

**Oral History Interview of
Larry Vigar**

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson
November 2, 2018
George West, Texas**

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

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Transcript Overview:

This interview features Larry Vigar as he discusses George West's Storyfest.

Length of Interview: 00:13:16

Subject

Introduction and background information
How Larry got involved in the storytelling festival
How Storyfest benefits the community
How the festival has changed since he's been there

Transcript Page

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Time Stamp

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Andy Wilkinson (AW):

So this is November 2, 2018. Andy Wilkinson with Larry Vigar. V-i-g-a-r?

Larry Vigar (LV):

Correct.

AW:

And we're in beautiful—and it's a particularly beautiful day today—in George West, Texas, and we're going to be talking about the Storytelling Festival. But I need—would you give me your date of birth?

LV:

Eleven, twenty-five, 1968.

AW:

You're about to have a birthday.

LV:

Yes sir.

AW:

Happy birthday.

LV:

Thank you.

AW:

Where were you born?

LV:

Yuma, Arizona. Marine brat.

AW:

Did you grow up there or did you move around?

LV:

Moved around.

AW:

Yeah. Where did you wind up in high school?

LV:

West Texas. Pecos, Texas.

AW:

Pecos? Oh yeah. Let's see. Was Bob Bickley still alive when you graduated? He ran the Paymaster Oil Mill. He was probably he retired.

LV:

He was retired. He was still alive, yes.

AW:

He's a friend of mine. My father worked for Anderson Clayton for many, many years, and we used to visit Bob and spend some time—I always liked Pecos. Did you go to college?

LV:

Yes.

AW:

Where at?

LV:

I did some years at Howard Payne University.

AW:

Oh, Howard Payne, yeah.

LV:

Yes sir.

AW:

Good school.

LV:

Yes sir.

AW:

You are with Lowe's.

LV:

Yes sir.

AW:

A company headquartered not far from my hometown.

LV:

Correct, yeah. I'm out of Littlefield, Texas.

AW:

Yeah. When did you start working for them?

LV:

I started working for Mr. Lowe back in—it'd be '99.

AW:

I actually have spent some time talking to Roger. See, he—I loved—didn't he have for a while the convenience stores called the Jolly Rogers.

LV:

Yes sir.

AW:

I thought that was correct. And so you've been working since that time, since 1999. Is that right?

LV:

Yes sir.

AW:

That is a—that's a long time in the grocery business. How long have you been out here?

LV:

Been out in George West since 2009.

AW:

So that's a long time, too. Now, one of the things that I'm really interested in is that Mary Margaret just raved about how much—what great supporters you and Lowe's are of the festival. So I was just kind of curious as to [phone rings]—if you need to get that, get it. [silence] That how you got involved in the festival.

LV:

How I got involved in the festival? Well, basically it was already going on when Roger acquired the stores—which were formally Super S. Super S was already involved in the community

breakfast. When I came down here, the whole object was to get involved in the community and go forth and everything, and that's when I got involved with Mary Margaret and started doing community involvement towards it and helping out. As far as—I guess—the sponsorship part and everything—keeping it going, I should say.

AW:

Yeah. Is that a typical thing that Lowe's does in other communities?

LV:

I can't really say they do and don't. I mean, Mr. Lowe is very involved in all the communities. I just—you know, we're such a versatile company. I mean, each store is catered towards its own community, its own town.

AW:

So they're a little different in each one?

LV:

Yes. Everything is different. Some might be more—going into the livestock and everything. Here it is—here it's Storyfest. That's what we're big into. That's actually probably one of the biggest things in George West that happens every year.

AW:

Yeah. Well, I was going to ask you—and you have a—maybe a little different perspective on it than volunteers would have in that you're in business, so you see the community as a whole from a business point of view as well as the cultural point of view. Is it a plus for the economy and the business in George West to have an event like this?

LV:

Yes it is. I mean, you get people coming in from other areas. Actually, some people have never been in the stores before, never even been to George West before. They hear about it, is intrigued by it and want to see what it's about, then they stop in. You got these people—well, they may not want to eat at the festival so they'll stop at the restaurants and gas stations, or even spend the night. They stay to hear the bands play at night and then they spend the night. So I guess it is a plus for the economy. And where you also see it might repeat is you've got people that are stepping foot in my store that's never been inside of a Lowe's Supermarket. They're used to the H-E-B's, the Walmart's of the world, and then don't ever see a small, little—

AW:

Community store.

LV:

Community store, right.

AW:

Well, I noticed that—I stopped in last on the way back from the dinner, and one of your clerks saw my badge on my hat and said, “Oh, you’re here for the Storyfest? I work the Storyfest.” I just thought it was really interesting that—obviously a high-school-age person was—clerking at night—was still connected with the festival.

LV:

I have several that are actually off tomorrow to volunteer at the festival. I’ve probably got—I think—about four of them that are volunteering at the festival. Different events, but yes.

AW:

That’s pretty impressive. That’s pretty impressive. Have you had—well, you’ve been here long enough to see—nine years, so. Has the festival changed over that nine years?

LV:

It’s kept its roots, I should say. It hasn’t—you know, Mary Margaret and all of them have kept the roots, kept the—what started it has kept it—it’s expanded somewhat, yes. Different things. Added different things, grown bigger and everything. It’s seen its ups and downs, I should say. Economy’s gone up, economy’s gone down. Oil fields went up, oil fields went down. But as far as changing, it’s kept its roots, as far as it’s storytelling. It’s all about basically storytelling.

AW:

Is there anything in the community that compares with Storyfest for George West?

LV:

Not in George West, no sir.

AW:

Cool. Let’s see.

LV:

I can tell you that Storyfest has been very successful. I mean, neighboring community—they’ve had an event going—and I can tell you this right now, it looks like it’s almost a dead event, dead—event dead I should say because—I mean, I went to it last year and it’s really bad to see that you walk out there and you don’t—you might see a hundred people out there, and that’s it.

AW:

This is really well-attended.

LV:

And this is very well-attended. I mean—besides that, you have a festival that's been going on for thirty years, and in that timeframe it went from Community Square, blocking off one street, blocking off two or three streets. I mean, it's—it has grown. You know, its grown.

AW:

Does that—because I know in a community—in fact, a community of any size—it takes a lot of community involvement to do a festival this big. But in a community the size of George West, that means a lot of people in George West have to be a part of it.

LV:

Yes sir.

AW:

Does that change the character of a community? Or is that the reason it's accessible, is the community had that character to start with? Maybe a chicken and an egg. I don't know.

LV:

The community has the involvement already, and it has the character already. Because, I mean, it has the character. If it wasn't for the individuals, the townsfolk that live here, the event wouldn't be successful.

AW:

Yeah. Because you've seen—you've been parts of other communities.

LV:

Yes sir.

AW:

Because you've been working for quite a while for—

LV:

I've ran stores for Mr. Lowe from Albuquerque down to here.

AW:

Wow. That is a big change. That's a big change. So there is a big difference in George West just in the people?

LV:

Yes sir. Yeah, just the people alone, yes. This town—I've seen—supports its community more than I've ever—the townsfolk supports its community more than I've seen in almost any other small town that I've ever been in.

AW:

That's really cool. That's good to hear. And I only know Mr. Lowe just casually because of where I'm from. But he strikes me as the kind of the person that would be in favor of this kind of community involvement.

LV:

Yes. You know, it's unwritten. It doesn't—there's nothing out there that says that the store manager needs to be involved in the community. But there's an unwritten rule if you're a store manager or a store director—you know, even business owner—you need to be involved in your community. If you're not involved in your community, the community's not going to support you. And, you know, that's the whole object. But, you know, you get involved in the community, you get to meet a lot of these people and—I mean, these people are really good people out here. I mean, I'm not from here, but they—I feel like I am now because, you know, I've been here long enough, everybody knows my name, everybody knows who I am. And it's just—everybody out here—there's just a lot of good people that live out here.

AW:

Good. What should I have asked you about that I didn't?

LV:

I couldn't tell you.

AW:

[laughs] Okay. Well, if you think of something, let me know.

LV:

We can continue on. We just think of something and we'll bring it up. Like I said, Storyfest is basically—it's community involvement. You were out here several years ago for Mary Margaret?

AW:

Um-hm. Yeah, I've been here several times, yeah.

LV:

You've talked to the sponsors? I'm the first sponsor, I guess. Or second, whatever.

AW:

Well, yeah, I've talked to one or two people who are sponsors, but mainly folks who are volunteers and helped get it going.

LV:

And if you look—I mean, there is a lot of volunteers. It's a lot of planning to do this. I mean, it takes a lot of volunteers, personal time. I mean, the community is behind these people that are doing it.

AW:

Yeah, yeah.

LV:

I mean, they support them. I mean, like I said, this is volunteer work. These people are taking time out of their life to make this successful.

AW:

Um-hm, yeah. Yeah. And sometimes a lot of time.

LV:

Yes sir. I mean, even as my part—I mean, it takes a lot of—I don't want to say a lot of effort, but it takes a lot of—it takes some time to help—to make sure everything that Mary Margaret or anything that the Storyfest needs that I have it there and ready for them.

AW:

Yeah. Yeah. Good. Well, that's really kind of what I had in mind. I'm going to ask you to sign a release that lets us let people listen to this. That's really all it does. And I'll give you a copy of it. Then if—and I left you my card. And if I just put this "Larry Vigar," is that okay?

LV:

Yes sir.

AW:

We actually—I know this sounds a bit odd—but we actually hope that somebody a hundred years from now is going to listen to this, researching communities or community events, and they'll get to hear you talk instead of hear somebody report on what you had to say. And one copy is for you to keep.

LV:

Can I borrow your pen?

AW:

You bet. Sorry.

LV:

That's all right. Not a problem.

AW:

Thank you.

LV:

Um-hm.

AW:

So, I'm going to say thanks, and turn this off.

End of Recording

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