?

AR:

Yeah. It went—you know at one time a family could make a living on a hundred and sixty acres. And then about the time these small towns started dying farmers started increasing the acreage to make a living. And then Ropes got right in the middle of that. I mean, it was a—when I got married in 1964 there were two grocery stores, six filling stations, a lumber yard—

AH:

A newspaper office.

AR:

Newspaper office.

AH:

Post office.

AR:

Two insurance agents. Picture show. Dry cleaners.

AH:

Kind of like a five and dime store called Riojas.

DM:

Called what?

AH:

Riojas. R-i-o-[clears throat] excuse me—j-a-s. And he would have clothes or anything that you wanted. But at the lumberyard it was Higginbotham. Was a very, very good lumberyard.

DM:

Interesting that you said '64, because I have some figures from '65 that says that's about when Ropesville peaked at nine hundred and fifty people and forty-eight businesses.

AR:

And then it started going down.

DM:

Yeah.

AR:

All those businesses died out.

DM:

What was the reason for that?

AR:

Well, people couldn't make a living on a hundred and sixty acres anymore, so they either got bigger or sold out or moved out. And then I think the—I don't know when the first gin come there. Early in the twenties. Which was a Cate and Carter gin.

DM:

What was it?

AR:

Cate and Carter.

DM:

Catton Carter. C-a-t-t-o-n?

AR:

C-a-t-e.

AH:

And Carter. C-a-r-t-e-r.

DM:

Cate and Carter?

AH:

Cate and Carter.

AR:

I think was the name of it.

AH:

And then Billy Carter is another person that you need to talk to.

AR:

I think y'all are supposed to talk to him. He's ninety-something years old.

AH:

And Sandra said he could—his niece takes care of him. Helps take care of him.

DM:

Billy—

AH:

Billy.

DM:

Billy, where does he tie in with the founding of the gin? Is he a son of—?

AR:

Oh he's probably a grandson. Maybe.

AH:

But his parents had land there. Or still do.

AR:

His family come there in the early 1800s. I mean, like 1890. And at one time—I've heard—they owned the land all the way from Ropesville out to Busterville.

AH:

Do you know where Busterville is?

DM:

I don't.

AR:

It's about five miles.

AH:

Four miles.

AR:

Five miles east of Ropes.

AH:

There's a gin there.

DM:

Yeah, I have here that the gin was founded in the early twenties. That's what you said, wasn't it? Okay.

AR:

And then in 1957 they organized the co-op gin there.

AH:

And Arlin was—you were on the board there, too.

AR:

At one time my dad went on the board there. Early sixties. I don't know what year. And he served on the gin board for a while. And then in '74 I went on the gin board. Served on it seven, eight years. And then my nephew—her son—

AH:

Liam. [?] [0:27:02.7]

AR:

--served on it one time. And they had, before my dad passed away, they had give us a little plaque saying that three generations had served on that gin board over there.

DM:

Um-hm. That's something. Y'all are really, really tied in. Well, with all these generations you're really tied into the community and the area. Well, how has the agriculture changed in that area from the 1930s to the present? Has it become more cotton or more diversified?

AR:

It's always been basically cotton. We had, at one time, in the seventies we had a farm program where you couldn't plant it all cotton. In order to qualify for the farm program about—best I remember close to half of it had to go in something else. Nearly everybody went with milo. There was—and that's when the two grain elevators there—I don't know what year. It was in the fifties when the Goodpasture Grain elevator was built. And then the other elevator was called—the guy that built it was Joe Laverton. And then I think he had a partner. And they called it Ropes Grain Corporation. And his partner is still alive. He's about eighty-four years old. His name is Charles Shannon. He was raised on the Project out west of town.

AH:

So you might talk to him too.

DM:

Where is he?

AH:

He's out in Ropes.

AR:

He lives there in town. His wife was a schoolteacher there at Ropes. And she was the main instigator of getting the community building a historical marker.

DM:

Is she still living?

AR:

Yes. She's still alive.

DM:

What's her name?

AR:

Her name is Jeri Beth Shannon.

AH:

And her maiden name was Greene. Wasn't her dad a gin manager?

AR:

He was a gin manager at Farm Center.

AH:

Okay. Who owns that Four Star Grain? Who owned it?

AR:

I don't know who built that.

AH:

Because that's just down the road.

AR:

I don't even know who owns it now.

AH:

I don't either.

DM:

Can you tell me a little bit more about the founding of the Baptist Church? I understand that there was a school in 1920 that was used as a church also. The building was used as a church. And then the Baptist Church came in. It might have been founded in that school house, I don't know.

AR:

I think when they organized—now I don't know about this. You'll have to get somebody that knows more history—I know our granddaddy Robert T. was a Methodist and Effie Leigh was a Baptist. They went to different churches all their life. Which was kind of odd to me, but that's the way they—if it worked for them, I guess that's good. When they first started over there the Methodists would have a service in some building. I don't know where it was. The Baptist church or the school or where. But the Methodists would hold services one Sunday, and the next Sunday the Baptists would. So they alternated back and forth until they got separate churches. Another thing; Robert T. and Ben, his son, and Roy, they bought several lots in Ropes. To build houses on. Where—now I've heard this. I don't know. I ain't got any proof documenting it—but I've heard them say where the Church of Christ is, they donated those lots to the Church of Christ to build their church. And they own the lots right across the street.

DM:

Okay.

AR:

But they've sold them. Over the years they've sold them. Nobody ever lived over there in town.

DM:

The Baptist church will be celebrating its centennial in a few years then?

AH:

They had another church before they built the one that's there now.

DM:

Same site though?

AH:

Yes. And they may have some pictures of that church. Because Sandra married in the older church. The lady you've been talking with. And then they built the one where we're at now. But my uncle, A.A. Brian [?], [0:32:49.2] married my mother's sister, Ora Leigh. And he was the pastor there. And he taught school at Ropes. And then my aunt taught school at Ropes. And then Ben Dobson's wife taught school. So he met here there. Coy was our—he stayed in Spur, so he didn't come out here. The older son.

AR:

And Roy Dobson's wife taught school in Ropes.

AH:

Yeah, she taught school there.

DM:

You've mentioned a boarding house for school kids there at Ropes. Was there a boarding house for teachers? Or were all the teachers living there?

AH:

What's that lady's name? Hansinger [?] [0:33:27.7] That mother stayed with?

AR:

I have no idea.

AH:

I think it was Ms. Hansinger. But mother said—can you believe it was seven miles to Ropes and that was too far for her to come back and forth? So she stayed with this lady for the whole week and then come home on the weekends.

DM:

Isn't that something? Takes too long. Well, we were talking about the businesses diminishing and the forty-eight businesses in 1965 diminishing over time. And you know that transportation—improvements in transportation probably affected that as well because people can drive to Lubbock or they can drive to Levelland, wherever. Suddenly causes these local businesses to collapse.

AR:

And I've got the documents here—the abstracts—on that land that we own. And they date back until 1901.

DM:

Really?

AR:

When the state of Texas owned that land then. The first buyer was in 1901 from the state. I've got the abstracts here. If you want to make copies of them or something.

DM:

Does the name Jim Jarrett ring a bell? Because he was one of the guys who, in about 1901, started bringing people into that area. From what I understand.

AR:

This guy's name—first guy was Jeff Benson. And then at one time it mentions in here somewhere O.L. Slaton—you know the school over here?—he was involved in this at one time.

DM:

Wow. That's really interesting. Did you ever about—well, we were talking about the churches. I understand that the First Baptist Church was the first church in Ropes. Does that sound correct to you?

AR:

That's the way I understood it.

AH:

Uh-huh.

DM:

And then the Methodist, the Church of Christ, Church of the Nazarene—are any of those still around?

AH:

Yes. And then there's a Catholic church there too I think.

DM:

Catholic Church. And the Hispanic community has increased.

AH:

Yes.

DM:

It's what? Maybe 50 percent now, you think?

AR:

I don't think now. At one time it was in the school, but I think now it's—the Hispanics are decreasing.

DM:

Because of people coming—kids coming from Lubbock?

AR:

Yeah.

Tai Kreidler (TK):

It's a good school—you talked about earlier. Do they just like the learning environment better out there?

AH:

People like knowing who their children are running around with. They are in everything. They have one act play, they have UIL speech, they have athletics, they have—oh what else? But everybody knows each other there, and their kids are so busy. They have a wonderful cheerleading program. So your kids are busy and they're too busy to get in trouble, because they're in everything, see? A lot of people think, Well, your kids are too involved. But kids are going to find something to do, and I think that is what draws them there.

DM:

Similar things are happening outside the Metroplex. Outside Fort Worth-Dallas. People going out to the smaller communities for the very same reasons. These little schools are very dynamic.

AH:

Yeah. And they have excellent teachers. You know, they have good morals there. They have a strong discipline there. Kids need that. A lot of parents sometimes think they don't, but they do. I mean, you're going to have better kids there.

DM:

So this is all increasing—this is what's going to increase the classification of the school?

AH:

Yes.

DM:

What are some of the—thinking of athletics—well, and UIL and other competitions—what are some of the rival schools with Ropes? I mean, all schools have their—

AH:

Well, mainly Meadow. [Laughter] Meadow was rivalry when my mother was there. Still there.

AR:

They organized the city of Meadow about the same time they did Ropes, I think.

DM:

They're not very far apart.

AH:

Five miles.

AR:

There's always been a big rivalry between those two communities.

DM:

Any others? I know that Lorenzo falls into your—I think it falls into your district. It's a distance away.

AH:

Yeah, we played them. And then this year we had Whiteface and we had Meadow. We had New Home. New Home is becoming a rivalry. They're a small school. Six man like us. But I think they did go up this year, because they're getting a lot of Lubbock people out there. And then—let's see. Who else did we play, Arlin? Petersburg. We played Petersburg. We played Smyer.

DM:

How about Wellman?

AH:

Wellman. Wellman, Union.

DM:

This rivalry between Ropes and Meadow—does it ever appear in things happening between the communities before football games, you know?

AH:

Oh sometimes, you know, they'll burn the bonfire.

DM:

Okay.

AH:

At the homecoming time. Nothing drastic or anything. It's just kids' fun.

DM:

A long-standing rivalry though.

AH:

Oh yeah. Yeah.

DM:

You said your mother?

AH:

My mother. Uh-huh. Yeah.

DM:

Who was it again that was on the state championship? That was your mother?

AH:

Um-hm.

DM:

That was on the state championship basketball team in 1935? Can you talk about that a little?

AH:

And there—my son has a place to display with glass and all, and one of mother's teammates had her jacket and it's in that case. And then they have a picture of mom and them there. And our girls this year miss going to state by one class, and it was Nazareth. They won every game but one.

DM:

Nazareth can be pretty tough.

AH:

Nazareth just brings them out of the woodwork. I don't know where they get these kids.

DM:

Some have played for Tech.

AH:

But, you know—

DM:

One was on that Tech national championship team.

AH:

But our girls went to state and we don't have any seniors. So—but we play Nazareth again, because we stayed in the same district. They're very, very good. Very competitive. And you may have seen the little girl that doesn't have any hair? Maggie Anderson? She has what they call alopecia, and she is excellent. Oh my gosh. But her mom and dad moved out there and they live off of [Highway] 62/82. On some acres out there. But anyway. And then Lane went to district in football. Went to regional in football.

DM:

So pretty good football team too?

AH:

They have real good foot—they did. And then he went to regional in basketball too.

DM:

What about in the past? Besides the 1935 basketball team, have there been other state championship teams?

AR:

Fifty-seven. Fifty-six and fifty-seven.

DM:

Was that ladies' basketball again?

AH:

Uh-huh. Yeah.

AR:

The girls went and I think in one of those years—'56 or '57—the boys and girls both went.

DM:

Wow.

AR:

I don't think the boys won, but I think the girls won.

AH:

Yeah. They did.

AR:

They went two years and didn't—the won one year. One year they didn't. But back to that '35 team. There's a lady named Marjorie Pointer. She's still alive.

DM:

How do you spell that?

AH:

She's a hundred and two.

DM:

Marjorie--?

AH:

M-a-r-j-o-r-i-e. Pointer. P-o-i-n-t-e-r.

DM:

Oh Pointer.

AH:

She and her husband both are living.

AR:

They live in a nursing home in Levelland. She's about a hundred and one, I think.

AH:

He's a hundred and two.

AR:

And I think she would be competent enough to tell you some stuff.

AH:

She's hard of hearing, but I think she could tell you.

AR:

Her family was—her maiden name was Crowe. They—I don't know when they come to Ropes, but they come in the twenties, I think.

AH:

And they live there on—lived on 41. Their house is still there, isn't it?

DM:

What's the husband's name?

AH:

JC.

AR:

JC Pointer.

DM:

Would he be able to talk as well?

AR:

I think he's—

AH:

I think he's got dementia.

AR:

I don't know where he'd be.

AH:

But I don't think she does, does she?

AR:

I think he turned a hundred and four this year, didn't he?

AH:

He was born in '14. He's same age as Daddy would have been.

DM:

One lady out there—Ella Mae Ward? I interviewed her a few years ago.

AH:

Yes. She's a hundred and two.

DM:

A hundred and two? She's doing well still.

AH:

She's still living. Still by herself.

DM:

Out there in that house? That's where I interviewed her. I need to go see her. We need to go out there and see her sometime.

AR:

I don't know—I come up here one time and y'all had a little display about the Tractorcade in 1979.

DM:

Oh yeah.

AR:

I went on that.

DM:

Oh did you? Golly.

AR:

And I donated the tractor that I drove to the Bayer tractor museum. It's sitting out there.

AH:

Do you have a picture of that tractor?

AR:

Not with me.

AH:

So they can see.

AR:

Here's some information about when Eisenhower was inaugurated in 1953, the Hockley County Sheriff's Posse went to that inauguration parade in Washington, DC.

DM:

Really? Golly.

AR:

And my dad was a member of that sheriff's posse.

DM:

Look at that.

AH:

And he went because he was five. I had to stay home because I had to go to school. So I didn't get to go.

AR:

We got on a train.

DM:

Oh wow.

AH:

Yeah. [Laughter]

AR:

We got on a train here in Lubbock and they took the—they hauled the horses on that train. And we stayed on a—whatever they call it. Where you sleep on there.

DM:

Sleeper car.

AR:

And we slept on the train and then we got to Washington, DC they unhooked those cars and left them at the end of the railroad track there in Baltimore, Maryland. We'd get out and do stuff in the daytime and then every night we'd come back to the train and spend the night on the train.

DM:

Golly. That's something.

AR:

Until we got ready to come back home.

AH:

But there's several Ropes guys that's in that.

DM:

Still around?

AH:

Well, is there any of them living now? Sue's—

AR:

JC might be in that. I don't know whether he was or not.

AH:

I don't think JC was.

DM:

But you were five years old. Can you remember much about it?

AR:

Little bit.

DM:

When they were riding out there, where were you?

AH:

Well, he was with mom.

AR:

I was—I remember standing there in front of the capitol and George Mahon was our congressman for this area. We met in his office a time or two.

TK:

This is great pictures in there.

DM:

And you also have Tractorcade pictures?

AR:

Yeah. Yeah. I've got a bunch of them. Y'all had a display down here one day. In fact, Dan Taylor called me and he said, "You need to go up there to the Southwest Archives." He said, "They got a little display up there."

DM:

Well, we've been out to his house. There was a big event out at his house about four or five years ago. I don't know if you were out there or not. Think he had it out of his barn.

AR:

Yeah. About the anniversary of that deal.

DM:

I might just met you out there. [laughter]

AH:

And my dad's brother lived on that place. Where Dan Taylor lives.

DM:

Is that right?

AH:

Pete Ryals.

DM:

Yeah, we were doing some work with that at one time. I think one of our guys over here is still doing a little bit of work. Andy Wilkinson.

AR:

There was right east of my dad's place—and that place where Dan Taylor lived—there was a doctor—I don't know what his first name was—last name was Sears. And he bought the section east of us, and then he bought that section where Dan's house is. And he was a doctor in Whitewright, Texas. He never moved down here. Right south of it—the east one from us—the guy that owned the funeral home in Whitewright—his name was Phillip Wise—he bought a section down there. And they moved some of those people in that area out here to farm that. They knew them down there, and then they moved out here in the twenties. Some of our kinfolks were kinfolks to some of those people.

DM:

Oh really?

AR:

Yeah. They called them—their last name was Keeling. And there's still a Keeling grandson out there now.

DM:

How would you spell Keeling?

AH:

K-e-e-l-i-n-g.

DM:

Okay.

AH:

His name is David Keeling.

AR:

David Keeling is the one that lives out there.

AH:

He lives on 41, just right down from where Dad's place is.

AR:

There was another farm I've heard about—I don't know where y'all would ever find out—right there close to Busters Gin, which is five miles east of Ropes. There was a guy named Snyder. He was a cotton buyer at Spur that bought some land in there. He's there still on some of that. They traded 160 acres they traded for a pair of spurs at one time.

DM:

Really?

AH:

Was that crate [?] [0:49:01.8]?

AR:

Yeah.

AH:

Oh my gosh. But his grandson still lives out there Sanders said, right? His name is Johnny Snyder. He lives out there close to Billy Carter.

DM:

Was there ever any—as far as you know or have heard—was there ever any ranching out there after the twenties or so? Thirties? Was it all agri—was it all farming?

AR:

No, there was some ranches there. In fact, when they bought this place in 1919, there was a hundred acres broke out. And they broke the rest of it out. And I remember my uncle saying when they come here there was very few mesquites. You know, you see this ranchland now it's got mesquites all over.

DM:

Right. Right.

AR:

But he said, you know, they were very few and far between. But he said it had a cat-claw in that grass—native grass. He said, "We always said if you had cat claw on that land it was good land." You know.

AH:

That was a good sign?

AR:

That was one of the signs they looked for, for productive land.

AH:

Is that that thing that had those little seeds in it?

AR:

No, they kind of got thorns on them.

DM:

It looks like a cat's claw. It's got a little thorn.

AH:

Yeah. I used to pick those up all the time. They'd have these little seeds in them and all. You'd find horny toads out there too. But now I think they're about extinct.

DM:

I've got them at my place.

AH:

Oh you do?

DM:

Tons of them.

AH:

Really?

DM:

Yeah, because I don't have fire ants. Got those big harvester ants.

AH:

So you live out on acreage?

DM:

Yeah. I'm south of Lorenzo. Seven miles.

AH:

So you're a farmer too, huh?

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DM:

I'm not a farmer, but I live in a farmhouse.

AH:

Really?

DM:

I grew up in a rural area west of Fort Worth, so that's the way I live. That's what I like to do.

AH:

Awesome. That's awesome.

AR:

Whenever my grandparents moved there, there was a house that was three years old that they moved into.

AH:

Do you have a picture of that?

AR:

No.

AH:

That was—one of the guys that moved here from Tennessee. He stayed about three years. But he built that house, and then when he sold it to my grandad they went back to Tennessee. And then my dad sold that house to a neighbor of ours. And it's still sitting over there.

AR:

Fred Bentley.

DM:

Oh is it?

AR:

Bobby McNab [?] [0:51:52.0] lives in it now. But, you know, they've redone it two or three times.

DM:

What would the year be on that house?

AR:

It was built—

AH:

Well, Daddy built ours in '52.

AR:

But that house was built probably about '15, '16.

DM:

Wow.

AR:

But anyway. It pretty well looks original. The way it did when they bought it.

AH:

Had a pointed roof.

AR:

Sitting over there now.

DM:

One of those—you know some of those Project houses were like that, weren't they? With the hip roof all the way around like that and comes to a point?

AR:

Her son—her son, Len Jackson, bought a place out west of Ropes about two miles out of town. It was a Project place. It's got one of the original houses on it. It's never been added to. Nearly all of them out there now that're still there have been—rooms been added to or whatever. But his is still standing.

DM:

Can people go up to it close enough to get a picture?

AH:

Oh yeah, it's in pretty bad shape. He redid it there at one time. I told him, I said—he had thought about tearing it down, and I said, "You need to fix that up, because that's historical." It had never been added on to and it's still the original. And their daughter went in there. They have what they call tongue and groove paneling that was in those houses. And she took it off of the living room, but she left in the hall. And it has the original tongue and groove in there. And then it's three

bedroom, living room, kitchen. He went in there and redid all of it. Painted it and put carpet and everything. But he said the other day that it was in pretty bad shape. But you can go and look at it. And you can get a hold of him and he'd let you go see it.

DM:
Okay.

AH:
His name is Len Jackson. He lives on [FM] 1585. He's my son. But—

TK:
That'd be worthwhile to take a look at.

DM:
Let me see if I can—

AR:
There's one sitting out here at the tractor museum that's original. It come off what they call Murphy Place over there. They moved it out there and they fixed it up.

AH:
And then also, did they ever redo—I mean, did they ever add onto that guy that lived down that road where Jane Johnson lives? You know. What's his name?

AR:
Condor [?] [0:54:50.0]

AH:
Condor [?]. I don't think they ever added onto that either.

AR:
No, it hadn't been added on to.

AH:
I think that's original too.

AR:
He still lives there.

AH:

He still lives there.

DM:

What would y'all think about—I'm kind of imposing on you here—what would y'all think about maybe us getting together sometime, going out there and going to a couple of these places?

Taking pictures of some of these historic spots right around Ropes?

TK:

We'll come by and pick you all up. We'll just drive up there for a little.

DM:

Yeah. I'd cut out a little time to do that.

TK:

Late morning or—

AR:

I'm retired. I don't do nothing anyway.

DM:

You know, I think that would be good for us to have some photographs here. Especially with this centennial coming up. And also other things like you know if the old base for the irrigation well is still there, just things like that that have some historic value. I think it would be good to have a photograph.

TK:

It's a good idea.

AR:

Okay.

AH:

You have that picture of Mom and Dad's house, don't you?

AR:

Yeah.

AH:

You might have him shoot a copy of that.

AR:

That's not old enough. They want old stuff.

DM:

What is the year on that house?

AH:

Fifty-two.

AR:

Fifty-two.

DM:

Well, that'd be okay.

TK:

That's old enough too.

AH:

Because it doesn't look like that now. [Laughter]

DM:

That would be okay. Going with y'all around there to take some of these pictures might also help us to have a little more entrance to getting up close enough to a house to get a photograph without getting shot at. [Laughter]

TK:

There's always that.

DM:

"There's those Tech people again!"

AH:

I think if you told those people who you were they wouldn't shoot you. [Laughter]

DM:

But yeah. Consider that if you don't mind.

AR:

Yeah, I'd be able to go with you.

DM:

You'd also be able to take us right to it and we'd be wandering around.

AR:

A lot of that land over there I—have y'all seen a plot of that land they've got at the community building? Where those Project places farms were?

DM:

I didn't see that while we were there.

AR:

Okay, they're—

DM:

We kind of went in, had our meeting—

TK:

Had our meeting—

AR:

There's a deal right out front that shows the—it draws off the property lines and the original people from that Project. They—the way I understood it, if you had a playa lake on your place you got more acres. If it was totally flat they let them have a hundred and sixty acres, but if you had a lake you might end up with two hundred acres.

DM:

Okay. To make up for the wetland?

AR:

And then those boundary lines—I used to cut milo custom cut all over that area, and you better know where the property line is, because they just come to a point over there on places. Some people would have turn row in there, some wouldn't. [Laughter] But it was kind of crazy the way they did that.

AH:

Now, my son's grandmother owned a—her in laws owned the Project house there. A Project place west of Ropes. And she's still living. She's ninety-six. But it was her in laws. But she inherited this land. And Len [?] [0:58:17.8] farmed it there for a while but he doesn't anymore. But that was one of the Project places, and so you—I wanted Len [?] to come because he had all

this information about the church. He's a deacon at the church now, and he had all this information about the church on his phone.

DM:

Really?

AH:

And he was talking about it Monday and I said, "You need to come and visit and go with us." And he said, "I don't want to be on TV." [Laughter] I said, "You're not going to be on TV." [Laughter]

DM:

Yeah, we avoid that problem. A lot of people feel that way. I feel that way. [Laughter]

AH:

And so he wouldn't meet with us. But maybe he'd go around with us.

DM:

Oh that'd be great. And then you know maybe I can talk him into sitting down and just visiting with the little audio recorder going because I'd like to hear a little bit more about that.

AH:

I know, because—

DM:

Can you describe what else you have there while we have the recorder going?

AR:

The only thing we got about the sheriff's posse when they went to Washington. And I've got the abstracts to that land. And it dates back, like I said, to 1901. Until we bought it. That's all I've got.

TK:

I had a question on Sheriff Clem. Did you know him?

AR:

Yeah, I remember him.

TK:

And of course here it comes. What do you recall people talked about when he reported he saw that UFO? [Laughter] I know that's been in the ether but here's firsthand. I saw that name. I said, "I recognize that name." And he was the one that gave a report that he had seen something out west of Levelland.

AR:

Well, the stories I heard that Weir Clem said that they went out there. They saw something out there or heard about something being out west of Levelland. And they went out there and the engine on their car quit running. Have you heard that?

TK:

I've heard something about that.

AR:

So I don't know whether that's hearsay or it actually happened or what, but.

DM:

What year are we talking about?

TK:

Fifty-seven.

AR:

That was about the same time that stuff was going on over at Roswell. Wasn't it? About that same era?

TK:

Somewhere in there I think is right.

AR:

About '47, '46. Somewhere in there, I think.

TK:

Sounds like this gentleman here is a pillar of the community. Fine, upstanding individual.

AR:

Yeah, he was. I don't know how long he was sheriff over there. Several years, I think.

AH:

Now is he deceased?

AR:

Yeah.

AH:

Okay.

TK:

Well, just curious. I thought—you said Hockley County, I thought I'd ask the question.

DM:

Tai, you're the manuscripts expert. You want to glance at some of this?

TK:

Oh yeah. Sure. Sure.

DM:

We can go ahead and turn this off unless y'all want to add anything else?

TK:

Well, I had a question. Real quick question. What do you remember of Goodpasture and his operation? Did you have any interaction—your family—have any direct interaction with Grady Goodpasture at all?

AR:

I can remember in 1957 we made a good milo crop around, and there was a trailer—you know, people haul grain in trailers and trucks. But they were lined up waiting to get unloaded. From the elevator there in Ropes clear to the cemetery, which is roughly a mile out there. But they were—I remember them being lined up, waiting in line to get unloaded. And that was something to see.

TK:

Impressive.

DM:

Did you have any other?

TK:

Well, he's just pretty influential. Not only in terms of his operation—grain operation—but as an individual. I heard some interesting things over the years of how he was very pragmatic in his business dealings, I guess to put it in one way.

AR:

Yeah, he was a—he was a smooth operator. [Laughter] Had to be to accomplish what he did, you know?

TK:

Well fair enough. [?] [1:02:59.6]

DM:

I think we got a pretty good start today, but I know we're going to have a lot more questions for you as I go back through this and want to start filling in some gaps. But do y'all have anything else you want to add today? On the record?

AR:

No, I can't think of anything right now.

DM:

If you're like me, you'll think of it at 2:00am, so if you'll jot something down I'll jot some notes down too and maybe we'll follow up. And I'd sure like to get out and look around at some of these historic buildings and sites.

AR:

Okay.

TK:

One final question has just come to mind. Y'all have spent a lifetime out here. One of the things we're always curious about is what people of the land have seen. Anything stick out in your mind as you walked much of the pasturage and the land and plowed fields, artifacts and things like that of maybe early day ranchers that preceded y'all out here? Or find old artifacts?

DM:

Maybe Native American?

TK:

Native American Metates or anything? Anything come to mind? Any of that?

DM:

Y'all farmers plowed those things up sometimes.

AR:

Yeah.

TK:

And y'all see a lot. Where I grew up in Burkburnett that was true. We'd always visit with Mr. Owens who lived down Gilbert Creek and he'd say he'd see this and that.

AR:

I know there used to be an elderly gentleman over there at Ropes that hunted arrowheads. And after a big sandstorm I know he come out to our place on day. He had said, "Can I go back there and look around that,"—we've got a playa lake back there. And he said, "Can I go back there and look around.", "Yeah."

AH:

Who was that?

AR:

Old Man Hewitt. [?] [1:04:56.1]

AH:

Oh really?

AR:

Glenn Hewitt's daddy.

AH:

Really?

AR:

And he could find pieces. They never found but—and he used to tell stories about in the wintertime—You know these playa lakes used to hold water year round.

AH:

When we got rain. [Laughter]

AR:

But he said on a certain time of year they would live on one side of the lake, and on the summertime they would live on the—I think he said the northeast side because their prevailing winds were out of the south and southwest. And it would blow over that water.

DM:

Evaporative cooling.

AR:

It was cooling. And I remember him saying something like that.

DM:

Isn't that something?

AH:

So who was he talking about? "They" would?

AR:

Indians.

AH:

And do you really think Indians were out there?

All:

Yeah.

AH:

Oh my gosh.

AR:

And this place—I remember when my uncle said when they come there, there was a dugout on it. Half.

AH:

Who said that? Uncle Ben?

AR:

Yeah.

DM:

Guess there's no remnant of that?

AR:

No. It fell in a long time ago. But he said there was a dugout there

TK:

Way back.

DM:

Could've been a Spade Ranch thing.

TK:

Well, you know it's not too far away from the course of that yellow house kind of draw system?

DM:

Oh boy. A lot of Native American activity there.

TK:

So that's interesting. You know there's an old story that people in the region—particularly around Brownfield—talk about where they say Quanah, toward the end of his life, took a ride through and visited Brownfield and stuff.

DM:

Yeah, that's right.

AH:

Really?

TK:

Yeah.

AH:

Now what tribe was he with? Cherokee?

TK:

Comanche.

AH:

Oh Comanche. Okay. There's some Indians that live there in Ropes.

TK:

Oh are there really?

AH:

Well, they're part Indian. You know, Lucy Prophet [?] [1:06:57.8] is. Her mother was full blood, I think. Because they go up to the hospital in Oklahoma City. And she's a florist—she's a designer for United. Works in the florist.

TK:

She grew up there and everything?

AH:

Uh-huh. She's still there.

TK:

Been there for a while.

AH:

And her mom's still living.

TK:

And she's Comanche or Cherokee or—

AH:

I think they're Cherokee.

TK:

Cherokee.

AH:

Uh-huh. Her mother lives in a nursing home in Levelland. Her name is Billie Evans. But I think she's full-blood.

AR:

There's some land out west of Ropes. It's further out than the Project land. Guy named Aubrey Lockett. He bought ten sections out there. He lived in Burnham, Texas. His grandson's still alive. He's one—they still own that land. It was the first gin in Hockley County. It's right on the county line over there.

AH:

Is that that center?

AR:

No. Lockett building.

AH:

Oh okay.

AR:

But it doesn't operate anymore.

AH:

Yeah.

AR:

But in early thirties—I think he bought that land '33 or '34, somewhere in there—in about '36 or '37 there was a guy named Gardener over there. They farmed some of that Lockett land and another guy. I don't know what his name was. But anyway, they were drinking and they got in a squabble over there. The other one walked over to his pickup, got his pistol, and come out there and shot that guy and killed him on the gin scales right there in the Lockett building.

AH:

Who was that?

AR:

James Gardener's daddy.

AH:

Who'd he kill?

AR:

No, he got killed. James's daddy.

AH:

Who killed him?

AR:

I don't know what that guy's name was.

AH:

And they didn't do anything with that?

AR:

They didn't do anything to him.

DM:

What was James's daddy's name?

AR:

I couldn't tell you. Reason I know all this is because James lived across the street from me at one time after he got to be an old man. Which he's dead now. But his daughter is still alive and they own—

AH:

Holland Gardens.

AR:

--Holland Gardens here in Lubbock.

DM:

Oh really?

TK:

Oh my. Okay.

DM:

You know her name?

AR:

Ann.

AH:

What's her last name? Holland.

AR:

Holland.

AH:

Ann Holland.

DM:

Ann Holland. Ann Gardener-Holland. Okay.

AR:

They lived out there on that Lockett land.

AH:

And she went to Ropes school.

AR:

And she went to Ropes school.

TK:

Everybody.

AH:

I'm telling you. And if you're married here you're married to somebody that's kin to them. It's just amazing. Amazing.

TK:

Well speaking of that—Max Evans, Joaquin Jackson—have Ropes connections. Is that true?

AH:

Who's that?

TK:

Max Evans is a famous writer out of New Mexico that does a lot of western sort of writing, as I understand.

DM:

Joaquin Jackson, the Texas Ranger.

AR:

Okay.

TK:

Lived for a time, I think, in Ropes. So my goodness, it's a crossroads.

AH:

It is.

DM:

Yeah. Yeah.

AH:

Well, and to see—back to that Lockett guy. The lady that her husband farmed that land is just right north of dad's there. And her name is Caroline Gregg. And they were the ones—weren't they—didn't he bring them out here from Sherman? Or was it Dan Taylor? I mean Dawn Davis's dad, Leo?

AR:

Yeah, they come from Sherman.

AH:

But the Gregg's didn't?

AR:

Yeah, the Gregg's eventually did too.

AH:

Okay. And then his grandson that he was talking about is named Jordan Gregg, who goes to our church there at Ropes. His mom does too. His dad—his granddad.

DM:

Y'all are a wealth of information. I know we're going to be calling y'all and getting some more—having some more questions.

AH:

We're the gossips, I guess. [Laughter]

TK:

But I like that idea. Getting out with them, maybe, if it's convenient.

DM:

Yeah, if you have some time we can set aside something that fits all of our schedules.

AH:

He probably—and I do too—know nearly all the people that are on those Project places. The names of them. In fact, I have a book. Do you? Did you have that cookbook?

AR:

Yeah. Yeah, I got that.

AH:

And it has all the Project people in it.

DM:

Oh really?

AH:

You probably can get one of those cookbooks from Terri Beth Shannon. She was selling them. And it will have all the Project people in there and their pictures.

AR:

There was a man over there that his family lived out east of town too—east of Ropes. And they were old time people there. And he said one night—he told me one time. He said, “When they started that Project that the government come in there and built those houses brand new for those people and built them some barns, you know.” And he said, “You know, it was a good deal for those people that qualified for it.” But he said, “We was living out east of town. You could see through the walls of our houses, you know?” He said, “The government didn’t do nothing for us.” And there was kind of a—

AH:

Conflict.

DM:

Right. I’m sure.

AH:

Was that Walt Keeling?

AR:

No, that was CR Johnson.

AH:

Oh. Okay.

DM:

You know that’d be an interesting aspect of this whole story. I hadn’t really thought about that.

AR:

I'm sure those people on the Project didn't want to hear something like that, but you know. I remember that guy telling me that and he's—

TK:

Well, it's natural.

AR:

And he said—you know, he was just a kid, and he said, "I remember going to school with those kids when they first come." But he was—

AH:

Well, how'd they qualify for that? Did they just put in for it and then they get—got it?

AR:

You had to—it was just like any other government deal. I heard Sue say yesterday you had to have at least two children. You couldn't own any land anywhere else. I don't know what—they had several different qualifications like that. A lot of those people—I know of three or four families—that come from New Deal area. They were farming over there and then they put those people in. And there's a family—one of their boys is still there. Dalton family. And they come from—

AH:

Is that Davy?

AR:

Yeah.

AH:

Well, he wouldn't tell them anything. He's a hermit.

AR:

But they come from somewhere up there around Olton or somewhere. They were—he said they were living in a boxcar. Whenever they—

DM:

Were they tenant farmers up there?

AR:

Yeah, they were tenant farmers.

DM:

So that's why they got some land. Okay.

AH:

Well, see I guess JW's stepdad, Ace Connor?

AR:

Yeah.

AH:

He's the one that qualifies.

AR:

Yeah, he qualified for that.

AH:

Yeah, because of grandma's kids.

TK:

Amarillo Slim is another name.

AR:

Yeah, he lived at Ropes at one time.

AH:

He was a big time gambler, wasn't he?

AR:

Yeah.

TK:

Anything to say on him? [laughter]

AR:

I don't know him.

AH:

I don't know him.

AR:

I've just heard the same thing you've heard. I know he lived at Ropes at one time.

TK:

That's right, David. I just recorded Amarillo Slim.

AH:

Did Ropes ever have a jail?

AR:

Yeah. Yeah, they did.

AH:

There was a guy there named Bill Chandler. And I don't—he studied—and of course he's deceased now, but did he study the stars? Or I don't know what he did.

AR:

I don't know what he went by. He was the weather person.

AH:

But he was a weather guy. Daddy always would look up Bill Chandler to see what the weather was going to do. And he pretty well hit it on the mark. When to plant and if it's going to rain and what it's going to do. He was really good. Daddy always said he thought he studied. He never really did come out and say what he did, but he said, "I think he's some way studied the stars or something." You know.

DM:

Did he print something? Did he put something out in print? He just told people?

AR:

Oh no. He just told people.

DM:

He was a walking farmer's almanac.

AR:

Yeah, he was. He's kind of a hermit.

TK:

We could use him right now. [laughter]

AH:

Like those hermits.

DM:

We need someone to do a rain dance.

AR:

There was a—they used to, south of Ropes, there was a—the way Ropes got its name, I heard, was when the railroad come through they had some pens down there—cattle pens—and part of them were made out of rope. They loaded the cattle on the railroad. So there was a little community down there called Melrose. Right by the roadside park down there. But it just kind of vanished after Ropes or before Ropes. But anyway, somewhere down in that area they had an open air dance floor. It's the guy—he's dead now—but his name was Buford Moore [?].

[1:17:00:0] But he was a—I think he was a deacon in the Baptist church at one time.

AH:

Um-hm. He was. Um-hm.

AR:

But he was floored bouncer at the dance down there. [laughter]

AH:

But see Ropes was going to be the county seat instead of Levelland.

DM:

Well, it was the first settlement.

AH:

And so they changed it because something about it wasn't in the center of Hockley County. Isn't that the saying they're saying? And so they changed it to Levelland instead of Ropes. And then Ropes is Ropes School, but it's Ropesville, Texas town.

DM:

Yeah, isn't that something? That's interesting how the local people, like y'all, always say Ropes. Technically it's Ropesville.

AR:

I think there was another Ropes—town of Ropes—somewhere in the state, so they had to change it to Ropesville. Or vice versa. One of the two.

DM:

I've heard that it wasn't exactly Ropes but it was kind of close to the same so they wouldn't allow Ropes. But hey, that didn't stop all of y'all from calling it Ropes, did it? And it's on the depot.

AH:

No. Still call it Ropes.

TK:

But the ISD is Ropes?

AH:

Ropes. Ropes ISD.

DM:

Depot says Ropes.

AH:

Y'all need to go up there and look at the school.

DM:

Need to. Need to do that.

AH:

And they have a new field house that they just built. Very nice.

AR:

I don't know whether y'all know it, but right there at the edge of town and right south of town there's a family. Blankenship's. There's a lot of history on them out here at the Ranching Heritage Center.

DM:

Yeah. Right. Maxine.

AR:

But they still own land out there.

DM:

Is that Maxine Blankenship. Does that name ring a bell?

AH:

I never did know them, did you?

AR:

I didn't know. I never know any of those people.

AH:

And then another family is Cowan. They have a son that lives there in—across the railroad tracks. John. And then they have another son named Clay. And Arlin said Clay farms your land, right?

AR:

Yeah.

AH:

And Arlin said Clay knows a lot about the Cowan history.

AR:

I think their granddaddy was—

AH:

Lee.

AR:

I don't know this for sure.

AH:

He was a deacon too.

AR:

But I think he was the first guy buried at the Ropes Cemetery.

DM:

Oh really?

AR:

I know he's one that helped to get it started. But I don't know whether he was the first one buried or not. But I know he is buried there.

DM:

How do you spell Cowan?

AH:

C-o-w-a-n.

DM:

Okay.

AH:

Clay and John.

AR:

But they come there—his family come before 1900.

DM:

Golly.

AH:

Now where are they from? Do you remember?

AR:

I don't know where they come from.

AH:

Shirley's last name was Leatherwood and where did she tell me they came from? She married John, you know, when they came out here. Can't think of where she said they come from. Back east.

DM:

You've given us a lot of good leads here.

TK:

Absolutely. Absolutely.

AH:

I figured Sandra had given y'all a bunch of information.

DM:

She talked to you.

AH:

Her family came there—they're Armstrong. I don't know when they came there. Do you?

TK:

Well, she was very laudatory of y'all, and also knew that y'all's schedule was better before the summer kicked in, because she expected you—

AH:

Yeah, we're supposed to take our trailers to Ruidoso June the twentieth and stay until August first.

AR:

But just holler at me if y'all want to drive around out there. I'll tell you what I know.

DM:

That'd be great.

AR:

There's some more land over there. It's over there northwest of Ropes. And there was some families that was part of the Spade Ranch. I don't know what year this happened. But I know there was some people set up over there all night long on the railroad track. They had a fence—you know, they had a gate to go through. And you could go in there and pick you out some land and bid on it someday. And I know there was a family—Hobgood's bought some of it. And there was a guy named Joe Cooke bought some of it. I don't know how many acres was involved but I remember them talking. They set up over there all night waiting for them. Open the gate and get in there and look at some of that. But it was all pastureland.

AH:

Well, now do the Hobgood's still own that?

AR:

Yeah.

AH:

Well, who has that? Darrell's gone?

AR:

Randy Smith, probably.

AH:

Darrell's gone.

AR:

Yeah, Randy probably. Bobby owns some of it.

DM:

I don't have the year of when that railroad line came through there.

AR:

Eighteen, I think. But I'm not sure about that. But I think it was '18.

DM:

Okay.

AR:

I know the railroad come through before town was there.

AH:

Two thousand—I mean, 1918?

AR:

I think that's right.

DM:

Okay.

AH:

So that's a hundred years.

TK:

So they had a land rush of sorts there on the Spade Ranch?

AR:

Yeah. Yeah. I think it was the Spade.

TK:

I think that's right.

DM:

It was Spade cowboys that were—Spade cowboys were in that area, and I understand that they were some of the first to call that area Ropes. I'm not sure. I've just read that.

AR:

There's something about the Ellwood family that was involved in that Spade Ranch someway. But I know the minerals on all of that Project land over there—those people got like two-thirds of the minerals and the Ellwood estate kept a third of them. Still got them. I know whenever they get ready to lease it for oil that the Ellwood's come in there.

AH:

So where are the Ellwood's at?

AR:

Well, they—I don't know whether they own part of that Spade Ranch or whether he was the manager or the head. He was involved in it some way. I don't know. Y'all may know.

DM:

Yeah, we'll have the information on that. I know the name is familiar.

TK:

I think Ellwood's, they owned the Renderbrook, which is down in Colorado City, and then they had the Spade Ranchlands which were out here. And then they had something created called Spade Farms. And then they opened up a lot of it, including the ranch, and just sold it off. Which was like the big sell off a lot of ranches—

AR:

And I think at one time—where the old Saint Mary's Hospital used to be down here on 19th Street, 19th and University? There used to be a two-story house there, and I think that's where the Ellwood's lived. Or some of them at one time.

TK:

I think there's a historical marker out in front of that house, I think. And for a long time there used to be an office downtown that's affiliated with the Spade's Still, I think.

AR:

But there's still Spade Ranch over there. And there's still some Spade farms.

AH:

Yeah, Spade Ranch is over there—

AR:

Over around Levelland.

AH:

--on the Levelland Highway, isn't it?

AR:

Yeah. But the XIT come from—it come from Dalhart down south of Littlefield down—I think it come into Hockley County there. But all that was the XIT at one time.

AH:

But Ropes never did have any what they call “ranchland,” did they?

AR:

Oh yeah. It was all ranchland.

AH:

Oh it was?

AR:

Yeah. I guess it was part of that Spade Ranch. Most of that land. Now, east of town—how would you find out, like, when my granddad come in there? I have no idea who owned that land around. You know?

DM:

Might be some old plans.

AH:

And how did he find out about this land?

AR:

He went through the real estate guy, the way I understood it.

DM:

Speaking of it being ranchland—

AH:

There in Harrison—I mean, you know, you're in Harrison and you're looking at land in Texas?

DM:

Yeah. Yeah, isn't that something?

AH:

Yeah.

AR:

But he had a brother Lueders that—

AH:

That knew. But Lueders is where?

AR:

Down close to Stamford.

AH:

Okay.

DM:

It's a pretty big deal, though, to have new land being broken out and sold off, so I guess word gets around pretty well. Plus speaking of it being ranchland, one of the first things the railroad did when they came through there was put up those stock pens. They built stock pens for this cattle.

AR:

And I had a guy tell me, you know, a lot of this legal descriptions on this land. It'll have "So-and-So School District land."

DM:

Yeah.

AR:

I've got a place out west of Ropes and the legal description on it says, "McCulloch School Land." I just thought that was some country school in Hockley County, but I had a guy tell me the other day—he said, "No. That was probably some school in east Texas that come out here and filed on this stuff. And when you pay taxes on it that school down there got the money on it."

AH:

Levelland doesn't.

AR:

Well, that was before the—

AH:

Before it changed?

AR:

Yeah. Before it was organized. But I saw those “So-and-So School Land.” I just thought, Well, that’s around here somewhere. That’s an old school. But he said, “Oh no. That might have been in east Texas.”

DM:

Well, just like there are UT lands and designated by the state to the revenues come—go to the schools.

TK:

Which they should, I mean, to support education. And that’s what they did. They had more land than money. Especially after the Yankees left. Everything was stripped down to the core, so that was the way they funded universities and/or public education.

DM:

Some of them were fortunate enough that oil was found on their school lands. [Laughter]

AH:

Um-hm. Not like Whiteface.

TK:

Everything changed.

AH:

It’s like, Why didn’t Granddad go on over there? [Laughter]

TK:

Originally what happened was for the universities, they were ascribed lands further to the east. But somewhere in the 1870’s, 1880’s the legislature swapped it. They said, “This land is too valuable. We’re going to give you as much acreage as you have now in this permanent university lands group, but it’s all out in west Texas.” Everybody complained for forty years until they started discovering oil on it. [Laughter] Everybody got real quiet.

AR:

And then the railroad had a lot of power back then.

TK:

That's right.

DM:

That's right.

AR:

Even on this place it's got something about a railroad description. But—

DM:

The railroad had their land.

TK:

They were given land too.

DM:

They had adjoining land too.

AR:

But anyway, some way—I don't know—I guess they went through the state legislature or some way—but anyway. Whenever they picked out a route for the railroad I think they just took that land, didn't they? I don't think they paid those people for it. I don't know that, but I don't know how all that worked.

TK:

Railroads were encouraged in Texas to build. By the time they got their act together—and part of it was they were delayed because of the Civil War—by the time they got ready to build out of Houston and Dallas, a lot of people already settled up. And you're right. They had to just lay the track down and work with people who owned that. But that's not enough to support the railroad. How you build a railroad is the government gives the railroad company land for every mile of track, but there was no more land to give away. So what they did was they give it away in west Texas. And that's why all those things will say, "H&TC Central Railroad Lands." Because they just needed to give away land, and there was a bunch of it out here.

DM:

Um-hm. Same thing as you were saying earlier. They didn't have the money. They just gave the land.

TK:

Gave the land away. Now the government—federal government—when they built west, because they were in open country with the natives just recently gone, they could give land on either side. Which they did. But in Texas it was a little more problematic.

DM:

Right.

TK:

More information than you wanted. [Laughter]

DM:

Do you want to look at some of these?

TK:

Well, sure. Yeah.

DM:

I'll go ahead and shut this off.

TK:

Okay.

End of Recording

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