

**Oral History Interview of  
William Tydeman**

**Interviewed by: David Marshall  
March 23, 2018  
Lubbock, Texas**

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## Transcript Overview:

This interview features William Tydeman who discusses coming to Texas Tech and his work at the Southwest Collection. Bill describes the programming that he started at the Southwest Collection and the publications that occurred while he was working with the archive.

**Length of Interview:** 01:21:58

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### Keywords

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**David Marshall (DM):**

The date is March 23, 2018. This is David Marshall interviewing Bill Tydeman in his home in Lubbock, Texas. This is a continuation of a couple of previous interviews. So we're going to pick up with you coming from Idaho to Texas. To Texas Tech. Can you tell me anything about the hiring process itself? The application, how that went?

**Bill Tydeman (BT):**

Yeah. In retrospect, coming to Texas Tech and working in the Southwest Collection was probably the farthest thing from my mind. I had no direct aspirations for a job in the Southwest. Although I did know about the Southwest Collection under David Murrah because I had—you know, over the years, several years, gone to SAA, Society of American Archivists, and a couple of conferences and bumped into them and chit chatted and things like that. [Coughs] But when they—I guess there was a year or two—you may remember this better than I do, David. There was a year or two there where they had an acting head, which it was Preston Lewis, wasn't it?

DM:

Right. Preston Lewis.

BT:

For a year. He was the person who did a lot of the PR and fundraising and developmental work. He was switched over to trying to keep things on an even keel, which I think he did.

DM:

He was the—yes, he was the person in that position for the library.

BT:

Right.

DM:

Yeah, and then he was placed as an interim director.

BT:

Right. So out of the blue, I couldn't tell you if I was—I guess I can say with some truth that I didn't know anything about the Texas Tech opening. I mean, I wasn't looking for jobs and searching the chronical and doing everything else. I was reasonably content in Idaho, although the pay for the position of state archivist was like all state government at that time. You know, pretty minimal. So I had a phone call out of the blue from one of my former colleagues in the Southwest Collection, a woman by the name of Jan Barnhart. She was on the search committee for the position. I knew Jan fairly well. I mean, she was active in a lot of local preservation and historical activities. State's historical societies, things like that. She said, "We have this job open



and I'd like to tell you about it and encourage you to think about applying." I told her, I said, "Jan, I'm not really interested in Texas Tech." You know, I had the background and spent a couple of years at UNM [**University of New Mexico**] and that morphed into a job at the state. Now, of course, what I didn't say is that my girlfriend at the time was in Idaho and teaching at Boise State and so getting two people in the same place was a bit of a challenge to get that far and I wasn't particularly interested in chasing down something else at the time because what would Sandy do? And how would we work all that? So I said, "No. No thanks," and figured that was it. Well it wasn't it, because Janice is very persistent and I imagine we're talking about at least two, maybe three phone calls over the course of several weeks, I guess. I can't remember exactly how long. You know, the song she was singing was, "Well at least come to Texas Tech and look around and we'll host you for a day or so and that way you can get an idea on site, on campus, what things are like." So it was starting to bug me. It's hard to keep everyone at bay so I figured, okay. What's to lose? I get a trip to the Southwest. Probably get back to seeing some of my friends at UNM. So I said, "Okay. We'll make the necessary arrangements and you'll be chair of the search committee." And so that was kind of the informal deal we put together. And so I did that. I came to Tech and at that point, you know, they were anxious to fill the position. It had been a year. The Southwest Collection had just had its dedication so that places it at right about the opening couple months. I was there and had actually accepted the job by the time the friends of the library invited—I think it was David Nicola to come and be the honorary speaker, if that's the right term. I had probably a couple of weeks of lee time before that happened.

DM:

You came in what day? It was March, wasn't it?

BT:

Yeah. It was March. It was late March.

DM:

Ninety-seven.

BT:

Yep. Sure was. And I was surprised. UNM has a terrific collection and it has some really outstanding people, but what I call the politics of identity play out in major fashion. Discontent, unhappiness, why did this ever happen to me? I'm not being recognized. Blah, blah, blah. And a fair amount of infighting—although, not always directed specifically at what became the center for Southwest research. But to get to the point, what surprised me there was how friendly everybody was. You know, and all the stereotypes.

DM:

Where?



BT:

I'm sorry. At Texas Tech. So when I got on campus, people were very friendly, very welcoming. Somehow, I can't remember the specific details. After Jan's phone call, and she was a staff member, but as I said, very active in the archival community. But I think Janette Neugebauer was also on the search committee and her inimitable way, she suggested I would be foolish to pass up such a golden opportunity. I remember my asking—I don't know how the small details emerge in something seemingly trivial. But I said, "What's the transportation situation like at Tech? Do we have bike trails?" And there was a pause on the other end of the line.

DM:

You're not in Idaho anymore.

BT:

That was the gist of the pregnant pause. She said, "Well Texas Tech tends to be a driving kind of place. Do you have a little picky-up?" [Laughter] I said, "No, I don't think so." But she was very friendly and so were the members of the search committee and so to be honest, the principal attraction was that there was a considerable increase in salary, which was appealing. But not so appealing to be half the west away from my girlfriend at the time. So but we went ahead without some trauma and some gnashing of teeth and some assurances that things will be fine and they'll work out and you got good folks here and everything else. So that's what I did.

DM:

When this was all coming about, did you yet know that if you accepted this position, you would be an associate dean?

BT:

No.

DM:

I seem to recall that that all kind of came together after the fact.

BT:

Yeah. I think that Dale Cluff was interested in seeing the growth and expansion of library activities and he had laid some groundwork and I think—

DM:

Well he worked hard toward the faculty status.

BT:

Yeah, exactly. Yeah, exactly that's what it was. So this was seen as consistent with the moves



that the main library was making and that Dale was making. I felt like, you know, that the key administrators, Doug Birdsall, Dale, there's probably one or two others I'm missing in that equation that were—in fact, there's one or two that's still around. Jack Becker.

DM:

Becker, just saw him on the way over here.

BT:

Did you?

DM:

Yeah. But the administrators were Dean, Dale Cluff. And associate deans, you and Doug Birdsall. Right? That was it, wasn't it?

BT:

Yeah. A woman whose name I'm not going to recall.

DM:

Jan Kemp was up there pretty high somewhere, but the deans, the associate deans, I thought were very limited. I thought there were just two associate deans.

BT:

Yeah. I think you're right. The—I'm trying to remember. There was a gal who was head of reference and she left Sandy something or other. She seemed to have a good grasp on things. I thought I may be missing her.

DM:

You thinking about Sandy River?

BT:

No, not Sandy River.

DM:

But was she in one of those high administrative posts?

BT:

I may be missing something there. There may be a gap there. It's either she went from UNM to Yale or from—yeah. I guess I'm confusing things because I think she was making the switch from UNM to bigger and better things.



DM:

So this was someone at UNM?

BT:

Yeah. I think so. I'll think of it probably in a minute. But Dale, I thought was a good administrator. I mean, we all had our strengths and he had plenty of them. I think, in retrospect, he, unlike some of our later leadership, he was concerned about people. You know, he genuinely cared seeing people rise in the ranks and do well and succeed and made decisions accordingly. We all got along fine. I mean, the three of us. There was good chemistry. There wasn't any difficulties that I recall. You know, once or twice, Preston Lewis got mad before he left. You know, had a few things to say. We weren't cultivating. I think his name was Bob Moore. To the degree, that Preston thought that—

DM:

That was a money deal.

BT:

That was a money deal, yeah. So but you know, there was a friend's organization and they were occasionally doing interesting programs and promotion and started to step up our outreach and do things that were going on on the outside with programs and things like that. So altogether, if you would ask me about the first couple of years, I would say they went exceedingly well.

DM:

And even from a pion's perspective, like mine, you could see that. I could see that things were clicking.

BT:

Uh-huh.

DM:

So my question is did you—were you allowed to—you're a person who works well independently and not under a microscope?

BT:

Right.

DM:

Were you allowed to go with your initiatives or did he try to mold you in a certain way?



BT:

No. We had plenty of latitude to do what we thought was in the best interest of the collection and the folks that were there.

DM:

That's got to be a motivational factor.

BT:

Yeah, yeah. It was—I don't know how far along it was into my tenure there, but it couldn't have been more than months rather than years that Dale had been cultivating Jim Saul. There was quite a bit of back and forth because Saul was on the border regions and seemingly, very interested in libraries and academics. So he set up a meeting with Jim Saul and myself and Saul was a very interesting, very high powered person. And so we just got acquainted and kind of exchanged information. You know, saying—kind of an early attempt to build some relationship and some rapport. I can't remember. It was clear that there was some intentions, but weren't in particularly well defined. So I told Dale that I thought one of the areas that we could capitalize that would speak to the strengths of the Southwest Collection and what our long-term planning and objectives might be was to concentrate on the acquisition of nature and agricultural materials. We had strong history in that area. Had collected widely. People had done good work, academic and otherwise.

DM:

This was you and Dale only speaking first or was Saul in on that initial conversation?

BT:

David, I can't remember. If it wasn't an initial conversation, it was a second conversation we had. It was right early on and Dale was amenable. I mean, he said, "Why don't you talk to Jim and then we'll have a lunch?" Or something like that and I think that's what we did. And so I told Saul, "You know, given your interest, Saul, and what's happened historically in the collection, I think we're in a beautiful position to start making our presence better known and more widely—if not available, certainly letting people know that here's a collection of potential significance that needed more care and feeding." So I remember Saul saying, "Now, what is it with this nature? How would you define nature?" How do I define nature, you know.

DM:

At that point, did you wonder if this was going to go anywhere?

BT:

Yeah. We were back and forth. I made up something. I don't know what I said, but I guess it



sounded all right. Saul said in the course of the conversation, well—I wish I could capture his words directly, but I can't. "How would a million dollars be?" [Laughter]

DM:

You must've had a good definition of nature.

BT:

We shook hands on a million dollar gift and so I knew that it meant, with some resistance in certain quarters, people who were afraid we were diverging from our historic mission.

DM:

We talked very early on about this and about how nice a twenty-first century approach it would be from the old agricultural records and ranching and land use records into a bigger—a larger topic.

BT:

Right. Yeah. So the question then became, well what are we going to do? We've got a verbal commitment here. Well one thing that became clear was that Saul did not want to create an endowment. He would be interested in making a gift and looking at potential materials, but he didn't want this to become a—

DM:

Like an endowed chair?

BT:

Yeah—no, not so much an endowed chair, but an endowed collection, I guess. So there'd be monies that would be set aside for the exclusive use of building a—further a Southwest Collection. And—let me see. I think it was just serendipity. Pure luck. There's a—what's the old saying that luck favors the prepared? I'd done some thinking about what kinds of collections? And how many? And how long? And how do we deal with the fact that the gifts would come—particularly, Saul's gift would come when the time was right and not necessarily when we were ready to do X, Y, or Z. I think it was Bruce Cammack, who had a call from a book dealer in New York by the name of Ken Lopez and Bruce had had some dealings because he was acquiring quite a bit of literary material on the twentieth century authors and everybody from Conrad to other individuals who were prominent in the literary community. Said, "Well I don't know if you know this person, but he's looking for a home for his collection and his name is Barry Lopez."

DM:

Bruce said this?



BT:

Initially, talking to me. And I happened to know about Lopez. I had read Lopez. Admired his work enormously. Thought he was one of the best people I knew who were writing on the natural world. The more I thought about it, the better it looked to me like a fit between what we were after and what was available that would provide almost an instant recognition for the Southwest Collection.

DM:

Well and he was already, at that point, a National Book Award winner and runner-up, as I recall.

BT:

Yes. So he had—there was plenty of cache there.

DM:

I remember the day—I remember you saying, “I’m going to go meet this guy named Barry Lopez in New Mexico at some,” there was some conference or event going on.

BT:

The—I gave an enthusiastic amen to the idea of looking at Lopez’s material. Of course, he knew little to nothing about Texas Tech, but Ken Lopez was a well-respected and a very well-known book dealer. In that field, in the twentieth century, fiction and literature, more specifically, he was well thought of in all quarters. They started to check things out. Now, the first—so Lopez was very careful about his approach to things. The bottom line would be that he didn’t want a collection that would gather dust and would be obscure and wouldn’t otherwise be attractive to the scholarly and writing community. So we agreed to meet. This was that, what you just alluded to, the first time. I believe, my memory is suspect here, it was Cincinnati, Ohio.

DM:

Oh, okay.

BT:

Yeah. Where Lopez was the key note speaker for the Nature Conservancy’s Annual Meeting. I believe it was an annual meeting. Or it was a special conference. It wasn’t—they held annual meetings, but this was a special meeting on the state of the landscape and nature and where are we? And where do we want to go? How do we mobilize people to get behind the idea? The preservation of these collections. We had a short meeting. I mean, there was a lineup of people wanting to talk to them and glad hand and say how much they enjoyed this talk. I remember it was a terrific talk. He was a wonderful speaker. And so that launched a series of exchanges, including him coming to—him, being Ken Lopez—coming to Texas Tech with Barry. So Ken adopted the role of his agent, if you will. It was probably less mercenary than the normal writer



of—you know, but it was clear that we connected. We talked about the collection and what it might entail and what the specifics were of what could be coming and—

DM:

And the money, the Saul money was already promised?

BT:

Was promised.

DM:

Not in hand, but promised.

BT:

Right.

DM:

Okay.

BT:

Yeah. I mean, I had no trouble with the idea of acquiring a collection that was outside of the scope—the historical scope of the Southwest Collection—a lot of, several people did. You know, the collection is about farming and ranching and agriculture. It should stay that way. But I also had some intellectual apparatus from having been interested in the topic of American literature and its history and creation. Particularly, how it would serve the interest of those who were interested in larger issues. And there were probably—so driving it behind is in this back and forth between individuals and Lopez and the collection was one, for me, a recognition of the importance of—for want of a better term, American regionalism. So one could take the notion of what it means to acquire and to look at what writers who are concerned with the environment and landscape and you know, a tenable future, were concerned with as well. So it was—I felt like I was on strong ground. I didn't—there was no, oh my, can we do this? Blah, blah, blah. It was just, let's go full speed ahead. And Dale and everybody was behind it. And so the business about setting a price on the collection had to be negotiated in the terms and the conditions and et cetera, et cetera. But Ken Lopez was a joy to work with. So was Barry, although he continued to press and want to know more about the cultural context in which all of this was happening. So that's kind of—[clears throat] I mean, the collection began to take root. I can't remember exactly when the official date of its acquisition was, but it was then marked by successive gifts or successive acquisitions over the next couple of years coming from Saul.

DM:

Saul always faithful in matching those? The needs of this acquisition?



BT:

Yes. I mean, if Saul hadn't been there, this wouldn't have happened. On the other hand, he had some very definite ideas about the political stance and significance of certain writers. It was an educational experience for him. He was a boy scout and loved scouting. Supported scouting. You could see the fit between concerns on the part of the boy scouts of America and what collections that dealt with the acquisition and care of the environment so he—one had to sometimes make sure that we were on the same page. Endowments are far easier when you have a specified amount of money to accomplish X, Y, and Z. So there were a couple of times when he indicated he was less than enthusiastic about the work of a given writer. But at the same time, the idea that he would be there to back things up, to back up discussions and future acquisitions and to—he was very resistant to the idea of naming the collection and that took a tremendous amount of back and forth between Lopez, primarily, and Saul, and to a lesser degree, myself. But the James Saul Family Collection in Literature, Community, and the Natural World was the title for the collection that came along after much, much back and forth and discussion. Arena Family Collection.

DM:

Was that something Saul pushed for? The family?

BT:

It was Barry. He pushed for it. He did a lot of the negotiation with Saul. Saul was more than happy to interact with him, with the writer of that stature. So that was—you know, if we went back, we could find a demarcation of the times and places when other acquisitions came along.

DM:

Somewhere along the way, you and I went over and had an initial meeting with Schmidly, David Schmidly.

BT:

Yeah.

DM:

That was early on.

BT:

It was.

DM:

I can't remember if it was before you hooked up with Barry or after. But can you fit that into the chronology here a little bit?



BT:

Yeah. I'm glad you brought that up.

DM:

I brought the academic community at Tech right into this thing.

BT:

Right. David was—Schmidly was very interested in the history of natural history.

DM:

And I'll mention here that at the time, he was vice president of research at Tech.

BT:

Correct. And we—he was a member of the nature conservancy and had signed on. I don't know if he—I can't recall whether or not he was on the program in Cincinnati for that conference I told you about. I believe he was, or at least had laid all this out. And again, it was the luck of circumstance that he was interested in—I had long thought that the acquisition of the papers and minutes of the leading conservation organizations would be a tremendous asset to collection building. In the back of my mind, I'm thinking, you know, if we could ever get the nature conservancy and the Sierra Club and all the key players in the environmental movement, that would be a beautiful adjunct to go with the work of literature and writers. And so that meeting, I think it was just David saying, "Hey, this is really good stuff. We ought to get involved in this." And he began to tick off the names and activities of a number of academics, but whose interest was broad enough to include lots of work that we would be interested in.

DM:

It was at that meeting in his office that he wedded us with biological sciences and said, "You guys need to be at the swan conference in Monterey that's coming up." Whenever that was, '98.

BT:

Right. Yes.

DM:

So he took initiative right then, I recall.

BT:

And was involved in our activities. Wanted to hear more about them. Did what he could to clear them, clear the way. I mean, in some ways, it was—when he left Texas Tech, I think his next stop on the road was Oklahoma, wasn't it?



DM:

Wasn't it Oklahoma State?

BT:

Oklahoma State.

DM:

And I'll mention here, for the record too, he was vice president of research, but then became president of Tech, and then was here a few years, I guess, and then off to Oklahoma State.

BT:

Were you part of that group that went to Oklahoma State?

DM:

Um-hm. Barry spoke.

BT:

Right. To the faculty and people who had interest in the natural world.

DM:

I think maybe you, me and Schimdly rode up there.

BT:

That's what I'm thinking, yeah.

DM:

Or maybe Schimdly was already—Schmidly was already there as president when I went.

BT:

That's right. He was at--

DM:

Oklahoma State.

BT:

At the business of building some interest and rapport on the part of the faculty at Oklahoma State and seeing what directions that we could—where we could cooperate and work together. So having him leave was a bit of a blow because we can look backwards and see what might've been had he stayed and some of the administrative shenanigans that we had to put up with would not have surfaced because as Dale retired, you know, and as I said, he was a supporter. The new



administration had no interest. Absolutely none. So that was the new reality.

DM:

Well I wanted to get the take on how that all started and it's interesting to hear that maybe Saul didn't have a—I figured he came in with a natural history agenda or a nature—writers of nature—or the natural world. An interest in that, but that's not the case.

BT:

I think if we had come up with something equally exciting in another—in a related, but different field, he probably would've come along.

DM:

Could've been a history of the boy scouts of America.

BT:

Right. History of—what is it? Not possums, but what's the animal that's so aquatic?

DM:

The platypus? No.

BT:

Well it's platypus-like.

DM:

Like an otter?

BT:

Otter. I guess it was an otter. Schmidly told some stories. I guess I'm getting off the point here. It's not directly related, but at Oklahoma State, the Jim Saul equivalent would be Boone Pickens.

DM:

Oh. [Laughter] Oh well the muskrats, I guess.

BT:

Muskrats, yes. It was a great start. Was indicative of what the potential was out there and what would be going on in different venues. I think out of the state at Oklahoma State. I mean, Janet told me that she couldn't wait to leave Oklahoma because they hated a Texan being in the presidency at Oklahoma State. Said she couldn't get out of there fast enough. But yeah, that's kind of the telescopic view of—I'm trying to think if there—



DM:

Well we need that. We need that story because that was the beginning of this whole thing and it's a program that will be far reaching. You know, it will have its ups and downs, I suppose, but it will—the collection is so sound, so solid, that it inevitably will have far reaching.

BT:

Yeah, I think you're right, David. Once you get, as you know only too well, once you get those forms signed. Property and transferred. You're paving your way for a future.

DM:

Yeah. Can you talk about some—did you want to add anything else to that particular initiative?

BT:

I don't think so. I mean, unless you feel like there's some big gaps in there.

DM:

I don't think so, but we might think of some later and want to fill in. How about some of the other initiatives? Because you had quite a bit going on at that time. You were launching a symposium. A series of symposia. I think you started with the well—I suppose you own the southwest.

BT:

Yeah, you're right. That was an intent to establish a lecture series. An ongoing, yearly lecture series that—there's nothing unique with me. That's kind of the academic trail is what happens with the acquisition of collections that leads to related activities that bolster and support and otherwise, expand the initiatives that the libraries and special collections undertook.

DM:

When you came—go ahead.

BT:

I was going to mention my model there was something known as the Calvin Horn lectures and Calvin Horn was a regent at the University of New Mexico, but very interested in history and the history of New Mexico in the Southwest. And so, in conjunction with the history department there at UNM, they developed the Calvin Horn lecture series, which is still going on. What that meant was each year, a leading scholar would come and make a presentation, would make a lecture. Promoted widely and given all the appropriate support that the university could muster, but there was—this is where collections that—how would I put it? Endowments, I guess, again. You know, if it was endowed as the Calvin Horn lecture was, you had a year's lag time and you had plenty of time to begin to work out what this might look like. More than just a lecture, it was



to be a publishable piece. So you had to, you know, they're all connected with the background and promotion and visitation and talking to students and doing that. The scholar would make his presentation. It would be given to the committee. They would edit it and it would become a publication. If you invited the right people, you were giving sway to things that people were very interested in, but hadn't yet organized at that level. So we got off to a rousing start. Got some very good people at the beginning, but once again, as the political climate began to undergo change, that kind of—the energy dissipated and there was no interest in getting out and promoting that kind of thing. So I think—I don't know that we even got so far as a name for the collection, but it was a name for the lecture series. But it was very well received. I allowed myself to think that we could really make a splash nationally by doing this. There had been precedent for that with the—at Tech—with the energies that were devoted to preservation of natural resources and the international center and they had a publication program that went on for a while, but it didn't seem, to me, a great leap to be able to capitalize on those initiatives as well and bring those folks to the table.

DM:

We talked about a center status at one time.

BT:

Sure did. Because at UNM, we moved from designation of special collections to a title that was and still is the center for southwest research. That, I mean, not everything is a title or promo or advertising, but that helped solidify a vision that people could relate to and understand.

DM:

Let's back up a little bit. When you first came here and you looked at the Southwest Collection, you obviously saw some potential that wasn't being exercised there. Did you see the Southwest Collection as insular and not associated enough with the community or the campus or the wider world?

BT:

Right.

DM:

And that's where these initiatives came from.

BT:

Yeah. Absolutely right.

DM:

Especially like the symposia.



BT:

Um-hm. I mean, one could take the other movement that—at least, intellectually, I found powerful and appealing was what today, historians—you know, ten, twenty years later—call micro-history. So if you identify the historical web of things that are happening on the local level and are able to be what the anthropologist call, “constantly comparative,” you could take initiatives that were happening in Bozeman, Montana, and forest and relate that to things that are happening nationwide. It seemed to me to make that comparison was useful for all concern to get out of the parochialism that characterized often poorly thought out ideas about what’s important and what isn’t and the amount of time and attention that larger historical movements seem to track when they have a well-defined mission.

DM:

How—to what extent did you have to bud heads with that parochialism? Was it a strong force of opposition to any new initiatives?

BT:

I think there was an undercurrent that was not too happy about this money being spent. It never took the form of a direct confrontation or anything directly adversarial. It was just kind of whispers behind the scenes and, “Why are we spending all of this money?” And you know, what good is it? I mean, it always was a source of—later on—of amusement, but maybe has its downside as well, but when we schedule these things and we did a lot of work with teachers and education, thinking that here’s things for kids to latch on to. We scheduled something and about the same four or five people on our staff would show up for the lecture and the majority wouldn’t. I thought back to my own college experience. I mean, one of the best things about it was you could go to these lecture series. It didn’t cost you anything and you could listen to what they had to say and things like that. But it was—I mean, I think that the old adage holds still at Texas Tech is that if you’re not careful, administration can be death of creativity. I mean, you get so wound up in the minutia and so wound up in the reporting structures and when it all perceived, the important becomes the unimportant. So but as you say, having established collections like that and then managing to initiate activities means that you have to take the long view. The long view will probably prove beneficial to all concern as others retire and people come along.

DM:

Another component of all of this early on was this interest in public history. Getting out there and doing oral histories and in fact, the oral history program had completely dropped away. That’s something else that was brought back and other things as well.

BT:

Yeah. You’re right because the oral history kind of provided an intellectual scaffolding for



anybody who wanted to say, “Oh, why are we doing this? What’s the point of that?” It was tempting to point fingers, but at the same time, realistically, you were plugging into something that was important on the national level and was taken far over the years.

DM:

So when you think, I mean, you’ve been around the country and seen a lot of different archives. Can you name some of the archives that were obviously little parochial collections that never were going anywhere? They were, you know, maybe a fussy archivist overlooking their brood. As opposed to some of these dynamic archives that were up and going and reaching out to the community and beyond and establishing symposia.

BT:

I was impressed with what—what’s the archive and collection at North Texas, where all the springs are and water?

DM:

In San Marcos?

BT:

San Marcos.

DM:

Texas State, now.

BT:

Yeah. I was impressed with what Texas State has done and in a somewhat more limited context, what North Texas has done. North Texas has worked with a library model and worked strongly to cultivate the notion that North Texas is the place where grant projects and expansion of library activities should take place. I think Texas, not North—

DM:

Texas State.

BT:

Texas State has done well with acquiring papers and kind of a literary focus with some of the people that have been key in the Hollywood world and photographs and got some smart decisions being made about what they want to acquire. I mean, the ransom center at UT is an example of what money can do for you. I don’t know enough about the programmatic thrust of late, but certainly having the money for instantaneously creating a world class collection leaves the rest of us drooling. But those are the two that come to mind. Maybe three.



DM:

How about any that are static and don't seem to be going anywhere? Any you want to name or that occur to you, kind of as a counterpart? A contrast?

BT:

No, I probably ought to let someone else—leave that for someone else. But when you go out of state, you're right. You begin to encounter various thrusts. I mean, the Bancroft would be, again, another example of what money and a vision can do in the way of acquiring collections and world class research materials. But I think, you know, traditionally, what you're suggesting is that special collections, as they're conceived of by library planning and operations often but heads with traditional libraries and their impact to their potential for helping transform library activities. I think you're hinting at you look around and you see a half dozen things that you shake your heads at, collective heads, and wonder, why are they doing this? And if I only had that kind of support. So I think at Texas Tech, I mean, and early on, with the succession of archivists and historians, you had a—I wouldn't say it was always adversarial, but you had a built intention between the historical humanity side of things and the library's view of what's important and how it should be handled.

DM:

Another interesting area of expansion in those early years was toward Mexico and really, with an active acquisitions program, field program, it expanded again, like it had before into eastern New Mexico and Oklahoma and places like that, but down into Mexico.

BT:

Yeah.

DM:

Can you talk about how that came about? For example, the Tarahumara collection? You were approached about that.

BT:

Yeah.

DM:

Did Ted Holder come?

BT:

You know, David, I'm a little fuzzy on that point.



DM:

I know Ted Holder was our initial contact on that.

BT:

He was. I mean, the initiative itself grew out of the parallel development of documentary studies and the role that documentary played in the creation of a historical, visual record of the past so that you could have documentary photography holding hands with traditional areas of emphasis and often uncovering materials that had enormous appeal to an audience or to potential—I don't know exactly how you'd categorize it, but leading figures, both within the church and the art of documentary, I think, could come together and were beginning to come together. At Tech, we had done a fair amount of paving the way, I think, with following up on the suggestions of several of the key political and clerical figures. Once you looked at the material, you could see the potential it had. Again, early on, we had carte blanche to kind of go our own way and write grant proposals. Get involved in something that was of interest to us individually as researchers. And you know, that was exciting. Still is, is an important fact. But you know, you had to have a Catholic enough of a vision to see the correlation and the fit between those pieces of the puzzle and everything from micro-history to collecting on a broader scale.

DM:

I remember that some of the—as far as the Tarahumara collection, some of the attraction to that was an earlier Yacqui collection we had too and how those dub tailed. But then again, there was Tony Gleaton doing his photographic work in Mexico.

BT:

Yeah. Right.

DM:

That was probably even before the Tarahumara.

BT:

Oh absolutely. Well the Tarahumara material is early on. I mean, that grew out—we're talking thirties, before World War II, I guess, when Curry Holden—

DM:

Yeah, with the Yacqui.

BT:

The Yacqui. That's right. So there was that and a reasonable amount of attention paid to that. And then the Tarahumara, I mean, it was virtually an untouched field that—I mean, you know as



much about this as anybody, that there was such a wealth of material that it didn't require any major arm twisting to get people behind it. But you're right.

DM:

But the environment was correct at the time.

BT:

Yeah. That's right. Those—well I mean, the Holden Collection still gets attention paid to it. People interested in it. Somebody just called me last week wanting to know what I knew about X, Y, and Z and William Curry Holden. Did a lot of—Steve Bogner did a lot of work at the right time with teachers and providing materials for the classroom and things like that.

DM:

Yes, that was another—you know, there were a lot of bold initiatives and that was yet another for the public history. The effort to spread exhibits out there. Can you talk about beginning the artist and residence program?

BT:

Yeah.

DM:

How did that come about?

BT:

Just again, fortunate set of circumstances. Through some folks—Eric Strong. The late Eric Strong had an interest in, of course, the history of African Americans on the plains and in Lubbock. And I'd run across Tony Gleaton and his activities, which go back fifteen or twenty years. I mean, he was photographing native peoples long before anybody else was very widely interested in what was going on so it was Eric who suggested well, "You guys could probably profitably get together and work on projects." Those projects included the local histories, the micro-histories, the attempt to build an understanding of—what did Tony call it? I guess the black root west and the whole, "This is about migration and the movement of peoples." He was—Tony was a wonderer, in and of himself. I mean, it was always his understanding and his knowledge and his self-deprecation and his way with words offended as many people as it did promote them, but he knew what he was doing and had dedicated his life to it and could show a body of work that people found startling.

DM:

It's not unusual that a person like that would be eccentric.



BT:

That's right.

DM:

And some people are put off by eccentricity.

BT:

Well said. But that ran into some bureaucratic obstacles that grossly offended Tony and what he thought was his lack of support and understanding on the part of the Southwest Collection. I think he was right, you know, that people didn't like what he was doing so they made—dragged their feet in order to make sure this collection didn't go anywhere. So he wound up removing, taking back all of the material that he had donated at one point and that's too bad because that was and is a major repository of the black experience. You know, everything from the Exodusters in Kansas to the mixed settlements of New Mexico. There it is.

DM:

Where did that collection go?

BT:

You know, I don't know the answer to that. His wife was named executrix of the estate and so I think it is still in family hands. But we had talked publication, we had been to UNM Press. We had talked to people that Tony had talked to and the government, who would provide small grant moneys and things like that. You know, once he got sick, it was clear that it wasn't going—they weren't going to cure this one. I think it was found the cancer of the upper jaw. Something cancerous that did him in. I scolded myself several times for not being more actively involved with his wife. We got along fine, but the progression of things was such that we never came to any resolution, yet it was too early in the process of, "Where, when and how?" But again, contextually, that kind of—like a jigsaw puzzle, the pieces could fit or did fit.

DM:

Yeah. Things clicked. There was a time when a lot of these things clicked. The projects dug tail. That was the feeling. Was my feeling. But the artist and residence program continued.

BT:

Oh. I'm sorry. I really didn't get a—

DM:

Oh no. That's fine.



BT:

Yeah. The initial—I think Tony was the first artist in residence.

DM:

I think so.

BT:

And he spent the year photographing on the Southern Plains and in particular, the communities—the black communities that were scattered hither and yon. And then the incredible H.B. Paksoy was involved.

DM:

Oh, in the artist in residence?

BT:

I'm trying to remember. He was unhappy with the lack of status and the failure of folks to get behind him, but I think what that did was it wasn't artist in residence, but it created a vacancy when he finally left and went to Dallas, I think, or someplace like that. So suddenly, here was an opening that was being used—I don't know exactly. I have trouble recalling exactly what the scope of Paksoy's activities were, but—oh, I guess working with the Turkish—

DM:

Turkish oral narrative.

BT:

--Oral narratives with Warren—anyhow.

DM:

Walker.

BT:

Walker, who had done all that early work in preserving oral histories of Turkish people.

DM:

And then Warren Walker died and these things put a blow on a—nail in the coffin of some of these projects.

BT:

Right. Yeah. Sure did. The larger point being that saw an opportunity and seized it, that is, “Okay, this is empty and we've got this guy here who knows the history and culture of the area



as much as anybody else. Let's make Andy Wilkinson our artist in residence. Let's call it artist in residence to give it some cache, but it really translates into a—who knows what the actual title is?" But he's been able to use that effectively.

DM:

Fortunately, that morphed into a—to a fulltime position, a permanent position, and that's why it's still here.

BT:

Right, yeah.

DM:

Through all of the administrative changes. Otherwise, I don't know that it would be here intact like so many of the other projects are.

BT:

Yeah. I agree with you. Yeah.

DM:

But anyway, that's just another example of one of the many initiatives.

BT:

Yes.

DM:

Another was photographic documentation. Can you talk a little bit about that? We had some meetings. I believe a publication came out.

BT:

Yeah.

DM:

They produced a publication.

BT:

We got involved with the art department and with Rick Dingus, who had a history in his own work of being concerned with landscape and forms and the creation of the built environment and so we were able to get Helen Jones, one of the key grants, where we could fund the activities, at least the expenses, of a number of photographers, many of whom were identified by Rick. Again, whose work was in the Southwest or on the Great Plains, who were interested in how



photographs could be used historically to again, promote better cultural understanding. So that was a year project, but you're right. It involved a couple of meetings along the way that kind of defined—what—where did we have gaps in the collection? Where could historical photographs best fit in? What are the—I was always attracted as a younger—I'm not sure historian is the right word, but as a younger person to the occasional papers one would come across on needs and opportunities for study that historians are very fond of identifying those things for graduate students' dissertations and so on. And so that was really the underlying theme of the documentary photography work is to identify those things that hadn't been discussed or talked about or in that thought, many cases of being appropriately historical. That led to a nice, a very nice, set of photographic acquisitions over a year or so. More of that could've been done had Tony not gotten sick.

DM:

Right. I think that project was another example of first of all, cultivating someone right there on campus and drawing them into the—collaborating with these people, getting them into the Southwest Collection so the Southwest Collection is more than just a dusty archive. And then that person reaching out to people beyond. On campus, but also beyond and the thing just grows and grows if it's cultivated a little bit.

BT:

Given some care and feeding.

DM:

If the environment is right.

BT:

The inability to make distinctions between what is here or could be here and its research value and worth and what I would call, "The Vacuum Cleaner Approach," is, I think, an area that needs or needed much more care than it got, but it meant that you had to be—stretch your thinking to the point that you could begin to see a context where, again, where all of this—as you suggest—can come together and be utilized.

DM:

Right. Yeah. There seems to be a difference in acquisition approaches of those who are discriminating in their acquisition of materials because they're looking for things that are useful for research and have future application and then those that are acquiring to make connections. There may be other facets as well. What was the name—a publication came out of the photo documentation.



BT:

Yeah. "Island in the Sky."

DM:

Yeah.

BT:

Right.

DM:

Can you talk about some other publications that came out in those years? Either your own or others that were generated by this activity at the Southwest Collection? Steve Bogner had his. I guess it might've come out of his dissertation earlier.

BT:

Came out earlier from his dissertation, but was refined, certainly, as most dissertations are. You know, fit within the discussions we had was that he was very aware of the fact that these were the irrigation and decisions about land use and were all important and hadn't been very well connected. So again, it was chipping away at that super structure that guided so much of the expansion in the early twentieth century, I guess. But I don't know, David. I don't think I've got a fast answer for you.

DM:

Well tell me about some of your publications. You've been involved in a photographic study or two and tell me also about your Barry Lopez book.

BT:

The Lopez book was definitely a joint venture in the sense that, as you know only too well, you get some people who are willing and able and excited about sharing their views and others who are waiting for the clock to click on twelve so they can get out of there. But I would say mostly it was a lot of—with Barry, there was a lot of listening and a lot of back and forth about shape things might take. He often said that once he had discovered the appropriate structure—structure being the key word—for a project he was undertaking, it all came together. But getting the structural component first was key to an awful lot of the work that he did. So he was very open. I mean, my approach to Barry was, "Look. You've got all this wonderful stuff and it needs to be better known and understood." And that this group of writers, as we began to expand into other collections, acquire other collections, is almost unique in the North American experience because of their—I don't know exactly what you would call it. Their ability to work together. Their ability to cooperate. Ability to have shared experience. The ability to move in worlds that most of us never see. He was always first in line for any of those kinds of activities. So there was an



awful lot of that. A lot of telephone conversations. A lot of things going on when he was here interacting with faculty and making connections. Early on, for the first several years, I was just kind of an ombudsman. I was, "Oh, you need to talk to so and so because they've got some really good things. This guy in architecture has just defined what he thinks is a style of building that's unique to the Southwest." Et cetera, et cetera.

DM:

I suspect that Lopez, being inexhaustible, probably went with all of those leads.

BT:

Yes.

DM:

Never turned one down. [Laughter]

BT:

Absolutely. So I mean, that was a worthwhile project from beginning to end. You know, it still continues to this day. Unfortunately, he battles prostate cancer, but he wants to make the record as full as he can for a writer of the twenty-first century for students and others to come to appreciate what it is that we face.

DM:

The great thing about your oral history series with him and the book that was produced from that is the way it draws all of this together too. All of his work. I mean, his work is vast and just to draw his philosophy, his concepts together into a concise form. But did the—I would assume that your oral history series with him began just as an oral history series without an idea of this is going to produce a publication. Is that wrong?

BT:

Yes. It began as an idea that was, once again, filling the gaps of what needed to be done that wasn't being taken care of. So let's do this, but let's do it with the intention of making his best-known that we could.

DM:

So the idea from the very beginning was, "We're going to produce a publication from this."

BT:

Probably a year or two down the road.



DM:

Okay.

BT:

But right at the beginning phases, absolutely. Right now, he's working with a writer and another writer and another photographer. It seems like there were three or four individuals who were working on a larger compendium and magnum opus, which I know he's waiting to get what he regards as his magnum opus done and through the twenty-first draft or however many.

DM:

On a manual typewriter.

BT:

Yeah. [Laughter]

DM:

Or I guess—

BT:

IBM electric.

DM:

—electric. [laughs]

BT:

Right.

DM:

That's amazing.

BT:

Well how are we doing on time, David? Are we okay?

DM:

Oh. Yeah. I was just going to ask if you had any other thoughts on any other initiatives that loom large in your mind?

BT:

One of the things that never got too far down the road—too far down the trail—was cooperative programs with other institutions, but much of the same thing that we've been talking about this

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afternoon. You could see it would be easily translatable into programs and activities that it could be jointly supported and for which that, you could probably raise money for. So had David Schmidly stayed at UNM, I think that would be one institution that shares a lot of the same values and perspectives. Of course, we've got a plethora of Texas institutions as well. But I think you would agree that over time, while the environment has softened a little bit, there's still enough parochialism and, "I'll do this myself. Who are you stepping into my territory?" And that kind of thing. So the cooperation has never been too extraordinary within Texas.

DM:

It's funny that you would say that because as soon as you mentioned UNM and I immediately thought, yeah, good possibility of collaboration. But when you mentioned other Texas universities, I thought, hm.

BT:

Right.

DM:

That's interesting.

BT:

Yeah, sure is.

DM:

Anything else you want to add?

BT:

No, my rear end's kind of getting a little sore so these aren't the most comfortable chairs, but I also would leave the door open if you think of any other things. I've kind of stimulated my thinking about it. I'll holler at you.

DM:

Sure. I'm sure we'll find some gaps to fill. I'll turn this off.

***End of Recording***

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