

**Oral History Interview of
Dale Allen**

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson
July 28, 2016
Temple, Texas**

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

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Transcript Overview:

This interview features Dale Allen who discusses his memoir about working in the Soil Conservation Service. Allen shares how he became a photographer, and his time working with the SCS in the public information office.

Length of Interview: 01:57:25

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Keywords

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Andy Wilkinson (AW):

My uncle, for whom I was named, went to A&M and left. I am going to move a chair, if you don't mind.

Dale Allen (DA):

You do anything you want. You can have this chair if you want.

AW:

No, this is perfect. I just wanted to set this recorder a little closer to you, but where I can kind of see it so if it goes off or something. No, my uncle, for whom I was named, went to A&M from Brownwood, Texas, and so I had always had it in mind that I wanted to go to A&M, but I graduated high school in '66.

DA:

'66, yeah?

AW:

Yeah, and there was a—of course, you had to be in the corps in '66, and I was really interested in girls, and so I decided I didn't want to go to A&M, which is kind of short sided of me, but it's been alright. It is a good school. It seems like the people that I have been talking to with SCS, many of them—thank you. Let me give you one of mine. Many of them started at Tarleton and a lot of them that started at Tarleton, went to A&M, but there are a whole bunch of them that went to Texas Tech too, so it's—I have not run into many of you who went to some school other than Texas Tech or A&M and it is real interesting.

DA:

Yeah, the Soil Conservation Service had a lot of employees that went to the Ag (agriculture) school at San Angelo.

AW:

Angelo State?

DA:

At San Angelo State, in Tarleton, and Huntsville, and Texas A&M at Kingsville. And then a lot of soils people that majored in soils went to Oklahoma State. Oklahoma State had a strong soils department in the forties and fifties and sixties, and that is where some of our best soil scientists came from, Oklahoma State.

AW:

Oh, I didn't know that. I mean, I know it is a good Ag school, but I didn't know about it being soil. I understand that you're writing a history or a memoir?

DA:

Yeah, and I have written—right over there on the top of those two green books, pick up that two sheets of paper.

AW:

Oh, these two. Yeah.

DA:

I have one problem, Andy. I am very humble and I have trouble bragging about myself, but somebody told me, "You have got to write a what amounts to a query letter, and you got to brag on yourself." So that's—I bragged—that's a brag sheet that I sent in.

AW:

Could I have a copy?

DA:

Yeah, you can have that.

AW:

Now, have you gotten—do you have a publisher for it?

DA:

Yeah, several months ago, I contacted the Texas A&M University Press, and that is where I am. I had to—I sent my draft off twice, and I got a letter from one of your cohorts that said she—I think it was a she. I could be wrong. Said that she would like to see it. She said you and her or you and him, I think it was a her, know the people down at the Texas A&M University Press and y'all would like to see. And I said, well I have already obligated myself to Texas A&M. If they don't want it, it is yours.

AW:

Yeah, you let me know. I am an editor at Tech. Texas Tech Press. The series I edit is not necessarily a history series, although there is some history in it. I edit the series called Voice in the American West, which is everything told in the first person, but we do a lot of history books, and the important thing is that a book like yours gets out there, no matter who does it, so if you are having difficulty, let us know. A&M is a good press and they will do a good job.

DA:

They told me—I just talked to the lady. I guess I've had two or three conversations. She said it's a six month review process, and Andy, I have got one problem with the A&M review process. It's got to go through an extension service, and what used to be the experiment station and engineering section, and she said, "You might clear one of those sections without any comments and the other one have all kinds," so no telling what we will get. But she said, "Get ready for six months," and I said, "Okay."

AW:

No, that's true. I have warned writers when I am working with their piece that what sets a university press apart is peer review, and that's the advantage of it, and the disadvantage of a university press is peer review because it takes a long time.

DA:

Yeah, we had our own peer review system in the Soil Conservation Service of technical articles. If you represent the Soil Conservation Service and you belong to American Society of Engineers and you go to a national meeting, you have to—and you are going to present something on a subject – you have to have that paper reviewed before you go, and that is the same as a peer review.

AW:

You bet.

DA:

It fell on my lot to handle all of those, and I would sometimes get other people. But Andy, I got into a really tickly situation. We had an engineer that was the best engineer, agricultural engineer, in the country. He was just outstanding. Gene Vittetoe.

AW:

Oh, I have heard his name mentioned before.

DA:

And he was just—

AW:

Would you spell that last name?

DA:

V-i-t-t-e-t-o-e.

AW:

V-i-t-t-e-t-o-e?

DA:

Yeah, and Gene was off the scale. The only thing—problem with Gene, he used long words, and one day he had a paper he was going to present, and he should have given it to me three months ahead of time, and he didn't, and he just talked to the boss, state conservationist. He said, "What are you up to, Gene?" "Well I am going to that national meeting of American Society of Engineers?" He said, "You giving a paper?" "Yep." "Did Dale Allen clear it?" "No." "You better get it cleared by him before you go." He said, "What? I am catching the plane at eleven o'clock." He said, "You are not leaving until you get it cleared with him." So here he comes. "Dale, I got a problem. I can't get out of here until you clear this paper." "When are you leaving?" "Eleven." "Eleven o'clock? You think I can clear your paper between now and eleven o'clock?" He said, "That's what the boss said." So I started reading, and I called Gene. I said, "Gene, I can't even understand the first page. Just go for it. Nobody is going to understand it anyway," and he went and presented that thing and I never heard a word about it. [Laughter] Oh, he could use long words.

AW:

I think you made the right decision though.

DA:

I love the guy, but boy, my career was on the line when I said, "Just go."

AW:

Well let's talk a little bit before we get on talking about you and I know it is going to be hard to get you to brag about yourself, or maybe even just talk. But one thing that is important about this book besides the publication is that you ought to archive all of your materials, your research, your drafts, and all that sort of thing. A&M has a good archive. If they don't want it, you let us know. We will archive it with all of this material we're doing for SCS. The reason I say that is that we do that. We have a couple of large archives of writers on natural history, and people will read book, one of the authors, and they will be doing further research and what they want to do is look up where is all this coming from? Because you'll have a lot of material that doesn't make it into the book. So those kinds of archives are really valuable for researchers.

DA:

The problem with me is I don't have any archives. I came down here as a young, not knowing any better, guy that had a writing skill. I came up through the ranks. I held two or three jobs and all of a sudden, they had an opening. They decided to create a public information office so they had a deal with a guy who was a farm editor, and I didn't know any of this was happening. It was

down between me and him, and I didn't know that. And he was a good farm editor. I read his stuff. Very, very good writer. But they couldn't meet his salary demand. All they had to do was just promote me one grade so when push came to shove, he backed out and so they said, "Hire Dale Allen." So I had a house under sales contract in Gainesville, and I got to go from being in Gainesville, in Temple the next week. I just had signed the contract. Now, the lady hadn't signed it. The boss thought I knew about it. Everybody thought I knew, but I didn't know anything about it. So here I came and my only skill was I came up through the ranks, and I could write. That was my only skill. I just fell in naturally to what I was doing because I loved to write feature articles, and I would find out where we were headed as an organization, what our high priorities were and I would say, "Okay. How can we use the information function to press this new practice we're trying to push?" And I would write feature articles. I would go find if your dad had done something that was exactly what we were trying to do and he is the only one we knew about, I could not wait to go interview your dad and let him tell me what he did to make it work. I don't know how many feature articles I wrote, but that was my claim to fame. Of course, all of the people out in the field would say, "Golly. I wish Dale Allen would come to my place and write a feature article about this farmer doing this." I had all kinds of requests, but I had to make it fit our high priorities. Sometimes it was just as important as a high priority, but it was so isolated and I've described a lot of things in my memoirs, but I have left out some things.

AW:

Well those articles, I would assume SCS has those collected somewhere.

DA:

Well they are just stashed away in files. They have probably all been thrown away. You probably couldn't find two of them.

AW:

Oh, that stuff would be great to have collected.

DA:

Yeah, I wish I had them. I wish I would've kept every article I ever wrote in the magazine that came out in, but I just didn't. I had other things to do.

AW:

I saw yesterday, at James Abbott's house, I saw that you're also a photographer, because he had a whole bunch of photographs of people and on the back, they'd say, "Dale Allen. Photographer." Was that part of your public information job?

DA:

Yeah, I got to tell you about that. We had to take a picture of the state staff every year so every

time we had a major change, the state conservation say—and there were about twelve or fifteen of us, and I had a guy that would take the pictures for me for that job and I sent around the proofs one day, and I had this good friend named D.B. Pope, that was kind of a large guy and he was kind of down on the end, and I sent a note asking, was this okay if we sent whatever it was. On D.B.'s, I cut his picture and took scissors and cut him in half just as a joke. I see his face. He is a big guy and I forgot what about it was, he said, "Hell." He sent me a note. "Hell. Don't. Won't. I am cut into. I am cut i-n-t-o. I am cut into." I laughed and laughed. I am cut into. I don't won't. I am cut into. [Laughter]. Cut in two. On the papers, I am going through some old slides and I have found – I have all of those slides on a thumb drive and just picked that up. There is a few slides that will help illustrate some points that I've made in the memoirs.

AW:

Oh cool. You are going to add these to your book?

DA:

I am going to make them available. I don't know whether they want to use them in color or make them black and white.

AW:

Yeah, publishers always wince when you say color because it costs them more money.

DA:

Yeah. Sure, sure. I understand.

AW:

But I'll tell you for photos in this line of business, color is really important. You know, it's not like—

DA:

But those are all things I worked on. I did a lot of slideshows and those are what I call outtakes. I just bring them home and rather than threw them away, I just put them in boxes and trays and I have got a thousand or two of them around the house. I have been going through them.

AW:

Now, I see here something right down the street from me from my home in Lubbock, the Maedgen School Outdoor Learning Center.

DA:

Maedgen Elementary School?

AW:

Yeah. That's right down the block from me.

DA:

Is that right? That's the most interesting outdoor learning area. When I went there, Andy, the principal of that school had a serious visual problem. He could barely see, and the story he told about that outdoor learning area was just—blew my mind. I invited him to speak to one of our middle management conferences. He was an interesting guy.

AW:

These are some nice photos. Particularly, this big banner. Really pretty. What are you going to do with all of these once you get your book done?

DA:

Oh, I hadn't really made any plans.

AW:

Well we would sure archive them. What we do with slides is—it is very easy. We have a machine that we just run them through and digitizes them.

DA:

Well I have them all on a thumb drive and I have them numbered. My son put them on a thumb drive for me, and I can very easily let you look through—I guess I could dupe the thumb drive and you could have all of them.

AW:

Well we would like that, but at an archive, we like to have the originals also and the reason being is that ten years from now, there is going to be a better way to do these.

DA:

Sure and what bothers me is the thumb drive pictures I am looking at—they have lost some of their color. That is the reason I dug these out. My son digitized them for me, put them on a thumb drive. He said, "Dad, the slides won't be any better." But they are better. They are better than my thumb drive. My thumb drive has lost color.

AW:

Well the other thing is a computer—and I am sure you know this. I am not telling you anything new, but a computer screen colors are pretty much all over the map, in terms of their fidelity. Slides are really pretty accurate and so unless you have a really high end monitor computer screen that corrects—has a color correction thing built in – and those are thousands of dollars.

You know, they use them in printing and that sort of thing. So you're never quite going to get the same thing as you would with a real—which is why, at an archive, we like to have the original.

DA:

I don't understand exactly what that section is y'all are working on. It sounds like a library or something.

AW:

Well an archive is like the—I like to say the master child between a library and a museum. It is about information like a library, but it has a lot of artifacts like a museum, and what we—in the trade, we call it first source information. So in a library, you are never going to read something that's first sourced to speak of. You're going to read what somebody wrote about something, and so what we like to collect—like the oral history we are doing today—hundred years from now, somebody will be able to not only get the information that Dale Allen put into this interview, but they will be able to hear your voice doing it, so that's as close as you can get. We have letters, diaries, journals. When we documents organizations, we like to get something as plain and simple as their business records. For instance, we had a fellow that gave us his business records for a blue grass band that he was in in the seventies and eighties. Now, that seems kind of odd. They have got plenty of albums out, and everybody has their album so you everybody thinks, Well why do you want their records? What is it like to tour an acoustic string ensemble in America in the seventies and eighties? Well you are not going to know unless you can know things like, what did people get paid? What did it cost to fix their van? What was a hotel room in 1978? What did it cost? That kind of stuff. So you can go back and put something like that together. We have got one set of journals that I just love to show people when we tour them through our archive. We have the hand ledgers of a hardware store in Abilene, Texas from the turn of the century for about thirty years or so. And this is—we took in this many nails today. We took in this many—and then another set of books. It says here is what we sold. If you wanted to take the time to look at that ledger, see how it started out, what each column meant, you could go through and see when there was a building boom in Abilene, Texas. You could see what kinds of things were being done, and this is hard data. It is like collecting data out doing a soil survey. These are facts, and so you are getting as close to the factual information as you can without an interpretation, and that is what an archive, which is why, when you say, well you don't have any archives, you have already pointed out to me a great archive right here in these photos. And then just the drafts that you do in getting your book written and the research materials you assemble for that, that is valuable stuff, and that is what we exist to do. We got interested in Soil Conservation Service people because a guy that lives right by us, Bailey Mayo, called us up and said, "We have this organization, the retirees that meet every April."

DA:

New Braunfels.

AW:

Yeah, and he said, "You might get some interesting stories." Well so we went a couple of years ago and by golly, there were some really interesting things. I was particularly interested in it because I have just been doing for the last several years, a whole series of interviews and material collection on the American Ag Movement. The Tractorcade in 1979 and the things that went on around that because that started in our part of the world, Campo, Colorado, but another really big organizational site was Dalhart, Texas, and so we had a lot of those people that we'd collected their information. It has been a long time since we had had a populist agricultural movement. That's kind of the last one, and maybe the last one ever because there's—to have a populist movement, you got to have populists, and we all know there is not much populist left in agriculture, but when I got to meet some of those SCS folks, retired, I noticed several things. One of them was, I have never seen that many people who were at that age, who were that sharp, and had that good of memory. I don't know—I was talking to James Abbott about this yesterday. I don't know what you folks—I guess driving those un-air-conditioned pickups in the fifties may have helped you. I don't know, but there were a lot of people there who had really good recall of what they had done, and that's interesting because you don't want to interview somebody about their life when they are thirty-five. They really don't have a life yet, but if you wait too late in life—I mean, like somebody asked me about my growing up, well I can remember some things, but I can't remember all of it, so that memory is important. But the thing that struck me the most was that folks of your age cohort coming up through the SCS, seem to me, and you tell me if this is a wrong assumption, but it seemed to me that all of you folks were more interested in your work as a calling than you were in that work as just a job.

DA:

That's exactly right.

AW:

Well it just seems so obvious to me, and I don't think that's the case today. There are certainly some people in the work who are called to do and interested in all of the things that can be done, but I just don't think it's the same as it was and I think we need to document that. So that's what we have been doing.

DA:

I had to go to Mexico City with head of the information division of Washington D.C., Mexico City wanted a year of help from the Soil Conservation Service to help them communicate with farmers out in the Hinterlands. And the opening comments he said, "What you don't understand about the Soil Conservation Service of the United States is, it's kind of like a religion." I hear

him say, "It's kind of like a religion. It is a calling for our people." And so that got this guy started on a religious discussion that I thought was kind of funny. Anyway, you are exactly right. I read a book written W.C. Loudermill, probably published in the thirties, something about the dangers of soil erosion worldwide, and that really made an impression on me, and I wrote – that was something I got really good at, at a young age, was writing, and I wrote essays about that, I know, from the fifth grade on. And I dreamed about saving the world from soil erosion, but at that time, I didn't know anything about the Soil Conservation Service, so I said, "Well, I'll major in location agriculture and I can work through the use for that." When I got ready to get out of A&M, they said, well you—we would like to—would work for Soil Conservation Service, but you are not a veteran. You don't have veterans preference and you probably don't have a chance, but I got to work—I got to a farm anyways. So I did my thing. So anyway, I graduated from Texas A&M in 1949, age was twenty years old and I looked sixteen.

AW:

My uncle was there just before you. He didn't graduate. He left as a senior, I think, to join the Navy because he was afraid he was going to miss out, and he wound up getting killed in war. So he would have been there in forty—probably two through '45.

DA:

During the war.

AW:

Uh-huh.

DA:

My first interview was at a little farming community west of Wichita Falls, and I didn't have a car. My dad took me and I met the school board, and they had two applicants for the job, me and a guy from Texas Tech. The guy from Texas Tech was twenty-five years old, a veteran, married and had two children, and he look matured, intelligent. I was twenty and looked sixteen. I came out of there and I said, "Dad, I wouldn't hire me." I wouldn't and sure enough, they didn't. I got home and next week I got a notice, "We want to you to go to work for Soil Conservation Service in Jacksboro, Texas, Did you have anything?" I said, "Okay."

AW:

Where did you grow up?

DA:

I grew up south of Breckenridge. South of Breckenridge, Texas.

AW:

And you were born where?

DA:

I was born in Stevens County, Texas. I tell people, on a Friday morning, my mom was front bedroom.

AW:

What is the date?

DA:

I was born December 28, 1928.

AW:

Twenty-eight? December twenty-eighth?

DA:

I moved to Temple July—August the 1st, 1966. That is the day the guy climbed the tower at UT and shot those people and my preacher says that is the day he was born in Slayton, Texas. On a farm in Slayton, Texas.

AW:

What's your preacher's name?

DA:

Ronny Marriot. Slaton, Texas.

AW:

He is a lot younger than I am, but I was born in Slayton, Texas too.

DA:

Yeah, that's when you graduated from high school.

AW:

Yeah, I graduated from high school in Lubbock, but I was born—Slayton only had one hospital. It was a little Catholic hospital, and so although I was raised Methodist for many years, I thought I was probably Catholic because I was born in a Catholic hospital.

DA:

Now, I got to tell you something about Bailey Mayo.

AW:

Yeah, do. Good. I hope it is a good story that I can hold over him.

DA:

Bailey Mayo lived in Temple. He was a conservation agronomist. We had three state agronomists. They each had a third of the state. Bailey was an agronomist, and he had a son who was on the high school football team and at his request, I went to Austin to photograph him in his state championship game. We lost to somebody. I don't remember who, but I went down and walked the sidelines and took pictures. Bailey and I were good friends. I think our wives were good friends. My wife has been deceased now since '03, but anyway, I got trapped into having to edit a publication. Somebody hit on the idea of let's publish a how-to-do book, like a catalog, on conservation and organizing areas. We can't go in every home place, house, and solve erosion problems. So we went through an outline and they had all these things. I went to Houston, photographed and photographed and photographed, and we built this publication about how to break slopes. You put sticks in the ground and do different things. Landscaping. So I was the editor of that thing, and I had work to do, and I got these hundreds of papers to edit and the first one that came through was Bailey Mayo. It was like some kind of agronomy thing, and I thought I had lots of time so I went over it real carefully, and I suggested he do a little minor things, and sent it back to him and he just threw it aside. [Laughter] Now three months later, I have got them that thick. Now, I am not spending very much time on it. It didn't take much to please me, and so he sent his through again and he says that he has in his file somewhere, my suggestions on the first time and then, "Good job, Bailey." He says he has both comments from me and we have laughed and laughed and laughed about that. He may not remember that, but I remember it.

AW:

I will ask him. He has already—I have done one interview with him and he talked about the urban project.

DA:

Is that right?

AW:

Yeah, it is something near to his—

DA:

It was a really good book. It told how to do things and particularly, in urbanizing areas, people will skin off the land, and leave a tree, and now, you fill back—how much fill can you put back around a tree? Well there is a limit to how much fill you can put back around a tree, but you can go out around the dripline, and build little things to let that soil not be covered as much, and this be this much higher than that. We had pictures and it was really a good publication. Bailey was

one of the chief writers, I say chief. I guess we had maybe ten or twelve or fifteen—I don't know how many writers.

AW:

Boy we need more of that. In Lubbock, as you would know, one of the problems is what they do to playa lakes.

DA:

What?

AW:

Playa lakes. Farmers plow through them, but in town, they turn them into parks, and of course, either one creates all kinds of problems for runoff, and for what is going to happen with soils and everything else and so in Lubbock, right now at least, they are starting to go back and try to reclaim, in some way, these playas. And of course, once you've taken out that clay and the other things that make them unique, well it is pretty hard to recreate it, but they're at least trying to fix it, and if they'd had your handbook, maybe they would have done that in the first place.

DA:

Yeah, I wish I had a copy of that handbook. I guess it ran out of print. It was –

AW:

What's the exact title of it? I'll try to find it.

DA:

I think it was *Controlling Erosion in Urbanizing Areas* or something like that.

AW:

Okay. And it was an SCS—?

DA:

Publication, yeah. We had our own little print shop and cartography unit [?] [00:30:25] up at Fort Worth, and I shot tons of black and white photographs.

AW:

Now, so was it only for Texas or was it for SCS?

DA:

Yeah, it was Texas and I did—all of the photography work that I did was in Houston, and that's because that was a _____ [00:30:47] of the state, but it probably fit more than – I don't

remember all that much about it. I've laughed and laughed at Bailey. He got the biggest kick out of it. He would get a bunch of people around, "Let me tell you about Dale Allen's editing."
[Laughter]

AW:

How did you pick up photography?

DA:

By force. I never was a good photographer.

AW:

Well the photos I saw yesterday were good.

DA:

I had to work at it. That picture right over there on that house, I just looked into—I studied other people's photography, and I would take my wife with me on really important soil shoots, and she was an oil painter and she could say, "Dale, if you'll move right over here and get that tree limb in there, it would be a lot better," and see? I didn't see things like that. I worried about the F-stop and the speed.

AW:

Yeah, she was interested in the composition.

DA:

And she helped me with the composition. I never was good at composition, but I just—it was just force. I just was forced into it.

AW:

I draw and paint, and I am great at composition, but I am not good at F-stops. [Laughter] There are two different sets of skills.

DA:

I knew when I went to work for Soil Conservation Service, I was going to be able to take pictures and show things, so I bought an old camera. August 21. I think that was about—that started 1949. It was about that time. It was a cheap camera. Used black and white film and I carried it, and I shot a few pictures, and got to see them develop non-expense, and I went out on a guy's farm one day to—we called it service to the conservation plan. If a guy had an old plan, we'd tried to contact him at least every other year, and if there is anything that we needed to do or he changed his plan or anything—that was just part of follow up. This guy happened to go to the church I went to, and he had an old field in front of his house about twenty, twenty-five,

thirty acres, and we'd had some native bluestem grass seed harvested in that county in nineteen—far in the rain 1950s [?] [00:32:58]. I guess he harvested in '50, and I guess this was planted in '51. I saw the place probably in '53 or '54, and he had grass that high. Native blue stem, little blue stem, Indian grass, switch grass. Perfect stand. And he told me how many cattle he run in that pasture the year before. It made a good story. I took a picture of him in that grass with that cheap camera and had the film developed and wrote a story about it. That was my first successful feature article. The editor put it on the front page of the *Jacksboro Gazette News*. I had never had a feature article published in a newspaper before, and I got all kinds of comments from church because people knew I was the young kid on the block and they knew Carl Ramsey was park's man down at the Ford place, and had been a member of the church for years and years. And the comments I got from that story was a great encouragement to me. So I got to where I had to write a feature article – or had to write an article for the Jacksboro paper every other week. That was my start to writing, taking pictures with my camera. Cheap camera. Developing the film myself and I wasn't a good photographer. I promise you, I wasn't a good photographer.

AW:

Well what I saw looked good. You know, you learned an important lesson from being a journalist, someone who can write and take the photographs gets the job.

DA:

Yeah.

AW:

Again, I keep harping on these archives, but you didn't happen to collect all those things, did you?

DA:

No.

AW:

Your feature articles?

DA:

No. I don't have—I might have one or two articles laying around the house somewhere, but I just didn't save them. I counted up one day the magazines in Texas that used our articles while I was public information officer, and I got a list of them somewhere and I guess there are twenty magazines. A lot of magazines that people don't know about and I learned to—if you are going to sell a product, you have got to figure out your audience. You've got to target to your audience. You got to pick out your audience, and then you got to tell him or her what the benefits are of

that. In magazine feature articles, you have got an automatic selection process if you know what magazine they read or what magazine people read that you are trying to reach. So I had articles in *County Progress*. It was all county commissioners, county judges. There was one that went to municipal—I can't remember the name of it. There was a contractor's magazine. I had a whole list of those sort of things. I guess I have got a list somewhere. I would use it in my memoir. Twenty, twenty-five different magazines, and if I am trying to reach your dad, and he is interested in wildlife, and he has got a farming operation at Slayton, and I am trying to convince him to reuse the crop residues are beneficial to dove hunting, what magazine would he read? Well he might read the *Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine*. So you would write a story for that magazine, and then I learned that if you use the benefits to him on the first sentence, he might come near reading it, than if you put the benefits in the last sentence. So better hunting is one advantage to crop residue management in Slayton, Texas. That sort of thing. That's just part of the tricks of the trade I learned the hard way.

AW:

Well usually those are the best lessons. Did you graduate high school in Breckenridge?

DA:

Yes.

AW:

Okay, and did I hear you say that when you graduated A&M, it was in Soils?

DA:

No, I graduated in Agricultural Education.

AW:

AG Education.

DA:

I was going to be an AG teacher.

AW:

Okay. And you let Laudermill, L-a-u-d-e-r—I guess. Mill?

DA:

Yeah, I think it's—W.C. Laudermill.

AW:

And you read that at an early age, right?

DA:

Yeah, it was a little slick publication probably thirty pages small. Probably USDA handwritten. I don't know. But he travelled all over the world, and he documented erosion in China, and Japan. It was pretty rugged, and it made a deep impression on me. I guess I read that in the thirties. Probably sometime in the thirties.

AW:

Yeah, it's very interesting. I remember in 1958, so I was ten, I read a book called the – it was the report of the international geophysical year, where they had gone around allegedly for the first time, and measured things around the world like – and I remember to this day, reading – and this was no good way to be in it – but Lubbock, Texas, my hometown, by this time we had moved to Lubbock from Slayton. But Lubbock, Texas had the highest particulate matter in the air of any place they measured, and of course, what they were talking about was the dust we were having in the fifties. But as a little kid, I was still proud that we were in this book. Well that's really interesting. Why did you choose to go in AG Ed instead of in soils?

DA:

Well my high school AG teacher made a deep impression on me. He was just a joy of a person, and I got interested in location agriculture, and got me interested in the FFA [**Future Farmers of America**] chapter and was president of the FFA chapter my senior year. He made a deep impression on me, and I just thought, I think I would like to be an AG teacher just like he is. I didn't know about the Soil Conservation Service. I got interested—I was interested in serving soil, and I didn't know about the Soil Conservation Service, and I thought I could do it through location agriculture. Turned out I was close, but I interviewed for a job with the Soil Conservation Service while I was A&M and the guy said, "Well you are not a veteran. Veterans give five point preference and you probably don't have a chance."

AW:

Really?

DA:

But as it turned out, I had taken some range courses, and they needed somebody with that nametag in their profession.

AW:

I have also noticed a lot of folks that went to work for SCS had done the summer internships, but you didn't do that.

DA:

I didn't get to do that. That was new when I was in school. I knew one guy that did that, and it

was a great thing. It came a few years after me. I missed out on that. That's a really good thing. We had a girl named Terry Cearley, C-e-a-r-l-e-y, came along in the seventies as a student trainee at San Antonio. She was from San Antonio, a city girl. One of the smartest women AG majors I ever knew. She could have been president of general motors. We had a national convention out at San Antonio, and I worked the press room, and she helped me, and she worked in that program – she worked – I think it was the end of her sophomore year, end of her junior year. I know she worked in her sophomore year, and junior year. I don't know about in her freshman year. Two locations. She got out of there and went to work for Soil Conservation Service at – can't think of the name of the town. South of San Antonio. And was a jewel. She could have been anything. One day my boss came in and said, "Dale, we are losing Terry Cearley." I said, "Yeah." She had slipped word to me that she was starting to raise a family. He said, "She can't do that." [Laughter] She did and I wish I knew what happened to her.

AW:

Spell her last name again.

DA:

C-e-a-r-l-e-y.

AW:

C-e-a-r-l-e-y. And you said, "Cearley?"

DA:

Cearley. She pronounced it Cearley.

AW:

One of the things that I am having trouble is finding women SCS people to talk to. We've talked to some of the women who have been assistants and secretaries and things like that, but that is pretty interesting.

DA:

She was so smart. There is a formula you use for figuring out channel capacities. You drain in a cash field and you go put it through this channel, and you have to figure the acres of land and all that is there. It is called Manning's Formula. M-a-n-n-i-n-g. I do not understand it, but I went on an inspection in her area, and the engineer went out with her on a job and that night he said, "Dale, do you know what Terry Cearley could do?" and I said, "What?", "She can work Manning's Formula." No soil conservationist could do that job. That is an engineer's job. She could do Manning's. That is how smart she was. [Laughter]

AW:
Gosh.

DA:

I got to tell you something. You may want to edit this out of your recording, but I am going to tell you anyway. We just talked—she was—she could be state conservationist. She could be director of the soil conservation. She had that capability and she decided to raise a family. My friend George Marks and I were classmates at Texas A&M, he came to me and said, “Dale, what in the world—what in the world are we going to do with these young ladies? We hire them, and they stop, and have babies, and they leave us. We give them every opportunity.” And the deputy of the state conservation was with him. I said, “George that is real simple.”, “What?”, “George, if you are going to hire women, they are real simple.”, “What are you talking about?” I said, “Hell George, hire lesbians.”, “Golly.” He steamed and threw up his and stormed out. He wouldn’t speak to me the rest of the day. That’s the problem. You get these young girls. They are smart, and they are intelligent, and they meet a guy, and they get married, and first thing you know, things change for them.

AW:

Yeah, it is a fulltime job to be a mom. My daughter has got a great career going right now as a—she is director of public art for all the Texas Tech system, and it is just a wonderful thing. It is something she’s like made for. It is made for her, but she just got married to a nice, nice guy, and they’re starting to talk about having a family and I think, You spend a lot of time at work. You can’t do both of them. It is a very tough deal. Yeah, I understand. Tell me, you got to Temple early on and you did move around, I guess.

DA:

No, I started at the Soil Conservation of Jacksboro, and I got drafted in the Army. I got a chance to get in counterintelligence.

AW:

Yeah, so you were in the army for what year?

DA:

Two years. I was drafted in December of ’51. I was in until December of ’53, and the good Lord just smiled on me, and I wanted to be in the core, Texas A&M, and get a reserve commission in ROTC. We’d fought the war to end all wars in World War II. There was never going to be another war. I was convinced out of my mind there would never be another war. So I could go to Texas A&M and get a reserve commission, teach agriculture, and have two jobs. I could soldier on weekends and do all this stuff, and before I transferred to Texas A&M in probably 1947, Joe Boone talked me to into—let’s go do wheat harvest. So I went out to his family ranch in

Seymour. We were going to go up to wheat harvest. We were going to follow wheat harvest all the way to Canopy [?] [00:46:28]. Well it rained, and we couldn't work, and his dad said, "Well I'll put y'all to work here doing some stuff." And he put me on the bundle wagon. I haven't run a bundle wagon since I was twelve years old, and I climbed on that bundle wagon, and I came down, and had a pain in my right groin, and I had a hernia, and I didn't lift any more – anything that weighing more than that chair. I have no idea what happened. So I flunked my physical. I couldn't get—so we found a family doctor—a doctor—not a family, but a doctor in Cisco that had learned a new method of treating that with a needle, and didn't have to have surgery. He said, "Now, one thing about it, you can't tell anybody at Texas A&M that you had this treatment because it's not recognized by the medical profession yet, and it is not going to be accepted so don't tell anybody, but don't lift anything." Well that didn't last long. I tried that and I came down with a pain and I had to dropout. So then I graduated from Texas A&M and go to work for Soil Conservation Service, then I got drafted. And the guy told me, "You ought to try to get in counter intelligence. They only take people fresh out of basic training. They won't take officers." And so I applied, and I got in counter intelligence, and I spent nine months in Tulsa, Oklahoma driving an unmarked Army car with Arkansas license plates doing interviews for—interviewing people for assistance positions. Top secret clearances. I was a private E-2, Eisenhower froze the rank, and I couldn't get a promotion. I was the lowest rank in the U.S. Army, driving an unmarked Army car, and working my—I worked really hard. I thought and thought and thought. The good Lord just smiled on me, and the people I went to A&M with were in the Army in 1950, some of them going to Korea, and some of them came back. Some of them got to go to—we got to come back. And here, they were fighting in Korea, and I skipped it. So I really—I was blessed through that. I was good at English in high school. I wasn't good at anything else, so if it hadn't of been for my information skills in the field office, I probably wouldn't have made it because I got to write feature articles that went on the front page of the county newspapers and it helped my career. I became head of the SCS office at Nocona in 1956, and I had one of the—most success stories I ever had from a feature article in a local newspaper in 1958 or '59. We had a guy that had a lot of money. He married a lady who was wealthy, and he owned a three hundred and twenty acres farmland out in kind of a second, bottom about in Red River. It was kind of out of the bottom, but we called it bottom and it wasn't really bottom. And he wanted to plant coastal Bermuda grass. We didn't have coastal Bermuda grass west of Whitesboro. It wasn't that far East—wasn't that far West. He said, "I want to plant some. I want you to help my renter, my attendant, plant some." Okay, so we did. I showed him how to build a little a thing. You take a flat piece of border plate, make a wheel out of it, and mount it on a device and you just drop that sprig right there in front of that wheel, and let that sprig—stuck it in the ground and it'll grow.

AW:

So it like sticks the sprig into the ground?

DA:

No, you just lay the sprig. You can buy the sprigs about that long and just run that wheel across there and just stick that whole thing in the ground about that far.

AW:

Oh, I get it. So it pushes it down in?

DA:

Yeah, and then you had a little thing on the bottom back that kind of covered it up.

AW:

Now, pardon me for asking this, is coastal rhizomatic grass?

DA:

Yes.

AW:

Okay.

DA:

It doesn't produce seed.

AW:

Right, right. That's what makes sense of pushing it in the ground.

DA:

[Lawnmower in background] Yeah, so he found some sprigs forming in Whitesboro. That was probably sixty miles east of the company, and just hadn't moved that far west. So he planted that as good land, and I had been out to his place. He seemed to carry a camera and he called me one day. He said – his name was Earl. He said, "Dale, get out here quick." I said, "Why?" He said, "I got something I want you to see and bring your camera.", "Okay." So I came out there and Andy, those runners on that coastal Bermuda grass, they were long enough that he could pick a runner up and put it over his shoulder. It went behind his shoulder, and it was growing there, and it went over his shoulder, and I took a picture of that and put it in common use and boy, the phones started ringing. In a few years, there were hundreds of acres in Montague County. And then it went all the way to—while I was there—it went west of Nocona, west of Montague County over in Henrietta. I don't have it for you now. We had no idea it would grow that.

AW:

Yeah. Now, was this irrigated or was it—

DA:

No, no. It was dryland.

AW:

Wow, that's—because I know, in my country, they will grow it, but you have got to have some water.

DA:

Yeah, it had to have good fertility. It wouldn't do well, and then even after it got established, it would play out unless you renovated it. Go and tear it up and re-fertilize it.

AW:

Oh, so it had a lifespan that you had to go back.

DA:

Yeah, I don't understand whether it got root bound or what happened, but you had to tear it up and fertilize it, but it would re-establish itself. I mean, I am talking about on the grassy type. It is kind of on the fringe of where you could raise out here.

AW:

Yeah, I noticed. I was talking to Dale Fischgrabe yesterday morning.

DA:

Yeah, he's a friend of mine.

AW:

Well we had a nice visit. I noticed driving in on 36 that we had gotten to Gatesville, and all of a sudden, there must be a dotted line through there, because we quit seeing dryland, nice pastures. Now, everything had a pivot in it, and everything was brown all the way into—it seemed backwards to me. It seemed like it should have been the other way around.

DA:

Up around Comanche, they quit growing peanuts, and they grow Bermuda grass pasture over here. They got a little weak irrigation system.

AW:

So they drip? Because we weren't seeing a gated pipe or anything.

DA:

No. All of the ones I have seen are sprinkler systems.

AW:

Sprinkler? Yeah. Boy there was a lot of hay. A lot. I guess dairies—

DA:

Yeah. We had a lot of winters, like I say, had a lot of rain in April and May and boy, there's hay all over this country.

AW:

Yeah, I know. I hadn't seen that much hay, and it was still sitting in the field so there must be a surplus of it.

DA:

Yeah, I imagine they are having trouble selling it. That is what hay did. When you make it, everybody makes it.

AW:

Yeah. I read once in a USDA book from the fifties, which I want to ask you about in a minute, just those books—but the annual, USDA annual report, you know, they would have, at least in those years, they would have a topic. Like there would be water or grass or—and one of those, in fact, it stuck out to me. It was that the single largest agricultural crop in America was hay.

DA:

I'm not surprised.

AW:

And it is also the crop that no one knows the price of. [Laughter] Because it is so reasonable.

DA:

It is not like a loaf of bread. It doesn't have the status of hay.

AW:

Yeah, and they don't trade it on the Chicago board. Those—you know, the writing on those things—like you were impressed with Laudermill's book, I was impressed the first time I read one of those USDA annual reports. The essay on that topic—I was looking—I remember the one on water which was '53 or '54. It was somewhere in the early fifties, but if you took that article or essay and blacked out the dates, you could publish it today, and you wouldn't have to change a thing.

DA:

You are talking about that USDA yearbook?

AW:

Yeah.

DA:

Do they still publish that?

AW:

I don't know, but I just wondered if the SCS, someone like you or maybe you, because they don't sign those. I don't think. They are just published by the USDA, but it is really great writing and it is—

DA:

Yeah, I never did write one. I wrote stories about West Rocky Creek, west of San Angelo, there is some people – somebody followed up on that story and wrote a story about West Rocky Creek. I was told they were going to offer for writing it for USDA yearbook, but I don't know if it ever got done or not and I don't know if they still publish it. During World War II, a book came out, a USDA yearbook called *Keeping Livestock Healthy*. My dad studied that thing. We couldn't get veterinarians because the veterinarians went to war. They were all aggies. They went to war. He treated his livestock with that USDA yearbook, and I got to tell you one story about a USDA yearbook that I think about a lot. It made a deep impression on me. I was the public information officer, and I was supposed to know everything about photography and everything about everything. So I got a call one day, well the boss did, and we got two photographers wanting to come to go the Lubbock area, and work on finding some USDA yearbook in order to take some pictures of irrigation, and they need a guide. "You are going to be the guide.", "Okay, so" – oh that's somebody mowing my lawn.

AW:

Yeah, I have been watching them.

DA:

So they made a point. They wanted to go to Lubbock area. So it rained on Saturday all over West Texas, and I was supposed to meet them on Wednesday, and I was really concerned because it rained so much. So I called them, "Oh no, we have got a tight schedule." So I met Bill Reese, who was district conservationist for SCS at Lubbock, and we met somewhere, and he's going somewhere to show us—he was going to show us a terrace system. It was different. We drove by and we saw—now, this was on Wednesday, they had a good rain on Saturday, and it was just barely dry enough to get a tractor in the field. We drove by a farm and here was a lady driving a

brand new tractor in a cotton field. The cotton was about that high. There wasn't a blade of grass in that field, except there were two spots of white weeds, what I would call a white weed, and the farmer was out there hoeing them by hand, and she is plowing, and she has got a bonnet on and a mask, a dusk mask. That brand new tractor just plowing away, and these photographers went ape. "Stop, stop, stop. They want a picture there." I don't think Bill Reese knew the farmer, so we stopped and talked to him and got to take some pictures. They started taking pictures, and I wanted to ask, "Why are you plowing? It is just barely dry enough to plow. Why are you plowing?" They had a new tractor, and it's paid for, I guess, and got gasoline in the barn paid for. So after we talked, the guy said, well I've got to go get my old tractor and plow out that ditch over there. That's the ditch that brings the water to this field. And I think he was going to try to get it ready to irrigate Saturday.

AW:

After the Wednesday?

DA:

Here she's plowing the moisture out of the ground to get it dry enough to irrigate Saturday?

AW:

Yeah.

DA:

That really bothered me. I didn't ask many questions, but that was the mindset. I had three uncles that lived out there and did that. And I am not picking on them, but that was a mindset.

AW:

Yeah. When I was born, I spent until about first—well until we moved to town—to a big town, and I started first grade when we lived on a farm, and you plowed. I mean, that is what you did. Fuel was cheap.

DA:

You weren't lazy.

AW:

You weren't lazy and you weren't going to sit around and do nothing, and so if there was nothing else to do, you plow. I think Dale Fischgrabe and I were talking about this yesterday. He mentioned, just sort off handedly, but it made a lot of sense to me, that high fuel prices have probably improved water conservation, more than any one thing, because people don't pump so much and they don't plow so much.

DA:

I mention in my memoir. [grinding noise] I wrote—I don't know how many feature articles about water conservation, leap into low energy precision application system. Instead of squirting the water up in there, you dropped it right on the ground. I wrote stories. No telling how many stories I've written about that, and all of that didn't do as much good for saving water as the price of energy.

AW:

Yeah, and at least in our country, the efficiency—I actually talked to one that was a professor at Texas Tech that had been studying water use in I think, Parmer County, who is in terrible shape right now for ground water, but what they found was that the more efficient the application system was for water, the more water they used because the idea was more crop for the drop. You know, no one could make more crop, and that was more of an interest than saving water.

DA:

I'll be darned.

AW:

It's counterintuitive to what I would think as a city slicker now. It has been a long time since I have been on a farm, but you would reduce your water usage, but it actually increased it.

DA:

Yeah, I remember when we got real gung-ho about doing water conservation on the High Plains, probably in the sixties or seventies. The High Plains underground water conservation district of Lubbock had a guy whose name escapes me, that was really gung-ho about water conservation. He was really ahead of his time.

AW:

I will think of his name in a minute because he was a first director, right?

DA:

Yeah, the first one that I ever knew.

AW:

Yeah, I think. Because that district didn't start until after the Second World War, right?

DA:

Right.

AW:

And it was one of the first in Texas. High Plains.

DA:

He was a really neat guy and he called up area engineering one day, and they have been talking about water conservation things. [Phone rings] What is it that this underground water conservation district could do to help you conserve water? I am not going to answer this. I am just going to see who it is.

AW:

Sure.

DA:

He said, "We need some equipment to take out on a farm to catch the water that a farmer puts on with an irrigation system to analyze his efficiency. We've got sprinkler systems on one end. We'll put down four inches of water, and on the end, two inches of water, and one inch water all in one application. We need to level that out, and be more efficient." So they advise a system of putting empty vegetable cans, and if this one caught three inches, this one two inches, this one inch, and you adjust that. So it was a step in the right direction, but I never thought about that turned around to result in water use because now you can get it more evenly. Now, you can use more water.

AW:

Yeah, you can get more use out of it. Yeah, it was a real shock to me and that's in a county where they are down to the—maybe down to the end of their—

DA:

And that's Parmer County?

AW:

Parmer County. Yeah.

DA:

What is the county seat?

AW:

Well the county seat is Fredonia, I think, and Bovina is the other town and then they have —

DA:

That's on western edge, is it not?

AW:

Oh yeah. Right on the border. It is just west of Bailey County, which is Muleshoe, where there's still a lot of water. Dale Fischgrabe also pointed out that the city of Lubbock buying up the Bailey County water rights has actually resulted in better water conservation, because they're a more careful user of the water than landowners, which is also counterintuitive. So I was—it was pretty interesting. Let me ask you something about—specifically about public information offices. One of the other things that I have noticed in these interviews with other SCS folk is the approach, especially for people like James Abbott, and Dale Fischgrabe, and Bailey Mayo, and they mentioned it time and again, is that when they went out into the field to work with a farmer or rancher or landowner, they didn't go out at least until late in the eighties when things started changing with larger farms, fewer people, and more regulated programs. They all talked about, "Well we couldn't go out and tell people what to do, instruct them. We could educate them, we could provide assistance, but we had to convince them. We had to persuade them," and I just wonder if that wasn't a big part of what your job was, to provide the material so that they could do that?

DA:

Yeah, it was. Something happened in agriculture that you may not be aware of. You may also be aware of it. The big change happened in agriculture, particularly on the High Plains, in 1985, when a bill called the Food Security Act was passed. It has a long, long history. Years and years ago in the 1930's, the early days of the Roosevelt administration, the Roosevelt administration created an organization called the – I don't know what the name of it was—Triple A Agriculture Adjustment Act or—

AW:

Is that where the FSA came from?

DA:

Yeah, the PMA, Production Marketing Association.

AW:

And the Farms Security Administration.

DA:

It was an organization. It was a USDA agency. The sole purpose of it to start with was to help farmers have some income. Worldwide prices of cotton, for example, were so low that they decided to start subsidizing certain crops, and you could grow—I don't remember how they subsidize it, but you could get extra money for a bail of cotton simply because the rural price was nothing. I can remember my dad took some cotton to the—hailed it ten miles to the gin in a wagon, and it wasn't hardly worth bringing home. He couldn't get enough for it just during '31,

'32, and '33. So that organization was interested in getting money into farmer's hands with no consideration for erosion control and here, the Soil Conservation Service was cross purposes. We'd say, "You don't want to do that. You need to conserve the soil.", "No, I can't do—" so along in the sixties, seventies, there was a big conflict between the two USDA agencies. The Soil Conservation Service, and whatever this agency was that provided substance for surface crops. The name changed every few years. It was PMA at one time and ASCS. One time it was ASCS, Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Service. They were reacting to laws passed by congress. Laws were written by congressmen. It wasn't an agency that wrote the laws and they were subsidizing surplus crops on highly erodible land. Andy, there was a time in Texas when you could have a cotton allotment in Bell County, Texas. We're in Bell County, and you might have a hundred acre cotton allotment and there came a time when ASCS would let you sale that allotment to some other farmer. So they found out a farmer in Seminole could go buy shin oak, sandy land, blow sand for nearly nothing, and plow that up, and buy allotments from Bell County. A hundred acres and plant that land to cotton. For two or three years, he could make a crop because it was high in organic matter. As soon as the organic matter had played out, it wouldn't produce a crop. Then they had a program to pay the farmer if he had a crop failure. He had a disaster payment. So here, the USDA agencies were direct cross purposes. We are trying to stop them from doing that, and they are paying them to do it.

AW:

Yeah, and they are planting in ears where they know they are not going to make a crop for the loan. To get the—

DA:

Andy, I was with one of our guys at Seminole once and he said, "Dale, we are not going to go out there." That guy was planting cotton. He said, "We are not going to go out there and look." But I bet you lunch that he's not putting a seed in that field. He's pretending to plant cotton. Now, when he gets a crop failure, he will get—Not many of them do that, but that guy is one of the one that does it." Now, later they made him produce receipts from the feed store, where a crooked feed store guy would give him—so there was a really big conflict, and the Food Security Act came out in 1956 and said, "Okay, if you are going to grow subsidized crops on highly erodible land, you have to protect the land from excessive erosion." Now, it's the law. If you go to get certain—now, people start listening because the Soil Conservation Service produced a soil survey, and you got to do it, so it really changed agriculture. It really made a huge change and I happened to get a chance to get it on the ground floor, and we went through some rough changes. All of a sudden, we had to have—we had two hundred—James Abbott thinks we had two hundred and fifty thousand farmers in Texas without an adequate conservation plan, and he's got to have that conservation plan. It has got to be installed by 1989 or he can't get his subsidies on that cotton on that high erodible land, or whatever he was growing. And so I got involved because the guy who—when that law came out, the guy that should have been taking care of it in

our state office was moved here, and was building a house, and he had to be gone a lot. And those directors would come in every so often and he said, "Dale, would you watch those and alert me when I need to—" I said, "I can do better than that. I can write you the memos if you want me to. I can dictate the memo. I know what needs to go to field." I did and boy, he'd come in, and he was so happy. He would sign off on those.

AW:

Now, what year was this about?

DA:

The bill was passed in 1985. It was called the Food Security Act of 1985, and it went into effect almost immediately. You couldn't—by '86, you couldn't grow those crops without some wind strips or something to protect it. It really made a huge difference. It just made all the difference in the world.

AW:

Did it alter the way that the SCS or I guess, were the NRCS by this time?

DA:

No, it was SCS at that time. NRCS didn't come along until after I retired in '89, '90, '91.

AW:

Okay. Well did it alter the SCS personnel's relationship with landowners?

DA:

Yeah. Here's what it did. You got to have a conservation plan. If it is your dad, your dad has to have a conservation plan, and he's got to call for treatments that could hold that erosion to an acceptable level. They accepted a level of ten times per acre. And if he just had rural crop land like Seminole, about all he can do is use wind strips, eight rolls of sorghum and sixteen rolls of cotton or whatever or windbreaks. You can't plant windbreaks. They used to plant them twenty-five years ago, and you measure crop residue, and now, he is desperate to stay in business to get his subsidy. He should listen to the Soil Conservation Service. You have got to have a plan, and we were so strapped. We computers in every office, and we learned to type those things out with computer. We didn't have to do much on sight work. We had thousands of them that had to be done and we didn't—the law didn't give us any extra funds.

AW:

Yeah. They never do. Do they?

DA:

I was able to help on that because the Soil Conservation Service decided okay, we'll go to volunteer program. They had an outfit called—a wing called—it wasn't a wing. It was a movement called the Earth Team. It was volunteer's that would work for Soil Conservation Service for nothing. It allowed people to do jobs. Mundane jobs, secretarial work and other jobs that would free up the conservations. So he spent all his time on conservation planning. You got certain things to do in the field office. You have to do—and the day I was given that job, we had five or six, I think five volunteers from Texas. In a year, we had a thousand. All you got to do is tell the guy at Seminole or Muleshoe, name some jobs – figure out some jobs that you can get a volunteer to do, and let people know you need volunteers, and you can get them. And we had people working—begging to go to work for us.

AW:

Really?

DA:

Two hours a day. Three hours a day. Women. Skilled people. Retired people. It was a really big thing.

AW:

What's the name of the volunteer program again?

DA:

It is called the Earth Team.

AW:

E-a-r-t-h.

DA:

The Earth Team. Yeah. We even had a call 1-800-the soil. 1-8-0-0-T-H-E-S-O-I-L.

AW:

How long did that program go?

DA:

I guess we still have Earth Team members. I really don't know. It started – I don't know when it started, but we kicked it in really high gear. [Coughs] 1985. We had just a few members, but boy, all of a sudden we realized we had—Soil Conservation Service gave us some training from Washington. I went to Washington. I went to a volunteer conference in San Francisco that really turned me on about volunteers, and I really got high behind, and we did a lot of good work with

the volunteer program.

AW:

Until your book comes out, who else can I talk to about this program, because this is the first mention I have heard of it in all these interviews.

DA:

In the Soil Conservation Service, when they decided to go really all out, they decided in each state the public information officer would be the volunteer coordinator. So the reason you haven't heard about it is because you haven't talked to public information officers.

AW:

Got it. Yeah.

DA:

I know a lady in Iowa that was a volunteer coordinator in New Mexico. A counterpart in New Mexico. I kind of lost track of it, but that's all I know.

AW:

Well that does make sense as to why I hadn't had anybody mention it. Was it an asset to the field offices or was it another thing for them to have to say grace over?

DA:

No, it was—all you had to do was get them to sign up, and now they are protected from liability if you are damaged. You know, but they got to be signed up. And then you couldn't pay them anything, but you give them a t-shirt that said 'Earth Team' or 'Captain Earth Team.' We fell access to some research by smart people that knew about volunteers, and you'd be surprised what some people will work for. What turns some people on to—if you are working for a good cause, there's certain people that will help you, and it is just a matter of connecting the two, and we played on that.

AW:

So as a public information officer, you coordinate it, did you also publicize it to help?

DA:

Yeah, we did. I did a lot of writing about it, and all I would write about would be a person like you that on your spare time you helped the field office do different things, and write a story about you. And one of the things we learned—the people that are looking for a job that don't have a job are willing to work free, if they can work in a field that will gain experience.

AW:

To help them get a job.

DA:

We had a guy who had a degree in geology. Graduated from TCU with a geology degree and we had a core drill rig working in Fort Worth area that needed a geologist, and he worked for free and learned to be a good crew and later got a job, fulltime job with him. Spent his career working for them. People will work free to learn something to gain experience, and we used all of that kind of stuff. There is a lot of tricks to be into volunteer work, so we took advantage of that.

AW:

Yeah. Well that is really interesting. When did you retire?

DA:

I retired in '89.

AW:

In '89? That is a long time back.

DA:

Yeah.

AW:

Did you do consulting after that?

DA:

No.

AW:

Or writing?

DA:

No, I really retired thinking I had the best of two worlds. I could retire and write feature articles and sell them, but I failed at realizing one thing. When I was sitting up there in the center of the action as public information officer, I had all these field office people that were saying, "Dale, come to my county. I lost that contact. I lost the link between where the stories are." So I wrote about two or three, and that took up bridge. I took over a bridge game so I would rather do a bridge game.

AW:

[Laughter] When did you start on your memoir?

DA:

You know I started after I retired. I would remember something I had done, and I would sit down and write about it, and it would involve something about you or something, and I would send you a copy of it, and you would like that and I would just throw it aside. I saved all those things and my granddaughter said one day—her name is Wendy. W-e-n-d-y. She said—they called me Haha. She said, “You ought to write a book. Put those in a book.” Well I might just do that. So when I started, I decided to make it into memoirs, and I decided to make it a conservation story. The name of my book is *The Trail of the Texas Conservationist: The Memoirs of Dale D. Allen*.

AW:

Oh, that is great.

DA:

So she said, “How are you coming on your memoirs?” I said, “Well we are doing pretty good.” She says, “Got my name in there?” I said, “Yeah, I do, but I may have misspelled it.” She said, “What do you mean?” I said, “Well I am talking about those windy soils in West Texas. W-i-n-d-y? Was that how you spelled it?”, “No, no. It is w-e-n-d-y.”, “Oh, I don’t have your name in there then.” [Laughter] She is always going to be about her, not going to be about her, it’s about my conservation career. I’ve laughed about that a lot.

AW:

[Laughter] I like it.

DA:

I got to tell you one more story about—I worked—I learned to do information campaigns. I didn’t know what an information campaign was until I did one and somebody said, “Hey, that’s called an information campaign.” I made some speeches about it, National Information Policy. An information campaign is—you’ve got something happening, and where I started, we had a booklet coming out on how to control brush to benefit wildlife. We were getting a lot of criticism because we were encouraging people to control brush, and some of the environmental type people thought we were doing that to the detriment of wildlife. Well our biologist said, “No, if you do it right, it improves the grass, and it improves the habitat for wildlife because if you control the brush in strips, deer like to graze in an open area, but they like to cover a strip nearby.” So we put together—and so when we published that, I decided to write a number of articles about it to advertise. Not advertise, but to tell about it. So I wrote an article for the *Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine* and *Ranch Magazine*. And so when you do an information campaign, you use all of the resources you have to accomplish the same purpose. You just use

different outlets. So I worked on a number of information campaigns, but now I have forgot what we are talking about.

AW:

We were just talking about you had a story about your memoirs, about Wendy, but I was wondering how long you have been working on them and then you mentioned the public information campaigns—about how you were doing them before you knew what they were.

DA:

Yeah. I lost my train of thought. Anyway, I've done a number of them, and they really are _____
[01:23:54]

AW:

Yeah. Is it—well you retired a little too soon to probably answer this, but you're familiar with what is going on in the world today, and I am stopping to think about the public information things that I always read avidly. When I first moved back to Lubbock in the late seventies, I lived way out in the southwest part of town, which is not so far out anymore, but we were on the Co-op power, and because we Co-op power, we got a Co-op magazine, and it was one of those great magazines that you are talking about. A little magazine nobody knows about, but it was targeted and so there would be articles, many of them having to do with agriculture and how to handle your livestock and so on. And so that was interesting, and then the High Plains underground water district had a great monthly newsletter, and it would come out with an article, but always graphs. Here is what's happening with usage, here is what's happening with rainfall, here's what happening—you know? And I was always interested in statistics when I was in college, and so it was—I actually read that thing every time it would come out.

DA:

Yeah. I used to get it in the mail. It would tell the levels, the measures of water levels in all those wells.

AW:

Yeah. Exactly. It was really interesting. Now, you don't get anything in the mail except junk. If you're going to get it, it is going to come in over the web or in an email attachment or something like that. Now, I know the same amount of work is going into it, but I find that as a consumer, I mean, a consumer of the information, I am less likely to read it when it comes to me that way than if it came in the physical mail, and I think it is because I believe that I can—if it's on the web, I can go find it whenever I want to. Whereas in the other way, it was there in front of me and I paid more attention to it.

DA:

It is new. I remember those littler power Co-ops. I had forgotten about those.

AW:

Well I just wondered if the job of public information in electronic media world is different.

DA:

You know, I know it's changed. I know, for example, the extension service has done something that I would never have thought of. I read something about this a year or two ago. They had a seminar planned at someplace on something, and they had four or five speakers, and you could get on your PC, and log into that seminar, and listen to the speakers. You could listen to the talk. It is just like being at the conference. You could do it from your office.

AW:

Yeah. We call those 'webinars.' We do them all the time at the university. I mean, all universities do them.

DA:

Yeah, that is something I had never thought of.

AW:

Well you couldn't do it until recently because of the – you have to carry a lot of information to do video. Audio's pretty easy, but video takes a lot of bandwidth.

DA:

And things have changed. I have a great grandson who plays baseball as a minor league pitcher for the Los Angeles Angels and he plays for the Burlington Owls, in Burlington Owl.

AW:

What is his name?

DA:

His name is Tyler Watson.

AW:

Alright. We are baseball fans so I am going to pay attention.

DA:

And I can get on the Burlington Bee's website, and I can find his schedule, and I can listen to his baseball games. And if he is playing in a town where it is televised, I can pay fifteen dollars a

month or something like that, and subscribe to it, and I can see a televised game of his on the computer. You know where that technology came from?

AW:
Military?

DA:
Came from a guy named—he's a wealthy guy who owns the Dallas—

AW:
Oh. Mark Cuban?

DA:
Mark Cuban. What sports team does he own?

AW:
He owns the basketball team the Mavericks.

DA:
Okay, Mark Cuban bought that team, and his—the team he had been associated with in Indiana or somewhere was playing a game. It was televised, and he could not get the televised game in Dallas, and that was his specialty was communicating that from them to Dallas, and he got a team together of his cohorts. He said, "I want to be able to come to a Dallas Cowboys game, and turn on my computer, and watch that game in Indiana." They call it streaming. They developed that technology that is called streaming, and I can get Tyler's baseball games streamed on my computer. I do more listening than watching, but it is just a different world out there.

AW:
Yeah, another advantage of streaming is that—we are looking into doing that for our archives because if I put an interview up where people could just download and listen to it, which is pretty easy. You don't have to stream it to do that. We run the risk of people capturing that and doing what they want to with it. For an interview about SCS, probably not a big issue. But if I'm – the other group of interviews I do all the time are with musicians, and artists, and writers. A lot of what they're talking about is intellectual property. When you start talking about your book, there's an intellectual property issue there. The nice thing about streaming is, it is much more difficult for that to be captured by the listener or viewer on the other end. So you can stream a video of that game, and it's difficult for you at your computer to record that, and then have an unauthorized copy. So streaming is really nice on a lot levels.

DA:

Mark Cuban. I have been told Mark Cuban is the one that designed that and got it going.

AW:

Yeah, well that makes sense. Would you do this all over again?

DA:

Do what?

AW:

Work as a PIO [**Public Information Officer**] for the SCS?

DA:

Yeah, just pure by luck I got a chance to move down here, and be the first public information officer Texas had. We had—Louisiana had one. It was the only one in the United States. Louisiana and then Texas decided they would have one. So I came down here, and I didn't—I talked to a friend of mine when I found out that I got the offer and I said, "Doug, I don't want that job. Do I?" He said, "Well Dale, who else could do it?" I said, "I don't know anybody else that could do it. I don't know anybody else that could do the job that I think ought to be done." So I said, "Okay, I'll take this." So I took it.

AW:

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

DA:

Well read that thing. There is some things in there that we haven't talked about.

AW:

Okay. Let me just take a second. You did a good job here. You got the Food Security Act changes. That is the first sentence of the second paragraph so you have got it going in there early.

DA:

I made my biggest contribution in the Food Security Act. It helped make the biggest change in West Texas.

AW:

[Long pause] It has got the volunteer coordinator. So your radio spots lead to the 'Don't mess with Texas' campaign?

DA:

Yeah, I started putting out those. I belonged to an organization called Beautify Texas Council. Stop littering. I got invited to join that organization, and I was putting out public service spot announcements, and I had little short thirty-minute ads on television. Public service things. A guy walked up to me one day and he said, "Are you Dale Allen?" and I said, "Yeah," and he said, "Are you the guy that's responsible—" I want to tell you about those books.

AW:

Okay.

DA:

He said, "Are you the guy that is responsible for those public service sponsors about the Soil Conservation Service?" I said, "Yeah, I am." He said, "Well how do you do that?" He was new in a position—a new public information officer in the Texas highway department. He said, "How do you know what length?" and I said, "Well there are some guidelines for—radio is rated a hundred and fifty words a minute, and television is a hundred and twenty-five words a minute. You just have to design. If you go for a thirty second spot, you have got to go about seventy-five words, maybe a hundred." He said, "Golly, that's interesting." So he got started doing those for the highway department. Now, he had a budget, and I didn't have a budget. So they hired a firm to design that 'Don't mess with Texas' thing, and boy he made a name for himself because it's—I don't know—it's known nationwide. I don't know whether anybody else has done it or not.

AW:

I think it is known worldwide. You see and the reason you know it is known worldwide is because people make parodies of it. They use the "don't mess with"—and they do that all over the world so that campaign is really helping today.

DA:

I've forgotten the guy's name, but he and I—we weren't—I couldn't say we were friends, but we were casual friends. I can't think of his name. He's probably in replacement [?] [01:35:09].

AW:

Early on, he also made that program more effective by involving pretty well known Texas musicians like Willie Nelson, and other Texas known personalities.

DA:

Yeah, then after that, this organization located here in Texas—in Temple, called the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board.

AW:

Yeah, my friend—I think my friend, Rex Isom is a member of that.

DA:

Yeah, I think he is. I have heard of him, but I don't know him. But anyway, they had some different committees, and they had a public information committee at one time, and these were some conservation district directors, and they got ahold of some funds, and they raised some money, and Clyde Gutsoff [?] [01:35:55] was the public information officer of the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board. He said, "Dale, if you'll write me some spots, I can get somebody to narrate those for us, and produce them for us, I think." I said, "Okay." So I wrote a bunch and he got a country and western guy named Gilly from Houston.

AW:

Oh. Mickey Gilly.

DA:

Mickey Gilly. He took those things to Mickey Gilly and Mickey Gilly just jumped at them. "Why I'll be happy to." And he had his own studio, and he read those things, and put them to music, and taped them for us, and we distributed those statewide, and they really were good. So that's the on and offspring out of the 'Don't mess with Texas' thing. Mickey Gilly did a really good job, and we—after I got started doing public spots here in Texas, Washington office did some, and they decided to use Loretta Lyn as a spokesman. So they sent out some recordings. My counterpart in Tennessee went with a guy from Washington D.C., and they went to Loretta Lyn's house, and they sat there and recorded her spots, and made spots that were distributed nationwide, and I put them out all over Texas. We had around five hundred radio stations. A hundred and twenty-five TV stations. In those days, it might still be true, if you owned a TV station or a radio station, you had to give a certain amount of your time to public service. They didn't call it that. They call it something else. And so in order to get your next license, you would document those, and you'd keep records of it. So they gave me all kinds of records about how many of those things—how many hours our station was using. So when Loretta Lyn's spot came out, it was really well accepted in Texas, and I got a lot of reports from different TV stations of how they had used them, and some of them said, "We really did like the Loretta Lyn spots." So one day when I kind of got ready to compile that for the year, I found out her address, and I wrote her a note. Just three sentences. I don't know whether I put it in a card or what, and told her about how many stations I thought that Texas used those, and how many favorable comments I have gotten. And she sent me the nicest letter, and thanked me and that Christmas, I got a Christmas card from her. I saved it for years. Now, I can't find it.

AW:

Oh gosh. [Laughter] That's too bad because she's one of the—she's a sweetie too.

DA:

Yeah, is she still alive?

AW:

She's a nice person.

DA:

Yeah, and she—one of the spots, when my friend, Jim Blue, and a guy named Joe somebody, went to her house, they saw a pot with flowers growing in them. This guy said, “Loretta that would make a good spot.” And he sat down and wrote one, and I still remember the spot. He said, “When I was younger, I didn’t have a pot to put my plants in.” It had a conservation theme to it, and was really a good spot, and Joe Larson was the guy. He sat there, and wrote that in her living room, and she recorded it that day. I didn’t have a pot to put my soil in or something.

AW:

Yeah, which is of course a play on the old story about how poor you are. Well tell me about those three books. I see, I guess, part one, two, and three. The Soil and Water Conservation in the Western Gulf Region.

DA:

Mr. Louis P. Merrill was the regional conservator for the Soil Conservation Service starting in – he was located in Fort Worth. In those days, we had the Western Gulf Region which was Texas all the way to Florida, and he was head of an old soil erosion project back when there wasn’t any such thing as a conservation district. And Hugh Hammond Bennett was head of the Soil Erosion Service, and he had a dream of having soil conservation districts kind of like a school district. District directors would be landowners – voted into being by the landowners, and they would be—run the conservation business for their district, and they’d get technical assistance from the Soil Conservation Service. That was Hugh Hammond Bennett’s dream. Mr. Merrill was head of that duck creek project at Lindale, and he had either ten or twenty farmer advisors. Farmer Advisor Committee. Some of them were black, and they advised them on what experiments to do on their Washington project, and so when Hugh Hammond Bennett started pushing the idea of conservation districts, the land grant association of Texas A&M, and extensive service fought it tooth and toenail. Fought him to a draw. They wanted the conservation district movement to be put out of the county agent with the county agent being the executive director of the soil conservation field office, and the county commissioners to be the directors. And they wanted all the federal funds to come to land grant universities, and go to the extension service, and the president of Texas A&M at the time, I have forgotten his name, was president of the land grant college association. A&M fought it, and fought it, and fought it to the bloody draw and finally, the governor of Texas signed a state soil and water conservation law in Texas. I think it was Governor Lee O. Daniel. Probably 1936, or seven, or eight. I’ve forgotten. That became the

model act, and it became a nationwide organization. Mr. Merrill, meanwhile, retired, and he wrote a history of that whole thing in longhand, and my boss, George Marks, found about it and said, "Dale, I am going to talk to Mr. Merrill if it is okay with you. I am going to talk him into letting you help him publish those." He had three different books. "I want you to go get those handwritten notes, and edit them, and let's publish them." I said, "Okay. You are the boss." So that's what we did. So we published those and I have – those are the first three editions, and he signed all three of them. I talked to my son last night, and I said, "Dan, I am the last person in Texas that I know of that has a copy of those, and I am going to see Andy Wilkinson tomorrow from Texas Tech, and I want to show them to him, but I sure don't want to let them get out of my possession. What should I do?" He said, "Don't let them out of your possession." So he found them on the internet.

AW:

Oh, so they are still—you still can find them?

DA:

Yeah. They're a PDF file and he said he found listed under the evolution of the soil conservation districts or something like that. Louis P. Merrill. L-o-u-i-s P. Merrill. And he has a PDF file, and so that's what I know. I just want to show them to you. He said, "Don't let those out of your possession." Those are the originals. Those are the first ones that came off the press.

AW:

Just make sure that they go someplace when you're gone.

DA:

Meanwhile, he sent me a note, and Texas A&M University has a copy of them. Baylor University has a copy of them, and most public libraries have a copy of them.

AW:

And we could very well have on at Texas Tech too.

DA:

You probably do. I bet you anything Texas Tech has a copy of them.

AW:

Yeah, I'll look. I'll check when I get back.

DA:

And I took those things and my grand—my daughter had a typing business at the time, and she

typed them for us and I don't remember. I think we found a book publisher. Does it say who published them?

AW:

I was looking for one.

DA:

I think we found a book publisher.

AW:

No, this says, "Published by U.S. Department of Agriculture of Soil Conservation Service." So you may have later, but this one—

DA:

Okay, we hired a printer then just to print them, and bind them for us. I couldn't remember.

AW:

This is good.

DA:

It is really non-complimentary to Texas A&M land grant system.

AW:

You know, the land grant system was a great thing in the 19th century, but it's maybe outworn it's—especially coming from a university as I do that is not a land grant school where we take a different view. One thing that can be done with this, if it is not easy to find, but there is a PDF out there already, well it really doesn't matter, but places like ours and I am sure, A&M, other places, we have book scanners that are actually designed so that you can open the book up, and it will scan them and create a PDF file. It is pretty easy anymore to do that.

DA:

There is so much technology out there. After this flap in the public national commission about the — what is when you use somebody else's speech?

AW:

Oh, plagiarism.

DA:

Plagiarism. They started running the other speeches at the national commission through a plagiarism software program.

AW:

Oh yeah. Well we use them at the university when you teach a class, because there's so much stuff available on the web, and kids go in, instead of writing something, they cut and paste it. They copy it from—so you can actually run an essay or I teach—one of the things I teach at the university is I teach songwriting, and first of all, when I see a song that is really good from a kid that is not a really good writer, well I suspect that it's been plagiarized. You don't even have to have a special program. All I do is highlight that and I just put it in Google, and search for it and it pops right up. When somebody says well I didn't know that was stolen or I couldn't find it, well don't believe them, because it is real easy to check.

DA:

I'll be darned.

AW:

Yeah. It's—I mean, we have to do that all the time especially with the number of online classes which are really popular, and for good reason. It is cheaper, and students can have other jobs, and attend to their classes without a specific schedule. I am in favor of that, but if you are teacher, how do—first of all, how do you even know that student exists out there? You don't see them in the classroom, and how can you proctor an exam if it is happening out there in cyberspace? So there are now having to be tools developed to make it easier to catch cheating in terms of that work.

DA:

Well I wrote a song once. I was at a meeting in Corpus Christie and I had a dear friend. It was a lady who was real talented and the wind was blowing and I said, "Betty, we ought to write a song about that." So I wrote this song called 'Windblown,' and it was a few stanzas. It had four verses, and the last part was he was wind blowing something, and years later I happened to be in Nashville, and my wife's, sister's, nephew was on the national scene, and I met his agent, and I went to one of his gigs one night, and sat by him, talking to him. I said, "I have written a song." He said, "Oh, you have?" and I said, "Yeah, it is really a joke. It is just a joke." He said, "Would you come to the studio tomorrow and record it?" and I said, "What for?" He said, "Well." I said, "It is just a joke." He said, "You don't ever know. If you'll let us record it, I would love to record it and just store it because you never know." I didn't do it.

AW:

Oh really? What was his name?

DA:

I don't have any idea. My nephew's name?

AW:

I mean your nephew's name.

DA:

His name is Wear, W-e-a-r. His name is Daylan, D-a-y-l-a-n. Daylan Wear. He could write songs, but he didn't have a voice that was attractive. Some people just have a voice that as soon as you hear it, you like it, but this guy was a little bit tenor, and it just never did hit it.

AW:

Yeah, they haven't liked tenors in Nashville in a long time.

DA:

He just didn't—he could have a gig, because he put on a good show, but he just never made it.

AW:

For many years in Nashville, if you're a good songwriter, you didn't have to be a singer. You could be a good songwriter, but in today's world, you pretty have—much do them both, and that's kind of a difficult thing.

DA:

Yeah, when I was at A&M I had a job one semester as – working at a restaurant. Work three nights, three days a week on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday. I didn't have money to play the jukebox. On Saturday nights, the veterans would come to our restaurant and play the jukebox and I remember – I can't remember the guy that was so famous. A country songwriter. I can't help it because I am still in love with you. Anyway, he was bigtime, and later there was a movie about him, and it had a story behind the songwriter industry that I never had thought of before.

AW:

It's very different now. I got started—songwriting is what I wanted to do since I was a little kid, and I decided to take it seriously right at the end of the whole songwriter era when they would—when you would hire on with a publisher, and you went to work every morning. It is like a regular job, and you had a cubicle or a little room, and you'd sit, and work, and write and maybe you would co-write with other people, and they had a demo studio at the publishing, and they would have people who are called song pluggers that take your song out, and see who was looking for waltzes or sad songs or whatever. As Willie Nelson said, "Sad songs and waltzes aren't selling this year," and that was one of his songs.

DA:

What was it?

AW:

He said, "Sad songs and waltzes aren't selling this year." No one wanted to bring one in. But money changed all that. It wasn't money as to who got what, so much as that it was when really big corporations began to get into the music business like Sony, and Warner Brothers, and those. They did what a lot of big corporations do is you throw money at the wall and whatever sticks, that's what you go with. What that meant was in the songwriting business is that some poor artists, not your wife's, sister's, young man, but someone they thought they could make a star out of. They would recruit them, and they would sign them, and they would say, "We are going to do an album, and we want to sign a three album deal or whatever, and we are going to spend a million dollars on that album in promotion." And of course, the young singer says, "well that's a great deal." They're so excited, but what the company didn't say was that million dollars comes directly out of the sales of your record. So you don't make a nickel until we have paid back that million dollars. Well if you are trying to make it as a singer, you're in trouble because you're not getting money off your record. But if you are a writer or a publisher, you're by law required to get your mechanicals, and royalties right from the beginning. So all of a sudden, now you had an industry where the singer, the star, to make any money had to also be one of the writers. A really big difference in the way the industry was structured afterwards occurred, and so a guy like this young man Daylan who wasn't going to be a star, but could be a good writer, pretty difficult nowadays, unless they are willing to, or able to co-write with the star, and so then they are able to make it happen.

DA:

I went to a conference once in Nashville for a week, and I was blown away at the good music you can hear in nightclubs. Just a motel, hotel would have a little nightclub, and starving musicians were first class.

AW:

Yeah. In fact, the old joke is if you get stopped by the police in Nashville and they give you a ticket, the same time they give you the ticket, they hand you a demo tape. [Laughter] Everybody's doing it. Yeah, it is an interesting business. So now, what's funny and I don't—it's kind of like things going around full circle. Now, a musician has to make a living the way they used to make a living before the record business. That is, they have to make a living by going out and singing. Last night in the hotel, I was eating salad, and there was a young man who sat up his gear, and was playing music. I thought, Well it's good. I kind of like it, going back around. Well I really appreciate—

DA:

I am happy. I am sorry I didn't hear you when you came this morning.

AW:

Oh, that's alright.

DA:

I guess I was on the computer. In fact, I played bridge yesterday, and I am helping a lady learn some things, and I was writing her a little instruction about nine o'clock about something she did wrong yesterday. I don't like to tell her at the tables. [Laughter] I am just helping her learn.

AW:

I do have—of course, we all – being in the public university business, we've always got something to sign, but I do have a release I'd like for you to sign. It lets us let people listen to this, and when we call this, do we want this—our collection with your name on it—let's see. Dale D. Allen? Is that how you'd like it?

DA:

Yeah.

AW:

Okay, and I made two copies or am making two copies of this. One, for you to keep, so you will know what you have signed away here, but it is pretty much the same. As a public information guy, you'll know exactly what it's about, and then if you ever get up to Lubbock, I would love to take you around the archive, and kind of show you what we do. You had some good questions about that earlier.

DA:

I don't go to that retirement thing because I run a bridge game on Wednesday, and Wednesday is a big game. Let me—I am getting a lot—I help a family that might need me. Let me see.

AW:

You bet.

DA:

Let me see what these messages are. Yeah, my granddaughter's coming to Temple today. Let me just say yes. [Beeps] She had a bad report from M.D. Anderson yesterday, and she wants to talk to me about it.

AW:

Oh. Yeah, that's sad. I am going to stop this tape, but by saying once more, thank you.

[End of Recording]