

**Oral History Interview of
Alan Pickett**

**Interviewed by: Daniel Sanchez
May 25, 2018
Lubbock, Texas**

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

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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 Alan Pickett as he reflects back on his career as a sportswriter. He discusses notable college teams, the Big Country Hall of Fame, and prominent college coaches.

Length of Interview: 01:07:38

Subject	Transcript Page	Time Stamp
Background information; working as a journalist in Kansas vs. Texas	05	00:00:00
Researching for books, notable things	11	00:14:44
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Keywords

College Sports, Sports Journalism, Coaches

Alan Pickett (AP):

And then this is just—put it in your archives, as an oral thing?

Daniel Sanchez (DS):

We put it in there as an oral history and they do a full transcription. It takes about eighteen months or so and then the transcription goes online. Because we don't put the digital files online because of server demands, and so if somebody wants to actually listen to it they have to come into the building. Or in your case, you could get a copy made and you could have a copy for yourself.

AP:

So I could have a copy of that after it's done? Eighteen months or whatever down the road?

DS:

Oh yeah. Or you could have a copy of the interview right away, also.

AP:

Yeah, okay.

DS:

In fact, if you want to—on the transcription go back and edit it, you could also request before you make it available. "Let me make sure it's accurate." Because sometimes our transcriber might hear something that wasn't said right, and no one will catch it if no one knows exactly what that nuance is. But let me get this started. My name is Daniel Urbina Sanchez. I'm at the home of Al Pickett in Abilene, Texas. Al is a journalist, writer, and he's done a lot of stuff in the realm of sports writing. And so, Al, thank you for allowing me to come into your home.

AP:

Appreciate it. You bet.

DS:

Could you start with your complete legal name?

AP:

Okay. It's Alan Wayne Pickett, but everybody calls me Al.

DS:

Okay. And where were you born?

AP:

I was born in a little town called Council Grove, Kansas. That's where I grew up, and then graduated from Kansas State. Ended up working in radio in Kansas and Arkansas, and then the radio station I was working in Arkansas sold, so I got a job as the sports head of the newspaper. Then one day the *Abilene Reporter News* called and asked if I'd be interested in being a sports editor in Abilene. I said, "Sure, where's Abilene?" [DS laughs] I moved here in '86. I spent sixteen years as sports editor, and then went to work for myself. We'll get into that. By doing all sorts of different things. But so I've been in Abilene since 1986.

DS:

Okay. Well, can you talk about some of the differences between working in Kansas and coming here and doing sports here?

AP:

Well, yeah. I mean I was working in radio there and I came here to work in newspaper. Although, now I do a lot of radio things. It's different. I guess the big thing that strikes me about Texas is that football is so big, you know. And then there probably basketball is a little bigger in some ways in Kansas. But football—there's no doubt what king is in west Texas. It's high school football.

DS:

Yeah. Well, in fact Kansas is the home of basketball, so it's natural that that's—

AP:

The wrong school for me. I'm at Kansas State, not Kansas. [Laughs]

DS:

I have a cousin who graduated from Kansas State. In fact, I lived in Garden City, Kansas when I was a young guy.

AP:

Well, I grew up clear on the other side of the state over in eastern Kansas. Just south of Manhattan.

DS:

Okay, yeah. So that's why you went to Kansas State.

AP:

Yeah. I went thirty-seven miles off to college.

DS:

The Little Apple, right?

AP:

Yep. There's the Little Apple. It's a great college town.

DS:

So what years were you going to college?

AP:

Seventy-one to seventy-five.

DS:

Okay. So when you were going on it was long before the Big 12 ever came?

AP:

Oh yeah, it was Big 8 days. But we were Big 8 champions of basketball three of the four years. Football wasn't very good then. It's turned around since with Bill Snyder. But yeah, I was K-State fan from day one.

DS:

Wow. Well, do you want to talk about some of that rich basketball tradition there before we start here?

AP:

Well, I mean, just you know Kansas is of course—University of Kansas—has such tremendous success. Their first coach was Dr. Naismith, who invented the game. And Phog Allen, and of course K-State—one of my college classmates who I knew pretty well in college was Lon Kruger, who is now the head coach of the University of Oklahoma. We had great teams back then. K-State has been to the Final Four a number of times. They had a great rich basketball tradition.

DS:

Okay, and so once you got here how'd you get up to speed on the football?

AP:

I started on the Tuesday before the first Friday football games. And so literally I was going out to cover a game and I'd asked my staff—I had a staff of six—"Okay, how do I get to Eastland?" Or, "How do I get to this town?" Because I had no idea where anything was. But you just learn, and it was I guess baptism under fire. I learned in a hurry. Very quickly realized how big football

was in this area. So I was covering the little Southwest Conference back in the *Friday Night Lights* days. I was covering—I knew all the folks involved in that. But I literally hit the ground running. Starting on the Tuesday, with the first Friday is the first football games.

DS:

It's interesting you mentioned that, because I actually interviewed one of the guys that played for Odessa back in the day.

AP:

Really? Gary Gaines that was a coach there is a good friend of mine.

DS:

Oh okay. And you still keep in touch with him?

AP:

No. Well, Facebook occasionally. Gary's had some health issues but he later coached at Abilene High and at Abilene Christian, but I knew him back when at Permian too.

DS:

Yeah, wow. That guy must have some stories.

AP:

Yeah. Oh absolutely. Absolutely.

DS:

And so what was it like having the little Southwest Conference?

AP:

It was—I tell people from out of state when you think about that Shotwell Stadium where Abilene plays was the smallest stadium in the district and it seats fifteen thousand. So it was big crowds, and in those days—it's got to have been supplanted by the Metroplex—but in those days about every third year this district was winning a state championship in what was 5A then. So it was great football. I've seen a lot of great players come through.

DS:

Yeah, and it was kind of that dominance that led to that two-tier 5A playoffs.

AP:

Yeah, a little bit. I really think it was part of the whole growth of Plano and Allen schools that were just so huge. That's been tweaked a number of times. I think the biggest reason they do it—

obviously it gets more teams in the playoffs—but there's so many schools. There's two hundred and fifty-two schools playing 6A football. I mean, other states—Kansas—they've got sixteen teams playing 6A football, so.

DS:

Yeah, there are some big schools in the state.

AP:

Oh it's unbelievable. I mean Abilene High here is twenty-three hundred and Allen is over six thousand. It's incredible.

DS:

And so when you were writing for the newspaper, did you ever think that you'd be writing books about the sport?

AP:

Oh I never ever planned to write any books. That was totally—I left the newspaper in 2001 and in 2003 my former boss, who was a [coughs]—excuse me—was then the editor of *Statehouse Press*, which was a little local press [coughing]—excuse me—between—out of McMurry University. He called and asked, “Would I be interested in writing a book about the Abilene High team of the 1950s?” The *Dallas Morning News* in 1999 named the teams of the century in all the different sports. [honking] I think that's my—and they, in '54, '55, and '56, Abilene High won three consecutive state championships and they had a forty-nine game winning streak, which was the longest in the nation. So the *Dallas Morning News* named them the Team of the Century. And so they were trying to do some local history books, so they asked if I would be interested in writing a book. So I said, “Sure. How do I write a book?” I had no idea. So I ended up writing *The Team of the Century*—was the name of the book—and that was my first book that came out in 2004, which was the fiftieth anniversary of the first of three consecutive state championships. So that was how I got started writing a book. Then a couple years later—probably in '06—Glen Dromgoole, who I had worked for—who had hired me to come to Abilene—said, “Well, that *Team of the Century* did really well. What's your next book?” I thought, “Oh gosh, I don't know. I don't have a next book.” So I pitched him a couple ideas and he said, “Oh I don't think that would carry a whole book. You're always telling stories, why don't you do a collection of stories?” So I wrote *The Greatest Texas Sports Stories You've Never Heard*, which was a collection of fifty stories. Most of them were around Abilene, and the two lead stories were two things that happened on the same day in 1976. One was the longest field goal in the history of football was kicked in Abilene by a guy named Ove Johansson, the Swedish exchange student who had not even seen a football game until a year earlier, kicked a sixty-nine yard field goal against East Texas State. And then that same day Art Riles, who you know as former Tech graduate and former Baylor coach, he was playing for Houston. They were

playing SMU in the Cotton Bowl and his mom and dad—and his dad had been his high school coach—were killed in a car wreck. And that's why Art became a coach. He was originally not going to coach because of his dad. He ended up transferring from Houston to Texas Tech because he just felt like everybody seemed to go, "There's the guy whose parents were killed." So those happened on the same day in 1976. So those were the two lead stories of the book *The Greatest Texas Sports Stories*. And then that led to the third book. One of the stories I had in it was a little story with Emory Bellard, the coach who was the assistant to Darrell Royal at Texas in then later the head coach of Texas A&M. He was the guy who invented the wishbone. I met him through—I'm chairman of the Big Country Athletic Hall of Fame here and we met him through that. He always kind of wanted to have a book done about his career so I wrote with him his autobiography in his voice called *Wishbone Wisdom*. We got that book out in 2010, early 2010, and six months later he was diagnosed with ALS—Lou Gehrig's disease—and was gone within another six months. So what a blessing we got that book done and did very well. And then that led to—about the time that was coming out I had broadcast—I was doing Abilene High football and Abilene High won the 5A state championship, and the chaplain of the team called me and said, "Hey, I've got an idea for a book." I said, "I don't have time to write a book. I just finished—I've got one coming out right now." And so he called and, unbeknownst to any of us, they had developed the theme brother's keeper on the Cain and Abel story. They had wristbands that said "Bro Keep" and even had "Bro Keep" on their state championship rings. I said, "Oh that's a great idea." So he did the interviewing, I did the writing, and we self-published it and turned it around by July of that year. We turned it around in about six months. That's being made into a movie and filming has just begun. It'll be premiered in Abilene in March of 2019. And then that led to *Mighty, Mighty Matadors* that you were asking about and how did that come about? Well, Jimmie Keeling was the young head coach of that team and Jimmie then spent twenty years as head coach of Hardin-Simmons. I do the radio for Hardin-Simmons and covered him in the newspaper. One day Jimmie called and said, "The guys on the team really would like to have a book about their story." So I drove to Lubbock with Coach Keeling and met with them and decided, hey, that's a really good story. It took several years to get out. It came out in July of 2017. So it's been out about a year now. So that's how that came about. How an Abilene guy wrote a Lubbock book. But it's a wonderful story about a team that was the first integrated school in Lubbock and they were the only Texas high school team ever to win a state championship in their first year of varsity football.

DS:

Yeah, and I also liked the way you tied it back to Pete Ragus, because he had done something similar except for the first year—you know in 1964 or so?

AP:

Yeah, at Corpus Christie Miller. Yeah, 1960, I think. He had kind of an integrated team, but that was all new in West Texas. That was when all of it was being forced by the government through

the Education Act. Where if you didn't integrate you'd lose federal money, and so that's how they forced it to happen. Lubbock, unlike a lot of schools, didn't close the black school. They kept Dunbar open but they opened Estacado as the true experiment and it, obviously, was a great success.

DS:

It's kind of glad that they did that, because they would have lost all that Dunbar history.

AP:

Yeah, yeah, you know. And Dunbar finally closed in the earlier nineties, but yeah. There's no good way around any of that, but this team—and you realize, 1968 was the most turbulent year in America, probably. Bobby Kennedy, Martin Luther King's assassinations, the Vietnam War riots, the civil rights riots. This team put all that behind them and went fourteen and O and won a state championship, so the thought of this *Mighty, Mighty Matadors* was not just a football book, but how they reacted to the times of that era.

DS:

Yeah, I was really interested in that perspective. You know, because it's something that I always ask when I'm interviewing somebody from that era. Keeling said about, "We'd call up ahead to find out if we were welcome before we went to go eat there. We didn't want to embarrass our guys." Which is—

AP:

This just doesn't seem like that long ago. I mean, I was starting high school that year, you know? But how different the world is now. We wouldn't think anything about it now, but it was different back then.

DS:

Yeah, and I'm glad. He took it—shouldered—upon himself, not—you know?

AP:

Yeah, and I just think—to me, one of the neat things about those guys on that team are all still so close. Brown, black and white they are all still so close. Like Joe Rose—white center on the team—said, "My kids know that someday I'll have some Matadors as pallbearers. [Laughter] I thought that was a good line.

DS:

You know the other thing you do and I'm kind of interested in is when you research a book, you mentioned interviews, do you go out there and do oral histories or just a set of questions? What do you do?

AP:

I go out and I've never done much on tape. I write for five magazines still and so I've always just sit down and do interviews with them. So some of these were just done online. Emailed back and forth. Some of them I actually went interviews—I went to a reunion of the team and interviewed people. At that point you're—on this one, you didn't really know what direction was going to go. And fortunately, Kenneth Wallace, the quarterback on the team, his mother kept a great scrapbook and so that's how I had the game stories all the way through. And then tried to supplement that with the interviews with as many people as I could. We even interviewed a number of the players. Some of the stars of the teams they played against, like the quarterback of Brownwood or the star running back from Henderson who they beat in the semi-finals who went on to Oklahoma.

DS:

So did they talk about how they keep up on Estacado, or? [phone ringing] Was it just because they were in the district?

AP:

Well, because I'm talking about playoff games really were not in the district. I just think that they were just living. They were high school kids living their life and I don't think they really knew. They knew Estacado was really talented, but they didn't know they were the first integrated school in Lubbock.

DS:

No, that's not what I mean. I mean, they didn't—you know—were the weary of facing Estacado as far as how powerful they had become?

AP:

I know Dan Steakley [?] [00:16:23], who went on to play at Texas from Colorado City said, "We didn't know how good they were but I'd seen him in track the year before and I knew they were really fast." [laughter]

DS:

Well yeah, and you point that out they were just as successful on the track field as they were—

AP:

Oh yeah. I mean they eventually won a state track championship. There was just a great group of athletes that came through. But it was more than that. It was the fact of how they unified together. There was a lot of talented teams that don't win at all, and they just had that something special. And then of course amazingly they outscored their opponents that year, I think it was five hundred and thirty-eight to thirty-six or some crazy number like that.

DS:

And how do they compare with the Abilene squad as far as the makeup of the guys and the—

AP:

Compared to the 2009 Abilene championship or the 1950s Abilene state championship?

DS:

Oh? Did you talk to a lot of the 1950s guys?

AP:

Yeah, I did.

DS:

Okay. Well, I guess you could compare all of them, if you wanted.

AP:

Well the 1950s was much different because that was before integration. That was an all-white team that was so dominant. The Estacado team was different in the fact that it was just new. I mean, they had no history. Abilene High has a history to build on. The Abilene High 2009 state championship, which was the seventh state championship in the school history but the first one since '56, they were made up very similar. They were brown, black and white. They were a very mixed-race team that all bonded together. So there was that real analogy there. They were, I think, the Mighty, Mighty Matadors and the Eagles of '09 were both a little undersized. They weren't—especially Abilene High team was small—both teams relied on quickness. So I think there was a correlation there. Probably much more so than the fifties team, because that was just a different era.

DS:

And during the course of the years, what strikes you the most of all the coaches and players?

AP:

Well I guess one thing that just jumps out at me is the one thing that maybe all of those teams—the fifties, the coach Bellard, the Estacado team and then the Abilene High 2009—how much reverence they hold for their coaches. The fifties team just loved Chuck Moser. I mean, he was stern, disciplined their end but I mean they—I told one of them one day, I said, "If Coach Moser came down from Heaven and said, 'Give me twenty pushups,' you'd do it." He said, "No, we wouldn't. We'd try, but we're all about eighty years old now." [DS laughs] You know, these Estacado guys, they loved Coach Keeling. I mean, absolutely. I mean they still—I'm not with Coach Keeling hardly ever. The phone does ring and it's one of his old players. I admire that. I don't think with my playing days I ever had that connection with the coach. I think the same

thing with the Abilene High teams with Coach Warren that's going to come out in the movie. So I think that's—there's a similarity there to this. There's something about those great state championship teams, that they bond between the coaches and the players.

DS:

You mentioned the movie. Are you involved with the movie in any aspects?

AP:

Yes and no. Of course it's based on my book. I've read the script—the initial script. I haven't read the final script. I'm going to get to play myself from the radio now so it's in the movie. So I've been involved with that. We've worked with the executive producer. But as far as directly? No, I've not had that. The big thing is we hope they make some money because I get a percentage. [Laughs] So that's the big thing. But that's a long ways down the road.

DS:

Any timeline before it goes from a project to being released?

AP:

Yeah, they've already booked the convention center in Abilene for a premier on March the thirtieth of next year.

DS:

Wow, that's pretty close.

AP:

And then after that it'll be able to release into theaters. And how that all works I still don't know. I mean, they're pretty confident they can get it in three hundred theaters or so, but time will tell on that. But we really ended up with some big named cast. We got Laurence Fishburne, Milo Gibson—Mel Gibson's son, Coach Warren is being played by Glenn Morshower, who you may not know that name but you know the face. He was in *Moneyball* and in *24*. So we ended up for a small budget independent movie with a lot of big names in it.

DS:

Wow, it's exciting.

AP:

Yeah, it is exciting! We're—I tell people, I say that, "Here's what I know about movies after being involved: I don't know very much about movies." It's taken us four or five years to get to this point. They've got to raise money, they've got to cast, they've got to—it's pretty complicated.

DS:

And are the locations going to be here?

AP:

They're filming all the inside stuff. They're starting right now in Minnesota, because that's where the production company is. That's where Winter State Entertainment is. So they're filming everything inside in Minnesota, because inside it doesn't make a difference whether you're in Abilene and it's a lot less expensive for them. Then they'll come to Abilene in the fall and film outside stuff. They'll film stuff at Shotwell Stadium and scenes around town and so that'll be filmed here.

DS:

And the good thing is because we're not fifty years removed from it there's still a lot of those environments still here.

AP:

Oh yeah. I mean, when this comes out we'll be not quite ten years removed from it.

DS:

Yeah, it's great. That's rather a quick time for a story turnaround.

AP:

Yeah, it is. *Friday Night Lights* was about the same timeframe by the time the movie came out after the book so it—I've learned it's complicated making movies and it takes a lot of money.

DS:

And so what do you do now?

AP:

Well, my grandson asked me one day, "What do you do, Grandpa?" And I said, "I have twelve jobs." My wife said, "Don't lie to him." And I started counting and she goes, "Oh God, you do have twelve jobs!" I own an oil and gas reporting service. That's kind of my full-time/half-time, or my half-time/full-time job. And then I write for five magazines. Three oil and gas magazines and two sports magazines. I host a daily sports talk show here in Abilene on the radio. I have done the play-by-play for Abilene High football and Cooper, Abilene Cooper, basketball and baseball for about thirteen or fourteen years, but I gave that up this year because I have a grandson who's a freshman who's playing varsity at Abilene Wiley so I'm a grandpa sitting in the stands now. And I still do Hardin-Simmons football and basketball on the radio and some other freelancing. Plus writing five books. So I've kept busy.

DS:

Let me ask you some about that radio work. What do you like about doing it?

AP:

Well, it's odd in the fact that that's how I started. I worked eight years in radio, got in the newspaper business by accident, spent nineteen years as a sports editor and then kind of returned to my roots. I'm really doing a little bit of both. You know the fun thing about the radio—the daily talk show—90 percent of the time or more it's just an open line. So I never know what question is coming from the other end. So the ability and the spontaneity—the ability, I think, to show your knowledge, because you don't ever know. I mean I may think I know what the topic is going to be that day and somebody else says it's going to be something totally different, you know? So the spontaneity, I love that. The play-by-play was fun because you're the eyes for somebody listening on the radio or on the internet. Just the fact of trying to be as descriptive as possible and bring excitement to it. So it was fun. Gosh, I've had a chance to do a state championship Abilene High football team, I've had a chance to go with the Hardin-Simmons women's basketball team that made the Final Four. So I've had a lot of great opportunities in the radio as well.

DS:

Yeah, I need to ask this: Do you have, like, a signature call? For example, we used to have a guy in Lubbock—and he just passed away recently.

AP:

Jack Dale?

DS:

Jack Dale. I think it was, "He shoots, he scores." You know?

AP:

Yeah. I don't know that I have one. Not necessarily. Oddly enough, Jack grew up about thirty miles from where I grew up in Kansas.

DS:

Really?

AP:

Yeah. He was from Alma, Kansas. I was from Council Grove. We used to talk about that. I know Steve, his son, well too.

DS:

I interviewed Jack, God, I'm thinking probably 2002? It was a long time ago I interviewed Dale.

AP:

He's probably been gone four or five years now, isn't it? But yeah, Jack was a great guy. I don't know that I have a—if I do, not conscious of one.

DS:

Did you ever meet Corky Oglesby?

AP:

Yeah, I knew Corky.

DS:

He just passed recently, too.

AP:

He did. And Wes Kittley is a really good friend of mine. One of the two sports magazines I write for is *Red Raider Sports*. You probably have seen—

DS:

I've probably read some of your stuff. Read it all the time.

AP:

In fact, I've got an assignment to write two more stories for the summer issue. But yeah, I just did the last issue I did a wrap up on the Chris Beards basketball season. Chris is a friend of mine. And then I did a feature on Texas Tech winning the indoor Big 12 Championship. Of course since that came out they won the outdoor titles too. Wes is a good friend of mine.

DS:

Yeah, the basketball—I mean, the track teams there are just unbelievable right now.

AP:

Wes is—he's the best. He absolutely is the best. Coach Kittley.

DS:

When he slows down a little I'll have to go knock on his door and sit him down for an interview.

AP:

He's great. He's just a terrific person. And Coach Beard I've known because he was McMurry one time and his daughters—he's got a daughter in the same class as my grandson at Wiley. In fact, I went out to see my granddaughter play basketball one day. It's about two days before they played Baylor this winter. I looked over and there's Coach Beard. I go, "What are you doing? Are you scouting?" He was watching twelve year old girls' basketball. [Laughter]

DS:

That's funny. Yeah, he was—yeah, I know that when he had been there with Coach Knight—one of our assistants—he interviewed him at that time. Because he was like, "Yeah, you've got to watch this guy. This guy is going to be somebody."

AP:

Yeah, I did a feature on him when he was recruiting back when he was an assistant there. So I've known Chris for a long time.

DS:

Well, let's—is there anything that you'd like to talk about?

AP:

I don't know what—when I do interviews with people, I always say, "Well, here's my best question: What didn't I ask you?"

DS:

Yeah, I didn't ask you a thousand things because—

AP:

I just—my career has been interesting in the fact that I've done a little bit of everything. Maybe I'll mention one thing here. I told you about I didn't really plan to write a book. I graduated in journalism in mass communications from Kansas State. At the time, after you took a couple basic classes like Reporting I, you had to kind of decide were you going to have an emphasis in radio/TV, or in print journalism, or advertising, or public relations, whatever. I decided to go into radio/TV because I didn't want to write. And so when I speak to people I say, "Well, sometimes things don't work out exactly like you planned." I didn't want to write and I spent nineteen years as a sports editor and written five books. [DS laughs] Didn't exactly work out. God has a different plan for you.

DS:

Yeah. And in fact, I'm just—I went to Tech in the mid-seventies and my first major was mass comm. But after the first semester I realized I didn't really want to do radio. I didn't want to do

any writing, I didn't want to do advertising, so I had to change major. It was not what I wanted to do.

AP:

And I always kind of knew I wanted to sports. I've always kind of had a hand in that. I didn't know that that's where it would lead, but I was always a huge sports fan and I'm also chairman of the Big Country Athletic Hall of Fame here. Two years ago I got inducted into the hall of fame here, which is our hall of fame for a nineteen county area. It's remarkable. We have a museum now in the administration building and we've got four members of the Pro Football Hall of Fame who grew up in this area. We've got three Olympians including a gold medalist. We've got tons of college hall of fame people. I mean, so.

DS:

How did that come about? How did the idea come about?

AP:

In 1988 and '89 the Abilene school district under their athletic director at the time decided to start a hall of fame. They inducted five people each year. Well, they changed superintendents and the superintendent come in didn't want to put any emphasis on that so it just dissolved. I was on the selection committee the first two years. And so I always thought, We ought to have a hall of fame. We have such a rich heritage of sports here. And so one day somebody with TSTC [**Texas State Technological College**] called who was asking my advice on a golf tournament. I had just left the paper and me and my big mouth, I said, "Well, you know what we really need is a hall of fame." And one thing led to another and I've been the chairman ever since. We started in 2002. We just had our seventeenth annual banquet. We've inducted a 179 people into the hall of fame, and we've given sixty-five thousand dollars in college scholarships to kids through the banquet. So you know—the TSTC did it as a fundraiser for several years. They dropped it in 2009. We formed our own board, our own 501(c)(3). It's just grown and grown from that point. I'll take a look it. It was really my idea to rejuvenate it. It's been a fun remarkable thing. It's done so many good things. Each year we give twelve one thousand dollar scholarships, in addition to recognizing the great athletes and coaches from this area.

DS:

You know, and it's hard to do an entity like that and keep it going.

AP:

Yeah, and you know that's the hardest thing. It takes work. My wife works for six months as the event coordinator, just selling the tickets, the planning, all that stuff. You've got to have somebody. It can't be all volunteer. Somebody has got to do that. Someday we hope to have a bigger museum. But the fact we have a museum and we've done what we've done exceeds

anything I ever dreamed of. I just thought we wanted to honor our very first class in 2002 was Gordon Wood, at that time the winningest coach in high school in Texas. Still the third winningest, from Brownwood. Don Maynard, who was Joe Namath's favorite receiver with the New York Jets in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Sammy Baugh, one of the great players of all time from Sweetwater. Charles Coody, the 1971 Masters champion. And Mindy Myers from Munday who was the most decorated athlete twenty-five times at a UIL state competition. They put a medal around her neck. And so that's a pretty good first class, you know. And now we've added Bob Lilly. Bob Lilly grew up in Throckmorton. The greatest Cowboy, probably, of all time. So it's just remarkable. Dean Smith, who was an Olympic gold medalist and a Hollywood stuntman for years. It's really been fun to get to know those people and become friends with those people.

DS:

Wow. And so what is your—I guess—the physical boundaries?

AP:

It's a nineteen county area surrounding Abilene. What—"The Big Country" is a term, but it's kind of a nebulous term. Who knows where the boundary is? So we use the same nineteen counties as the West Central Texas Council of Governments uses. So it basically goes Knox City and Munday to the north, De Leon, Comanche, Ranger to the east, Colorado City to the west, and Brownwood and Coleman to the south. It's kind of basically—but it's nineteen counties.

DS:

Wow. And do you concentrate more on the accomplishment in the big schools, smaller schools?

AP:

Try to treat it equal. We try to have people from both. We try to have as many different sports. We try to be as racially equal. We try to be as gender equal as we can be. We've put in a lot of women. We've put in minorities. So, no, we don't want it to be an Abilene hall of fame. We want it to be a Big Country hall of fame.

DS:

Now how difficult is it to balance the records before integration? Like the Prairie View against the UIL?

AP:

It's really hard. In fact, if you go back we only have one person from Woodson, which was our all-black high school in Abilene before it closed. It was somebody you probably know, Louis Kelly, who was a long time coach in Lubbock. But there's no records, you know? So there's nothing that—we've had a few other nominated, but nobody has been selected. We have a

selection committee and a board of directors that make the selection. But it's really hard because there's no statistics. I mean, it's really difficult and the farther you go back—we started something called the Legends for people who competed before 1950, because we knew they were forgotten in time. We had two wonderful nominees this year, one of them from Rising Star who scored the first touchdown in Texas Tech history in 1925. And the first year they played football he scored the first touchdown. The other one was from Ranger and he was a four-sport letterman at Oklahoma and then played twelve years in the major leagues. But those names are forgotten in the past, you know? If we didn't remember them. Obviously they're not there at the hall of fame banquet. They're long deceased. But—so that's been a fun thing. We added that category.

DS:

And who was that player at Tech?

AP:

Gene Alford.

DS:

Gene Alford.

AP:

Yeah. He actually started at Daniel Baker, went to Tech, and then there was some confusion over his eligibility so he only played one year at Tech. He ended up finishing at Sul Ross State. But Gene Alford from Rising Star scored the first touchdown in Texas Tech History.

DS:

I need to see if our— University Archivist, if she knows those facts.

AP:

We had some relatives there. There was a granddaughter living. But I mean, he competed in the twenties.

DS:

Oh yeah.

AP:

And then he went on and played a little bit in the NFL. In fact, I think he's in the Detroit Lions Hall of Fame. He went on and he actually played for Portsmouth. Portsmouth—whatever they were called before they became the Detroit Lions in the early, early days of the NFL. So that's going way back.

DS:

Yeah. So I take it you enjoy doing that?

AP:

I do. That's—it's really fun. That's been a really a labor of love. Just the fact that we get to recognize these people and it becomes a big thing to them. We usually average between four hundred and five hundred and fifty people at the banquet. We do a video presentation. We have a website now. So just the fact that we get the chance to honor them. For some of them—like this year we have two guys from the Abilene High teams of the fifties. Well, they're pushing eighty years old and somebody is still remembering them, you know? This year we had two from Abilene High, a Big 12 umpire who's still—he's working the Big 12 tournament right now. One from Colorado City, one from Stamford. In fact, the guy from Stamford was a quarterback on a '55 state championship. He's now a sports agent. He's Baker Mayfield's agent. And so we try to get a cross-section of a whole wide range of people. We've had a number of Texas Tech people go in besides Wes Kittley. Michi Atkins, who's a leading scorer in Southwest Conference women's basketball. Will always be the leading scorer, because the Southwest Conference doesn't exist anymore.

DS:

Exactly.

AP:

Nikki Heath, who was teammate of Sheryl Swoopes in the national championship team. This year Jody Brown from Cross Plains went in. He was a four year letterman at Texas Tech in football.

DS:

You know, you mentioned two of the ladies that we've interviewed in our archives. Michi and Nikki. Michi was interviewed by somebody else, but I interviewed Nikki. It was interesting, I asked her, "When did you know you were a better athlete than the others?" And she goes, "When I was three." [AP laughs] And then she went into. She goes, "Yeah, at three I was so much better than everybody around me."

AP:

I remember when—of course she was from Loraine. Little tiny—little tiny—six man school. I remember when Texas Tech signed her. I thought, Is she going to be that good to come out of Loraine to the Southwest Conference basketball is a pretty big jump, you know? She was pretty good.

DS:

Yeah. Well, and Marsha did it with a bunch of small-town girls.

AP:

She did. That national championship team, everybody was from within about sixty-seventy miles of Lubbock, you know?

DS:

Except for the one from Freedom, Wyoming.

AP:

Oh I'd forgotten that. I'd forgotten that. But I remember Brownfield and Sweetwater and Canyon, Nazareth, I think.

DS:

Yeah, yeah. What's her name? I'm having a brain freeze. Anyway, one of the other players that I interviewed, she was the one from Freedom, Wyoming. She talked about, you know, that she was just kind of like—it was [Cynthia] Clinger. She came there because her boyfriend was being recruited by the men's basketball team, and that's how they find out about her. I think that's what it was. And so—

AP:

I'd forgotten there was even anybody that wasn't from that team. Was she a starter?

DS:

Yeah. Yeah. And she was one of these—she went through a dramatic transformation from when she first arrived on campus to that year that they won it. I bet she dropped twenty, thirty pounds.

AP:

Really?

DS:

I mean, but even when she was bigger, she could still run. Because that was the one thing nobody realized about that team. Every single one of those players could run.

AP:

Ron Holmes, who was the longtime basketball coach at McMurry, had been the coach of Brownfield—the boys coach—when Sheryl was playing at high school. He always tells the story that they were playing a summer league and they let Sheryl and another girl who went on to play at West Texas A&M play with the boys in the summer league. And said he still remembers—he

was playing with them—he was young then—he got a rebound and threw it out to Sheryl. She took off down the court, dribbling left-handed, and she outran the boy who was the anchor on their sprint-relay team. Everybody just kind of stopped and he said, “Sheryl, have you always been able to do that?” And she goes, “Do what?” She was such a good athlete, you know?

DS:

Yeah. And that team was—oh gosh. Gerlich—Krista Kirkland.

AP:

Yeah, who later became a coach at West Texas A&M. And now she’s where? UT Arlington?

DS:

I think so.

AP:

I think she’s at UT Arlington as head coach, I think.

DS:

Krista talked about—

AP:

She’s Krista Gerlich now?

DS:

Yeah. Yeah. She talked about how Sharp came in that summer before the turnaround and said, “Well, I’m cleaning the house and I want to talk to you because I want you to be the leader.” And she told her how, “We’re going to be bringing in Sheryl, and we’re going to be doing this. We’re going to go where not only are we competing, but we’re winning.” And so they did. She said she talked about that. Because it was just like [snaps] in a two year span that they went to the top. I mean, literally. They went from—

AP:

That was a tremendous team. Sheryl—remember national championship. She had forty-one or something.

DS:

I think it—was it forty-four in the national championship game?

AP:

It was over forty, I know that.

DS:

Yeah. Yeah. It was amazing watching that run, because I think she had one of the biggest runs in the tournament that male or female had ever had.

AP:

Oh yeah. I actually don't remember. I was at the Final Four in New Orleans—the men's Final Four—and I just, like a fly on the wall, I was sitting in the lobby in the bar area and a bunch of coaches were in there. I was just kind of eavesdropping on the conversation. Eddie Sutton came in, who was coaching at Oklahoma State then. I think it was Oklahoma State. I don't think he was at Kentucky, I think he was at Oklahoma State. He said, "Have y'all been watching the women's championship game?" It was Sunday afternoon. They all go, "No," you know. He goes, "You ought to see this girl from Tech. She has the quickest release on her shot I've ever seen." He was talking about Sheryl Swoopes, you know? So there was a pretty good coach admiring that and the rest of them kind of poo-pooing. But he had watched it and how amazing she was.

DS:

You know in that era it's like the men's and women's basketball games were back to back at the colosseum, so if you went early you saw the women. It used to be if you went early you and six other people saw the women. But it went to where it was a sell out every night.

AP:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. When I lived in Arkansas we had a state championship girls' team, and that became the big draw. Because they were—end up thirty-three and one or something. So they became the huge, huge draw. Nothing like winning.

DS:

So did you start covering sports before Title IX?

AP:

Yes, in fact in 1974—back then the NCAA didn't sponsor women's sports. It was the AIAW—the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women. There was one division. And so little tiny Immaculata college out of Pennsylvania won the three national tournaments in a row, but they were playing Southern Cal and Kansas State, and they beat Mississippi College, which is a division II school now. So they were all together, but Kansas State hosted the national tournament that year. And so several of us got a wild hair—because nobody was broadcasting women's games, hardly. We offered our services free of charge to anybody that wanted to pick up and broadcast the games from the national tournament. So I broadcast the national championship game between Immaculata and Mississippi College to a station in Jackson, Mississippi. I did a game back to Queens, New York. I did a game to Salt Lake City. So that was kind of my foray into—I was a junior in college. But I still remember they had a press

conference at the start of the tournament and they talked about pushing Title IX, and that was the first story I ever sent to the *Associated Press* that got a byline story. I never heard of Title IX. It'd just come in about a year earlier. I had no idea. Little did I know how that would change the world, you know? But that was the first story I ever sent to the *Associated Press*, was about a Title IX press conference.

DS:

And I had no idea you had done that. That's just happenstance. But you know, and you also—by doing your broadcasting you're probably on the cutting cusp of that also, because the women's sports, after a few years, became popular.

AP:

Oh yeah, absolutely. And the quality was good. In fact the Immaculata team that won it, their coach was Cathy Rush, whose husband was an NBA referee. Two of the starters on that team were Marianne Stanley and—I can't remember the post player's name—but they became the head coaches at Old Dominion and at University of Illinois. They became well-noted college women's coaches at that time. So it was—that was my first big thing ever to broadcast.

DS:

Yeah, because that was the end of an era where small schools like Wayland Baptist University dominated.

AP:

Right. Wayland Baptist was in the tournament then because back then before the AIAW there was just AAU [Amateur Athletic Union] that they played, you know? Them and Nashville Business College. But so yeah. We have two or three members of the Flying Queens who are in our hall of fame who played here.

DS:

Oh which ones?

AP:

Cindy Shelton, now Cindy Shelton-Raughton. And Mary DeLane. She was from Trent, that little town of Trent. I can't think of her last name now. But so they both played at Wayland Baptist under that—what was the legendary coach?

DS:

Harley—

AP:

Harley Redin, yes.

DS:

Harley Redin.

AP:

Harley came down for both of their inductions. Now he has since passed away, hasn't he?

DS:

I haven't heard that.

AP:

He may still be living, but he's really getting up there in age.

DS:

We interviewed him ten years ago. It's been a while. In fact, we interviewed him before the administrator there that used to be a coach, also passed. Was it Hardin? Charles Hardin? But you know it was interesting, when I interviewed Redin and we talked about that—the end of that era. Those last few games with Immaculate and all them. That was, like, the last Final Four that was all small schools. I mean, because he lost players like Jill Rankin Schneider. She—going to go into her senior year—she had the opportunity to go to the new program at Tennessee, and so she went up there and joined Pat Head, who became Pat Summit.

AP:

Right.

DS:

But that happened, I'm sure, to a lot of other teams. That they lost a star player.

AP:

Oh yeah, absolutely. I mean, because like I said, the national tournament that year had Illinois State and Southern Cal and Kansas State, but Mississippi College and Immaculata and Wayland Baptist. There was lots of small—more small schools. There was twenty-something teams. I don't remember exactly. I don't remember who it was out of Utah—maybe it was University of Utah—but yeah, we broadcast games all over the country.

DS:

Wow. Now how did you create that idea that you just—how did it come to you that, “Hey, let's do this,”?

AP:

I don't know. I think, probably, we were trying to pad our resumes. [laughter] You know?

DS:

And you come up—you're creative when you're a student?

AP:

Yeah, you know. We didn't get paid, we just offered it free of charge. So I don't remember how we came up with the idea. So they were really—there were three of us. I don't know whether one of those were involved then, but the three of us who did most of the play-by-play when I was in college on the student—we had a little ten watt FM student radio station—but I was one of them, one was Dan Musil, who is now the weekend anchor for probably thirty years at KHOU in Houston—the CBS affiliate. And the other was Steve Physioc, who is one of the announcers for the Kansas City Royals.

DS:

Bad company, huh?

AP:

Yeah. Good company. What happened to me, I don't know. But I don't know how we came up with that idea. We just thought, Boy this would be a neat opportunity. Because nobody was doing the games and we had started doing the women's games on the FM. You couldn't hear it anywhere outside of campus, you know. We started the home games and we traveled a couple times. We didn't have any budget to travel anywhere. I remember we borrowed my advisor's car. We were going to drive to Iowa State to do the game. We got caught in a blizzard in northern Kansas and ended up having to turn around and come back and didn't get the chance to do the game and they moved it to a different gym anyhow. There wasn't cellphones then. You had to put it in a phone line. We've come a long ways. [Laughs]

DS:

Oh yeah. Yeah. That's interesting.

AP:

Yeah, so that's how I got started. Then I spent eight years in radio, then like I said, station sold and I got a chance to stay in the same town in Searcy, Arkansas, becomes sports editor of the paper. I didn't ever know anything about doing a newspaper. I learned that by trial and error.

DS:

And I mean, how did the writing aspect of it—I'm sure you had your deadlines for that night to get the story by the morning.

AP:

It was different. The paper then was an afternoon paper, so I had a little bit more time.

DS:

Okay.

AP:

But once you got here you were literally—game over at 10:30, had to have the story at 10:45. You learned to be really fast, you know? And so I'm sure my writing was bad starting out. I don't know. But interesting—I went to interview for the job. It just so happened as we all got laid off at the radio station the sports editor had left the newspaper. Totally unrelated to anything. And so the editor—I'd been there five years doing all the play by play there. He said, "Can you write?" That was the first question out of the interview, and I said, "I don't know." And he said, "Well, I know you can cover sports because you kicked our ass for the last five years." That was my interview and that's how I got in the newspaper business. [Laughter]

DS:

What was that learning curve like?

AP:

It was fun, because it was just a new challenge, you know? Really the writing wasn't as hard. I'd always read people and so you kind of copy styles of people you liked and admired. But it was learning how to do layout and how—that was all kind of a learning curve, you know? And of course when I started the newspaper business we were using typewriters. Before computers, I mean. I've seen the whole evolution of it. And then finally we were paginating and building the page on the computer screen. So the writing, I don't know. I just think because I had read so much sports over time that I kind of knew how that—but how to craft a story and how to make the most important thing in the game the lead. Not—you know, you read somebody that's not very good sometimes and somebody hits a winning shot and it's ten inches down into the story, you know? You've got to kind of know how to do it.

DS:

You know, one story that was probably bigger in Lubbock than it was here was—and you mentioned it earlier—that the closing of the Southwest Conference and then the opening of the Big 12. Having been from the conference that had been the Big 8 before it became the Big 12 and working in the industry, what did you think about all those changes that were happening?

AP:

I liked it because it wasn't hard to see. In fact I caught some heat over writing that they ought to go ahead and fold the Southwest Conference, because there were was many problems and Rice

and SMU were bringing nothing to the table, you know. I remember being at the—I was presidents of State's Sports Editors and we brought Steve Hatchell into—the first Big 12 commissioner—in to speak and I remember he said he got a—what was it he said? That he got a PhD in Texas politics in the first year because Ann Richards, the governor and Gib Lewis, the speaker of the house were both Baylor graduates and that's how Baylor got into the conference. Because of the political end of things initially. But I thought it was good because everything became so TV oriented and we didn't have any audience outside of Texas, you know. And so—and obviously as an old Big 8 guy, I was glad to see those teams come in there. I think it's been good, you know. You always hear about the demise. But I think it's pretty strong.

DS:

And in fact, when I was telling you about moving into the new building in '96 one of our key collections was the records of the defunct Southwest Conference. Me and a few other people went to Dallas to get all their business records. The gaps that were in their—in the written record—is what prompted us to start of this oral history project that pertained to sports.

AP:

Have you been to the Texas Sports Hall of Fame in Waco?

DS:

No, I haven't.

AP:

They added a Southwest Conference wing and they got all the memorabilia from the Southwest Conference and each school has a segment in there. It's really good. I'm on the selection committee for the Texas Sports Hall of Fame. They spent about three million dollars on this wing for the Southwest Conference. It's really—you need to go sometime.

DS:

We need to go.

AP:

Yeah, you would really—spend a few hours. It's really good.

DS:

And I think it's great, because since we're in archives we have a few memorabilia and that's kinds of stuff, but not a whole lot.

AP:

There they have you can go and punch up a button. Let's say you go to the Texas Tech wing. You can punch up a button, you can watch the women's basketball team from '92 or you can watch a football whatever. So it's really pretty cool. They've done a great job.

DS:

You know, in Lubbock we had—well, we have the National College Baseball Hall of Fame. And we've worked with them during interviews.

AP:

Isn't that struggling though? Right now?

DS:

It's struggling, and it's been—and that's kind of why I was limited with you—it's hard to do that, because you almost have a better source of income or money coming in than those initial years, because they've always had that hump. Because without the money nothing gets built.

AP:

It's tough. It is really tough. If we had to have a building and pay somebody full time, we're not raising that kind of money. We couldn't do it. But AISD gave us free and we raised money for cabinets. We don't have all the technology, new technology there but we've done pretty good for what we've done. For a bunch of amateurs we've done pretty good, you know?

DS:

And they've done a great job for a bunch of guys that were having lunch and on a napkin they mapped out what they wanted to do with their hall of fame idea.

AP:

You know Robert Giovannetti?

DS:

I've met him.

AP:

Robert's a good friend so—and he now he's one of the assistant ADs.

DS:

And he's someone that we need to interview because of all his play by play that he did.

AP:

Yeah, he does baseball. Of course he's the one that started *Red Raider Sports Magazine*. It's since gone on to Chris Level and those guys, but that's who I write for.

DS:

Oh okay. Yeah, Chris Level is a great guy to listen to on the radio.

AP:

Yeah. But Robert's who got me involved in that. One day he called me and we became friends. He used to be on my—back before he worked for Tech and couldn't do it—he was on my show every week doing the Big 12 report with me.

DS:

Yeah, because he headed up, I think, our public media there, didn't he?

AP:

Yeah, I think the sports information director people come under him. I don't know what the exact title is, but yeah.

DS:

Because I think when they had a realignment of the TV station and the radio station, I think all that was—I think he was in charge of all that.

AP:

Could be. It could be. I'm not sure. We haven't talked very often in the past. I mean, the last year or two since he got that job at Tech.

DS:

And then Tech's editor is always—something is always changing there.

AP:

That's the way of the world.

DS:

So let me ask you this, as an outsider looking in. What do think of the performance that Kliff Kingsbury has done in the years he's been there?

AP:

He has—he has not reached what I think the potential is, and I don't know where the fault lies, but it's just not been very good defensively. They've not taken that next step. I don't know what

it's going to take to get to that next step, and that's not being critical saying that can't happen under him, because I think it can. But for whatever reason, they've not taken that next step. I put a lot more on the defense than the offense, you know? They were better last year, but they still—they've not gotten to that point.

DS:

Yeah. Yeah. Have you seen any similarities with another program over the years that maybe had to solve the defensive problem or an offensive problem so they were able to turnaround?

AP:

No. You know, tradition is such an amazing thing. You look at people that have success and they continue to have success. How does Alabama just keep winning all the time, you know? Kansas State was so bad in football when I was in school until Bill Snyder came and turned it around. And look at Kansas now—football. They're awful. So Tech has always been good. They've never been great. Spike is in our hall of fame here. He's from Ballinger Spike had great success there, but they never were—they want to share the Southwest Conference title. He had great success, but never to that next national, top five ranking kind of level. And so Tech really has never been to that point, and certainly never on a consistent basis. But if you think about it there are many that are. That's only a handful of schools.

DS:

Yeah, that's why we always see Alabama.

AP:

Alabama and now Clemson and Florida.

DS:

Used to be Georgia also.

AP:

Yeah, yeah. Exactly. Exactly. Oklahoma and Nebraska. Nebraska has fallen off. But you know, I mean—but Oklahoma and Alabama? I mean, tremendous programs.

DS:

And Nebraska's downfall was rather quick when they did it.

AP:

Yeah, they did some bad hirings. My cousin's wife was Tom Osborne's secretary, so I kind of got a little inside knowledge of that. When they got an AD that turned out not to be a good AD, he was proof that you've got to have a good person there. He ran off some good people and made

some bad hires. Bill Callahan was a horrible hire. So I think now they've got Scott Frost back. Home state boy who had a great year at Central Florida. I think they'll be back. I think Nebraska will be back. But you realize Kansas and Nebraska [coughs], there's more kids playing high school football in Houston than there are in those two states combined. [Coughs] There's not the population to draw from.

DS:

Yeah, I think the shocker that I saw was—and it's one of Leach's—one of his first few years. We played Nebraska and Leach was—they had started off with a good season and Nebraska jumped out their 10-0 lead. Then Tech ran seventy points on them, 70-10 game. And I thought—that's when everybody goes, "Uh-oh. Something is wrong."

AP:

Yeah, I remember that. That was the beginning of the demise of Nebraska.

DS:

And I think the next week they gave up seventy-seven points, don't they? Something?

AP:

Yeah, maybe to Kansas State or somebody. [Coughs]

DS:

Yeah, I think it was Kansas State.

AP:

I think it was.

DS:

Yeah.

AP:

Because when I was in college Nebraska and Oklahoma beat the dog out of Kansas State every time. My freshman year in college Nebraska won the national title, Oklahoma was second, and Colorado third. Three Big 8 teams were one, two and three in the nation.

DS:

Wow.

AP:

We got beat by all of them. [Laughs]

DS:

Yeah. There has to be a whipping boy in the conference.

AP:

And we were! [Laughs]

DS:

I mean, because that even filters down to the high school level.

AP:

Oh yeah. And traditionally it's even more amazing at the high school level is these little schools, why do only one of them keep winning? Because you know you run out of talent sometimes. The little town of Albany up here? They're always good in football. How do they always be good? That amazes me.

DS:

Yeah. And then same thing when talking about girls' basketball. Up in the panhandle there's been coaches that they've had fifteen, twenty year runs with their teams.

AP:

Oh look what Joe Lombard has done at Nazareth and Canyon.

DS:

Oh yeah.

AP:

It's incredible, you know. Just amazing. So programs. It's more about programs than—you're going ebb and flow with the talent a little bit but especially in high school you can't recruit anybody. You have what's there.

DS:

And when you talked to Coach Kelly, did you cover the success he had at Estacado when he was there?

AP:

A little bit. I really don't know Coach Kelly well. I've talked to him a few times. He went into the hall of fame initially one of those first two years. I was just on the selection committee, so I really never dealt—I mean, I know Coach Kelly, I've talked to him, but don't know him well.

DS:

I was fortunate enough to interview him and we need to him to sit down again, just because things have changed.

AP:

He's still in good health, I think.

DS:

He still is, and he still lives in the same house there on 77th Place.

AP:

Really? But you need to talk to Coach Keeling sometime.

DS:

I do. And I wish I could have done it today while I was here.

AP:

He's just—he's amazing.

DS:

Put in a good word for us.

AP:

I will. I will. Have you talked to him?

DS:

Just over the Facebook like I did with you. And so I need to just sit down and—and meanwhile I'm going to give you my phone number and so you can call me and say, "Hey, call me. We need to talk."

AP:

Yeah. You have his number?

DS:

No, I don't.

AP:

I'll give it to you when we get down there. What else? Anything?

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DS:

Well, no. I was just wondering. Is there anyone around here that you think we should interview about their sports experience?

AP:

Well, I mean, Charles Coody lives in Abilene. He was the 1971 Masters champion. You win a green jacket, you're in a pretty select fraternity.

DS:

You are.

AP:

He owns Diamondback Golf Club here in town. He's seventy-eight years old now. Still very good. Sharp. That would be good. He goes back to the champions' dinner every year. He doesn't play in the tournament anymore now that he's gotten older. That would be one. That's the one that comes to mind right now that has just a reman—I mean, when he won the Master's it was a tie for second between Jack Nicklaus and Johnny Miller. [Laughs] That's pretty good.

DS:

Not many people put those two names behind them.

AP:

Yeah. And people go, "Charles Coody? Who's that?" But that's opened a lot of doors for him over the years. He only won like—he won a number of times on the senior tour, but I think I think he only won three or four times his whole career on the regular tour. But one of them was in Augusta.

DS:

There's a lot of golfers that never came close to even being on the tour, much less winning three or four times.

AP:

That's exactly right. So that's the only one that comes to mind that I can think of that—of course, he's one of our inaugural hall of fame people, but he would be good. And Coach Keeling.

DS:

And you know when we were doing the Southwest Conference stuff, we kind of took the same track you did. That we wanted to make sure that we had not only players, coaches, but administrators, sports announcers, sports writers. That's kind of—we did Jack Dale and—oh gosh—Frank Fallon.

AP:

Sure.

DS:

Did a fun interview with Frank Fallon. That was a great guy.

AP:

Yeah, yeah. His son Steve's a friend of mine. Of course, Frank—he ended up having Parkinson's disease and passed away. But Steve was an executive director of the Texas Sports Hall of Fame for a number of years. He's retired now. So we have Frank Fallon—God, he was the voice of the PA announcer for the Final Four for what? Twenty something years? So yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. It's neat to remember those guys that have those jobs for so long, you know?

DS:

And not only have them, but perform at such a level.

AP:

That is exactly right.

DS:

I mean, because you're never going to find another Jack Dale. That guy was just unreal.

AP:

And such a nice guy.

DS:

He was.

AP:

That's the thing. I always like when those really good ones are class-acts too. I met Dick Enberg one time. Same way. What a wonderful guy, but what a career, you know?

DS:

Oh yeah.

AP:

So that's it. I think that's it. You covered my life story.

DS:

Well, I'm glad I did. I'm glad I stumbled across your door, right?

AP:

Well, absolutely. Absolutely. Hope I didn't bore you to tears.

DS:

No, no. And I hope you don't mind us going a little bit into your realm and interviewing some of these guys.

AP:

No, that'd be great. That'd be great. Absolutely. And I'd love to have a transcription of it whenever you get it done. I know it's a long ways down the road.

DS:

Okay. Yeah, and who knows? They might do it quicker. I interviewed some guys from *Motor Sports* last summer, and those transcriptions are almost done. So it's been about a year.

AP:

How many people come in to look at those things?

DS:

Well, I don't know. Because that's the reference department that does that stuff downstairs. And so we're kind of—

AP:

So probably somebody if they're doing research then, right?

DS:

Yeah, yeah. And even like Dr. [Jorge] Iber. When he was doing his research him and I were doing interviews, like, over the phone with coaches out of South Texas for some of the stuff he did down there on Coach Lerma. And so those he would just take a copy and not wait for a transcription, because we weren't doing transcriptions then. We were doing just abstracts. So he would just listen to them himself and get out of it what he wanted.

AP:

What he needed to get out for the book he was writing or whatever.

DS:

Or else he'd still be waiting to write his first book.

AP:

Yeah, yeah. It's work to do a book. You know, people ask me now what's my next one? I have no idea.

DS:

You going to stay in sport or thinking about branching out?

AP:

I've got an idea in the back of my head, but I don't know if it'll ever come to fruition or not. But I'd like to do something different just for the sake of doing something different, you know? But I don't know. I may not ever write another one. Never planned to write one!

DS:

Yeah, yeah. But you know, sometimes happy accidents happen.

AP:

Yeah. And like I said, all of them kind of—somebody came to me. I mean it all kind of just happened, you know? I guess I said yes instead of no at the wrong time.

DS:

Well, it's worked out. Thank you.

AP:

It's done all right.

DS:

Thank you, Al.

AP:

I appreciate it. Thank you.

End of Recording