

**Oral History Interview of  
Mary Ann Pawlik**

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson  
November 1, 2013  
George West, Texas**

**Part of the:  
*George West Storyfest Interviews***

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### Related Interviews:

This interview was one of eight interviews conducted on October 31 and November 1, 2013 that discuss the Geroqe West Storyfest. Other interviews include: L.T. Davis, Ross Harris, Jim Huff, Julie Kaase, Jim McGee, Glynis Holm Strause, and Pauline Word.

## Transcript Overview:

This interview features Mary Ann Pawlick, who discusses her love of storytelling, her work for the George West Theater, and everything she appreciates about Storyfest.

**Length of Interview:** 0:34:36

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### Keywords

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**Andy Wilkinson (AW):**

And I'll preface it by saying this is November the first—the morning after Halloween—2013. Andy Wilkinson here, in George West, Texas, with Mary Ann Pawlik, P-a-w-l-i-k. And Mary Ann is two words? No *e*?

**Mary Ann Pawlik (MAP):**

Yes.

AW:

That's exactly how my wife spells it, and she gets really frosty when people make one word out of it. [Laughs] Let me start by getting some just basic information so that in the future, people will know which Mary Ann we're talking about. Oh, what is your date of birth?

MAP:

My date of birth is March 19, 1934.

AW:

My granddaughter's birthday is March 19<sup>th</sup>. That's a great day. And where were you born?

MAP:

I was born in Inez, Texas, right out of Victoria, Texas.

AW:

Okay. What's your maiden name?

MAP:

Lovel.

AW:

L-o-v-e-l?

MAP:

E-l.

AW:

One *l*?

MAP:

One *l*, um-hm.

AW:

And did you grow up in Inez?

MAP:

I grew up in that area, yes, and graduated from Bloomington High School.

AW:

Okay. And where did you go after Bloomington?

MAP:

I went to, then, Texas A&I in Kingsville. And it will be Texas A&I until I die. It will not be Texas A&M. [Laughter]

AW:

Yeah, it's—people do something wrong when they change those things. I still have trouble thinking of Texas Tech as—although, when I graduated there, it was, by that—I think I may have been in the first or second class it was Texas Tech University. But we—you know, it was Texas Tech College to us. How did you wind up in George West?

MAP:

My husband is from here. My husband, Everest Pawlik is from here.

AW:

Everest?

MAP:

Everest.

AW:

E-v—

MAP:

Just like the mountain: Everest. And he and I met at A&I, and then we married. He spent a year—had one more year to go after we had married. And he was in North Carolina in the service. And then when he got out of the service, we moved here and have been here ever since.

AW:

Now, I see a retail operation here.



MAP:

Those are his brothers. He has several brothers here, and one has Pawlik Supply, and then the other one down the road has the water well service.

AW:

And what did—have you and Everest done here?

MAP:

We have raised cattle and I had taught school for many years here.

AW:

What did you teach?

MAP:

I taught—well, I started out teaching in the third grade, and then I moved up to the seventh and eighth grade, and then I went up to high school, and I've taught English and Speech there. And Mary Margaret Campbell, who is the director of Storyfest right now, was one of my students.

AW:

Oh really? That's pretty good. We were talking just before we got this tape started, and you mentioned that your husband's folks are part of that group of Polish immigrants who came to Texas. Gosh, they came early on, did they not?

MAP:

Yes, they did.

AW:

Eighteen-forties, maybe?

MAP:

I don't know exactly when, but I do know that her—his grandfather move to the George West area in 1919.

AW:

So that's a long, long history. And your family, where—

MAP:

My family was from Czechoslovakia. And I think my—well, I know my mother was born in Sweet Home, and then she and my father moved to the Victoria area. I don't know exactly when.

My father died fifteen days before I was born, so there was a lot of history that I really didn't know.

AW:

Yeah. Were they farmers there?

MAP:

Yes, um-hm.

AW:

Yeah. Well, how did you get involved in Storyfest?

MAP:

Well, of course, I've always been interested in the art of storytelling. And I think it's so important to keep these stories alive. And so when Rob Schneider decided that he would like to try a festival here in George West, I became a part of that committee. And I served—

AW:

So right at the beginning?

MAP:

Yes. I have—I served on that committee for several years, but then I dropped out as far being on what they call the board, but I have worked in Storyfest all twenty-five years.

AW:

Yeah. And I assume that when you say you've always been interested in storytelling, that's partly connected to your—

MAP:

My—yes.

AW:

What you teach.

MAP:

English and speech, yes.

AW:

You mentioned that we keep our stories. And by that, what do you mean?



MAP:

Well, I mean that various groups of people have stories—or I feel they do—that pertain to them. And so I think those are so important to preserve. When I first started with storytelling—Storyfest, we had a fairly large group of locals that told stories. And we don't have that anymore. We seem to have people here that know stories, but they won't tell them. [AW laughs] But I had—I had a little bit more success in getting some of these older people to tell stories. I remember one of them, Remita Garcia, that told some wonderful stories about one of our old timers here by the name of Douglas Road. And they would go on trips and he would tell stories about—that were hilarious. And then he would tell—Remita told about how he grew up, and some of the things that he did as a child. And those stories—I don't think anybody has put them down and they're gone. They're gone.

AW:

Is Remita gone?

MAP:

Yes, yes. Now, if you're here tomorrow—

AW:

Yes ma'am, I will be.

MAP:

—you will meet his daughter, Maggie, and she's one of the hosts on one of the stages. I don't know which one. But it's her father. And I don't know if she has ever written down any of his stories. But he just told some wonderful stories.

AW:

How do you spell his name? R-e-m—

MAP:

I-t-a, I think.

AW:

Garcia?

MAP:

Um-hm. He had a restaurant over here close to the railroad tracks, T&T. And people from all around would come. He was a wonderful cook, and a wonderful storyteller.

AW:

And his daughter, Maggie, will be hosting one of the stages and working?

MAP:

Yes, um-hm.

AW:

Okay. I'll try to meet her.

MAP:

Yes.

AW:

Go ahead.

MAP:

She may know some of the stories. I would think she would know some of them. But no one could tell stories about his childhood the way he could. I often wish that we had recorded those. And, at the time—you know, when you're first starting, you just don't remember all of those things that you should be doing.

AW:

Since—when the festival began, you already knew that there were people here that told stories. How did you know that?

MAP:

Well, because I was a schoolteacher. And, you know, [laughs] you learn through—from your students. And, of course, just going to eat at the T&T, you would meet Remita, and you would—he would tell you things. So I thought right away, he was really good. And then different people would say, "Oh my goodness, this one can tell stories." It's just as—we have a roundtable of men that go to the Dairy Queen. I'm sure you have heard about them. And they sit around there and they tell these stories. And I've always said all of them should be on the stage here. But most of the time, you can't get them. They will tell you a story if you'll get up—

AW:

But they don't want to do it on a stage.

MAP:

No.

AW:

So there's a history of storytelling. Part of the culture—

MAP:

Yes.

AW:

—of this place, that storytelling right—way before the festival.

MAP:

Yes. Oh yes. Yes.

AW:

That's really interesting.

MAP:

Yes.

AW:

Has bringing in what we call a professional storyteller—has that had any impact on the local storytelling tradition, good or bad?

MAP:

You know, I really don't—I really don't know, mainly because I am always doing something and not getting to listen to all the storytelling. But I feel that sometimes, some of the locals might be a little intimidated. They think they can't tell the story the way the professionals do. But when we began this Storyfest, I don't think they felt that way because they had not been listening to the other professional storytellers and I don't know whether that's good or bad, but I just think it's a shame that some of these wonderful stories are lost.

AW:

Yeah. Well, I agree with you. I will say, though, that in terms of storytelling festivals, this one still has a lot more local input than a lot of—

MAP:

Oh yes. I agree. I agree. Oh, and I really like the professional storytellers. I mean, they are so good.

AW:

But you know, the professionals love to hear the locals, though. They really do.

MAP:

I'm sure they do. I'm sure they do. And I think last year, they had several. Now, there's one—you may meet him—Johnny Campbell. He writes cowboy poetry and also tells stories, but he's not in real good health. And one day, we'll have him gone, too. I don't know if he has recorded. I know he's written his poetry down—he has books—but I don't know about some of his stories.

AW:

Yeah, stories are a little harder to write down.

MAP:

Yes, yes.

AW:

It's one thing to tell them; another thing to put them down on paper.

MAP:

Right. My mother-in-law, who came here as a young bride, had some wonderful stories. And when she was in the nursing home, I waited a little bit too long, but I did get several of her stories. And I have told her children these stories, and her grandchildren, and they had never heard them. Because, you know, back then, you were busy raising a family. You were out working in the fields, and taking care of the animals, and all, and you didn't always have time. But she had some delightful little stories when she was young; things that happened to her. I heard about her wedding—her wedding night. It was delightful.

AW:

Did you record those?

MAP:

No, but I have them written down.

AW:

Wrote them down, that's good. Well, a few of the people that I've interviewed have said, well, the whole idea of a storytelling festival seemed really unusual to them. But as soon as that first one happened, they were sold. So I guess there were some people that hadn't thought that storytelling at the Dairy Queen was quite the same as having a festival.

MAP:

Absolutely. And I know that at the very beginning there were quite a few people that, "Storyfest? A festival about storytelling?" But I thought it was a great idea. I always did.

AW:

Sometimes the trees can't see the forest. [MAP laughs] Well, another thing that's really struck me is—not only because I perform myself, and so I go to lots of festivals, but in my town, in Lubbock, I've been on the board of our Arts Alliance, and we put on a really big arts festival. Have for—going on forty years. I know the difficulties of staging a festival.

MAP:

Yes.

AW:

And we're in a city of three hundred thousand people. It should be easy to get volunteers. This is a city of twenty-five thousand—twenty-five hundred.

MAP:

Hundred.

AW:

And so how in the world has George West managed to not only have this survive twenty-five years, but to be such a good festival? How does that happen?

MAP:

I don't really know, except I do know that we have people that live here that are always so ready and willing to work in whatever area that you ask them to. I'm president of the board of the theater over here.

AW:

Yeah, that's another thing I want to ask about.

MAP:

And we had to raise a lot of money, and there were people who were always willing to help. So I think from the very—we just have a group of people here who really do want to make our town successful.

AW:

And if I remember correctly the dates that, I think, Glynis told me yesterday, the theater was restored before the big economic impact of the Shale.

MAP:

Oh, absolutely.

AW:

So you were doing that before you were rich. [Laughs]

MAP:

Oh my, yes. We really were. And we worked for about ten years, because we would get a certain amount of money and then we'd do something. You have—have you been in the theater?

AW:

No.

MAP:

You've got to come.

AW:

Because when I came here the last time, it wasn't quite open. But no, I want to see it.

MAP:

Oh, we will be having things on the stage from eleven-thirty until two-thirty. Then the ghost stories will be from eight to nine. We do not keep it open all the time, unless there's something going on, even in the story. It tends to have—we have a few problems, you know, people coming in, leaving trash and so forth. We work too hard to do that. But it will be open probably from eleven o'clock until three o'clock, and then we'll have it open again during the ghost stories. And I'll be there most of the day tomorrow.

AW:

Okay. Well, I hope to get a chance to look at it.

MAP:

Good, good. We have three storytellers from eleven-thirty until twelve-thirty, and then we have some cloggers that are from the local area, and then we have two musical acts. I know one of them is from here, and the other one's gospel music. So I don't know too much about that one.

AW:

I can't remember what my schedule is that day. I know I'm going to be here all day, so I don't have to worry too much about remembering. When did you start, and what motivated the reconstruction of the theater?

MAP:

Well, we were given—when I say, “We”—just some people that might be interested in doing it. We were given the theater and the land that it's on. Not a lot of land. But we were given it. And



the man who was the chairman—and he was going to put together a committee—had to give it up. And so he called me and asked if I would be willing to kind of spearhead this. And I just hated to see this building be destroyed. You know, it was just in bad shape. We have a wonderful picture in there of what it looked like when we started. So I had had some success. Have you been to the Buck West house? That's our—

AW:

Yes.

MAP:

Okay. I was chairman of that little group. It's not that I'm in the—

AW:

The chairman business. [Laughter]

MAP:

No, but I think I don't have good sense, and I don't always say no. But anyway, we had a committee and we started working on this. And we did not realize that there was a little asbestos in there.

AW:

In the theater?

MAP:

Yes. It doesn't matter if it's a lot or a little. You have to do—and so that really was a big undertaking. It took about eighty thousand dollars to—

AW:

Yeah, just for the asbestos remediation.

MAP:

Anyway, that's how I got started. And I had—I had two other people, Virginia Hart and Lamon Bennett, who were just fantastic. We were able to get a lot of our work done by the prisoners out at the prison. And we—people would give money. And, of course, I asked—I wrote for grants and we did get a few along the way and so that's how it all came about.

AW:

That's pretty remarkable. What sort of things do you do in the theater?

MAP:

Well, we do concerts of different kinds. We just had one Saturday night: Reflections. These two men do a Frank Sinatra, and they do a wonderful Blues Brothers. Unfortunately, our audience was rather small. But they were fantastic. This young man I talked about before that does Buddy Holly, he was a good friend of my daughters, and he has done two for us. Each time, he charges very little, just barely his expenses, because he wants to help the theater. We lost our daughter in 20—in 2009.

AW:

I'm sorry to hear that.

MAP:

And he was doing it more in her memory. But anyway, we have had—I don't know if you're familiar with the young man from Kerrville, T.J. Smith. He's really good. We're looking forward to some more. But we also then have local things, like I directed *Our Town*, and it was—I'm telling you, I was just shocked, the professionalism of the people who were in our town. It was wonderful.

AW:

That's a wonderful play.

MAP:

Oh, it is. I always said—and, of course, I taught it in high school. But I said, "That's the one play I want to direct here." And so I did, and it was just standing room only for two nights.

AW:

Oh, that's great.

MAP:

And then, we use it for children. We do children—like, at Christmas. And we do—our school uses it. They're going to be doing a band concert coming up in December. And various things like that. Besides, we do open it to—sometimes people need to have a big meeting, and so they come there. It seats about three hundred.

AW:

Three hundred? Yeah, and I'm sure the sightlines are really good in that theater.

MAP:

Yes, yes, yes, yes. Because it was a movie theater. And I do remember going to the movie when my husband and I moved here. It was open as a theater, but television came along about that

time, and, you know, things just went down. And then, before long, it closed. There were offices in there for a while, and then they closed. Then, it just started going down, down. One man had bought it, and he was going to have a team center there. Well, it didn't work, and so he gave it to us.

AW:

Yeah. How—is it also a 501(c)(3)? A separate entity of its own?

MAP:

Yes. Yes, yes. We started out under Storyfest, though, because we could not apply for grants without having that designation. So we were under Storyfest, but now we're our own entity, a 501(c)(3).

AW:

That's really good. That's really good. What do you see is the future of Storyfest and the theater?

MAP:

For Storyfest, I just see it getting bigger and better all the time because I really do think people like it, and more and more, we're getting people from outside the area. They know it's always the first Saturday in November. They come. And it's a great opportunity for non-profits, too, because they're the ones who have the food booths. It's a way for them to make money. And they're always good vendors here to sell their wares. And so I just think it'll continue to grow. And I just think Mary Margaret has done a marvelous job, as Becky did when it started.

AW:

What's Becky's name?

MAP:

Becky Allen. She's—

AW:

Was she the first director?

MAP:

No, actually, Rob Schneider was, really. But then Becky came on later as a paid person. That was our first one. And the same is true of Mary Margaret. But all the other people are volunteers. And as far as the theater goes, I think that we'll continue. In 2014, we have our Centennial George West. And so we're going to have several things throughout the year to celebrate our centennial. In fact, January the eighteenth we're going to kick off with—I probably won't remember his—R.J. Vandergriff—

AW:

Vandergriff, um-hm.

MAP:

He's coming to do his *Cowboys Ain't Dead Yet!* And, of course, cattle was so important to George West, the town and the man. In fact, this street right out here was the trail that he brought his cattle into the railroad.

AW:

Really? The main street here? Houston Street?

MAP:

Yes. And so, when we have our centennial celebration, we're going to have it all year long, but the big part is in September, because that's when he filed the papers. We're going to have a parade. Right now, we plan to have at least four or five longhorns in that parade, going down that way. So that's exciting. But back to the theater, we have—[clears throat] Glynis Strause that you have interviewed, is going to direct *Dividing the Estate*.

AW:

Yeah, she mentioned that. An important piece.

MAP:

That's going to be in the theater. And then she's doing a reader's theater based on stories from—well, I think they're basically George West stories, not only the town, but the man.

AW:

I hope you're going to record all of this.

MAP:

I don't know. You know?

AW:

Really, you ought to. And it's not that difficult.

MAP:

We should. You know—I guess. I should get—I should get somebody—I talked to a young man the other day. He was a—he did video. And maybe he'll do some of this. And we should record it. Yes, you're right. You know, you get so involved in getting it on, you just—ah.

AW:

Oh, that's right. There are a lot of details. But if I could help just with advice on that, ask Mary Margaret to give me a call because we record things all the time. And when you're recording it to document it, it's not nearly so critical as if you're trying to make a—

MAP:

Professional-type—

AW:

—film out of it, you know? And so, there's a huge gap in the effort and the money. Today, you can, for five hundred dollars, buy a camera that will do a spectacular job for a documentation. So there are a lot of people that could help you do that, but it would be a great thing to keep. And then, we would be inclined to archive any of the recordings that you do, any of the documentations for your hundredth. I'm sure other people would be interested in it, too, but if not, we would certainly do it because it would connect with Storyfest.

MAP:

There's a very good—well, I don't know exactly what to call it—I guess, exhibit—at the Witte Museum in San Antonio on cattle trail drivers. And, of course, George West was one. And so—in fact, a book—one of the men that works there—is coming out in September about George—the man, George West.

AW:

Oh really? Do you know—

MAP:

I don't know his name, but I do know he is—he's associated with the Witte museum. He's a curator and his book is coming out in September, I think, of 2014, which would be great because it'd be just the time when we do this.

AW:

Is—do you know, off the top of your head, who might be publishing it so I could look it up?

MAP:

No, I do not. But one of the members of our board is Patrick Burns, and he is a descendent of George West, and he gave this man a lot of pictures and perhaps, some stories. I don't know all, but I can ask Patrick. But I don't know.

AW:

Yeah. Cool. Very good. What should I have asked you about the festival and the theater that I



haven't asked?

MAP:

I think you've been thorough. [Laughter]

AW:

Well, there might be something else you wanted to add.

MAP:

I really—you know, I just think it's such a good opportunity for people to gather together. Sometimes, they don't always go to listen to the storytellers, they're over there because they haven't seen somebody and it's just a wonderful opportunity. It's—you don't have to worry about your children. They're down there playing in the children's place. And it's just a—it's just such a family-friendly festival. And I think that—as I said before, it's a good opportunity for non-profits. Like, for instance, I'm a member of Cattle Women—Texas Cattle Women. We're Brush Country Cattle Women. We have a booth, and we fix the best barbeque beef on a bun. [Laughter] But it's an opportunity for us to promote our product, as well as make a little money. We do it more for promotion than anything.

AW:

I think Jim Huff—maybe it was Jim McGee yesterday. There were two Jim's. I kind of get some of that confused, but one of them was talking about the kinds of money that some of the non-profits made in their booths, and it was really the kind of thing that would keep some of those organizations afloat the whole year.

MAP:

Absolutely. Now, it isn't enough for us, but, still, that's okay. And one of our main goals, though, is to promote beef. And we have kept our prices down, probably more than anybody else has, simply because we want to promote it. But it is a great opportunity and some of these organization really do need this for their operating expenses.

AW:

Tell me about the Texas Cattle Women. Where's it headquartered in?

MAP:

Austin. Well, it's—I started to say, "Austin," but that's not true. Wherever the president is. But we do work through the Beef Council there in Austin. But we have a—we have a state president, and then, she, of course, has her board made up from different locals. We're called a local. And we're the Brush Country Cattle Women, and we encompass Live Oak County and some from the surrounding area. And we promote and educate. And I've been a member of that one for a long



time. We like to go into the schools and tell about beef, not only the nutritional value of it, but also, all the byproducts. The children are just absolutely amazed at all of the different byproducts that come from beef. We have a little puppet show that we take. I've been doing Callie the Cow for a long time, [laughter] behind the little stage. But it's an organization that is open to any woman, and she doesn't have to raise cattle; she just likes to eat beef and promote beef.

AW:

How long has the organization been around?

MAP:

Oh my goodness. It's a long—

AW:

Is it a long time?

MAP:

It's a long time, yes. And I don't know—and, of course, then we're affiliated with the American Cattle Women, which is—I believe they're in Denver. Yes, Denver. And we've been around a long time. We have promoted beef. And, of course, we're in the crosshairs of PETA [**People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals**] and all of those that think beef is bad. We have to do something to counteract that.

AW:

Sure. Yeah. Well, my daughter is Director of Education at the National Ranching Heritage Center. I just—it sounds like they might ought to be doing a little more with Cattle Women because that's not a group I've heard talk about there at the Ranching Heritage Center.

MAP:

Well, we have several ladies that have been members of Cattle Women for a long time and one is just such a delightful lady. She is—she's having trouble with her hearing now, but she used to do Callie the Cow with me and she would go back and tell the children stories about her life on the ranch. Where, I came from a farming family, she came from a ranching family here. And she told about how they would work the cattle, and get up early in the morning, and all. And she just had some really good stories to tell the children, besides what we were telling them about nutrition and the byproducts and so forth.

AW:

Is she still alive?

MAP:

Yes, and she may be at Storyfest tomorrow.

AW:

What's her name?

MAP:

Her name is Marjorie Bledsoe. She's from Oakville. Are you going to go out to the Dobie—

AW:

Tonight?

MAP:

Tonight. She may be out there. If she's out there, I will introduce you to her.

AW:

M-a-r-g-e-r—

MAP:

M-a-r-j-o-r-i-e.

AW:

A-r-j-o-r-i-e.

MAP:

B-l-e-d-s-o-e.

AW:

Okay. Because she sounds like she needs to be interviewed.

MAP:

Oh yes. Yes. Oh my goodness, yes.

AW:

Yeah. Well, we can arrange that.

MAP:

I'll—as I said, it depends on how she's feeling, but she loves to go out there. And she's been there all—

AW:

Well, I wouldn't even have to do it today. I travel a lot, so I can—it's conceivable that I could come back. And if she's older, then probably—

MAP:

You know, she just had a few health—her legs and so forth. She's had some problems there. She and her sister, Lucie Moore—Lucie is not with us anymore. She's gone. But those two ladies—oh my goodness, the stories that they could tell. Oh my, my, my, my. I used to take them to some of the meetings that we went to, and it was a delight. I keep talking about them being old. I'm going to be eighty next year, so. [Laughs]

AW:

Well, but old is a whole lot of how you feel, not so much what registers on the scales.

MAP:

What the calendar says?

AW:

Yeah. Well, good. Well, thank you very much.

MAP:

All right. I appreciate your interviewing, and I look forward to hearing about some more things coming up.

AW:

Well, don't run off, though. I need to get—

***End of Recording***