

**Oral History Interview of
Warren Hasse**

**Interviewed by: Steven Gamble
July 13, 1976
Pampa, TX**

Part of the:
Legacy Oral History Interviews (Sports)

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Interview Series Background:

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Transcript Overview:

This interview features Pampa sports journalist Warren Hasse. Hasse discusses sports in Pampa and in West Texas more broadly. Hasse talks about the West Texas-New Mexico Baseball League and its memorable players and games. Hassee also discusses football and basketball in the Pampa area.

Length of Interview: 01:37:01

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Steven Gamble (SG):

This is Steven Gamble. I'm interviewing Mr. Warren Hasse on the thirteen July, 1976, in Pampa Texas. We'll be talking about West Texas athletics, everything from high school basketball and football, to the old West Texas-New Mexico baseball league. Well sir, to begin with, could you just kind of give me a rundown concerning your—where you're from, how you got to West Texas, and your involvement in athletics in this part of the world.

Warren Hasse (WH):

Fine Steven, I am originally from Wisconsin. Always interested in sports there, and participated in sports. Went to the University of Wisconsin in '41, and the war broke out, enlisted, and the various travels through the Air Force, part of them were spent in the West Texas area. After coming back from overseas, I went down to Midland as an instructor. I graduated from aviation cadets at Childress. And when the war was over, I went back home, back to Wisconsin, and wound up working in newspaper. But the publisher of the newspaper there—I was classified advertising manager—and the newspaper publisher wouldn't let you write any sports unless it had to do with hunting or fishing or—oh I can't think of the other sport which he was so deeply interested, but it certainly was not participant sports or competitive sports that we understand today. I had desire, as a Chicago Cub fan all of my life to get in the radio end of it, and reading broadcasting, or *Editor & Publisher* magazine rather in the fall of '48, *The Pampa Daily News* was advertising for a sports editor. So, in looking through *Editor & Publisher* and *Broadcasting* magazine, I found out that the newspaper owned the radio station in Pampa. So I told my wife, I said, "Well if it's all right with, we'll just go back there. We liked West Texas during the war years, and go back down, and maybe I can move from this newspaper end into the radio business, since they owned both of them." And I applied for the job, and Halloween night, they called me in '48 and said "If you want the job, it's yours. Come on." So I came down as sports editor, and that was in November of '48. The next summer I started broadcasting West Texas-New Mexico League baseball, and in '49 started doing all the Pampa High School football, basketball, and all sports.

SG:

You still do those?

WH:

Still—well, the high school sports now are alternated. We have two radio stations, the school board alternates back and forth, year to year. But in '52, while I was managing editor—I moved up from sports editor to managing editor—and in '52, the fellow who was the manager of the radio station, still owned by the newspaper, said, "Why don't we buy it?" So we did, and I've been in the radio end since '52.

SG:

I see. You have any periods where you left Pampa during that time? You've been here straight through?

WH:

No, none, none whatsoever—been here since '48. Yes.

SG:

I assume you like what you're doing—

WH:

Yeah, right, uh huh.

SG:

Well, that's good. I'd like to talk to you first would be West Texas baseball. When did baseball come to Pampa?

WH:

Oh, well before I did. It was originally here back in the thirties, I believe, and then it took a brief hiatus during the war and resumed in '46, if I'm not mistaken when there was such a proliferation of leagues immediately following the late forties—'46, '7, and '8—between Texas, North Carolina, and mainly back in the East, and even some in Louisiana, whatnot. There were just tremendous number of minor leagues—

SG:

Oh boys coming out of the war and that kind of thing.

WH:

Right. And West Texas league was one of the real fine class C leagues at that time, I think, because of the—well it was fairly close, we had good rivalries, and also it provided what the fans wanted from the standpoint from a lot of offense—the light air around here, and a lot of baseball to travel, and it was no problem at all for a good slugger, a good hitter, to be up in the thirties homerun wise. And of course '61, I think it was, Joe Bowman hit and Bob Crues had those days out here, and a lot of those fellows that couldn't muscle up and get two home runs in the Evangeline League, could come out here and hit twenty-two.

SG:

Yeah. I know you weren't here in the thirties, but was that semi-pro baseball then?

WH:

Semi-pro, yeah.

SG:

There wasn't a professional league then?

WH:

No, the old—they called them the Roadrunners, they were sponsored by an oil company that's now defunct.

SG:

Yeah, I see. When did baseball leave Pampa? Professionally—

WH:

In the mid-fifties. Driven out, I felt, by a couple three things. One, we lost Amarillo, as far as Pampa was concerned, which was a tremendous draw for us, we were good draw for each other—we helped—

SG:

Amarillo went to the Texas League?

WH:

No, not at that time. First they went into—oh they moved up into a league that had Pueblo—Western Association or Western League, I can't remember which they called it then.

SG:

It was higher than Class C?

WH:

Yes. Right. They moved up to that. So we lost a great draw there. And the league had already had some problems—we had moved up from the West Texas to the Class B Southwest League. And it brought in some fairly unstable, financially unstable communities that probably couldn't sustain professional baseball but tried.

SG:

Uh huh. Which communities are you—?

WH:

Well Ballinger came in, and we had long drives now to Roswell, where we—they were having some problems, Clovis was having financial problems, Borger was having financial—Pampa was having financial problems. We had—

SG:

What years are you referring to now?

WH:

This is the mid-fifties, just before we closed up shop.

SG:

Just before the Bowl Dust [sic].

WH:

And the other thing that I think was probably, maybe even more of the bigger influence upon us closing shop here in Pampa and probably a lot of other places, was strangely enough the advent of little league baseball—

SG:

I've heard that.

WH:

—the youth baseball programs. We'd sit in the press box on top of the roof of old Oiler Park, and we'd see a couple of the little league ball parks, just a block away, all the moms and dads who were baseball fans, with the kids that we would've liked to have at the ballpark, were all over there. And we're sitting out there playing before three hundred people.

SG:

That's rough, that's rough. I believe Stan Grzywacz, baseball pitcher who pitched for Lamesa for a while, came up for something I thought was kind of interesting. He commented that he thought refrigerated air had a lot to do with killing baseball down around Lamesa. That—

WH:

Well, that's possible that that did do it.

SG:

I can cut this off at any time.

Tape Break

SG:

I believe I was talking about refrigerated air and the impact that might have had on—

WH:

I hadn't thought about that. It's quite possible.

SG:

I never had either until he mentioned it.

WH:

I do know this—we've got fans that crying today, said they wished they were going out to the ballpark. And I had a little old gentleman here retired from Santa Fe Railroad was here in the office a week or so ago. And he worked—I forget how many years he told me he had. He'd missed one Pampa home baseball game in something like eight or nine years, and only then because of an emergency call he got at the railroad and had to go up that night.

SG:

Yeah, that's loyalty.

WH:

You bet, well there's a lot of them like this.

SG:

Do any way it could work now in Pampa, professional baseball? Do you think that there's—?

WH:

No, no way.

SG:

The way expenses have gone up, and the fact that Pampa hasn't grown, I mean the population has been static as far back as I remember.

WH:

Yeah, there's no way. Amarillo can't make it, and they're 140,000, and they can't pay the way.

SG:

Yeah, that's what I hear, that's what I hear.

WH:

I wish it would, but—

SG:

About—we talked about kind of what caused baseball to—or its demise in West Texas, but what about Lubbock specifically. You have anything you'd like to shed on why baseball left Lubbock?

WH:

Well, one of the things, when Sam Rosenthal died, was one of the critical things, you had a great backer there. And this is what happened a lot of places, you lost the key person that was a great operator. It happened here in Pampa—we lost a great operator, not because of death, but he got sold out—didn't really want to, and he was getting ready to go down to the spring camp at the Shreveport ball club—R. L. Edmonson owned the ball club here—he was getting ready to go down to Shreveport. And the day he left, why a fellow approached him and said, "How much do you want for the ball club?" He said, "I don't want to sell it." He was making tremendous money on it and loved it and ran a good tight tough ship, which you have to today. And this guy kept badgering and badgering him, and said, "Well go ahead and put some kind of figure on it." So he said, "All right I'd sell it for \$125,000."

SG:

Wow.

WH:

—and takes off. And comes back and they've got the \$125,000 raised by some ranchers who are great baseball fans.

SG:

Mr. Mills. Doug Mills and R. D. Mills.

WH:

Yes, R. D. Mills and his wife. And they were marvelous people and great baseball fans and they poured a lot of money into that ball club. But with them, it was more a fans interest and not a business interest, and consequently it didn't get run as tightly as it should have. And they finally—anybody gets tired of seeing money go down the drain, and at that time also, they were being set upon unfortunately by a few baseball players that would do things that were not the best. I remember one that, on a road trip, went out and bought a set of golf clubs and then when the season was over and he was gone, why he had them send the bill to the baseball team to pay for the set of golf clubs—

SG:

I assume he wasn't coming back the next year?

WH:

Right. We had another one that was a great star in the league and had been around the league for quite some time, but wasn't a very solid stable individual, and he would steal brand new baseballs from the Mills during the regular season. And I remember one winter, he called the Mills, he was out of money, he called the Mills and asked them if they'd like to buy x number of dozens of baseballs—brand new baseballs for next season. He'd stolen them from them and was trying to sell them back. But this kind of people—the Mills are such fine people—they were not used to dealing with this type, and I think it just got the better of them, and they finally got out. As far as Lubbock, I mentioned Sam Rosenthal, one of the other problems there, of course, was his death—

SG:

His wife, I believe took over the team—

WH:

—and then Mrs. Rosenthal tried to run the ball club and hired general manager, and Paul Dean eventually got involved in the thing, and he ran the situation like he did Clovis. He finally finished the season with something like ten players or eleven—

SG:

He sold them off—

WH:

And it was—

SG:

Was he hurting for the money, or why did he do it?

WH:

I imagine Paul was hurting, personally, probably was.

SG:

Even though the ball club was turning a profit, he personally was—

WH:

Whether it was or not, I don't know. Whether the club was turning a profit or not, Chock Hutchinson could tell you about that. I think Chock was—

SG:

C-h-o-c—

WH:

C-h-o-c-k. Chock. He was in Lubbock, last I knew, and he served as business manager, and in fact, he may have been league president briefly. I'm trying to recall. But he had a very deep interest in the baseball program down there.

SG:

Okay. You were a business manager for a while—

WH:

Right.

SG:

For what years, or year, or what?

WH:

I was business manager here for one year and served jointly as sports editor and business manager. It's difficult. I don't remember the year, I'm sorry, I don't remember the exact year. It was—when it was—I'm going to guess '50—I'm going to guess.

SG:

Did—I guess you got pretty intimately involved in the fina[nce]—did you get paid for doing that or were you volunteer?

WH:

Business manager? No, I got paid for that.

SG:

You did? Held down your job.

WH:

Started out originally, I just—I left the newspaper just briefly as full time and then the publisher said—well went to the Mills and said, "Can we use Warren both ways if he's agreeable?" And they said yes.

SG:

Oh so this is after the Mills had bought the—

WH:

Yeah.

SG:

What were the finances like back then?

WH:

Oh—

SG:

Were they turning a profit?

WH:

No, no.

SG:

How much were they loosing? Enough to really—

WH:

I really don't—I couldn't tell you that exactly. I wasn't—I sort of ran, I guess you'd say more of a general manager than a business manager—they looked after the money pretty much, but I know it wasn't turning a profit at all. I'd have to go to them paydays and get some more money put in the pot to keep salaries going.

SG:

What would you get the gate receipts and—

WH:

Yeah, I'd get the gate receipts and make the deposits, but I didn't keep the books like they had [inaudible].

SG:

Concerning salaries for the players back then—what kind of money were they making?

WH:

All the way from \$75 a month for a rookie from Laredo, a rookie catcher who just wanted to play ball and \$75 was sufficient for him, up to—I'm trying to think—

SG:

Was Warren Hacker on the team then?

WH:

No, Hack had already left. I'm thinking that we probably had some maximums around \$600.

SG:

600? Did you have players on the team that were under contract to big league players—or big league teams affiliates?

WH:

No, nobody farmed out to us. We were trying to send some to the majors, and did—not while I was serving as general manager, when Jimmy Hamilton, now deceased, an old time scout that had originally signed Johnny Vander Meer and Chuck Harrison and some of those guys—he had an eye for talent, and he managed to pedal some to the major leagues and sold one that is now in the major leagues today.

SG:

Who is he?

WH:

But he is up there as an umpire. Ed Sudol.

SG:

Oh Sudol. I knew he was in this league.

WH:

We've got two little West Texas boys up there—Jerry Dale's another one that's an umpire in the National League, out of our league. He played at Clovis.

SG:

I see. I guess you had pretty good officiating. I understand you had pretty quick-tempered officials here.

WH:

Well, that depends on who you talk to.

SG:

Yeah—

WH:

Of course it's like anything else, when you get a young basketball official, he won't take any lip from a coach on the sideline because he wants to be in command. And yet you get an old pro official, he'll run by that coach on the bench and with his whistle in his mouth, tell him to sit down and shut up. I mean, he'll give him a couple of warnings, but the young officials will stick you right away, and I think it's true with a young baseball umpire, trying to make a name.

SG:

Did you have a mixture of young and old umpires here in the league, or were they predominately young—

WH:

Well, they were young in baseball—most of them were young in baseball, but we had some that were up in years age-wise. And we've had—oh I can think of one other at least from our league that went to the majors.

SG:

Secory by any chance?

WH:

No, that's not the one I'm—this kids' name—this fellow's name was Roberts, and he was up in the majors for, oh, two or three years. And he got hurt—he got in a collision or got hit by a foul ball in the knee, I can't remember what—his knee went out on him, and he had surgery. He's from Dallas—and he had surgery in his knee and never did come back.

SG:

I see.

WH:

Great fellow, and well obviously fine official. He wouldn't have gotten there—

SG:

Yeah, I guess so. When you were business manager, did they have a maximum amount the total team salary could be?

WH:

Well, you had limitations as to what allegedly what you could pay, and allegedly—well you had, there's no allegedly about this—you had x number of veterans, x limited service, and x number of rookies.

SG:

Do you know what the total payroll could be?

WH:

No, I don't have any idea.

SG:

You use the word allegedly—were some people getting a little under the table or something?

WH:

Oh I'm sure they were, I'm sure they were.

SG:

From businessmen in the community who were interested?

WH:

Well, no not necessarily businessmen. I think that some of their salaries ran over what they were supposed to have gotten in one way or another—

SG:

Oh from the team itself.

WH:

From ownership, yeah.

SG:

You say one way or another—they pretty covert about it?

WH:

Oh probably. I think you'd list their salary schedule or the contract figure at something and they'd pick up a little extra. And I know that a lot of them were on a bonus situation, not in their contract, but they just expected it. If they—a guy would go out and pitch a fine ballgame, you might tell them to go down and pick out a sport coat or a pair of shoes or something like that. And the money through the fence was always—

SG:

Yeah I was going to ask about that. What's the record you can remember from somebody getting through passing the cigar box and money through the fence.

WH:

Well moneywise, I really don't remember. But seems like, I'm trying to think. It was Ray Faust in Amarillo one night was pitching and had a couple home runs or something, seemed like he picked up a couple hundred dollars through the fence. And Jack Venable used to be a good stick too, plus a good pitcher, and he'd pick up pretty good.

SG:

I guess they had—they carried about four or five pitchers on the team, and they had them fill in other positions?

WH:

No.

SG:

Oh generally not?

WH:

No, we didn't. The only time the pitcher would play another position would be in a real dire emergency, or if, you could take a Venable or a Faust or something and stick them out in the outfield for a couple of innings in the event you had an injury. Now we had one or two fellows with the Pampa team that were versatile enough that played outfield and pitched. One was Roy Parker, who was in Lubbock in the present time. And Red Dial I think did it on a few occasions when you wanted to get an extra stick in the lineup.

SG:

Oh, I see. You commented that although you were a business manager, you kind of functioned as a general manager. Does that mean you had anything to do with trades?

WH:

Well, you were involved with them. You worked with the manager Grover Seitz and Virgil Richardson at that time were both here, and you worked with them. But trades in those days were not that big of a deal really. You were just trying to keep enough uniforms filled.

SG:

Yeah, I guess so. Did money—you say that from time to time, by the Pampa owners were losing money. On these trades, did money figure into it? In other words, would they sell some man to kind of keep them afloat?

WH:

Not Pampa. No, not Pampa.

SG:

Other teams would?

WH:

I'm sure that Clovis probably did. And maybe Paul did at Lubbock in those days. Although we really—you know, we're talking about Catfish Hunter types. Everybody we're talking about was

just a hopeful that—like we had—one year we sold two guys to Washington at the end of the season. A third baseman named Curt Hardaway and a left-handed pitcher named Vibert Clarke—they both went to Washington on a look. And you got x number of dollars for sending up on a look. And if they liked them at spring trading, they'd send you the balance on a committed agreement. Then Hardaway, we were in the playoffs that year, and Hardaway was just playing sensational ball, third base for us. Chicago White Sox got their third baseman hurt, and I can't remember who it was. They came down and looked at Curt, and offered us \$5,000 for him at that time. Well, we said no we'll take ten. And they wouldn't go ten to take him up. So he went on to Washington, and we wound up getting, between the two of them, the figure I recall was \$1,500, and they kept Clarke and sent Hardaway back to us with the recommendation that we turn Curt into an outfielder. So not figuring to have Curt that spring, we signed old veteran Johnny Bruzga out of Amarillo and gave him a \$500 bonus for signing. John's a super ball player, but he was late in his career. And John hadn't been with us four days and in walked Hardaway. Washington sent him back and said, "Put him in the outfield." "Well that's fine, we've got Bruzga and Haradway both," but Curt said, "No, I'm third baseman. That's what I'm going to play. If you want me, I play third."

SG:

Oh he didn't want—

WH:

So we wound up having to pay Johnny the \$500 bonus plus ten days salary or something like that and then turn him lose.

SG:

To get back to the sixteen man limit?

WH:

Yeah, to get back the limit and get Hardaway back in there. Curt never did—I guess he lost his incentive when they told him he couldn't play major league third base, and he wouldn't go to the outfield.

SG:

Maybe just stubbornness, or something.

WH:

Probably.

SG:

You talked a little bit, just a minute ago, about some of the players, and how they may have been less than honest or whatever. The man selling back the owned guns, or unscrupulous, or whatever the term.

WH:

Of doing what now?

SG:

Well you'd mentioned a little earlier about the individual who used to take balls and then send them back—

WH:

Oh I see, back to baseball thing—

SG:

I was just going to ask about the general character of the people, though.

WH:

Oh generally, I think you had real fine people. Gosh, some of the guys I can think of, I just love them today.

SG:

How did they fit in with the community?

WH:

Most of them fit in very well. We were here when we had the advent of the first black ball players into the league.

SG:

Oh when was that?

WH:

That was—

SG:

Early fifties?

WH:

Yeah it was early fifties. But I was trying to think. It was Abilene or Lamesa. Abilene had an almost, at one time, almost total Latin American team.

SG:

Cuban as I understand.

WH:

Cuban, yeah. But there was a catcher that came in and was probably about the forerunner, and he was—I really think he was black, but they listed him as Cuban—

SG:

Was that on the Abilene team?

WH:

It was Abilene or Lamesa—I want to say it was Lamesa, but it could have been Abilene. But we never had any problems.

SG:

No racial—

WH:

No, I can't remember—

SG:

Even when blacks came to the Pampa team?

WH:

No, but we had some absolutely tremendous black ball players—Jonas Gaines, Sam Williams, Vibert Clarke that I mentioned.

SG:

Oh, Clarke was black?

WH:

Yeah, and Curt Hardaway—they were all black. And we—they were just superb athletes. Quincy Barbee—oh gosh, just tons of them. And they were accepted as athletes, but they had problems socially. There was no place for them to live, and they understood this, but I'm sure they didn't like it, and they put up with it.

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SG:

Would fan support drop off when the number of black players would increase on the Pampa team?

WH:

I think it did. I really believe it was—

SG:

They just couldn't relate to the—

WH:

Despite the fact we won the championship that one year with those that fellows I listed, attendance wasn't all that good. I think it had a detrimental effect at that time. I doubt if it would have today, but it did at that time.

SG:

Yeah, I see. But there wasn't any overt name calling to the blacks or any throwing bottles at them or anything?

WH:

Never that I can recall.

SG:

The fans—apparently pretty well loyally supported the teams. Would the fans take the players out to eat or anything—invite them over to their house—was there a close personal relationship?

WH:

I imagine with some there was. I'm sure there was with some.

SG:

I see. What kind of attendance would Pampa draw?

WH:

Well, we can go right behind you and look in those baseball guides here and it'll tell you exactly.

SG:

But an estimation?

WH:

It would vary annually, probably from about fifty thousand, forty-five to fifty thousand up to—I can't really remember what the maximum years were. Before I got here, the maximum was obtained.

SG:

Did they ever break a hundred thousand?

WH:

I imagine they came very close to it a couple of years.

SG:

And that's with a town of just 24,000 people.

WH:

Back in about '47.

SG:

Well that's impressive. Would they have special nights—oh let me ask one thing before I forget. Are there any copies of these books you have. I understand you have yearbooks for the various years.

WH:

Well, not yearbooks as such, but—

SG:

What are they?

WH:

—old Gordon Nell over at Borger put out publications—

SG:

Yeah, I'm interviewing him at four o'clock today. Yeah.

WH:

Well, I've got a couple of copies of his books and I have a hard time keeping them. The old ballplayers will stop by every once in a while—Frank Benitez and—Frank stole one and kept it for a year and finally got it back from him—

SG:

Yeah, he's in Amarillo now—is that right?

WH:

Yeah. But they like to look through there, and I've got baseball guides that date all the way back to about 1906 or something like that. And they come in, we thumb through and look at guys' batting averages and find out that they didn't hit .380, that they wound up hitting .310, you know.

SG:

Amazing how those averages kind of creep up on you.

WH:

You betcha.

SG:

You say Pampa didn't have working agreements with Major League ball clubs?

WH:

Well, not directly with the major league—we had, with Shreveport, a pretty general working agreement with Mr. Peters—Bonneau Peters down there, and Salty Parker was the manager down there—

SG:

Oh Salty Parker—

WH:

And Grover Seitz was a good friend of Salty's and with Mr. Peters, and they—I think that Warren Hacker probably may have been the key to that. They got Hacker from us and of course did well with him.

SG:

Would they pay any percentage of the player's contracts here in Pampa?

WH:

No, no.

SG:

That was strictly up to the owners here, to take care of their own financials.

WH:

Unfortunately for us—

SG:

The working agreement didn't tie in?

WH:

That was the final thing that sent us under in the mid-fifties, after a local group bought the club—it was sort of stockholder type of thing.

SG:

Bought it from the cattlemen?

WH:

Yes. And we had a promise of a major league agreement that would take care of the salaries, and a doctor here and a businessman went around and got a bunch of people, including ourselves here at the radio station to put up money. We put up a thousand dollars with the understanding that we would maintain the ball club the next year and that we would have a working agreement. We put the players in, but the agreement didn't come, and we all payed through the nose to pay it off.

SG:

Oh. Gee-wiz. And that's when baseball folded, I guess?

WH:

That was when baseball folded and would have made it totally difficult to get it back because these people had a bad taste.

SG:

Yeah, been burned once.

WH:

You bet.

SG:

Not going to go twice.

WH:

Right.

SG:

The teams that did have working agreements, Abilene and Lubbock, for example, did you find that they would turn out the better teams because they had these players under contract?

WH:

No, not necessarily.

SG:

Oh not necessarily?

WH:

No.

SG:

That's surprising. I would have thought they would have a higher caliber of player.

WH:

Well, you might think that, I think there could be reasons for it. They may have had to play players that had been assigned to them, and maybe they weren't all that good, and they were trying to develop them. Where Grover Seitz had a tendency to want a well-developed, mature player. He wasn't interested in developing the young player. He wanted the proven veteran. And as a consequence, you had all that experience and the veterans over the rooks, and it was the youngsters—and it was fairly simple. We probably—no, we also carried maximum veterans, and that wasn't true with some ball clubs.

SG:

Especially, I guess, those with affiliation would want the younger.

WH:

Sure, if you can develop them.

SG:

I see. I didn't consider that.

WH:

They might also get loaded up with a kid that, let's say, that might be a—well let's use Hardaway's case—that was a fine third baseman in this league, but the parent ball club wanted to turn him into a catcher or to a first baseman or to an outfielder and said, "Play him there." And so you had people playing out of position by order of the top. Whereas we could play them where we wanted to and didn't have to worry.

SG:

I see. Concerning the managers that were here. Would you characterize them as—had most of them been—I guess they were player managers, but had any of them, I guess, been affiliated with the major leagues at all?

WH:

Well, Grover Seitz was not a player managers.

SG:

How do you play Seitz?

WH:

S-e-i-t-z.

SG:

Thank you.

WH:

And if you're going to Midland, going back down to Midland, his son—last I knew, one of his sons—Bobby—worked for Pioneer Natural Gas Company in Midland.

SG:

Okay.

WH:

Grover played in the St. Louis Cardinal chain, and the highest—the closest he had gotten to the majors was Rochester. In the old international league, Triple A ball, and didn't make it, and eventually came back and managed in this league. He managed Clovis and Pampa alternately, a couple times a piece I guess. But wherever Grover went, you'd have a good ball club, you'd have excitement, you'd have the fans out, even when your team was on the road. The last year that we were in with Amarillo, he got into a fight with a fine first baseman named Paul Mohr, M-o-h-r, over in Amarillo, and sometime in I guess early or late June, I can't remember, and from that time on, when Pampa and Amarillo played, we never drew less than three thousand fans.

SG:

One fight would turn them out—

WH:

That's all it took, you bet. And people loved Grover, Grover would always create—Grover Seitz stories are a legend in the West Texas League.

SG:

If you know any, I would appreciate them, it's always hard to come up with something off the top of the head when asked.

WH:

Oh gosh, the story about him throwing the umpires watch out of the ball park, umpire called—got in an argument with Grover over at home plate, and the umpire pulled out his pocket watch and said, “Grover you’ve got two minutes to get out of the ball park.” You’re ruined or something—so Grover just grabbed the pocket watch and threw it out of the ball park, threw it over the stands, and of course this cost him not only the watch but a suspension. He kicked an umpire here at Pampa. Told me it was unintentional, that he was kicking at the ground, the ground was hard, and his spikes scraped the umpires shins, and he got bounced for ten days for that—

SG:

Isn't that what they all say when they kick an umpire?

WH:

Yeah, he showed me a telegram he got from the commissioner of the minor leagues and it was—when we got ready to put him back in, we finally got a telegram one morning saying he was reinstated conditionally for the balance of the year, and we went around and got a great big dog house and put it in the back of a flatbed truck, and Grover put on his baseball uniform and crawled inside the dog house and we drove it around town that day to promote the fact there'd be a ballgame that night and Grover would be back on the field. Went down to the sheriff's office, got a great big heavy ball and chain, tied it to his leg, you know, and then dragged him into the ball park in the dog house that night.

SG:

I assume you had a good crowd that night.

WH:

Yes, we did. Mr. Trautman, who was president of the minor leagues, was a fine person, and he certainly had baseball at heart, and Grover did too, but you had to know that most of the stuff Grover did was to bring the fans out—he realized you got to pay the way. And prayer meeting he held one Sunday night at Albuquerque on the pitcher's mound, people were griping about Sunday night baseball, so he just had a prayer meeting of his team out there on the mound before the ballgame, and he was constantly either getting into fights or encouraging his players to—to draw. Of course like I say, Grover Seitz stories go on and on.

SG:

Were any of the fights ever serious? Did anybody get hurt in the—

WH:

Grover got hurt in a fight here one night with Art Shires.

SG:

Art Shires?

WH:

Yeah. Grover got the worst of that, one of the few he did.

SG:

Is that a player for another team, I assume?

WH:

With the deal with Paul Mohr, just as an example, we were occupying the first base dugout. There was a little drainage ditch running alongside the field and if the ball went in the drainage ditch, it was an extra base automatically. A throw came in from center field or something and went by the first baseman, and Grover was leaning against the fence beside the dugout against this drainage ditch. And the ball rolled to his feet, and he just reached down with his foot and gave it a little flick, and kicked it into the drainage ditch, which got us the extra base. And the first baseman, Paul Mohr, running after the wild throw, accidentally—absolutely accidentally—collided with Grover while he was reaching for the ball just as Grover kicked it. And Grover was looking at the ball to make sure he was kicking it at the right place. And he thought Paul had hit him. And he just turned on Paul and pinned him against that fence and they went to it. Well we got out of there with our lives that night, and that was all—cushions, coke bottles, and everything. So the next morning, we had a meeting about nine thirty. Grover had called some of us and said, “We’re not going back.” We were supposed to go back Sunday afternoon and play, and Grover said, “We’re not going back; we’ll get killed. There’s no way we’re going over there; it’s just not safe.” So we made a lot of phone calls to Buck Fausett who was the owner and the manager of the ball club. We went over that afternoon, and as soon as we hit the ballpark, Grover asked me, he said, “Warren, come on with me, I want to go get Buck and have him call Paul over, and I want to apologize to Paul.” So he did, and Paul was fine, he wasn’t upset at all. They shook hands and had a nice visit, and from then on, as I said, whether we’d played in Pampa or Amarillo, we drew three thousand fans.

SG:

Yeah, they just turned out to see if there’s a rematch somewhere along the line.

WH:

That kicked it off. Sure. That's right.

SG:

Smart promotion.

WH:

Nobody got hurt, and it brought the fans out.

SG:

Would fans ever get involved in the fights? Would they ever come pouring out of the stands?

WH:

No, huh-uh. No, no.

SG:

Would players ever run into—you know, get hacked off at the—

WH:

I can't remember players doing it. I remember one of the Pampa owners and an umpire were getting ready to square off under the stands one night, but that is all—I can't remember the fans ever getting involved. They probably did—

SG:

I just wondered how—I know a lot of the fans would be oil field workers and things like that, and they're kind of—can be a rowdy bunch.

WH:

I can remember one of our fans got in a fight with a ticket taker one night.

SG:

What was that?

WH:

Well we had a beer joint across the street, and this was one of our fans, never missed a night, was there all the time, but always stopped at the beer joint first before he came to the ballgame. And he drank a little longer than usual this night, and well it started off, I was sports editor of the paper and I was down at the paper after the game. We had a teletype system that connected all of the lead town newspapers, and it was the responsibility of the hometown to go down after the game, punch out a starting box score to everybody in the league so we'd get good coverage. And

I was sitting there like two o'clock in the morning, one o'clock in the morning, phone rings, and it's this fellow and he tells me who he was, and he said, "I'd sure appreciate if you wouldn't mention anything in the paper about what happened at the park tonight." And I said, "Didn't know a thing about it." And he said, well he relates it to me—he'd been over drinking this beer, and he'd gotten in late, and the game had already started, and just as he was walking in the gate, with a few too many under his belt, a foul ball came over the top and struck him right in the head. And apparently it happened just as the ticket taker had turned toward him to pick up his ticket. And he thought the ticket taker had hit him. So he hauls off and slugs the ticket taker. Well we got a good fight going on. (laughs)

SG:

I've heard of a lot of things, but never the ticket taker.

WH:

Poor guy. Yeah, that's right. Poor ticket taker, they're as innocent as could be and gets clobbered.

SG:

Yeah, I guess. What about—selling a beer in the—were you allowed to sell beer through the concessions?

WH:

No, well, we never did.

SG:

That could've been a good money maker, I just guess—

WH:

I think it probably could've been. We never, to my knowledge—never even considered it in those days. Today, it would be the natural thing to seek. But in those days, we didn't.

SG:

You know they still don't sell beer in Amarillo. I interviewed Mr. Jay Taylor—

WH:

Right. I know they don't. There was a hassle over that and whether it would help. I think it would. I've been in San Antonio, and that's in the same league, and they draw superbly down there, they do sell beer, and there's no problem. I don't think there's anything wrong with it. I'd like to see it.

SG:

Do you have any idea what kind of money they made off the concessions or selling the signs in the outfield?

WH:

Oh, yeah, sign sales were an important—very important thing and preseason box seat sales were an important thing. Concessions were important, but we didn't get the prices—in those days obviously that you get today. Go out and pay the prices—it's unreal. And it's an important factor, all right. And that may have been one of the things—you know when you lose the kids to little league baseball, you don't run much through that concession stand.

SG:

Yeah, yeah that's true. That's very true. You broadcasted game back—how were the facilities and the various parks—?

WH:

Oh for our league, of course we very seldom went on the road. We recreated all the road games.

SG:

What they call simulcast?

WH:

No, no, you recreated them.

SG:

How would you do that?

WH:

Oh, we'd sit here in the booth at the radio station and had a telegrapher at both in the press box at where you were playing and a telegrapher down here. And they used the old bug—the old “diddadotdit” system. They'd just key everything to you and you found out what the weather was, what the crowd was, and who the umpires were, and the starting lines ups. They gave you all that. And as I recall, the cost on that was something like \$35 a game, you had to pay for that, and then you sat here and recreated everything.

SG:

And you would recreate it like, “And there's a long drive to center,” I mean you'd give the dramatics and the emphasis and things like that.

WH:

Yeah.

Tape Breaks

SG:

I think we were talking about broadcasting the games. You do all the home games, I guess. 140 game season, right?

WH:

Right. Yeah, generally it was 140. I think it might have varied a couple, one way or another, some years—146 or 142 or something.

SG:

I understand Pampa, a year or two won the championship and would play off with—I think they played Henderson of the East Texas league one time.

WH:

Yeah, played Henderson.

SG:

Did you go to those games at all?

WH:

No, same thing.

SG:

Same type thing. I guess that's how always was. Any unusual problems with broadcasting the games? Any obstacles to overcome that—?

WH:

Oh—not really. Made it nice because people—most people would think you were there, a lot of them thought you were actually there. We'd have people call down here with bets and say, is Warren at Clovis? And they'd say no, and then they couldn't believe it. Well can we come down and see how you do it, you know, and they'd come by. Tickled to death to have them. One time we ran into—we had a telegrapher, one of the times, that was an alcoholic, or at least he liked to drink, and he'd get drunk before he'd reach the end of the ballgame, and you'd have trouble. And I remember it happened—

SG:

Grand slam home run with nobody on base and things like that—

WH:

You'd have to find—you'd have to get on the phone and get somebody there to do something about it because—

SG:

I guess you could—

WH:

But he didn't last long. He was—

SG:

Did you ever function as official scorer?

WH:

Oh yeah, I was official scorer from all the while here at Pampa with the exception of the first year.

SG:

Did anybody ever come to you after the game and say, why did you give me an error on that play? I couldn't have that for ten years.

WH:

Oh, most of the time not, because what you do during the ball game is not the official action. Not until you fill out the official form and send it in does it become official. And even that is subject to change and review. But if there's a questionable situation, I'd always go by and talk to somebody—the first baseman, the umpire, the player himself—and make sure that was the way I saw it and try to call it right. Now if it was a rulebook, a scoring rule error, why it was no problem to look it up, you shouldn't make that to begin with. And the only—oh sure you'd get a complaint now and then, but it was nothing that was a bitter thing that would hang on forever.

The only time I ever felt bad about giving an error, really bad about it, was it cost a fellow a batting championship in the West Texas-New Mexico League one year. And a very dear friend of mine. Pappy Stokes down in Lamesa and Plainview. And I loved old Pappy, fine ball player, tremendous competitor, and one of our outfielders dropped a can of corn one day that he should've had—and if I'd given Pappy the hit on it right at the end of the season, he'd of won the batting championship. As it is, I ruled it an error and he lost it.

SG:

You did what you thought was right, so—

WH:

He would josh me about it, but nothing serious.

SG:

No bitterness or anything.

WH:

You know you cost me the companionship and laugh about it.

SG:

You find many superstitious ball players?

WH:

Nah, huh-uh. I can't—they probably did have some, but I didn't notice it. I think a guy, if he ties his shoes a certain way, or you'd find a lot of them that wanted to step on third base as they came in from second or right field, or didn't want to step on the chalk line, or something like that.

SG:

Would you ever talk to many pitchers that smelled like they hadn't had a bath in five weeks and then won ten straight games, or something? Nothing like that?

WH:

No. Only one I can think of even looked like he hadn't had a bath, or at least hadn't washed his uniform in four years, was Frosty Kennedy down at Plainview.

SG:

Is that right?

WH:

Yeah.

SG:

What about betting—gambling on the game? Was that something the fans liked to do in the stands—

WH:

They possibly did. If so, I didn't know about it.

SG:

Was there any organized betting, large scale on the game?

WH:

Not to my knowledge?

SG:

Were there on any team—

WH:

In the league?

SG:

Yes, sir.

WH:

Not to my knowledge, no, at that time, I wasn't concerned about it. I had—if they did, I didn't know and I didn't care.

SG:

What about fines and suspensions, you mentioned Seitz—

WH:

Oh there was some of that. The league president, of course, always had responsibility, and the player would get fined. It wasn't—if, although there may have been a lot more fines levied than we knew about, and they were maybe kept quiet or something. But there wasn't an awful lot of it. And I think the league president recognized that these guys were not making any money to begin with, and you know if you took twenty bucks away from them, you took a lot.

SG:

Yeah, I guess that's true.

WH:

Him talking about this one rookie we had—seventy-five bucks a month—and fined him for something (laughs)

SG:

Would you split the gate receipts with the visiting team after the games, or how would that work?

WH:

No, as I recall it was just straight home and home deal. Keep your own gates stuff.

SG:

You drew—oh I see. Hmm that's interesting.

WH:

As I recall. Now, I can't even remember any guarantees that you got paid. I'm sure it was just home and home in those days. I may sound stupid on this perhaps for not realizing, but that's twenty five years ago, I can't—I've been involved in so many college and high school gates since that I can't really remember.

SG:

Where are the club records now? Financial records and things like that.

WH:

I doubt if they any more exist.

SG:

Even exist? Well, it'll be interesting to see. It really will.

WH:

The only thing would be if the Edmonsons kept there's for any particular reason or the Mills kept theirs for any particular reason.

SG:

I understand the Mills are still in town?

WH:

Yes, they're still in town, and the Edmonsons are also.

SG:

I'll just give them both a call.

WH:

Yeah, Mr. Edmonson has a dude ranch type of thing up in Colorado, but he spends a great deal of time here, and this being summertime, I'd imagine he's probably up there running it during the summertime. His son lives here.

SG:

Okay. As for the stadium, what kind of rent did the ball team play? Was it a dollar a year type thing, or a percentage?

WH:

They owned it. Here they owned it.

SG:

Oh they owned their own stadium.

WH:

Yeah.

SG:

Oh so that was no problem at all.

WH:

Yeah, as best I remember, they owned it, or they owned the facilities—they may have rented the land, like a dollar a year or something, from the railroad company, I think, or something. But there was no big fee on that, no problem.

SG:

Last thing I'd like to ask in regard to West Texas baseball is some of the more colorful men or memorable men or events or something like this. Who, twenty years ago, still sticks out as memorable?

WH:

Well I mentioned Pappy Stokes, and Frosty Kennedy.

SG:

Where did he play again?

WH:

Pappy played at Plainview and Lamesa. And Frosty was at Plainview.

SG:

Is he still at Texas?

WH:

No, I think he went back to North Carolina, I believe. And Frosty, Ed Sudol told me—Ed of course makes the rounds regularly in the umpiring, and he ran into Frosty one time out in Los Angeles. Frosty was driving a truck out there. And we have a lot of the ball players that live here—Deck Woldt and Joe Fortin and Max Mollberg. And oh I see one of the other umpires over in Amarillo quite a bit. I see Frank Benitez a lot. Frank wasn't around the league all that long; he came in the later years from East Texas area. I can't remember the league particularly.

SG:

What were some of the most memorable events? Are there any events, even maybe games that really stand out in your mind for one thing or another?

WH:

Oh, as far as just actual plays, some guy climbing a fence, making a catch, that kind of thing, no. You see so many of them, I guess I just sort of lump them all together. Part of the game, to me, as far as our league is concerned, I got a lot of memories of major league ball I've seen. But in this particular league, maybe I was so close to it, it was just another play. But—

SG:

Especially when you saw them all every day and had to report on them—

WH:

Yeah, the incidents that hung closest to me are individuals—people like Roy Parker and Jay Haney, and Homer Matinee [?]. I remember in the playoffs one year, Pampa and Lamesa, I think Jay was at Lamesa at the time. We're in the playoffs, and it wound up that both of them, two old veteran outfielders, super outfielders, put them in the outfield and they'd stay with anybody. But it wound up that they both had to play third base in the playoffs. So they'd get up there and challenge each other. Each would get up and bunt at the other guy (laughs). Make him come charging after that ball. But it's things like that, the humorous events, and the Grover Seitz stories, and I'm sure the individual ball players can tell you about the homerun they had and the great play they made

Tape Breaks

WH:

I mentioned earlier that the West Texas-New Mexico League, because of its light air, used to have superior batting averages. And a lot of people might look at it and say, well it was cheap scoring on the part of the official scorer. But it wasn't that—you could hit line shots out here, hit routine fly balls, and they just kept sailing. Some guy would come in from, as I said, the Evangeline League or some heavy air where you had the high humidity all the time and come in

here and just couldn't believe how well he could hit the ball. All of a sudden, he'd become a major leaguer. We'd use this a lot of times to sell ball players. Ed Sudol is a good example. Ed came to us, and just a big hulking individual. Ed's about six-five, six-four and 240—I don't know what his weight was—225, 230, something. Tried to stick him at the outfield and first base and he couldn't play either one real well—he was too stiff. Not real agile, and his coordination wasn't all that good. But he came in and hit, I think .293—.295 with us that year, and with his size and everything, he looked like a super ball player. We sold him to somebody in one of those heavy air leagues—back in I believe in the Carolinas or somewhere. And as I recall, the figure was \$1500 we got paid for it. And he knew he couldn't play ball, that he wasn't ever going to get to the majors that way. So that winter, he went to one of the umpiring schools and did real well at the umpiring school. His size, again, was an asset to him there. So he goes to the owner of the ball club and says, "Look I'm not going to report. I'm going to go to umpiring." And the fellow said, "Look I paid 1500 bucks for you. You're going to play for me. Either that, or I'm going to turn you in, and you will never umpire or play a game the rest of your professional career," which was probably right. So Ed goes out, and can't make it—the guy finally gives him his pink slip. And Ed picked up the telephone as soon as he got the pink slip and called the league president and said, "Look I know you're short umpires. I've been to umpiring school, and I've just been released. I'm a free agent. Will you sign me on as an umpire?" The fellow said, "Sure. You're hired. You're working home plate right where you are tonight. Stay right there in town." So he goes behind the plate, and the guy on the mound, the pitcher, is his roomie. (laughs) They roomed together all year. So he's working balls and strikes for the guy that just gave him the pink slip.

SG:

That's an interesting situation, it really was. You have any idea what the umpires got paid in this league? Was it comparable to players?

WH:

No—I doubt if it was. I don't think it was. I don't think they got anything to speak of.

SG:

Who was the league president at this time? Do you remember?

WH:

Oh, golly, we had several. One of them was a fellow that was born and raised right here at White Deer, and he lived in Dallas. I can't think of any names right now.

SG:

I can get those out of various books we've got.

WH:

I've got them right there in the record books.

SG:

I'd like to move on now to—I guess we'll start with, well let me ask you a question. Has Pampa generally been a basketball or a football town or both?

WH:

Well, it's been accused—it's been accused of being a basketball town, which is an absolute lie. The only reason we got the title of a basketball town was because we had a fellow that came in here that was an outstanding individual from the standpoint of being able to coach and reach youngsters and that was Clifton McNeely, and he also saw the opportunities in Texas because nobody in Texas gave a hoot about basketball. So he got after it hard and wound up getting the Pampa Harvesters to the state tournament seven out of eight straight years—won the championship four times in those eight years. And in the interim—well the first few years he was here, we had great success in both football and basketball. But in the interim, the head football coach after we won the first state championship had the opportunity to go to Texas A&M, Tom Tipps, who now scouts for Quadra. And when Tom left, we never did find a replacement coach that had the talent, that had the ability—we've had the talent as far as players are concerned as evidenced by the number that have gone on to college and played major college football—well the talent has been here. But it's been a lack of coaching coordination. And most of them came in here, the coaches would come in being forewarned that Pampa was a basketball town, which is not true and never has been. It's just that—

SG:

I see. They still love their football here.

WH:

Oh you bet, you bet, and their basketball. They support them both well; there's no fan reluctance to go to either one.

SG:

When did McNeely come in?

WH:

Tipps brought him in—he took over at mid-season in the '47/'48 season. Replaced a fellow name of Dick Livingston at midterm.

SG:

'47/'48. And then he won state championships in '53, '54, '58, and '59 I guess.

WH:

Right. And finished second, third, and fourth, and failed to get there one time in the four intervening years.

SG:

I see. Where is he now?

WH:

He is a junior high principal in Irving School District.

SG:

What's his complete name?

WH:

Clifton, Clifton McNeely.

SG:

Okay. He's out of coaching then.

WH:

Yeah.

SG:

That's incredible.

WH:

He got out of it when he left here. He wanted to get into administration here, and had some problems—that he was too good of a basketball coach, and the school board said that he would never do anything here but coach basketball. And he unfortunately was here at a time that the superintendent was playing out the string of his career in the administration, and he didn't want to rock the boat, as he told me, he said, "I just don't want to rock the boat." And so he wouldn't give an administrative job here, and so Mac left and got an administrative job and served as high school principal at Denton High School for years until all of his children—his three children, twin sons and daughter—graduated there. Then a former college classmate of his, whose superintendent in the Irving School District, offered him a brand new junior high there, and said, "Aren't you tired of fighting high school hassle? Wouldn't you like a little easier job?"

SG:

And he said sure.

WH:

Well I take it back—this year he changed over—he is not junior high principal now, he was supposed to have been this year, but the day school started, they dismissed the man that was in charge of special education in the Irving School district and the superintendent called Mac, and said, “Mac, I’ve got to have somebody I trust and that I know is capable.” He said—

SG:

So he took that on?

WH:

He said, “Will you take it for me?” So Mac took the job, the assignment right then.

SG:

When did he leave here again?

WH:

Oh he left here—I don’t know, the ’59 or ’60 season was his last.

SG:

I see.

WH:

He coached one more year, I think, after that last state championship.

SG:

Did people here try to keep him on, or did they even care about basketball?

WH:

Oh yeah, they cared, but—

SG:

Did they try?

WH:

But his mind was made up what he was going to do.

SG:

Just no way to talk him out of it.

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WH:

No huh uh. He turned down the head coaching job at West Texas State several times. And I thought we had him there, but—

SG:

What made him so good?

WH:

Dedication, the ability to communicate with the youngsters, a wife that was behind him all the way. I've seen many coaches whose wives aren't that interested—only in bringing home the money—that the job might entail. But Peggy was for him all the way. Of course Mac had—he's one of those that was raised out shooting the basketball every day of the year on an outdoor court at Slidell, and the kind that would go around and get candy bar wrappers, and mail them in so he could get a basketball. Didn't have the money to buy one, but you'd have to go find one somehow.

SG:

Just loved the game and his enthusiasm rubbed off, I guess.

WH:

Right. You betcha. Anyhow. And had the ability to go with it. And had some tremendous youngsters that played. Jimmy Bond, probably the greatest.

SG:

Bond?

WH:

Yeah. Jimmy was—

SG:

Did he play college ball?

WH:

Well he had his choice, anywhere he wanted to go. He was high school All-American, six-foot-five. Super youngster. Bond stories—I can tell you more of those than I can Grover Seitz stories. And Jimmy had made up his mind when he was in junior high school or before that—that he was going to be a minister, and he turned down all the major colleges in the United States and went to Pasadena College of the Nazarene, so he could be a minister. Played for an AAU team while he was there. During the off-season, in addition to playing college ball, he played for a glass company team. And they played in the AAU championships his last two or three years of

college. And in '56, the Olympics was—United States Olympic team went to Australia, Phillips 66 won the AAU championship and consequently took their team, but they invited Jimmy to go with them.

SG:

Wow. Yeah.

WH:

They had seen him play in the AAU tournament and asked him to go with them. But the ministry is all he's ever wanted. He was inducted into the basketball hall of fame last year at Athens.

SG:

I see. Where is he now?

WH:

He just left the—Nazarene Church in Oklahoma City this summer and assumed the position of pastor of the First Nazarene Church in Colorado Springs to be closer to his parents, who—and his two brothers—who all live in Colorado.

SG:

I see. It wasn't too high scoring basketball back then. Just what made him so good, so much better than the rest?

WH:

Jimmy?

SG:

Yes.

WH:

Oh he just had talent unlimited—tremendous coordination, personality, long fingers, great attitude, he didn't care who scored. He didn't care about any—

SG:

Team player? Yeah—

WH:

He had no personal acclaim, and this was something McNeely built into his ball club—it's a team effort. And the guy that wasn't the team man, a lot of times, sat on the bench, despite talent.

SG:

When was Bond here? '53, '54 year?

WH:

Well we had—we finally ran out of Bonds—he had an older brother, Bill that played here when I was here, when I first came in the '49 season. And middle brother, Marvin, and then Jimmy, whose last season was '53, '54.

SG:

State champs both years?

WH:

Yeah.

SG:

Who were some of the other players that you remember off those early teams?

WH:

Oh there's Gary Griffin and E. J. McIlvain—they both played at Rice. Charlie Minor played at Texas A&M, Bobby Gindorf played at Texas Tech.

SG:

Yeah, he's one of our all-time heroes down there.

WH:

Freddie Woods played at Rice.

SG:

Did these boys also play other sports? Were they also double as football players?

WH:

Most everybody played at least one other sport. And here again, we run into that problem, said that—a lot of people said McNeely wouldn't let anybody—or no basketball coach at Pampa let a kid play another sport. But we very rarely had one that didn't double, at least one that didn't double between football and basketball. Bond did, as an example. And Randy Matson, Kenny Hebert, just to name some of the better known names. But I can name a whole bunch of them, down through the years.

SG:

Hebert was a basketball player too?

WH:

Oh yes. And baseball and track.

SG:

Is he back in Pampa now? He went to U of H, if I remember.

WH:

No, Kenny's—the last I knew is in the Houston area, and I think he still is.

SG:

I see. Wayne Kreis.

WH:

Wayne's an attorney in Fort Worth. Played TCU—

SG:

He was here the same time Matson was, I think. I think they were on the same team.

WH:

They graduated together, right.

SG:

I see. I remember him playing for TCU for—started as a sophomore I believe for TCU. What kind of support would the community give the basketball team? Sell out crowds?

WH:

In McNeely's days, in those days we're talking about—Jimmy Bond days, it didn't matter if you played Amarillo High School, Borger High School, or Tulia High School, it was standing room.

SG:

Even games you knew you'd win—

WH:

Oh yeah.

SG:

—lopsided.

WH:

Of course, we ran off a winning streak to seventy-two consecutive ball games, and another streak of fifty-six in a row, I think.

SG:

Well, that's incredible.

WH:

You bet.

SG:

Really incredible. Did the coach get any kind of special—well let me ask you a question about McNeely's salary—how did that compare to the head football coaches' salary?

WH:

I don't know what the head football coach was making in those days—but I know that—

SG:

More than what McNeely was making, you think?

WH:

Oh yes. Yeah. for some reason, it always—and it still is that way.

SG:

Even if you turn out four out of five years state champs.

WH:

Right. I know a coach in your hometown that won, I won't say your hometown—cause I don't know what your hometown is—but there's a coach in Lubbock that won a state championship, and he felt that was worthy of a raise. He went to the athletic director and said, "Look I won state championship, shouldn't I get a raise?" And the athletic director said, "Hell that's I'm paying you for, is to win."

SG:

Who was that, or would you rather—

WH:

Well that's what I was told is that's what happened to Bobby Moegel, in baseball at Monterey.

SG:

You know, he also tried to take over the head football—

WH:

Yeah, Coronado or somewhere.

SG:

I believe it was Coronado. Didn't get it.

WH:

Probably like to have brought his brother Dicky in.

SG:

Yeah. what kind of minority support—when did Pampa High School integrate?

WH:

Sixty—

SG:

Early sixties?

WH:

Uh no.

SG:

Oh later?

WH:

Seems like it was mid or late sixties. I'm really trying to think when the first black athlete started playing out there and who the first one might have been. I'm going to guess around probably 196—let's see, '67, '66, along in there somewhere.

SG:

What kind of—was that a harmonious integration athletically?

WH:

Athletically I know of no major problems that they had. I think most of the time a fellow was respected for his abilities, and it was a problem—it is a problem and still is today for the black athlete—from one standpoint and probably others—but one that comes to mind real quickly is you get through with football, basketball practice, 6:00, 6:30 at night, and the black community

is like two miles from the high school, and most of them don't have any transportation. And they've got to find a way back home. Somebody come pick them up or something, and it is a problem for them.

SG:

What kind of changes have you noticed since integration, athletically again—since integration has arrived—an increase in the quality of athletic teams in Pampa, or what? Or have you noticed?

WH:

Oh I don't believe that integration has had any effect upon the—that itself per se has had any effect upon the quality of the teams. We've had some mighty fine black athletes.

SG:

Yeah, the Lemmons boys, I guess.

WH:

Oh yes, surely.

SG:

Yeah, most recently anyway.

WH:

But there are many others, with tremendous talent. I think a lot of them have had, probably not the support perhaps at home that they should have had—to help them further develop that talent. We've had some that could've been just absolutely super athletes. We had one that I can think of that without question probably could have been a fine professional basketball player.

SG:

Who was that?

WH:

He was a youngster that was six foot—well his sophomore year he was six-foot-seven or something like that.

SG:

Wow. Big kid.

WH:

Yeah, but he had a lot of personal problems in that he didn't have a father to begin with. And had he—his name was Matiga Bunton—

SG:

What's happened to him?

WH:

Last I knew, he's still around here—doing what, I don't know. I have no idea. But—

SG:

He didn't try college, or—

WH:

He never finished high school.

SG:

Never finished high school.

WH:

Never finished high school, but it was only because he did not have a good background, and it wasn't—and then his problems that developed in high school weren't academic—totally academic. Just some of the other things that he didn't have the opportunity to learn, about getting along with people, and in society, and what the rules and regulations are.

SG:

Yeah, learning what authority and discipline, I guess—

WH:

Yeah, exactly.

SG:

Did—after the championship seasons, did McNeely get any sort of gifts from the fans or anything—it was legal to give things—

WH:

In those days it was still legal, and I've got a list of them in a little book right behind you there of what he got every year. We've got everything from a brand new automobile, down to playground equipment for his children, and washer, dishwasher, and dryer stuff for his wife, and washing machines, and stuff like that—cash, so on and so forth.

SG:

So he did have quite a bit of community support behind the basketball team.

WH:

Oh you bet.

SG:

What was the impact on—just having the best basketball team in Texas throughout the decade of the 1950s on account of the size of Pampa.

WH:

Well, there's no question—no question that it was a thing we were extremely proud of in Pampa. And it also brought about construction of the first major high school fieldhouse, I think, in West Texas. The old—oh the fieldhouse in Lubbock, the old one that Lubbock High used to—Chapman Field House used to be—at that time—probably a fairly decent facility. Amarillo didn't have any place to play, and doesn't today as far as high school is concerned.

SG:

How many people would this—

WH:

Ours seats 2,500, and it was built because of McNeely's basketball success. We had to get some place to put the people in because the old junior high that they were playing in would seat probably about six- seven hundred. And it was no problem putting twenty-five, twenty-six hundred into the new field house, and basketball has always been able to pay its way here. It's been a—

SG:

Was McNeely the coach when this was dedicated?

WH:

Yes. We played Borger in there, and they beat us, and a year or two later, they got ready to dedicate a new field house over there that sits about twenty-three hundred, and we went over and beat them.

SG:

Beat them—just walked swapped out insults I guess.

WH:

Swapped out, right.

SG:

How as attendance through the sixties for basketball? The quality still remained good, even though—

WH:

Attendance has always been good for basketball, it hasn't reached the heights, it has not maintained the heights that it did in the McNeely era and the Bond era. And Bill Bowerman, Gary Griffin, Mac Lane, and that bunch—the state championship teams. But we—Robert McPherson has done us a super job as basketball coach, and—

SG:

When did he take over?

WH:

Oh let's see—

SG:

When McNeely left, or—

WH:

No. when Cully—no when Sterling Gibson was in—

SG:

Had several coaches then—

WH:

Sterling, yeah, Sterling was here for two year. He's now head man at Eastern New Mexico. But Robert, I guess, is in about his maybe coming up to his eighth year, I guess approximately.

SG:

I see. Has Pampa gone to the playoffs—or gone to the state—made the finals?

WH:

Not to state— not to state.

SG:

Not since McNeely.

WH:

Not since McNeely. We've—closest we got was we got beaten in El Paso in the regional game in '67 I think. And then we lost in Abilene in '68 or thereabouts approximately.

SG:

Well Pampa's always up there, every year, they turn out fine teams.

WH:

Oh yes, we work hard.

SG:

Howard Lewis, not long ago, was a good ball player.

WH:

Howie's a fine ball player.

SG:

And I think he's at Tech now, playing football, I believe.

WH:

He's at Tech, playing football, but he told me in the spring before he graduated that when he went to college, all he wanted to do was play basketball.

SG:

Hmmm, well he hasn't even played at all at Tech. I don't even think he's gone out for the team.

WH:

No, no, they wouldn't let him, I'm sure. I'm sure. They probably told him—

SG:

Our track team could use him too; he was a fine hurdler.

WH:

Fine hurdler. He's a tremendous athlete, a tremendous competitor, and a fine young man.

SG:

Is he?

WH:

You bet.

SG:

What rivalries dominated Pampa basketball in the fifties and sixties?

WH:

Pampa/Borger.

SG:

Well Borger always plays some competitive basketball too.

WH:

That was the key rivalry, then there was Pampa/Plainview. They were in our district at that time, Bob ClemDaniel was the head coach down there—he's now the head man at Wayland. That was always a tremendous rivalry. And it was the McNeely/Tex Hanna rivalry at Borger that was so great in the fifties. And in those days it was McNeely and T. G. Hall at Amarillo High School, well then Amarillo split in '56, opened up Palo Duro, and subsequently Tascosa and Caprock, which delineated the fan support totally in Amarillo. And it still means a lot to Pampa to beat Amarillo, and I'm sure it's an embarrassment for them to lose to Pampa. But it doesn't carry the weight that it did years ago.

SG:

Is attendance still up in Pampa? I mean, do they still sell out the—still 2,500 people?

WH:

Basketball? They will on occasion—they will on rare occasions, it's not like—far from what it used to be.

SG:

Not like it used to be. Yeah, I guess nothing like the state championships to bring in the team.

WH:

Probably takes us back to the television and maybe some other factors.

SG:

What's the best, or most memorable high school basketball game you've seen? Any one game stick out as just being—

WH:

Well of course state championship—one of the state championship games, an overtime affair, does particularly. We went into overtime—I was, at that time, the rights for the broadcast, we could broadcast the games up until the championship game. And then the rights were purchased

by Mobile Oil Company, and they would carry the broadcast for us on that. So on this championship game, I was sitting on the bench right behind, on the seat right behind the Pampa bench with Coach McNeely's wife and Coach Cully's wife and some of the fans. And we were tied at the end of regulation time getting ready to go into overtime. And Mrs. McNeely was pounding on me and she just leaned over and said, "I'm scared to death."

SG:

Who were they playing, do you remember? Just curious. It's not important.

WH:

Port Arthur, I believe it was.

SG:

Port Arthur?

WH:

Seems it was Port Arthur. And Jimmy Bond came as the whistle sounded end of regulation time, Jimmy wound up on the end of the floor to my right. And as he came walking towards the bench, most of the other kids were juiced up and running, he just came walking calmly over, looked me right in the eye and gave me a great big wink. And just as calm as could be about going in overtime for state championship, for the school's first. And Peggy's beating on me, and she said, "I'm scared to death." And I said, "Don't worry about a thing, Jimmy just winked at me, we've got it under control." He went out, got the tip, we went down, scored, won the championship, nothing to it. And to follow up with that, to give you a little bit of an idea of what I'm talking about Jimmy Bond.

SG:

How do you spell his name?

WH:

B-o-n-d.

SG:

Oh Bond.

WH:

It's James Bond (laughs) 007. That was, in those days, they played the 4A state championship at night, and our fans were there, and we had a big victory dinner—well to precede that a little bit, we were in a chartered bus, the team was, and I was with the team. We drove back from Mount Vernon courts where we're staying in those days.

Tape Break

We were in chartered bus, and as we were—went back to the motel and dressed, and while we were doing that, changing clothes, cleaning up, our fans went down to a restaurant, a big restaurant in Austin, and rented the dining room for us to have a victory affair. And we loaded up in the bus, and I was sitting in the front seat on the right hand side with Coach McNeely. And our two captains Bond and George Depee, who later became a minister as did Bond, were seated behind the driver on the left-hand side. And of course, you can imagine, everybody in the bus, which was just the team and the team managers, the coaches, and junior high coaches—screaming and hollering and making a big fuss. McNeely told them to quiet down—wanted to say something. And of course I figured it was going to be a big story, congratulating them what a great thing they'd done and everything. And all he did was he said, "Do you fellows know who won this championship for you?" and I was sitting there real smug, and I just knew that Bond had won it, because of what I just related to you, there was no doubt in my mind. And he waited for about twenty seconds and nobody said a word, and he just pointed to the roof of the bus, and he said, "The man upstairs, and don't you ever forget." Well then we went on to the dinner and had that, and when it was all over, crawl back in the bus to go back to the motel, we were leaving early the next morning, and as we got in the bus and were riding back, I noticed that Bond—Jimmy wasn't in the bus. And I asked Mac, "Coach, where's Jimmy?" he said, "Don't worry about it." And went back to the motel, and no Jimmy there, and I asked him again, "Where's Bond?" He said, "Don't worry about it." And he wouldn't tell me. Got up the next morning, bright and early to head back to Pampa, and of course it's 550 miles I guess to Austin, and the school was gracious and told us we could stop in Fort Worth overnight on the way back, make a break, and they wanted to have a big celebration when we got back here the next afternoon, give them time to set it up. So we get ready to leave the next morning, like six, six thirty, I forget what, no Jimmy yet. And I said, "Where's Jimmy." He said, "Don't worry about it." So we get in the bus and we're cruising down the highway, like ten o'clock, ten thirty, comes time for church Sunday morning—and we always stop when we're travelling in those days—you always stopped for church. And we made different ones, whether it was Church of Christ, Baptist, Methodist, even Catholic, whatever. We had kids of all denominations, we took everybody to the same church.

SG:

Went as a team then.

WH:

Went as a team, yeah. We stopped in this little town, it was church time, and went in, and there was Jimmy in the pulpit.

SG:
Preaching?

WH:
That's where he'd been.

SG:
Sounds like quite a man.

WH:
You bet, anyhow, but he left the night before, with his parents and some people from that church, and they'd worked out the arrangements the week before.

SG:
And the team would stop there. That's great. Do you remember the topic of his sermon? Did it have anything to do with—

WH:
No, I sure don't.

SG:
I just wondered.

WH:
But his brother was there with him, Marvin. They both were conducting the church service in the church that day.

SG:
I'm betting you've seen—well you've obviously seen a lot of good basketball here in Pampa.

WH:
Oh gosh, and how.

SG:
You think Bond is the best player you've seen?

WH:
Without question. Without question.

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SG:

How was Randy Matson as a basketball player? I remember seeing him at A&M.

WH:

Randy was a fine basketball player. Randy was the kind of athlete that could have done anything. He could've been—his eyes prohibited him from being a baseball player. He played little league ball, was a super ball player in little league, but his eyes—they just weren't that good. Even after he won the Olympic medal in Mexico City in '68, he flew home directly from there partly because of problems down there in the village I think with news people and whatnot. He was never one to get into the spotlight. He tried to avoid it at all time.

SG:

Modest, I guess.

WH:

Right. It was more than he wanted, and so he came back before the Olympics were over in Mexico City, and he had two professional ball clubs—Houston and Atlanta were both trying to sign him at that time, offered him super bonuses.

SG:

Were those football clubs?

WH:

Yeah, pro football. And he still did not want to give up his track career, which would've meant having to do, so he turned down the good money that he could've gotten there to remain as an amateur and dedicate every day of his life to throwing the shot for nothing. But it's the kind of kid he was.

SG:

Did he play football in high school?

WH:

Played football in high school.

SG:

How was he?

WH:

He was a fine football player.

SG:

I assume he'd have been a heck of a fullback.

WH:

You bet, and of course he was a fine basketball player, and he went to Texas A&M, and his second year at A&M they talked him into coming out for basketball, which he did, but he had to loose forty pounds to do it—he had to cut down from his throwing weight of 265 down to about 225, 220, which he did. But he just couldn't get his weight back for track, and so he had to give it back. Plus he had injured a foot. He had a bone that he'd broken in his foot in the constant pounding on it in basketball—kept it sore all the time.

SG:

He was a good rebounder, as I recall.

WH:

Oh you bet. Well he's one of our leading—he holds records here at Pampa high school right now.

SG:

For rebounding?

WH:

For scoring and rebounding.

SG:

Scoring also?

WH:

Yeah, in fact, he's ahead—if you just hand me that book back there, I can tell you. He's ahead of Wayne Kreis. You talked about Kreis being such a—[referring to book] just that one right there, yeah, it's got all the records.

SG:

Yeah, Kreis was a fine ball player. I understand he had possibly a little bit of attitude problems, if you believe what I've heard.

WH:

Well, I don't know. It wasn't an attitude. Wayne was cocky and could back it up. I think the—

SG:

Yeah, he could produce.

WH:

The perfect example I can tell you in just a minute because—but okay, let's see—career scoring, Jimmy Bond—

SG:

Still holds that?

WH:

Oh yeah. Jimmy holds—just to give you an idea [reading book]—I wish I could—single season, that's not career, field goals—Jimmy Bond in his career, 77 games at Pampa High School had 558 field goals. George Bailey, who was also an all-state player and is now assistant coach here, had 453, that was second, and Matson was third with 442, then come Griffin and Kreis and Coyle Winburn.

SG:

Pampa sure turned out some ball players.

WH:

Just to give you an idea on Bond, and this was back in the days when you didn't have the bonus free throw, that kind of situation. Bond averaged 22.3 points a game in his junior year and averaged 20.5 his senior year.

SG:

Won state both times.

WH:

Won state both.

SG:

Yeah, '53, '54.

WH:

But, and another great one that came through here was Steve Williams, who played at Texas Tech—the old red head, orange head, we used to call him.

SG:

When did he play here?

WH:

Steve played here in '65, ['6]6, and ['6]7. And he holds the school record for assists. But he played at Texas Tech, but Bond in three seasons, averaged 19.3 in 77 games. Bailey was second. Randy Matson averaged 14.3 points a ball game in his career here.

SG:

And Pampa's always concentrated a lot of defense, and not really—

WH:

Well, yeah. That's true.

SG:

Well they turn out good defensive teams, I'll say that. They have. Any other memorable games stick out, or the best game you ever saw, or—

WH:

Oh golly. For various reasons, various ones stick out. The game that cost us our 72 game winning streak was out at Portales. And here again, perhaps the character of McNeely shows. We went out there to play on a Saturday night. We had our five starters, but number six man was a youngster who was a tremendous shooter, you could either play him either at forward or guard.

SG:

But he didn't start.

WH:

Well, we got up Saturday morning early, and in those days we travelled in cars. And I'd drive my car, and McNeely would drive his, and we'd take the players in the cars.

SG:

Oh no team bus or anything.

WH:

No team bus, right. And we met at the school that morning, like six o'clock, I think to get ready to go to Portales, and as this number six man came, who was an underclassman and held the scoring record, single game scoring record at Pampa for years and years and years after he did it in his senior year in a bi-district game, thirty-nine points. But he showed up, his mother brought him up and dropped him off, and as he came walking in the gymnasium, McNeely said, "Did you get your English paper in yesterday for Miss Tarvey?" he said, "No, I didn't." Mac said, "Well you're not going with us." And he said, "Well I talked to Miss Tarvey and she said I could turn it in Monday." Mac said, "You were supposed to have it in yesterday. Just call your mother and tell

her to come back and pick you up. You're not going." So we went out there without him, the number six man, and we lose our two forwards on fouls on the first half, and we needed him a little bit desperately. And finally had the 72 game winning streak snapped, and that was it.

SG:

Well, it says a lot for the coach, you stick by his principles or you're [inaudible].

WH:

Right, exactly, but this is why the kids knew that when he said something, that's the way it was going to be and had to be, and they respected him.

SG:

Did you ever notice any suspicious referring in New Mexico? A little homer jobs or anything like that?

WH:

Oh, you always think that, and I know a lot of the fans always thought they got homered when they came into Pampa, but in New Mexico, the thing that always upset us—

SG:

I've heard that about New Mexico, in fact I've heard that specifically about Portales with another team.

WH:

Well I won't say that we got homered, I don't believe that at all, I don't want to believe that I guess. But the thing about New Mexico officials, they call the inbounds thing different than Texas officials did. I think basketball was stronger in New Mexico before it was in Texas. And as a consequence, in Texas you had five seconds for the out of bounds player to turn the ball loose. In New Mexico you had five seconds to have the ball in play, in the hands of a player on the floor. So as a consequence, the first thing you look for in New Mexico when you're playing over there is the long pass, and then you've got to lot for the short pass because your time ticks down. But in Texas we didn't do it that way. You'd look for the inbound pass, the short pass, and if you couldn't get it, well you'd just throw the ball in the air deep, and while it was in the air it was—in New Mexico—was called a dead ball because you hadn't gotten it in play—which is what the rule says. I mean they were right in New Mexico.

SG:

And y'all suffered from that?

WH:

We suffered from it. And the great games, we used to play Ralph Taskers' Hobbs ball club. You talk about games I remember, that's one I do remember. The final score was 110-98 in a high school ball game.

SG:

Whose favor?

WH:

Hobbs. But we shot—I've got the statistics in my records, but the first half—the score at half time was 55-52 I believe in favor of Hobbs. We had hit—what did we hit? Eighteen out of twenty-one field goals. That's thirty-six points, and we'd hit sixteen of eighteen free throws, I think. We had one player, and the fellow that was keeping stats for me at half time just waved me off, he said, "Don't use these. I've been watching the game, I guess, because these are not right." You know, he couldn't believe it, eighteen out of twenty-one field goals, and he said there's no way those are right. As we checked it out, they were right. They checked with the coaches shot chart.

SG:

What year was this by the way? In the fifties?

WH:

No, this was in the sixties. This was—Cully was coaching then.

SG:

When you had Matson and Kreis?

WH:

No, we had Bo Lang, Johnny Carlos, Jimmy Cornutt. I can't remember who all the other fellows were, but it was an incredible ball game.

SG:

I tell you. That Tasker, he—

WH:

And of course what Tasker does, he runs ten players in on you, if you've watched enough of the—

SG:

And you mean run, too.

WH:

And I mean run. Every time there's a whistle, two more come in, and you lose track of who you're guarding. And by the time you found out who you're guarding, well he's got two more in there. And you just—plus he just wears you out physically. I've got tremendous respect for Ralph. I think that he's done a magnificent job, and we've got one of his ball players playing at West Texas State, Eugene Smith. And Eugene is just a superb individual. He'll be captain of the team next year at West Texas State, this coming season.

SG:

Yeah, Hobbs has been something else.

WH:

Oh yeah, Ralph's a great guy, and the program over there, the school—I appreciate the school—because they throw their gymnasium open to the youngsters all year round. The kids can walk into the gymnasium today, anytime today and go in and play.

SG:

But not in Pampa?

WH:

No, huh-uh.

SG:

In fact, not in many places.

WH:

That's right. That's right. And they say all they have to do is just refinish the floor every year, and the kids—it serves is a youth center—every gym in town serves as a youth center for the kids of the community. They let them in and all they've got to do is refinish the floor. It'll cost them 150 bucks or something like that and it's taken care of.

SG:

Yeah, that's incredible.

WH:

And the kids understand and appreciate what opportunities they are given, and they don't damage the facility other than the wear and tear in the floor. They leave everything else alone.

SG:

Let's switch to Pampa football for a minute. What are some of the memorable teams, or the best teams that Pampa has turned out since your arrival there?

WH:

Oh that was back in the Tom Tipps days of course. Best bunch was a backfield we had one year that had Harold Lewis that went on to play at Baltimore for the Colts for a long time and Howie's father. Harold was a junior, and we had Ed Dudley, John Darby, and a quarterback by the name of J. N. Wright. First bunch we had, when I first came, the first good team I recall had a quarterback by the name of De'Wey Cudney, and Elmer Wilson, who went on Texas Tech—played at Texas Tech, Jerry Walker, who was one of the great lineman at Texas Tech when they were still in the Border Conference, and Buddy Cockrell who played for Sammy Baugh and the New York Titans.

SG:

These teams are all early fifties that you're talking about.

WH:

These were, yeah, right at 1950. And Jerry could've played professional ball, he was drafted by the Saint Louis Cardinals, but he'd had so many knee operations that he just couldn't cut it, he was All-Border Conference and was on the Texas Tech athletic—

SG:

The fifty year team—

WH:

The advisory committee or something like that, I don't know what they call it—athletic council or whatever. And Elmer, I think, has been active in the Texas Tech ex-students organization and whatnot and played a lot of—president of the student body, I think at Tech or most popular guy on campus—one or the other when he was playing down there. But we've had a tremendous number of fine ball players, I mentioned Kenny Hebert, just to give you an example of something to amplify what I said about—we lacked the coaching ability, I truly believe that because one year we had four guys from here playing and starting at the University of Houston, when Yeoman had his greatest ball club. We had four of them on there.

SG:

Who were—? Was Beers from—?

WH:

Who?

SG:

Beers?

WH:

No, no. Jim Arthur was there, and Kenny Hebert. Rowdin, who went on, had a shot in the NFL, and—seems like there was a lineman whose name I can't recall right now, but they all played here and we had a fine, fine season with that team. And my theory all along was in the first place, to get back to what you had said—what this a basketball town and not a football town—the coaches were brainwashed before they came here that it was a basketball town—they were told that.

SG:

They had a defeatist attitude.

WH:

So they came in and knew that I can always blame it on basketball, which they did constantly. And then finally it wore into the kids that we can't win in football at Pampa, which was untrue—we had done it previously with McNeely and Tipps both—we'd won district championships with both of them. And my theory all along was that we need to get a coach that is a psychologist, that can turn the thinking around before you go and turn the program around. And I just happened to be on the school board at the time that we hired John Welborn, who's now the head coach here, and we didn't even know about him until Sunday, we hired him Monday morning at 7:30, and I looked at his record and found out he had a degree in psychology. And I said, man that's what I've been saying for fifteen years, this is what we need.

SG:

That's the man.

WH:

He's my man. He's had two 8-2 seasons. He's taken the same kids, they're no better kids, they're no worse than the kids we had for twenty years when the best year we had was a 5-5 year.

SG:

You just got a positive approach.

WH:

Went at it in the right way. The town has never stinted on putting out money for coaches, for equipment, for facilities—it's always been there. So it hasn't been a lack of support from the tax payer or the school board or the administration.

SG:

What about attendance?

WH:

Attendance is nothing when you're losing.

SG:

Do people 5-5—?

WH:

It wasn't good. Yeah, 5-5—

SG:

Years people just don't turn out.

WH:

That's right, you bet.

SG:

About what—during a 5-5 year, what kind of attendance would there be? A couple thousand?

WH:

I'm going to guess, I really don't—that's what I was going to say—about two thousand.

SG:

What has it been the last couple of years with the program coming around?

WH:

Well, with the program coming around, we're talking about 4,500 to 5,000.

SG:

That's good, that's good.

WH:

You bet.

SG:

What kind of support do the Pampa people give the team on the road?

WH:

Excellent. We give the team, football and basketball, better support than any of the teams we play—football and basketball. We'll have more Pampa fans—now we're having a problem in basketball in the district, because the Amarillo gyms are such cracker boxes. And I've had the athletic director of Amarillo call over here and ask us to put on the air for the Pampa fans to bother coming, there are no tickets. And they'll allot us 100, 150 tickets and that's it. But in football, it's real easy to count the heads because the Amarillo fans sit on one side of the field and Pampa on the other, and there's no question who's got the most there. It's pretty obvious. And another thing that we have tremendous pride in here is our band, for football, and our choir and band programs year round because the band adds greatly to our football and basketball programs.

SG:

That's good. Sounds like teams do get good support here. Football rivalries—is Pampa/Borger as big in football as it is in basketball?

WH:

It has been down through the years. For a while, it was probably as big in football as it was Pampa/Amarillo High. Then with the losing seasons for both of us, it sort of tailed off, and Gene Mayfield became head coach at Borger, and he really shut it down. He beat us eight straight years when he was head man at Borger.

SG:

I understand that he came here to Pampa.

WH:

He stopped here on the way, and applied for the job here. The superintendent asked him what kind of a program he wanted, asked him to lay it out, and he did, he laid it out. [knock on door, break in recording]. And he had explained his program to the superintendent, and the superintendent said, "Well Mr. Mayfield, I believe it looks to me like you want to run the whole program, and we're not interested in that." So he drove twenty-eight miles over to Borger, and they hired him immediately. He had come from successful years down at Littlefield. So we kept on searching. We could not find a coach and realized that we had a problem. So the superintendent called an assistant coach by the name of Duane Lyon, whose now a coach in California at Rolling Hills High School, and has had tremendous success there. But he had played football with Mayfield in college. Asked him in the office and he said, "Duane, you and Coach Mayfield played together—you're old teammates—would you mind calling him and asking him to reconsider the Pampa job."

SG:

This was the superintendent?

WH:

This was the superintendent asking the assistant coach to call Mayfield, invite him back. And he said, "Well I'm sorry. They're going to announce Sunday that he's accepted a job at Borger." And he knew it because Mayfield had asked him to join him on the Borger staff. So we were really struggling and couldn't find a coach, and finally one Monday, the school board found an old classmate of his he'd gone to college with at Texas Tech incidentally, and he'd bounced all over coaching circles.

SG:

Who was that that they brought in?

WH:

Babe Kerflin [?], who was on the staff at Trinity University at the time. But he'd been all over, been at New Mexico State, Idaho State, just a lot of places. And he lasted about two and half years, and I think he got fired in midseason. But this was pretty much the situation for a long time.

SG:

Do you remember what happened to Mayfield the first year at Borger? He had a state finalist.

WH:

Oh yeah, against San Antonio Breckenridge.

SG:

Yeah, Warren McVea. They lost, but I mean still—

WH:

What a wild ball game.

SG:

Yeah, something else.

WH:

I think Gene's a fine football coach, a fine football man. His job at West Texas is a difficult one.

SG:

Recruiting there is—got to be rough.

WH:

Well recruiting has got to be rough, but it's not all recruiting. I think the dual job of trying to run—

End of Recording



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