

Oral History Interview of Charles “Bud” Townsend

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson
March 6, 2018
Canyon, Texas**

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Transcription Notes:

Interviewer: Andy Wilkinson

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Transcript Overview:

This interview features Charles “Bud” Townsend as he discusses country music stars and the earlier years of his life. In this interview, Charles explains the Joe Hancock horses, racing those horses, and then branches off to recount his history with the country singers of the early 1900’s. He also includes some background and stories about his biography over Bob Wills.

Length of Interview: 03:49:30

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Keywords

Race horses, country music, Bob Wills, radio announcing, ranching, square dancing, family life and background, Jimmie Rodgers

Bud Townsend (BT):

This boy wrote me this letter. I'll wait for you.

Andy Wilkinson (AW):

Yeah. No, we're—

BT:

Is that a recorder?

AW:

Yeah. So we're recording—I'm going to scoot this back just a little bit.

BT:

That couldn't record much could it?

AW:

It'll record from here to the—

BT:

I've got one in there I want to show you, one channel. There's a guy that came through here, boy, and they were making a big thing for Harrington. I showed it to. He said, "Just name your price." You couldn't get them anymore. You couldn't go—he put this it this way. You could go four hours, a rock concert, on four D batteries made by Sony. I'll show you in here. It's still good but one side's gone out. I didn't figure you could ever find anybody to fix them anymore.

AW:

Well this particular one is made by a company called Roland, which is really well-known in the music recording business. This was developed [clears throat] not for music recording specifically but for news hounds and such. So, you can—with one hand, you can run all the controls on it, which is really handy. But the thing I like best, other than it's nice quality, is it's got this really bright screen and so I can look down without having to interrupt the interview and I can tell if I need a battery or if I'm about to run out of space on the card. So it's a real—

BT:

What is it, recorded on a card?

AW:

Yeah, an SD card, a little—like you put in your—

BT:

Oh.

AW:

You know, the little cameras and such. This one—I mean, this is 16 gigabytes. So, you figure a gigabyte an hour so that's sixteen hours. When I say a gigabyte an hour, that's two tracks, so it's stereo and it's in a WAV format, which is the archival format that you want because it has a lot more—it takes in a lot more information.

BT:

Like the Bose Wave over there.

AW:

Well, Bose Wave is a little different. That's talking about what's coming out and this is talking about what's going in. So it's a format that unlike, say, an MP3, which only captures a certain amount of data. The WAV captures about four times more data than that, which is important in the sense that—this is probably more than anybody wants to hear—when you open and close a digital file, every time you do that, you introduce a little random misinformation into the electronics, into that file. What makes these things go bad is that if they're opened and closed too many times and you don't have enough data, then the file itself is corrupted. So, the more data you have—it's redundant data so the more you have, the more robust that file is over a period of time and that's—

BT:

You guys understand that?

Michael Grower (MG):

I have no idea what—[BT laughs] you might as well have say it in Portuguese.

Ivan Cates (IC):

It was clear but I—

AW:

For an art man, it's a lot more pigment makes the thing less likely to fade. How about that?

BT:

There you go.

MG:

I can understand that.

BT:

Now, after you make this, you can transfer this to whatever?

AW:

Um-hm. Yeah.

MG:

Dr. Townsend, we'll have a copy at the museum with the rest of the oral histories because, you know, WT [West Texas A&M] used to have a far more robust oral history program than they do now.

AW:

They were the pioneers, you know, back in—[J.] Evetts Haley and [J. Frank] Dobie—

MG:

L.F. Sheffy.

AW:

Yeah. The people who were coming through, that was the rest—

BT:

And they were into oral history then?

MG:

Yes, sir. You know, Byron Price wrote an article on Mr. Haley called "Getting Old Cowmen to Talk." That's a great article.

AW:

You know, Byron and I grew up together. So, any time I have a—

MG:

Here's my [Inaudible 0:04:26]. I got your name on there as one of there as one of the—

BT:

Is his daddy still alive, Byron's dad?

AW:

No. The only—Byron's brother, Troy, is still alive but everybody else is passed on. I made three of these so one is to leave Dr. Townsend and one is to give to you.

MG:

And I'll make a copy of mine to bring back over.

AW:

Great. That's a whole pile of paperwork.

BT:

Would you put them over here and I'll sign them later? Would you put them on my desk?

MG:

Yeah.

BT:

If I try to write here—

AW:

That's fine. So, yeah, Byron—that's a great article, as everything else that Byron writes.

BT:

I knew his dad. One time his dad had some McChesney spurs. I don't know if he was up here or whatever. I said—oh, he visited a show somewhere and I said, "Price, I understand you want twenty-four hundred dollars for these McChesney's." He said, "You know, I don't believe I want to sell them at that price." He thought I was making an offer. But he didn't—he wouldn't even take that price. But he was the saddle maker, wasn't he, isn't that saddle shop?

AW:

Well, he had a—you know, I think Byron always talked about Bill, his dad, as being in the rag trade, that he was mainly a retailer but he had a saddle—he did have a guy that would build saddles. They also contracted with somebody. Back when I could still wear boots, I bought my boots from Bill. They didn't build them in their shop but they had—I think Rod Patrick, maybe, built their boots for some time. So you could get things like that from him that were handcrafted but in the shop itself they didn't do too much of that.

MG:

We got some patterns for some leggings and some saddles that Byron donated years ago; paper cutouts. We've had them so for such a long time although we didn't have a signed gift agreement so we just got that in the last five years from him.

AW:

From Byron?

MG:

From Byron and Bill Shaw.

AW:

Well, you know, his dad was—I wish I'd have been—had this job when Bill was still alive and healthy because he, you know—and he wasn't a talker, Bill wasn't. I mean, he was pretty taciturn. He had a swing band.

BT:

Oh he did?

AW:

Billy Byron, and his—and I can't remember the last part of it—but he had a swing band and they played music. That was back when he was rodeoing. Byron said that he only—he discovered—you know, he saw pictures that they had and he asked his dad about it and he said, "Dad never would talk much about it." Maybe he talked to somebody else but he wasn't going to talk to, I guess, to Byron, maybe wanting to make sure he didn't go over to the dark side and get in a swing band himself.

MG:

Before we get going, can I ask a formality question? Where's the closest bathroom?

BT:

Right here. I've got the door closed then there's one upstairs.

MG:

That's key to me.

BT:

Because right there—because if a cat gets in here, I just didn't want to him to bother you.

MG:

I'll go ahead and take advantage right now before we get rolling.

AW:

Do that. I stopped at the filling station.

MG:

Can't even have more than two cups of coffee anymore.

AW:

Yeah I stopped at the filling station.

BT:

No, no, straight on.

MG:

I see it.

BT:

You nearly went in where that recorder was.

MG:

I almost did. [Door closes]

AW:

While we're waiting Michael to get back, I was thinking, Dr. Townsend, that we would go for a couple hours this morning, have some lunch and then come back for as long as you're comfortable today. I'm going to set another time.

BT:

That'd be all right.

AW:

I know that we're—it's going to take more than a couple hours or four hours to get your stories down. So, I'd just like to spread it out a little bit so that you're comfortable with it and we keep on with it.

BT:

Okay. Whatever.

AW:

Okay. Good. So while—also while we're waiting for Michael, I'm going to say for the recorder's benefit, this is the sixth of March 2018 in the morning at Dr. Charles Buddy Raymond Townsend's home. Besides myself, Andy Wilkinson, and Michael Grower is also our old friend, our dear friend, Ivan Cates. Speaking of swing music, guitar player extraordinaire who's sitting in and visiting. And we're going to be talking—and this is, again, for the people doing the transcription—we're going to be talking, starting today, about not only Dr. Townsend's life and his accomplishments but as an important part of all of that, at least as many of the stories as we can capture that all come from—we've all heard him tell over the years. If you don't mind, I'd

like to start just to confirm some basic information. November 5, 1929, your birthday, is that right?

BT:
Yes.

AW:
And where was that?

BT:
Nocona, Texas.

AW:
In Nocona.

BT:
N-o-c-o-n-a. Right on the Chisholm Trail. Old man Justin—I say that—I shouldn't use that term. Mr. Justin, H.J., was about twelve miles at most right on the Red River at Spanish Fort where he started.

AW:
Yeah. How long were you in Nocona as a child? Were you there for a long time?

BT:
Well, I was born on—I was born on Main Street in Nocona. I don't know whether call that Clay Street or Main, but interchangeable. My granddad was very was very well to do. A lot of oil and a lot of land. He had a huge ranch house right in town.

AW:
Oh in town?

BT:
He owned two square blocks.

AW:
Now was this your grandfather—

BT:
Maternal.

AW:

Maternal. What was his name?

BT:

His name was Lilburn, Lilburn—

AW:

L-i-l-b-u-r-n?

BT:

Uh-huh. Lilburn Keck, K-e-c-k. German. K-e-c-k.

AW:

K-e-c-k.

BT:

Um-hm. Lilburn. My mother was a Keck. She was one of nine children.

AW:

Was she in the middle of that bunch?

BT:

She was right in the middle. Let's see, there would've been two girls older, Cora—

MG:

Hancock.

BT:

—and Myrtle, then my mother, then there would've been one boy near her age. And then—they really said Papa had two families: one when they were poor and one when they were rich. [AW laughs] So, the next family would fit more like the giant, the movie. It was Dick, Jodie, and then two girls, Pearl and Edna—and Buck. I forgot to mention him. He was the baby in that. They all had plenty of money, fast cars. I used to say to my Uncle Buck—I gave the eulogy for his funeral. He had fast cars, fast women and pretty fast horses—Hancock. [Laughter]

AW:

So he had Hancock horses as well?

BT:

Oh yes. He had the—he probably had the fastest Hancock that anybody ever bred. Horse called Little Dick. He was out of a mare called Old Pet. She was a sorrel—

AW:

Old Pet, P-e-t?

BT:

Yeah, P-e-t. She was a cold-blooded—I guess you would call her today—you'd call her a sorrel. Not a spot on her. Not a deep a sorrel like the King Ranch sorrel but beautiful sorrel, copper sorrel. They bred—

AW:

I'll bet she was pretty.

BT:

They bred Joe Hancock to her and had this foal and Uncle Dick got it. Uncle Buck traded him out of it and he was lightning, unbeatable for two-hundred and twenty yards. Now, he wasn't as long of a running horse—if they ever ran him a quarter of a mile—I don't know it, but I guess they did. People paid no attention. They just say, "From this telephone pole." So, he was really fast. He was a bay. Beautiful sorrel color with black mane and tail. I've seen them on that horse one time at the Belcherville Rodeo; Belcherville and Crenshaw's. Really Crenshaw's had it then. Was in the height of the Depression because they started those rodeos there in Belcherville, which is about nine miles west of Nocona. It'd be between Nocona and Ringo, if that means anything.

AW:

Well, I've been through there and I don't remember Belcherville.

BT:

Well, it's pretty—nothing there except a house or two. But they had a—all those little towns had a nice grocery store back then. I never will forget. They took him up to this rodeo and we were so—I don't want to say backward—you couldn't consider us backward if everybody was backward. The Depression was interesting. It made us all equal, equally poor, equally ignorant, and equally provincial.

AW:

That's what my mother always said.

BT:

Come in. [knock on door] I'll get it.

AW:

Would you like for me to get it?

BT:

No.

Glen Stiller (GS):

Yes sir.

BT:

Come in.

Man:

How are you, sir?

BT:

Is that you—oh how are you?

GS:

Good. I've come to aggravate somebody.

BT:

This is—we've been—

AW:

This is like a reunion.

BT:

This is Mr. Stiller.

AW:

Glen Stiller.

GS:

I haven't seen you in a while.

AW:

I know. Where have you been?

BT:

Good to see you.

GS:

Good to see you, sir.

BT:

Be careful what you say. I guess we're rolling. [Few people talking at once] Have a seat.

MG:

I asked about that the other day. I'll tell you about that.

GS:

All right. Good.

BT:

Have a seat. You could sit here right here. Anyway, we'd gone—the reason I remember about when it was is when they were killing the cattle.

AW:

You mean, the government property?

BT:

Yeah. That's an interesting story. I happened to just catch the—to live at that time and came to—oh I was seven or eighty years old, whenever it was. But it's about '36 so I was about seven. But anyway, rodeo—we thought rodeo was the greatest thing that ever was because we never could go anywhere. All we had—when I was growing up, if you couldn't go by horse, we didn't go. There were a few people that had some old rattletrap trucks and old cars. As they said, most of them needed tars and batteries, that kind of thing. But we went up to that rodeo and I remember I had an old work horse—Papa had given us Tom and Luther, that was their name. Named after Tom and Luther Skinner. So, I didn't have a saddle so I borrowed a McClellan saddle. It's not wonder the south lost the war or whoever. It's one of the other, how they won. But those old saddles, they were awful. Oh my gosh.

AW:

They have a real deep seat.

BT:

Yeah. Well, it's split.

AW:

Yeah. But it also had a real—like once you got in it, you were kind of stuck.

BT:

It was—so I borrowed of this from Walter Regan. We rode from Nocona up to that rodeo.

AW:

How far was that?

BT:

That was to Belcherville so it—

AW:

So nine miles?

BT:

About nine miles but we took the backroad and came in. It was a great—it was a wonderful time to do it. We had this rodeo at the Crenshaw Ranch. Not many people came, just the neighbors and a few people that knew about it, but some good ropers there. The Burk's boys—well, you all would know who they are. Clyde Burk and Dee Burk, world champions. Jiggs Burk and some of them would come. So, I was talking about Little Dick, how fast he was and what a great horse. He had one problem. He would run away with you if you didn't know what you were doing. Uncle Buck—if Uncle Buck was sober, which was—I'd say he's sober 90 percent of the time, but that 10 percent was terrible. So, he was up there and he was—so I—that day in the morning, somebody wanted a horse race from the rodeo grounds to the end of the property. It must've been three-hundred yards, three-fifty, whatever. They had a horse race and, of course, Little Dick just outran everything. He was never registered. Well, there was no registry until '41, see. So, he won a race. Well then it came time for the rodeo and Uncle Buck was going to rope on him. He had roped one or two and they didn't—everybody got to rope about three calves, you know, jackpot stuff. There was no added money or anything like that. The name does come to me. Anyway, Uncle Buck was going to rope again and Little Dick was nervous in the chute, you know. Anytime you run a horse, you run him in a sense, because they don't know whether it's going to be a jump to run a race. But he was a cow horse. So, this announcer—his name was Ace something, can't remember. They did have a little sound system. Had run on batteries. There was no electricity anywhere at that time. That came later with REA [**Rural Electrification Administration**]. He said, "You think you'll ever get that horse out of there?" Uncle Buck was pretty high-tempered, especially if he had had a drink. He usually had had a drink. So, they

turned that calf loose—and I'm not lying—he didn't get as far as from here to that first bronze. Uncle Buck had him. He could've—he was that fast and that good. He turned, he said, "How does that look, you son of a bitch?" [Laughter] He was so mad he wouldn't even tie the calf, he just turned him loose. But that's not the end of the story. Later in the afternoon, they bulldogged often. So in that one day—

AW:

Also on that same horse.

BT:

—he had had a horse race, calf roping, and bulldogging, and he was great at every one of them. That's what a great horse—and he was an own of Joe Hancock. He wasn't large like some of old Joe's foals.

AW:

Were those Hancock horses pretty big horses then?

BT:

Yeah, big-boned because of that Percheron in them.

AW:

Oh so they were some Percheron.

BT:

The mother was Percheron.

AW:

Can we talk about that a little bit?

BT:

I'd finished with Little Dick. He was bad when you put him up. He loved to run. Papa had one pasture, a thousand acres. We called it the Big Pasture. They turned him out one time and he jumped the fence at the back of one of the pastures where we lived into that big pasture and he fell into a ravine and killed him. So that was the end of Little Dick. But he—eleven seconds wouldn't hardly start him for 220. I mean, I don't know how much you know about racing but that is fast.

AW:

I know enough to know that when I put money down, I usually lose.

BT:

Well anyway, now you want to know about the Hancock's?

AW:

Yeah, about the—about what the—I'd never—I don't know—I just know enough about them to be dangerous but I didn't know anything about any Percheron being a part of it.

BT:

Oh yeah. That's what made them great. And there were other horses. They had Belgian in them. They had some that had Morgan. If it looked like a good match, or whether it did or not, you needed a horse. They even bred some of the Hancock mares to an old jackass that my Uncle Fred had. We called him Old Bonehead. There'd be the whole family, you know. Everything was free. Anybody wanted—Uncle Joe—they knew what they had. So some of those mares, they'd breed to this—so I'm sure there were a good many mules in Montague County. There were Hancock mules and I'll bet you they could run more—outrun most anything because we had—Uncle Dick had a couple of ponies, I'd guess you'd call them. In other words, they were not big mares but they weren't Shetland's. They were—I'd say thirteen hands. I remember we had one called Raggedy Anne and what was that other? Raggedy Anne and whatever her name was. They were Hancock's out of—and my gosh, they could run. But they were little and made them easier to match, you know. If man was a good race horse, well, look at them—"Yeah, I think I"—you could match them. We had a—we fixed a race one time. I say "we," Nocona bunch. But anyway—

AW:

Would you, just for the people listening to this a hundred years from now, would you talk about what match means?

BT:

A match horse race? One of the most famous of all the match races in the United States was Whirlaway, son of Man o' War. She was bronze there. Whirlaway had won the Triple Crown then the people in California had a horse—was a grandson of Man o' War. Man o' War had a son named Hard Tack and the foal was Seabiscuit. So, the argument was who could—who was the best horse so rather than have ten horses in the race, it would be two.

AW:

Hence the idea of the match.

BT:

The match. A match race. Man o' War later was matched against the Triple Crown winner of 1920, and ran off and left him, about seven lengths. They had it in Canada. But that was—and

finish this for people a hundred years from now. Seabiscuit—actually, the guy—I knew the guy. He was—Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney was the famous family in Saratoga. He's the one that promoted it and he later said, "I wished I hadn't promoted that race because—see, War Admiral was sick that day so Seabiscuit outran him a length or two. Sir Barton was the Triple Crown winner in 1920 and see, Man o' War—I'm getting off on all this for a match race. But anyway, the man that owned him, owned Man o' War, he said he wouldn't run the Kentucky Derby. He would've had the Triple Crown. He could've been a walk-off. He said, "I'm not going to run my horse in one of those western tracks," meaning that Louisville was a western track. [Laughter] And they've never forgiven them because Man o' War didn't run at the Kentucky Derby. He just ran off and left them at the Preakness and the Belmont then the horse that won the Triple Crown, Sir Barton, they had a match race at whatever town or track would put up the most money and Man o' War outran him by about seven lengths, and he's a heck of a good horse, too, Sir Barton. He was sire of Gallant Fox, who also won. The only one who ever sired another Triple Crown winner. Or was it Gallant Fox who sired Omaha? One of them. But anyway, that's what they called a match race. Now, while we're on the Hancock's, if you want to hear that story—

AW:

Yeah I do. Just one little quick thing. Where did—and you may be getting ready to say this—where did the speed come in on those Hancock horses? Because I don't normally think about a Percheron being a racehorse.

BT:

I hope you didn't hit my below the belt now that you get some—seemed like I—the way I can recall these things, I wouldn't forget anything. Peter McCue was a thoroughbred and anyway, Uncle Joe Hancock—and the reason he's related to me is that he married my mother's sister Cora. I had a horse out here one time named for Aunt Cora. I called her Aunt Cora. But anyway, Uncle Joe, he was raised at Perryton. Joe Hancock was foaled at Perryton in Ochiltree County. Aunt Cora always talked about Ochiltree County. So, Jackson Hancock—Joe Hancock, my uncle's dad—he had some—there were two kinds of Percheron's. There were the large one, had the large fetlocks and everything. Good looking horses. Great horses. But there was a smaller one. You wouldn't call them miniature but they weren't large, maybe fourteen hands, which we used to think was the ideal quarter horse was fourteen hands plus two—fourteen hands and two fingers. So that was probably what they—and they could run, you know. I don't mean they could run with Joe Hancock or any of those horses but they could really fool you and outrun work horses, and they were work horses, too. So, Uncle Joe, his daddy—no, not Uncle Joe but his dad—heard about—Peter McCue was a thoroughbred horse, if I recall. I don't think I ever could recall because I never knew exactly—I think came out of Illinois. They got him down into this country and he's the one that was the sire of the great King Ranch horses. I think he would have—that King Ranch had a horse called Old Sorrel. He was the sire, as I recall, of Old Sorrel and I believe—if you go the quarter horse thing, the number one—when they had the registry

was Wimpy. I think Wimpy had his blood. Peter McCue. Nearly all—he was the basis, the thoroughbred—and that’s where the speed comes from. We used to say, “A quarter horse can run just as fast as the amount of thoroughbred that’s in him. So, Uncle—wouldn’t be no—he would be no relation to me—but Uncle Joe’s dad, Jackson Hancock, heard about the J.A.’s, and the J.A.’s had bought a son of Peter McCue. His name was John Wilkins. So, Jackson Hancock came from Perryton. They had some pretty good wheat interests there; three, four, five sections. He heard about this horse and I guess that he could run because you knew he could run if he was a sire of Peter McCue. He came to the J.A.’s, rode a horse from Perryton—that’s quite a ride—and bought that horse from the J.A.’s.

AW:

The John Wilkins.

BT:

John Wilkins, son of Peter McCue.

AW:

Can you spell Peter McCue?

BT:

P-e-t-e-r, of course. Even you could spell that. [Laughs]

AW:

On a good day maybe.

BT:

I’m just joking with you. Peter McCue. Then it’d be M-c—

MG:

C-u-e.

BT:

It’s c-u-e, wasn’t it? I was going to say “q” but you’re right. Peter McCue.

AW:

That’s what I wrote down but I wanted to make sure.

BT:

Well-known. Three bars years later would kind of be a basis but he was the basis of the thoroughbred in the quarter horse. So Uncle Joe—Uncle—I keep calling him Joe—Jackson

Hancock took him back to Perryton and this little Percheron mare was in heat. They just took her out of the harness and bred her to John Wilkins. Then—what is it, thirteen months, eleven months, whatever—this foal came along. Well, Jackson Hancock, he had other horses. They ran a lot of races up there, you know, over around Woodward. They had outrun you in that country, Canadian and up through there. So, this foal came, this colt. Uncle Joe, who married Aunt Cora, he fell in love with that foal, that colt. Well by the—in the meantime, my granddad had—I counted them one time—had twelve ranches over Oklahoma and Texas. I'll tell you a little story about that. They all came out of Illinois. Nelson Keck had children, about nine of them. But Uncle Joe—and they moved down on Farmers Creek, not too far from Red River. On this farm—I guess Nelson owned it originally and had all of his kids—but my Pop Keck, Lilburn Keck, he was a little more aggressive. He worked hard and had a family of his own, including my mother and nine kids. He began to buy up these old farms, the time they came, whenever it was, twenties or earlier. Farms, you could buy them, you know, fifty cents an acre, a dollar. You could take two-thousand dollars and buy a good farm. So he began to buy them. I'm going to come back now to Joe Hancock in a minute. I haven't forgot you.

AW:

This is perfect.

BT:

Of course that part of my life, that's what you're interested in.

AW:

You bet.

BT:

So, he bought them up everywhere. So, he bought one just across the river from Gainesville, in that area, called it Hilton, Oklahoma, right across—almost—from where old man Justin started at Spanish Fort, Texas, on the Chisholm Trail. He bought this old dirt farm. Nobody wanted it. He bought one in Duncan. He had them all over that part of Texas, not too far. When he died, every one of the kids got at least one ranch. But anyway—this is a funny little story aside. He was just probably getting cattle anywhere he could because momma told me she remembered many of nights that they'd come into some strange horses and cattle. I'm not saying he stole them but, you know, it's funny there was always a night herd. [Laughter] And they lived up above where they originally—in the old graveyards this day called Keck-Holt graveyard.

AW:

Keck-Holt?

BT:

Keck-Holt, H-o-l-t, like Jack Holt, the old cowboy. So, they hit oil. I mean, gushers there in Hilton. One little town was called Oilton and one was called Ragtown because they were those boomtowns and they make them out of rags and cardboard boxes and whatever. One of them was called Santa Fe, a little town. My mother always called it *Santa Fee*. That's where she and my dad met, was over there in that oil country because dad, my dad—we'll come back to that if you want to later. I just might as well—well, I'll go ahead and stay with Joe Hancock. Anyway, Papa—then that oil came. He was a rich man at three dollars a barrel. I still get royalties. Got a check, let's see, this week—no, last week. Pretty nice check. But when it was fifty dollars a barrel, boy, I was really—that was really great. I only had one-ninetieth of the oil so you can imagine what he had if I have a nice check what it would've been if it was all together. But anyway, I was born right across from Papa's big ranch house in town. He owned two square blocks. He owned everything. They've got a house over there where momma and daddy lived and I was born there. Well, I was kind of the favorite—he loved the other kids but they're still out on the ranches but I lived in town. He would take me over to sleep with him, Momma Keck. They didn't stay in the big ranch house. They had a garage thing; screen down. It was just a beautiful place to sleep in. I had a little old bulldog, a little English—they are the little ones aren't they? And they'd cut the tail off. So Papa would say, "Bud, we're going to bed. Come on." I'd say, "Come on, Pal." He'd said, "We're not going to take that dog." I said, "Well, Papa, if you don't, I'm not going." He said, "Well come on you little screw-tailed son of a bitch. Let's go." He always called—the preacher came one time and momma was putting on the dog for the—he said, "What do you call him son," and I said, "Screw-tailed son of a bitch." [Laughter] I thought—she was going to kill me after he left. But anyway, I'm telling you all of this and we get back to where the Hancock's lived. We were—Papa and I were sitting out on—he—it was a dry town but it didn't make any difference to a German. He had his beer. He had a place in the back of that garage apartment half size of this room and he drank Pabst Blue Ribbon. He got it over to Oklahoma; 3.2, 3.2 percent of alcohol. And he had kept his saddle in there. He had the first quilted seated saddle I ever saw and a nickel horn. But anyway, he and I were sitting out on the porch there one day and he said to—he said, "Well, I'm going up and taking my nap." Had a cane and an old cowboy hat, but never creased. You remember a lot of them would just—so he started—he said, "Now son, here's a nickel for you." He said, "You start saving your nickels. That's how I made my money, by farming and by saving my money." So he went on. Momma Keck was sitting in the room right where—we were out on the porch swing. She came and she said, "Bud, don't pay any attention to that old son of a bitch. We didn't have a damn thing till they struck oil over there." [Laughter] But he always tried to pass himself off as a dirt farmer who made all that money and never—he had cattle and everything but I don't think—it was the oil that kept—now we'll go back to Joe Hancock. The Hancock's, they lived down on his—and this was nothing but oil on that Red River. The sucker rods—see, you know what a sucker rod is—

AW:

Oh yeah.

BT:

—in those old power plants? What did they call those, powerhouse? Yeah, powerhouse. You'd have a powerhouse big as this—my property here, maybe not quite as large. And in it engines that would turn these and power. You'd have sucker rods going out that way, that way, for miles. That's why you had so many sucker rod fences when that—and you could hear those old things go [imitates sound]. All night you could hear them for miles. I don't know what kind of engines those were but down on the Hancock, he had oil fields that's just the L. Keck field. That's how much oil he had. Down on where the Hancock's lived and where old Joe—they kept old Joe. We always called him Old Joe or Aunt Cora called him The Old Horse. I don't know if I've ever heard them call him Joe Hancock. He had so much oil on that place that we all rode Hancock horses. We thought everybody rode good horses. We'd go down and jump the—sucker rods were about that high off the ground. See, you'd have a steel pipe here and then a curved thing like this and the rods would go through that and they'd go to an oil pump. So, you might have several on one of those—oh gosh. I know I counted one time there's forty wells down there. There's no regulation of railroad commission or anything, how many wells you could have back then. But anyway, that's where Uncle Joe wanted Joe Hancock. So, he talked his dad into some kind of a trade. Interestingly—this is kind of almost a fairy tale—the tape on this—if you ever want to hear it, it's at Texas Tech. I made it with Aunt Cora.

AW:

You recorded an interview with Aunt Cora?

BT:

Aunt Cora, yeah, and with her son. I don't know whether I got her—one of the sons broke old Joe. It was no trouble. The great thing,—they were good horses, good buyings [?] [0:45:10]. Tom Hancock told me one time, he said, "I asked my brother, Jack, who broke Joe Hancock." He said, "Joe." Tom said to Jack, "What was the greatest thing about the Hancock horses?" I can see Tom telling me to this day. He took his hand and he said—Jack said, "Here's the greatest thing about the Hancock horses, their mind." He said, "They had—they were such a great disposition," of course, like some of them. But Buck—if they were bred wrong or whatever. But they were good horses. Gosh, we rode them as kids, little babies almost, riding those. But we all—so that's where they brought old Joe back. We got pictures of this, which I hope we can get some of that Hancock stuff into a museum, those pictures. There was no such thing as horse trailer in the early thirties, no such thing—or twenties. So, you sent—ordered a kit to make a trailer from Sears and Roebuck. Sears and Roebuck send you—kind of like some of them send houses now. But they sent this trailer, wooden trailer, two wheels, not open. Uncle Joe wrote Sears and Roebuck—must've had a good crop that year—and got that trailer, came out from Nocona living in one of

those—they lived on that ranch. They didn't get any of the oil then. That oil went to Papa but he let—he gave everybody a place to live. That's probably the only reason, you know, that I had a place to live. Dad had tuberculosis and whatever but Papa had given us a place to live. But anyway, he came out to Ochiltree County at Perryton and got this foal and took him back. They just loved the horse. So, Uncle Joe was a farmer. This was in the late twenties, early thirties, 1930s. Better make that clear now, you know.

AW:

That's right.

BT:

So, Jack broke him. Jack was a tall boy, the tallest member of the family, good horseman. They were all good horse people. Boy, that family knew horses. Uncle Joe, I think if you take him to the best trainers at Saratoga or Santa Anita, he knew as much as about horses as—it was engrained in him. So, Jack broke him. I don't know whether they chased any cows or not—probably—because they had cowhands. Of course, by this time, they—he was full-grown. They thought he could run and he could. By gosh, you couldn't beat him. Some guys who were race horse people named Ogles. I don't know whether it's double O-g-l-e-s or O-g-g-l-e-s, but his name was Bert, B-e-r-t, Ogles. You could find it in some of the quarter horse—James Jennings could find it and I probably got it somewhere; Ogles. They let him take old Joe. Now, I don't know whether all of that breeding—maybe it was after they brought him back—got to where they couldn't match him. By matching, I mean nobody ran against him. But they took him up into Oklahoma and, boy, there were some good horses up there. They ran him everywhere but—and see, he looked—he had such bone because of that Percheron—that he looked like a work horse. And he had fetlocks sometimes, some of his colts did. You know what that is—

AW:

Yeah.

BT:

—that hair that comes down in the winter? They got—boy, just outran—we only have one picture of him running at Pawhuska. Listen, they'll outrun you at Pawhuska. That bunch of Osage Indians up there had good horses. So, old Joe's here on the picture and you got to look back to see where the other horses were. And this was 440 yards. I mean, he had—so, they got to where they couldn't match him so they tried everything. They would hook him to a wagon and pull up to a race meet. [Laughter] They said, "That old horse—well, I don't know. He runs a little but I don't"—they'd get to making fun of him. That's that Ogles wanted so they'd say, "Well, Emmett, I've had several drinks and I'm damn tired of hearing you talking. Yeah I'm going to run you." Just run off and leave these people. So it got to where they just couldn't match so Ogles took him. He was going to really get the big boys. He took him to Arlington Downs.

Arlington Downs was owned by W.T. Waggoner that owned the Waggoner estate. His home is still—if you ever want to see it, and you ought to get pictures of it, it's still in Decatur up on the hill there by old Decatur Baptist College where I went to school. I didn't know it till I got lost there the other—man—and I saw it. There's brush and stuff all around. It's right in town. But anyway, Old Man Waggoner—that's what all of them called him. I don't know why they called him Old Man Waggoner and Burk Burnett, Burk Burnett, because they were about the same age. Those two ranchers wanted the fastest horses and would get into the damndest arguments at which one of them had the—and that's why—of the Burnett's, when they got Joe Hancock, could outrun some of those—most of those Waggoner horses, one-eyed Waggoner and some of those good horses. So, W.T. Waggoner just built him a racetrack. Had all the money in the world—in Arlington, Texas. I mean, Saratoga style. Maybe better than Lonestar down there now. War Admiral was there this year, they brought him down. He was the Triple Crown winner. So, Ogles was going to try to clean up down there, those city slickers. So he took Joe Hancock down there but he took a good looking horse and he would ride Joe Hancock and pony this thoroughbred, see. They said, "Hey, can that pony of yours run?", "Hell no. This is my horse here. I'm going to put him in whatever race it is." So they were all ganged up down there one time. Ogles had him down there. So, this fellow said, "You think that horse can run," meaning his thoroughbred. He said, "Hell yes he can run." He said, "This pony horse can outrun anything you've got." They said, "Oh he can?" He said, "Yes he can." He said, "You're talking about your pony horse?" He said, "Yes. I'll even run my pony horse at you." So, they ganged up down there and I thought, My gosh. They began to bet on this race. So, I think it might've been Waggoner—one of Waggoner's horses. No it wasn't, it was another horse. So, such a commotion down there that Old Man Waggoner came, W.T., and he said, "What's going on?" They said, "We're going to match that pony horse against so-and-so's horse." He said, "That horse will outrun that plow horse looking thing there." He said—so I said, "Well, Mr. Waggoner, I guess you think you've got something that can outrun this horse for five-eighths of a mile or three-quarters." You couldn't run him long because he wasn't pure thoroughbred but anything less than a mile—three quarters was about it, better at a five-eighths. So, he said, "Yeah, we're going"—and his trainer came. His trainer came and said, "Mr. Waggoner"—they already had it on, you know, just hadn't finalized it. They're going to run this pony horse against Waggoner's horse. He said, "Mr. Waggoner, don't you run against that horse." Well, he said, "How far does he want to"—he said, "Three-quarters." He said, "No." He said, "Mr. Waggoner, don't you run against that horse." He said, "That's Joe Hancock. There's no horse you've got"—he said, "What do you mean? What the hell's going on? I've got two-hundred heads of horses down here and can't outrun a pony horse?" He said, "That's just exactly what I mean." [Laughter] "You can't outrun Joe Hancock." It just screwed Ogles' deal up because he had to get his horse and come home. Man o' War—I mean War Admiral was there. He said, "I'm open to any horse on this place for three-quarters of a mile," and nobody would run him. One time we had a little granddaughter of Joe Hancock. Her name was Dolly Dink. When you use the word dink, that means you've got a—and she was one of those—she was a little larger than Roxy Anne and Raggedy Anne that I told you about a while

ago was daughters of Joe Hancock. She was a granddaughter. Let's see, I guess she was out of old Pep, too, maybe. And a pretty little thing. She was a Bay. So, Clyde C.—his family owned a lot of real estate up in Oscar, Oklahoma, right across the line from Nocona. Used to be an old wooden bridge there; Oscar and down from Waurika, Ringling, Mud Creek and in there. Clyde had a lot of money. The C.'s—Wilbur C. is still—his daughter still has a huge estate there. So, Clyde had money. He was the brother to this C. He bought a bunch—went somewhere and bought a horse. Boy, it was a beauty. He looked like a King Ranch—that beautiful sorrel. Just perfect. Been a wonderful show horse. He bought—he's named—he's registered Del Rio Joe. So, we had a little dirt track there at Nocona and we decided to run Dolly Dink, the Hancock heir, against this great horse and they said, "No." My gosh, that horse. That's a great horse. He'll just run off and lead her. So my brother, John, my baby brother, he was riding Dolly Dink. I don't know who was—a boy named Cathy, just as crooked as a—he'd throw a race for a cigarette. [Laughter] That was an old saying back then. So, he was riding Del Rio Joe with Dolly Dink for 220 yards. Just ran off and left him. Well, we tried it two or three times. We said, "Okay, let's go to Oklahoma." They took Del Rio Joe over there with a nice automobile and Miley Trailer. They were the last word back in those days. They had pulled in and unloaded and everybody was looking at this great horse. And Uncle Dick, he was blind. We don't know whether a horse threw him in a rodeo or he was drinking formaldehyde, whatever. He'd drink anything. He was a bootlegger there. I'm happy to say that my uncle was one of the two leading bootleggers in Nocona. There was only one man who could compete with him. Well, he was blind and he couldn't—because Papa had money, couldn't get welfare. He had to do the best he could so he sold liquor. They didn't think it was a disgrace, you know. The sheriff would say, "Dick"—the other bootlegger was Aubrey Charles. He was blind, too. Well, it was hard to go and arrest a blind man, especially if they had children like Uncle Dick did. He'd say, "Boy, they would just raise hell here for us to get rid of you guys, raid you and find you." So he said, "Sunday morning you have everything out of your house but a pint of whiskey for yourself. We're going to raid." [Laughs] They never did find them because they tipped them off every time. They weren't buying them off. Maybe I've given them some whiskey. But anyway, Uncle Dick was blind and he showed up. This was Comanche, Oklahoma. You know where Comanche is? That's where the Burk's lived. Boy, great ropers. Clyde was world champion four times. He'd been killed by this time. He was killed when a dogging horse fell with him in Denver. Dee and Jiggs showed up and they were great horsemen, too; steer ropers, calf ropers. So, Uncle Dick pulled in this old broken down trailer, old pickup you wouldn't drive in. People said, "Look, come in here." We were part of the show. "What do you know? What's this coming in here? Is that a Shetland?" So, everybody talked up. Uncle Dick unloaded Dolly Dink. She was a good-looking little thing, you know. So, we—said, "Well, old man, will that little, old Shetland run?" He said, "Yeah, she runs pretty good.", "Well, I don't think you belong in races like this." You know, these dirt tracks had fast horses, probably some Leo horses and whatever there, you know. So, they talked a while and one of my cousins, second cousin, he acted like he was drunk. "We got a horse here that will match against that little, old thing." Uncle Dick was taking a drink, too,

and acting like he was drunk, you know. So, he said, "Well"—they brought Del Rio Joe over there. It was about like bringing Man o' War over to one of my horses. So Dee and Jiggs knew Uncle Dick and they said out of sympathy for this blind man, said, "Now Dick, don't run that horse against that." He said, "Dick, if you could see," he said, "that's a prettiest horse I ever saw." They said, "Dick, you wouldn't have a chance, this little thing. Don't run. We'll find one you can run.", "Well, thank you very much." So they finally—well, first of all, we had a foot race and I was supposed to be the fastest thing in Nocona.

AW:

How old were you when—

BT:

I was about sixteen, seventeen. Old enough to know better. [AW laughs] But anyway, we—I've been outrunning everything. I don't know foot racing had become popular around rodeos and stock shows and whatever. We just had some racing. I outran everyone in Nocona. I was awful good for a hundred yards. Cousin Tom might could beat me for fifty so I said we sure won—so they began to tell him how great a—we had a great foot race. Dee and Jiggs had seen me around rodeos. "We didn't know you could run." I said, "Well, I'm not too fast." They said, "Well we've got a boy here. He's pretty fast." This old kid was standing against tree, just kind of like this, backed up. Slim and trim. So, they said, "Well, we know Bud's awful fast." You know, they had their—they got up. "But we've got a kid here who might could outrun Bud." He didn't look like he'd had any meals lately. [Laughter] You stand against that tree and they matched him. Well, as soon as the old boy—we matched, he walked away from that, turned around and had a pair of track shoes in his back pocket, those spikes. I knew then that we was going to get beat. So, they started us in the starting gate and they started. I got ahead of him for about, oh, thirty yards and he came by my like gangbusters. I hardly knew which way he was going. [laughter] So, that was the end of my racing career. We'll get back to Dolly Dink, Hancock, Philly and Del Rio Joe. They got—they matched the race. Fellow's name was Hootie Keck, kind of a brushy kind of a guy.

AW:

Hootie?

BT:

Hootie. He was a part of it. He was dressed up in a suit of clothes. He never had a suit of clothes on in his life and had his pockets full of cigars. He looked like a racetrack dandy. He claimed that, you know, he was—he'd help Uncle Dick. He'd bet, you know. So, we got the race matched. Now, this is—what is that the guy wrote this book, this—I'm talking about a little thing, about a guy who lost the world championship because the string broke between the flank girth and the first girth and made the horse buck and he lost. But this was a little thing. Who

would've dreamed? So, we tried it three or four times and Del Rio Joe couldn't run as they used to say "fast enough to scatter his manure". You've heard that, haven't you? We got him in that starting gate. John, my brother, was riding Dolly Dink. This Cathy boy I told you that throws races for a cigarette, he was riding Del Rio Joe. He was going to win, they thought. The betters up in Oklahoma. It's a wonder we haven't been killed anywhere. It was a lot of money. When the gate opened, Dolly Dink froze and wouldn't start. So, Cathy saw it and he reached down to the bits and grabbed this horse and tried to keep Del Rio Joe from breaking out. Finally he lost control of Del Rio Joe and he got the lead on Dolly Dink. My gosh, half the money in Nocona bet on that race. John finally got Dolly Dink out and she passed him like he was standing still, so we won the race. But can you believe that that horse stalled when we had all that money bet? Oh boy, these guys in Oklahoma, boy, there's some tough guys around those little brush tracks. One of them said, "Hey, you guys really brought us off.", "No. No.", "I lost my money. I bet on Del Rio." He said, "Yes, but look at that son of a bitch down there with that pocket full of cigars counting his money." He said, "He's part of you bunch." [Laughter] I'll tell you, we left there with more money. But anyway, that's the way the Hancock's could run. So, they brought him back—when you couldn't match him at Arlington Downs, you couldn't have matched him at Churchill Downs. So, Ogle said, "Maybe—I don't know what we'll do with him. You'll just have to keep him as a stallion." Stallions are hard to fool with, you know. Tom Burnett, who owned the Triangle Ranch at Iowa Park. He was Burk Burnett's only son. That's all the children that Burk ever had. Burk lived at the Sixes [6666 Ranch] in Guthrie. So, Tom Burnett, he was a great horseman. He's the one that in a way made Joe Hancock famous in the later years. He heard about how fast he was and he had some really good what they called Triangle mares. They would call one mare Triangle 136, Triangle 120. They were mares he'd picked up all over the—and money was no object. See, he had the Sixes up here in the Panhandle, Sixes at Guthrie, a Triangle at Paducah, and a Triangle at Iowa Park. He was a rodeo man, too. He put on rodeos, and he married about three or four of those rodeo girls, you know, the Tad Lucas, Ruth Roach era. Ruth, of course, ranched next to us and was a dear friend of mine. She said, "Bud, we had some of the best parties up there," up at that old ranch house. So that's Tom Burnett. Tom wanted a fast horse to put with these Triangle mares so he got a hold of Ogles and said, "Would you sell that horse?" He said, "He's not mine. This man in Nocona owns him." So, it was about '31, whatever it was; 1931. He said, "I'll see if Mr. Hancock"—and he said, "Well, I'm going to ask you"—I think Ogles really got fifteen-hundred. But anyway, he told Uncle Joe he'd get a thousand for him. Well, he needed farm equipment, he had seven or eight children. Boy, '31 and '30 were the worst years of the depression. I mean, if he hadn't had been on Papa's ranch down there, they couldn't have made it. So Uncle Joe said, "Well, yeah, I'll sell him." So, he went up, Ogles did, to Tom Burnett at Iowa Park and they made a deal. He brought Uncle Joe a check for a thousand dollars. Boy, that's a lot of money then in 1931. I was twelve years old before I ever saw a ten dollar bill. I can't—I remember the first five dollar bill I ever saw. I thought that this had to be the richest person I ever saw. I didn't see a twenty dollar bill for a long time. Now, there wasn't any money. It wasn't that people just didn't have any money, there wasn't any

money. There wasn't that—the Federal Reserve hadn't released that much money. People don't realize how little—I mean, change was about all you had. I'll never forget the first dollar I ever had. But anyway, he got this—he took the horse up there and made the deal. He said—so Tom Burnett said, "What is the name of this horse?" He said, "You know what, we've had him for three or four years and he doesn't have a name." He said, "Well who's that man down there at Nocona that raced him?" He said, "Joe Hancock." He said, "That'll be his name." So, Tom Burnett gave him the name Joe Hancock. My Uncle Joe was one of the most modest. He wouldn't have any more named a horse after him than he would've called himself George Washington. Then when they organized the American Quarter Horse Association in 1941, Tom Burnett's daughter named Anne Burnett, she was the first Ms. Anne. She was part of that registration and King Ranch, they were the big ones but there were others: Waggoner's and whatever. So they organized the American Quarter Horse Association and [coughs] whatever horse won the Halter class at Fort Worth that year would be at number one. He was Old Wimpy, which I think goes back to Peter McCue. He could've been out of Old Sorrel but whatever. That's why they gave—made him number one and his statue is at the Quarter Horse—Wimpy. Well, they didn't register Joe Hancock. They didn't register several, you know. So after a year or two—the name comes to me. My mind's holding well, isn't it? Bob Denhardt, who taught at Texas A&M. I've got his book upstairs. Denhardt, the great quarter horses. Bob Denhardt was named an inspector. So for the horses that weren't registered, they'd go and register them according to confirmation. So they came to Burnett and, you know, even with as much pull as Ms. Anne had—Tom was dead by this time, I guess. I'd know he was. Yes. They inspected him and they argued about, you know—they said, "Out of that work, Marion. Big-boned, that's what you want now. Now you don't have"—Buster Welch told me, he said, "We've bred the bone out of them." So they registered Joe Hancock P, that means pedigree, 455. So he was that far. Well, the irony of it all is that the Western Horseman did a thing on the great cow horses just about four or five years ago—maybe not that long—*The Great Cow Horses in the American West*. There were ten of them. Joe Hancock was either among the top ten or the father of the first six of the great cow horses. Now we're not talking about running horses now; cow horses. Joe Hancock, he was up about maybe ninth himself but some of his—what do you call it, progeny—in his foals. I guess then they put Wimpy, I guess, or Hired Hand, whatever it was. After—now, he'd been dead since '41 but in 2015, we'll say, or 2010, his blood was still so strong that his horses were named the best—that's what they called them, ranch horses. You can find them. Well, there was—he was a freak. Joe Hancock was a freak. Man o' War was a freak. Secretariat was a freak. The Great Horses are freaks just like men are freaks, you know, like Jesse Owens, that great black runner who won the Olympics in '36. He was a freak. An average nigger couldn't run like that but Jesse Owens could, or whatever. Here's how—even his sperm was freak. I went down—when I was—this is also at Tech. My interview with Dr.—can't recall his name. My memory's not that good. But I went to interview him at his veterinarian clinic in Forest for Sylvan Dunn when I was doing the research. What was his name? I want to say Wright but it wasn't. So I went to interview him and I said, "I want to interview you about Joe

Hancock. I understand you were the veterinarian for him in his last years.” He said, “Yes.” He said, “You know, Mrs. Anne called me and she said, ‘Would you—’” he’s foundered. Today they call it laminitis. That’s when the hoof separates from the bone. That’s what killed Secretariat, laminitis. We called it foundered. We thought that if a horse ate too much rich, it’d be like a man getting the gout. You say gout was from spicy food. So I went down—he said, “Mrs. Anne said, ‘Would you get him and bring him down and save him?’” So he said, “I brought Joe Hancock down here.” He said his old foot was that big. They lose some of their foot and it kind of grows. As the young kids today would say, it looks gross. But he could still cover a mare and she said, “I want to save him.” She’s been saying, “Words were he was my daddy’s favorite horse,” meaning Tom Burnett. So he said, “I kept him here and got him to where he could cover a mare. I had thoroughbred here at the same time.” He said, “I decided that I was going to breed that thoroughbred mare. I decided I’d be sure.” I knew what was on his mind. “I’d be sure that he could cover a mare.” I know what he meant was, “To be sure he could cover one of my mares.” We’re experimenting things so he’s going to get a—own a Hancock horse. So he said, “I don’t know why I did it but I caught some of the semen from the thoroughbred and some of the semen from Joe Hancock.” Who would’ve thought? He said, “I wanted to see.” He said, “In fifteen, twenty minutes, the semen from that thoroughbred was dead.” He said, “An hour later, Joe Hancock’s sperm was just working alive.” He said the reason he could mark them was that his semen and his heirs, it was so powerful that they marked them with the Joe Hancock qualities. He said, “Later she had me bring him back down here and I put him down.” He picked up—he said, “There’s his leg bone.” He had Joe Hancock’s leg bone there. So, that’s kind of the story except as a race horse, he sired some great horses like Buck Hancock and some of those but his—he really became great siring roping horses. The two greatest steer ropers in Oklahoma maybe history. Guy Allen here in Texas of course went beyond. But Shoat Webster and Everett Shaw. Between them they had about seven world’s titles steer roping. One of them went by—Everett Shaw went by the Sixes one day and Joe—George Humphrey was there and he said, “Joe—George, boy, that’s a good looking horse there. He’d make a good steer horse,” and he said, “Well load him up and take him home. I’ll give him to you.” That’s the way George Humphrey and the Sixes were. They were just liberal people. So then Shoat Webster came down and gave him one of—but these were grandsons of Joe Hancock. They were—one’s out of Buck Hancock and whatever. And they took those two horses—and they were well-known. One was called Peanuts and the other Popcorn. They won all those world’s titles. Shoat was a good friend of mine and I said, “Shoat, I guess those were the best roping horses he ever sired.” He said, “Oh no.” He said, “The best Hancock was an own son of Joe. He was called Old John and Clark McEntire won the world’s title on him.” Clack McEntire is the father of Reba McEntire. But he had old John. So on year at the steer roping finals in Laramie, Wyoming—this is in the *Quarter Horse Journal*. There were twenty-one horses, nineteen of them Hancock’s. So, I think I’ve told you enough about—oh, I will tell you one other. They always wanted to outrun us. We all—we thought everybody rode great horses and they were so sensible. I rode an old horse who was an own son of Joe Hancock. He was so gentle, we called him Old Danger and anybody could ride

him; children or whatever. And I loved to ride—he had a mane. He had a mane as thick as any work horse you ever saw, Danger did. Then they were old Winnie May. She foaled some—she was out of Joe Hancock. So anyway, some people working in the oil field down there, Pure Oil Company—boy, this was a big oil community down there. The high school there was nearly as big as Nocona because so many oil fields, like Conoco, had a camp, Pure had a camp, Texaco had a camp. The fellow that ran the Pure Oil Company had two sons and they were always so envious of us for our good horses. So, the dad decided to buy them a couple of good horses, the idea to outrun the Hancock's. So, they made it be known they wanted to match race. So, they wanted to match what we thought was our best horse. I guess he was. He was one of the few—it was kind of unruly. We called him Old Buddy. Wasn't named after me. He was famous Old Buddy. Tom had a—he was going to ride a horse, Old John—not the one that Clarke got but these would be grandsons—and I was going—and we all went up to the cattle guard and the cattle guard was about a good quarter of a mile to the highway that goes to Nocona. One goes to Spanish Fort and one goes to Nocona. And so, we all got up there for the match race. I don't think there was any money but they just—for pride. This was pride. He was going to outrun—and my gosh, they were good-looking horses. We took a look at them and we thought, Maybe we'd met our match. These guys, they've really brought in something. They brought a ringer in on us. So that means you bring in one that's an unknown. They said, "Well, we're going to run to the highway there. Just leave enough room to stop them." So, they said, "You're going to run against Old Buddy." Tom said, "I think I'll just run old John along with you." I said, "I'm going to put Old Danger in. So, we had—there's five horses. We ran to the end of that thing and all three of our horses outran there horses. They took those horses home and we never heard from them again. That was the most fun day to beat those boys from the Pure Oil. Pure had all of—down on the Keck Ranch down there, most of that oil was the Pure Oil Company. Well anyway, that's the story—maybe it's a long road to talk about but this is good history.

AW:

It sure is.

BT:

I've told you some things that, you know, that didn't get out of the—oh, I didn't tell you how they saved him.

AW:

No.

BT:

Well, they were going to—twice in his life they were going to get rid of him because—I don't mean kill him. There were no such thing as real veterinarians in those days. A veterinarian was one who'd found a few books and maybe walked—made a few calls with a real—we didn't have

one in Montague County but we had one man that everyone respected as Jim Clingingsmith. Some of them even called him doctor but he was Jim Clingingsmith. Just enough to keep animals alive. Once a year—I say once a year, I could be wrong on that—but sometime during the year, he'd go through the country and castrate the horses. Most nearly all horses were castrated. Kind of different to the Spanish. You know, they didn't kill anything. That's why so many got here on a plane. So they were going—they could—Joe—he was—studs were trouble. They're harder to handle. We had so many Hancock's in that country, you know. So, they said, "We're going to castrate this horse." He didn't even have a—let's see. I didn't—I guess he didn't even have a name then. That was in the early days, maybe before Ogles got him. I don't know. But they threw him down and Jim Clingingsmith walked over, kind of looked at his testicles. He said, "Joe, are you sure you want to castrate this horse?" He said, "Well, he's a lot of trouble." Clingingsmith said to him, he said, "Joe, I think there's something special about this horse. If I were you, I wouldn't castrate him." Uncle Joe said, "Let him up." He was that close to losing—

AW:

A whole line.

BT:

—what I told you. Then they sent him to that doctor in Abilene. If they couldn't get him, they were going to put him down. So he saved—so twice in his life—and it was after that, you know, that he sired so many of these great horses. So anyway, that's the story that—I guess there's no other think that I want to tell you that won't get—that somebody doesn't already know. But they didn't know, up here at the Quarter Horse Association, for sure until a few years ago when Tom and I went up there that he was out of Percheron mare.

AW:

That's really interesting to me.

BT:

Yes. Now they've got it in there. And they had Joe Hancock as the breeder. Tom said, "No, my daddy was not the breeder. My granddaddy, Jackson—so they've got all of that straight. But in the West—I'm going to go up to Canadian for a fellow who's a Christian speaker. His name is Jeff Copenhaver. He makes CD's. He's got a book. He's giving away three-hundred thousand. I announced a rodeo for his dad at Spokane, Deb Copenhaver, who won the Saddle Bronc Riding twice. I'm going to go up and see them. Deb got into the breeding of horses and he bred some of the great Hancock's in Washington state. I talked to a woman the other day in—I was recommending some people for her ranch in Big Timber, Montana. Told her my uncle was Joe Hancock and she said, "Boy, the Hancock's have made a mark in Montana." So I guess that's about—oh, except this. My gosh, this is one that's—it's in the tape at tech. Nobody else ever knew this. I was out with Aunt Cora one evening, May and I. She said, "Bud." She said, "The

little Percheron mare—Joe and I”—she was a tough woman. Wonderful lady, Aunt Cora. One of the finest woman I ever knew. I don't mean she's tough in bad terms. Something had happened out here in the Panhandle and they drove two-hundred head of horses to Papa Keck's ranch that they lived on. While Joe was there—it was Joe that drove them. Joe drove them there. They'd already met. He wouldn't have brought the horses if he'd hadn't—he drove the horses. Uncle Joe and Aunt Cora married while he was there. They spent their first honeymoon night under a wagon. What's this got to do with Joe Hancock? The mare that gave birth to Joe Hancock was among that herd. After they married, they took their wagon and drove back to Ochiltree County. So, that's a good way to end this. But isn't that interesting?

AW:

That's a great way to end.

BT:

That this mare was in foal on the night of their honeymoon.

AW:

It's about close to eleven-thirty. You feel like talking a little more before we break for lunch?

BT:

Yeah sure.

AW:

Would you mind talking a little bit about your dad?

BT:

Yes. No. How do you answer that? No, I don't want to talk about him or yes, I'd be glad to talk about him. He was a great—he was a wonderful man, great influence on me. Probably had a—if he had a seventh grade education, I'd be surprised, maybe tenth. Maybe not that much, which makes no difference to the character of a man. In fact, he might be better off without it, I mean the education. His name was Claude W. I don't know how—I guess his family was fond of Daniel Webster—Claude Webster Townsend. He had a brother named J.D. Townsend, which we've learned lately was John David Townsend. So, he was born—I think my marriage license out there has got his name on it. He was born in Montgomery, Alabama in about 1890. I've got his picture in there. Didn't have many pictures. People didn't have cameras. It's too bad very few pictures of Joe Hancock—these things today, gosh. If we'd of had these iPhones, wouldn't it have been something to have gotten some—but anyway, his mother brought them, Daddy and uncle J.D. by covered wagon from Montgomery, Alabama. I'm going to say that was in the late 1890's, early 2001 or whatever. Now, we know nothing of his father except his name was Tom Townsend. They moved by covered wagon and went to Indian territory, which was Oklahoma,

as you know. There's where they kind of grew up. She got a job. She was a tall lady of—I thought a rather handsome lady. See, when they came—I don't know what year my mother and dad married, but momma was growing up on that Hilton Ranch while he was working in the oil field. So, the two of them met in Oklahoma and married, I guess, in Hilton. I'd have to look. They could've come across to Nocona where her family because Papa Keck wasn't living in—he's back over with his other places in Texas. He was a fellow—he was a fellow exactly Ivan's size, maybe a little taller. But thin—or my size but I'd say he's closer to Ivan. I remember him out on the first ranch we lived. We had one, two, three, four ranches in that country and we were in I guess his second ranch because the old, really big ranch house, looked like something out of that movie *The Giant*, it was down the road from us about three-eighths of a mile through a field. He had all kinds of fields. It was in this house that I first got a touch of music and got a loving for horses and many things. The only thing was learning that I got later. But my dad was a gentleman of the old school. He was an oil field worker. That's what he put down on that marriage license. At one time, [coughs] he owned three drilling rigs of his own. They'd be parked out in front of the ranch there in—but he got tuberculosis and had to give that up. Well, he was a—he loved life and was a gentleman of a gentleman. I don't believe I ever heard him use profanity or whatever. He was not a religious man except in the sense he believed in God. The only book that was ever in that ranch—they had a bookcase about that wide. As I recall, it was about thirty-eighty volumes called *The Book of Life*. Any of you remember it?

AW:

The Book of Life?

BT:

The Book of Life was the Bible stories. So, there had to be a connection there that I didn't know. But we were too far away from any church. The only transportation we had was either catch a ride with some of the family that had a car or we go in a wagon. Nothing to go to town eight miles on a Saturday and go to the movie and then come back. So, he'd have those oil—he was an oil field worker. Knew Erle P. Halliburton real well. In fact, my granddad sold Halliburton the land where his office is in Duncan. Got fifteen-thousand dollars for it. Boy, was that a lot of money in the late thirties. Never will forget it. It's a little off subject. But we were all at the old ranch house in town. My Aunt Pearl, she was a beautiful woman. I mean beautiful. Hollywood couldn't touch her. She was of the beauty of my wife, who's one of the most beautiful women physically and mentally I ever knew. But this aunt was around. Married two or three times and whatever. She was something. Cussed like a sailor and smoked but was beautiful with it. Some of those people back then could cuss and it was pretty. I can't explain. She used to—Aunt Pearl would come—we'd go up in their room at the big ranch. The kids: Buck's room, Pearl's and Edna's in the next room. Four bedrooms upstairs. So she'd go up with Doc Leake after her first husband was killed. He was running from the Texas Rangers. He was peddling that hot oil that I don't know anything about but whatever that hot oil was down in Kilgore, Gladewater, and

Longview. He was killed in a car wreck. She married a doctor. They'd come home at Christmas time and Aunt Pearl would—they'd all come in there. They'd bring great gifts for us. We were all so poor that whatever we got from them was our best gift. But she loved to spend—she'd be sitting across the room. She'd say, "Buddy, you little son of a bitch. Come over here and kiss your old aunt." She called all of us son of—one time a bunch of us got together and somebody said, "Is Aunt Pearl mad at us?" They said, "Why?" I said, "Because she hasn't called us a son of a bitch since she's been here." We looked on that as a term of endearment. But anyway, getting back to my granddad and Halliburton. He had this couple of ranches there in Duncan.

Halliburton's place was down in tin barns. They were old tin barns. I guess some of them are still there. Well, he wanted a new—he was going—he was getting high and mighty, you know. He wanted a place out on the highway to build his offices. They're there this day. I guess Brown & Root owns them now. But anyway, he wanted to buy this piece of property that Papa had. I guess some realtor told him, said—wasn't a big place. We okay on—

AW:

We're good. I'm just checking the battery.

BT:

He said—they told him fifteen-thousand dollars. So, Papa sold it to him and they mailed Papa—this is why I'm tying everything to Pearl. Kind of the Vamp family. It was an old ranch family. So, Papa had this check. He was sitting over here by his radio where he sat all the time—couch is over here. Aunt Pearl was maybe behind him fixing her hair and there was a bathroom behind her. She had a habit of going to the bathroom. At times she'd—if we were all here in this room, she'd have her panties down where you could see her butt. She'd say, "Keep talking. I'm listening." She'd go and use the bathroom and come back. I mean, there was no—so, this day, Papa said—she said, "Papa, what are you going to do with that fifteen-thousand dollar check?" He said, "I don't know." He said, "You can wipe your ass on it if you want to." She said, "Give it to me." She went in, took a crap, wiped her ass on that fifteen-thousand—[laughter] they liked to have never got it cleaned up but that kind of tells you something of that family. But anyway, getting back to daddy. He was a strict disciplinarian. Oh my gosh. If you bought—if you picked up one of his hammers, you could do whatever but you better put it back. Everything had to be put back in place. And he loved my mother. Oh my gosh, he worshipped her. If one of us boys would've said—she'd say, "Go gather the eggs," and we'd said, "Oh, I've got—" uh oh. Boy, he'd grab you by the neck. It didn't make any difference we younger boys or the older boys. He had boys as large as he was. Bill cut the eyes of mama one time. He grabbed him, took him out and whipped his butt. He was a gentleman and you acted like a gentleman. He had way of—that taught us to respect women. It taught us to respect our elders and older people and whatever. Even some of the family that was wretched, he would—we'd have respect. He had—let's see, I have to stop—we had five boys: two older than I, two younger than I. Well, you know you're going to have fights. They're going to be trouble. So, daddy was a—I'm glad you asked about

him because things come to you. He was a boxer. He was a—oh, he loved boxing. He was like Theodore Roosevelt. He loved boxing. Always kept a set of boxing gloves. In fact, he sparred one time with Jack Dempsey. He knew Jack Dempsey better than I know some of you because he hung around the gyms in Oklahoma and wherever. In those days, there wasn't enough money in heavyweight fighting and they didn't fight too often that Jack Dempsey would come to a gymnasium and say, "We're going to have a fight with Ivan Cates and Jack Dempsey's going to fight him. If Cates is our best boxer, he may, you know, draw a crowd." And daddy hung around those things. He wasn't a professional like Cates but he hung around and Jack knew him. So, they advertised one of these fights one night and the guy got sick or something. Jack said to daddy, he said, "Claude, you're going to have to go in the ring with me tonight." He said, "Jack, my gosh." He said, "You okay?" He said, "No, Claude, I promise you I won't hurt you." So daddy got in the ring with him and went to two or three rounds, enough to satisfy the crowd. Jimmy Braddock was daddy's bosom buddy. When Jimmy Braddock became the world's champion, daddy just rejoiced. He'd known him around these gyms. You know who Jimmy Braddock was? That movie the Cinderella Man. Don't you remember living in New York City and he won the world's title? I think he lost it the next year. I think Max Baer beat him the next year. But daddy would—let's say Ed and I'd have a fight. Daddy, "Oh, hey, come here boys. I saw you all fighting a while ago." He'd say, "You know, boys, if you're going to fight, it ought to be by—" what is it—"Queensberry rules." He said, "I'm going to put gloves on you and I want you to really fight." He said, "Get it out of you." "Oh no, we've—" he said, "No, you'll have to fight because you love to fight." He drew a ring. He knew that we'd fake it and wouldn't give it all we had. So he said, "I want you to fight and give it all you got. Whoever loses has to fight me." He had a jab just like that and, I mean, it was like a fence post that'd hit you. We were scared to death of that. So, I've fought with old Ed and boy, we'd be—I don't know who's the best. We'd fight. He said, "Whoever gets knocked out of the ring has to fight me." Well, Ed would get this close to the back of that ring. He'd look back and he'd see it. My gosh. He would come after me and whip me to the other side of the ring. By the time we finished, we were afraid to get out of that ring on a count of having to fight daddy. So, when the fight was over, I mean there wasn't a fight for several days. We were just wore out. He said, "Boys, you did a good job. I don't think I'll fight you today," or we'd spar a little with him. He had a right—it was when—it was almost like he knew exactly what the length was because it always hit you when the arm was straightened out. I guess they call that a jab. Anyway, he was—he loved Jimmie Rodgers. This had a great influence on me. He taught me to love music. He had a little old Sears & Roebuck guitar. I've still got it. I had to go to Jimmy Meek up here and it was in pieces. It was in a sack. I took and Jimmy—three-hundred dollars was a lot of money to me. I just started teaching here and Jimmy fixed it and it looked beautiful. He charged me three-hundred dollars. Well anyway, daddy had this little guitar and he and my oldest brother Donald would get out on this screened-in porch, little old thing about—if you just fix this off right here. They'd sit in a chair and daddy would wear—daddy wore an undershirt year round, a real undershirt, not a t-shirt. You remember the old undershirts? I've still got some. Daddy would play and he would sing some,

and Donald. They'd sing Jimmie Rodgers songs. Now, one reason they sang Jimmie Rodgers songs is daddy and Jimmie Rodgers were good friends and here's the way it happened. Jimmie Rodgers had tuberculosis so he moved to Kerrville, Texas and built a home there. It was called Blue Yodeler's Hill or something like that, his house. It's a beautiful home in Kerrville. Well, that didn't do him enough good so they sent him to the sanitarium—that's what they called them back then—to the sanitarium in San Angelo. My dad had tuberculosis and he went to San Angelo and they met, and sang, and played together. Well, when they came—when daddy came home—in those days, you didn't have concerts with big crowds, you'd just—even Bessie Smith, you know, had to play wherever she could to—but they put his Roadster—he had a beautiful Roadster. You ever see pictures of it?

AW:

Um-hm.

BT:

The biography is right up there. It's in *My Series: Music and American Life* and he tells about daddy. What's his name? Rosenberg or whatever his name is that wrote the book tells about my daddy. When Jimmie would come to Nocona, first thing he'd do is get a hold of daddy or Lyndon Manley [?] [1:52:13], who also could play second, or both of them. By second, you kind of lay the bass down. You know more about it than I do. But daddy—Jimmie would play his guitar and they'd just kind of back him up. We'll just say he backed him up. Jimmie would play and sing. Well, he would—he always wanted daddy. He would come and drive through town and people knew his Roadster and they'd draw a crowd. He'd come to our house there—the big ranch house—sit on the front porch, he and daddy, and they would sing and play. Then daddy would play with him, usually Schoolhouse. And he drank. I'm told people with tuberculosis have a low-grade temperature forever. Until they get rid of it, because they can now—and a little whiskey, at least they think—he thought that. And he had a flask of whiskey, Jimmie did. My sister learned a lot about this. He'd sit on the front porch and he'd have—he smoked. That's something—he and daddy both smoked and most people did. If daddy rolled his own, I guess Jimmie had the money to buy his own—roll them. Red Rose is what we called them. So, they would sit and play and Jimmy would—he had a cigarette lighter, about that wide. I'd say it was an inch and a quarter wide and three inches high or two and a half inches high. Had a little stem down the side that would—that brought your lighter fluid up. It was solid sterling silver. I know because I bit it so many times. So, my sister, Dorothy, would go out and watch him. She'd never seen a cigarette lighter. You know, they weren't common. They weren't for the common people till World War II, because I never did see one. It was about that thick, about three quarters—I'm trying to—because we're on tape. Dorothy'd say, "Let me see it." She was a pretty little girl. We called her—they thought she looked like Shirley Temple. She did, too. So, one day he said, "Dorothy, I'm—" no, Dolly Dimple or whatever he called her. Dolly Dimple. "I'm going to give you this cigarette lighter." It was an heirloom. You know, we didn't have anything in our house

worth two dollars, just old junk, furniture or whatever. We didn't have anything. And the house wasn't worth fifty. We kept that as a family thing. People would look at it. I talked to her the other day and her daughter, she says she can't find it. Dorothy ought to be whipped for letting that cigarette—it ought to go to the Hall of Fame because that was rare. Well, he had this flask and so he would—and Dorothy was a terrible liar. He would take a drink and Dorothy said, "I've never seen a flask." He'd take—she said, "Of course." My dad would never touch a drink of alcohol. Well damn, he drank it with Jimmie the same as he would. I said, "Dorothy, you couldn't get away without telling a lie." So it's in that book that my daddy, of course, wouldn't take a drink. But he was close to Jimmie Rodgers. When Jimmie died, it just nearly killed my dad because they were—you know, they were sick together. If Jimmie had lived eight more years and my daddy had lived two more years, we'd have had penicillin and they could've lived. Jimmie died at, what, thirty-three, twenty-nine. Daddy was on to forty-eight. But if he had lived two years, they got the penicillin because Doctor Leak could get it. He was any Army doctor by then during the World War II. But I remember my dad. He gave me that—oh, and one day—and he was a tinkerer. I guess that's the way to—and I don't mean that as a putdown to him. If you wanted to brag on him, you could say he had great ingenuity. He had worked in the oil field as a mechanic. So, there was no electricity. We didn't have electricity at our ranch till after World War II. That means you didn't have inside plumbing, anything. So, daddy got the idea—he was the pioneer of wind energy. He put a pipe up beside our house and where he got an airplane propeller, I don't know. He hooked this airplane propeller to the front of a car generator and mounted that on this pole and had a wire coming down and you put a piece of wood on it there, a handle, and you could pull that down and put a wire around it and shut it off. If the wind got too high, it could tear it up. So, he would—we'd get car batteries and keep them in a certain room. He'd run those wires and he clamped those so we could have—we were the only people in the country that had a radio. So, this opened another door for me. I was just a boy. We'd keep that battery up and we'd know when it was going to be down. There was no way to test them those days. We'd buy radios that you had hooks and you could use them just like a car radio. You had car radios. So, there was three things we never missed. We thought Franklin D. Roosevelt was second to God. So, we never missed the President's speech. If people'd say, "Hey, the President's going to talk on Thursday night, don't run that—don't be listening to One Man's Family or Mall Perkins." The other thing was being Bing Crosby, Kraft Music Hall. I loved Bing Crosby. They called me Bing as a kid. In my yearbook it said, "Bing, you're doing—" I just worshipped him. And smoked pipe. They're all up here on that shelf because Bing smoked pipe. So, we were thumbing through that. If it hadn't been for my dad—now, he had lived somewhere where he had heard Light Crust Doughboys. When Bob Wills had the Light Crust Doughboys with Milton Brown and Derwood Brown and Herman Arnspiger. But daddy told, "I don't know what happened to Bob." He said—the Light Crust Doughboys were still going. By this time they had fired old Daniel and he'd have the Hillbilly boys and he'd become governor and so forth. So one day at noon, we were all sitting at the dinner table. People at together then. You couldn't go anywhere. We'd roll that dial and we heard this upbeat music, fiddles and a guy hollering

[imitates sound]. We thought it was comedy. We thought, My gosh, this is—and it picked us up. For poor, ignorant people who didn't have any hope of the future. It was during the Depression on the eve of World War II we knew was coming. We saw that in the *Weekly Reader* we got at school. But we heard this band, Bob Wills. Daddy said, "Be quiet. I believe that's Bob Wills. Boy, I fell in love with Bob Wills that day. Every day at twelve-thirty, if the weather was right, we could pick up on that radio KVOO in Tulsa. Then at night, if you stayed up until midnight or eleven o'clock, then you could hear Bob's broadcast from Cain's Dancing Academy in Tulsa. So, there's where I fell in love and daddy loved Bob Wills. He said, "Son—" I never will forget it. I've got it in an article or two I wrote. He said, "Son—" whether he said "son" or not, I wouldn't be sure. Probably he said, "Buddy" or "Bud". He said, "You watch that Bob Wills." He said, "Someday, he's going to be big." Well, I never forgot that, not knowing that I'd write the book on Bob Wills. But it all hinged on my dad, his love of music and I guess he was a great carpenter, daddy was. He built—barns were bad to burn those days. You see, a new barn, you could figure it's not going to last too long, the reason being this: they put up hay too green. If you're not an old timer like myself, if you put green hay in a barn, it will set a fire. Something about that heat causes the dry hay to—did you know that, Ivan?

IC:
Right.

BT:
He built all the barns for Papa Keck and he was the most respected member of our family. Rest of them were very profane, like Aunt Pearl, whom I loved. But Daddy was a gentleman. You know, my granddad never called him Claude; Mr. Townsend. Most of the family—nobody else was mister, but he was Mr. Townsend. Then his health broke and we moved over to another ranch. It was about—and we moved by wagons. The family—three wagons showed up there, just talking about old bundle wagons. We loaded up all of our furniture. My, wouldn't it have been something to have a picture of that. Those three wagons going—it was about three miles. It put us six miles from town. Now, this was the oil fields place. It was another one of those places that Papa bought. And we moved by wagon. Not covered wagon. My daddy came by covered wagon but there was no need. Several of the family—Uncle Fred has his wagon and Uncle Jodie. I don't think we had one. We didn't have one till Papa gave it to me—gave it to us later. We moved to the place where my daddy died and he kept going—he put up that wind charger again, his wind energy. Environmentalists ought to love us. So, we—he put that up and he kind of went downhill. I'll never forget the day he died. He was coughing. You could hear those tubercular coughs a hundred yards. He was—now, momma thinks he died of throat cancer but the diagnosis was that he died—and of course, I had my uncle who married Aunt Pearl and he kind of looked after him some. But he died in July—I always thought it was August—he died in July of 1938. By the time he died, there was four or five cars—didn't have as many pickups then. There were four or five cars, maybe and mom and papa's. He always had a good car. Uncle Joe had a good

car. And about five or six wagons and seven or eight people who came in horseback and had them tied to the trees. But I can see them now out with the croquet—my dad loved to play croquet so we played the gentleman's game right there. We'd play croquet. But I'll never forget that afternoon that he died. My granddad, I don't know whether he came out or not, but he called Cone's Funeral Home. He said, "J.H., you go out and pick up Claude's body and give him the best funeral you can give him." So, we took him and buried him in the old Keck Cemetery where Nelson Keck first came. Since then, when momma died, we exhumed his body and they're both now in Nocona. But that's kind of the story of my dad.

AW:

Perfect. Thanks. What a good time. Now we can take just a little bit of a break if that's all right with you.

BT:

Yes. That is sure all right.

AW:

All right. Thanks

MG:

It's been amazing.

AW:

We'll resume.

BT:

My trouble is as a historian and you know so much about a subject, you're afraid you'll be shallow if you don't tell it all. People interview with me—Bob Wills, I feel sorry for him because I'll talk too much but if I don't, I feel like I've short-changed him.

MG:

You don't talk too much at all.

AW:

You're like me, though. You do interviews and, you know, as an interviewer, the worst thing you can do is ask someone a question, they look at you and they nod their head. [Laughter]

BT:

"I don't remember." When you can't get them to talk. I've had them say, "Boy, you're the best interview I've ever had."

MG:

I think that's true. You know that's true.

AW:

We're going to take a short break here.

MG:

I'm going to use the bathroom upstairs.

BT:

Upstairs. And the book collection's up there if you want to take a look at it.

IC:

In a little bit.

BT:

Right on up. [Pause in recording] A couple from Lander, Wyoming had come here to visit Charles Goodnight country. They were going to the canyon and they were going to Clarendon.

AW:

Keep talking.

BT:

Are we ready?

AW:

Yeah. I was just letting it run because, you know, there's so many good things happening when it's not turned on.

BT:

Yes. That's when you do—you know, I've done interviews and know you have. The best interview is when you walk into the car and say, "If we just got—" that's right. One other thing I want to say about Hancock horses and the Sixes; George Humphrey. One thing—George, he didn't like—he wasn't—he liked Hancock's but his favorite was Hollywood Gold. He rode—he led the grand entry at the Stanford Rodeo for about forty years. Many of those years he rode Hollywood Gold, who was a great stallion but not the [clears throat] stature of Joe Hancock. But [coughs] he told me a story as only George could tell me. I interviewed him in the barn. We can move from this right to anything else you want to do. But I was doing research for [clears throat] Southwest Collection when Sylvan Dunn was there. I think you may have heard me say that, when I said that about the sociologists.

AW:

No, we talked about that the other day when I was here and we weren't recording.

BT:

But it wasn't on tape.

AW:

No. we were just—

BT:

That's what I mean.

AW:

Yeah. Exactly.

BT:

So, I told Mary—we were doing—I was doing—he wanted research from everything: rodeo, what—everything—because he was so interested. Just a wonderful fellow. I don't know why he took a liking to me. I hung out over there with that historian whose name I couldn't think of.

AW:

I meant to look that up before I got here and I hadn't, I'm embarrassed to say.

BT:

He said, "Bud—" he called and he said, "Bud, I want you to go to Four Sixes and I've made arrangements for you to interview George Humphrey. He's been the foreman over there for fifty years." I looked at the map and I said, "Mary, we're going through Turkey, Texas." She said, "What about it?" I said, "You know, I heard Bob Wills say, 'I always had to play Big Taters in the Sandy Land for old Doc Garner down in good, old Turkey, Texas. So I thought, Uh oh. There's got to be some people there. So I told Mary, I said, 'I'm going through there and if Sylvan will let me, I'm going to start interviewing people about Bob Wills.'" I said, "The country's not sophisticated enough now to appreciate him." Little did I know. But I said, "In fifty years they will when I'm gone but I'm not going to let these people die and not get this history." So I called Sylvan. I thought, Uh oh. I didn't know if—I didn't know he was that broad that he'd let you get into music. I said, "Sylvan, I'm going through Turkey, Texas," and I said, "You know, Bob Wills grew up there, barbered there. If it's all right with you, I'm going to interview some of those people." He said, "Bud, hell yes." He said, "He was my favorite when I was at the University of Texas. He was our favorite down—go ahead." He said, "Have at it." Well, so I went down to interview George. That's how I knew he liked Hollywood Gold. George Humphrey loved the cowboy life more than any human being I ever saw. I mean, he wouldn't

back off, not for Ms. Anne or anybody. In fact, he said, "Well, Mrs. Anne called me the other day and said, 'George, I know it's getting hard for you to find mules to pull that chuck wagon out in the spring.'" He said, "Waggoner's has a truck that they hook to their chuck wagon and it'll be so much easier. He said, 'Listen Mrs. Anne, long as I'm foreman of this outfit, we won't take that wagon out behind a truck.'" He said, "We'll either take it out behind some mules or we won't go at all." She said, "That's fine, George. I was just trying—" he was like a father to her. So, I went in to interview him and he was in the kind of a tack room. You could tell they make some coffee there. By that old, big barn. He chewed that old tobacco. He would get ready [imitates spitting] and he'd spit. I've got all that on tape. That's worth a million dollars.

AW:

Is this tape at the Southwest Collection?

BT:

Yes it is at Southwest. So, we talked and we talked about horses. I said, "What about the Hancock horses?" He said, "I'll tell you one thing." He said, "You damn sure couldn't outrun him. Several of us had one down to the eight's," that's another section. "We were all on our way back, eight or ten of us, and somebody said, 'Let's have a race.'" George said, "All right." He said, "We broke to go to that barn. Those Hancock horses just ran off from us. I still like Hollywood Gold but he"—and we talked, many things. I'd love to hear the tape myself. He said—he was talking about something. He said, "They've tried everything to steal our cattle and everything, it's so big." He said there was a fellow that ranched next to us and he was a known cow thief. Just a terrible man. He said—the phone rang here and it was Woody Cuch. It was either Woody Cuch or it could've been Cassidy. These were commission companies on the Fort Worth Stockyards. See, in those days, there was no such thing as a sale barn. If people raised cattle in Roswell, New Mexico, they had to take them to Fort Worth to sell them. The Sixes did take some stockers to—they'd feed out in Kansas but mainly they took everything to Fort Worth and they had what was called a commission company. You take in a hundred cows in two pens, and the way they sold them is on Monday morning, Armor would send in a man. All had a walking cane. Swift would send one and **Cuttahay [?]** [2:16:16] or whoever. They'd say—and they'd just auction them right there. If Swift bought them, they knew how to route them down through those—you know, it was huge. We got in twenty-eight thousand head one night. No, wait a minute. It was thirty—the next night, we got thirty-two thousand on Sunday night and twenty-eight thousand on Monday night. Over fifty-thousand head in two nights. When they parked those trucks down on 28th street—and they knew how to open those gates. We'd come this way, this way. Finally they had to go right into Woody Cuch or whoever they were assigned to. We got that many in. So then if Swift bought them, they'd route them right down and they'd kill them within an hour because they had packing plants right there. They had sheet barns, hogs, whatever. They kill him. So, this guy called and he said, "Burk." He said, "Your neighbor just bought twenty head—" as I recall—"twenty head of your Canner cows. They're not worth

anything but you know why I bought them.” Burk said, “Yes,” meaning he bought those cows to take and put in his place and steal cattle and say, “Look here, I bought—I didn’t steal those. These are Sixes that I bought in Fort Worth.” So, Burk knew what he was doing and so did Humphrey. He was—they were buddy buds. So, he said, “I’ll go to Paducah and he’ll be bringing them in there.” So they brought them by rail. They didn’t truck them those days, they sent them by rail. So, he said, “Burk—I went in this hotel and we knew where he was going to come. I guess it was the only place you could come. So he said, “We went in and had breakfast.” He said, “Here he came.” He said, “Burk was watching him. I was watching him.” He said he went in the toilet and Burk went in and a shot rang out. This guy just—they had swinging doors on the toilet. You’ll see them like that. This man just fell through those swinging doors, just as dead as he could be. This girl that was the clerk that checked you in and everything, she screamed [imitates scream]. She screamed loud and said—George was on the outside looking to see who was coming out. She said, “Did you kill him?” He said, “No, but if Burk had missed the son of a bitch, I was going to kill him.” [Laughter] I thought that was one of the best stories I’ve—“If Burk had missed the son of a bitch, I was going to kill him.” I said, “What’d they do with Burk?” He said, “Nothing. I was the sheriff at the time.” [laughter] There probably wasn’t two-hundred people living in King County. So, they took him—get this, they took him to Guthrie to try him. [Laughter] I’ll bet you everything was four 6 Cowboy that was on the jury. So naturally they turned him loose. I thought that was one of the greatest stories. Evidently, both of them wore guns, you know, all of them. Probably the guy had a gun on him so that cleared.

AW:

Yeah. That was the defense.

BT:

But I wouldn’t take anything for that interview. I came back by there and found a guy. I said, “Does anybody here remember Bob Wills?” He said, “Yes.” He said, “He hasn’t been here in a long time. He used to cut hair here.” He said, “That man is at the old Phillips 66 station.” He said, “That man right—I think his name was Goode or Good. He knows right where he lived. He worked the roads. So I knocked on the door and this old gentleman in overalls came out and I said, “Do you know about where Bob lived?” He said, “Oh yes.” He said—I loved the way he put it—“I dragged the roads in front of his house. I dragged the roads.” He said, “The Oxbow Crossing was right there on Red River and I’d go right in front of the house.” So he took me out there and I kept that tape recorder. The word spread and the next day I got a phone call from the postmaster and he said, “I’ve got your 4-5.” He said, “I’ve got Doc Garner’s daughter lined up to interview. I’ve got this one and that.” So, that all ties together how I started the interviews on [clears throat] Bob Wills. His daughter was Hardaway. We went over there and we talked. She said, “You see that record player there?” I said, “Yes.” She said, “My dad loved Bob Wills so much. He didn’t have a record player or any records and Bob came by here one time and brought him this record player and a bunch of records.” That’s the kind of man Bob was. Old Doc

Garner. I interviewed his son who was in the insurance business over here at Clarington. He said—this postmaster, Jim Major said, “If she’ll give you an interview.” He said, “One of Bob’s girlfriends, teenage girlfriends, lives right over there but I don’t think she’ll give you an interview. She’s going through a divorce. She’s married to the man who’s president of the bank. So, we went over to her house and I told her who I was and she was cordial, just a lot of fun. She had already named one of her sons Jim Bob. So, that was enough for a divorce, I guess. So, I said, “Well, would you go out there at that house with me? I was there yesterday.” She said, “I really shouldn’t.” She said—you know, going through a divorce, this, that, and the other. She said, “I better not.” We talked a while. She said, “Hell, jump in the car. Let’s go out there.” Boy, this was a gold mine. I turned that recorder on and she and I—I think maybe the twins were with us. She told me a lot going out there. She said, “He had a band here of just kids. He’d holler and he said, ‘Just like the Beatles,’ or something. They just went wild when Bob would holler. You know, kid stuff.” She took me into the house—it’s still there—and she said, “Now here’s the where they played country dance.” We were going to come back to country dance. I tie that to dad, too. She said, “Bob, you see this room here, here? There’s one here and here.” She said, “They could sit right here; fiddle player and mandolin player.” They didn’t use guitars. Guitars were—guitar was a negro instrument, not a white man.

AW:

And they were pretty quiet in comparison to banjos, mandolins, and fiddles, too.

BT:

Bob used them—he played mandolin to second for his dad. She said, “They sat right there.” Then she told, she said, “Right here was Eloise’s room.” She said, “As many as the time, Bob and I would—he got an old Model T.” She said, “We’d go up into Oklahoma and he’d play the dance till twelve o’clock or one. We’d drive back, get back three or four o’clock and climb in that window.” She said, “I’d sleep there many of night with Eloise.” She was Bob’s crippled sister. She had a little limp. I think polio or something; not bad. She showed me everything about—now it comes to me. I was sitting here, going through my mind, “Bud, can’t you even think of her—” sometimes you just can’t think of a—her name was Laverne. So, she—we talked—she just made us welcome. We just loved her. You could tell she was a vivacious woman. So I was back there another time and Bob—I’d been doing interviews with Bob and he said, “You know, I want you to give credit—” very few things he ever told me about writing that book. I guess he was a man who was a free spirit that plays music. He didn’t want to inhibit me. He only asked me two or three things to do. Other than that, I was completely free. I was free even for that. But he said, “There’s some boys that lived at Quitaque named Stoclet.” He said, “They had played over there with a symphony in Roswell. He said, “You know, they taught me some things. He’d said, “I’d kind of wish you’d give them a little credit in the book if you will.” I said, “I sure will,” but I couldn’t learn any more than Mrs. Shelton had in her book. So I said, “Laverne.” I said, “My gosh, I can’t find out anything about some boys that lived at Quitaque.

They were musicians and Bob played with them. Their name was Stoclet.” She said, “I used to go with those boys.” She said, “I’ve got a picture of them.” So she came out and she had a picture of these very guys. I said, “Laverne, if it hadn’t been for your love affairs, I couldn’t write this book.” [Laughter] She was such a delightful lady, and her husband, too. I knew him. He had run the bank there. But that country dance, you asked me about my dad earlier.

AW:

Before we go to country dance, let me ask: would you like a cough drop?

BT:

Oh yeah. I’ll take one. I don’t need it. Thank you very much. Whoever’s listening, we’re getting a cough drop. I think you heard me coughing.

AW:

I once offered a cough drop to a friend of mine, kind of a severe woman, and she said—she looked at me square in the eye and she said, “I don’t do cough drops for fun,” [laughter] which I’d never heard of before.

BT:

I haven’t either.

AW:

So, a question I have for you about those interviews, especially with people like Laverne is that I know other friends of mine who’ve done biographies have had to walk a pretty fine line from time to time with survivors of family. Did you ever run into any sort of conflict when you were doing that magnificent book with the people left behind that wanted things to go one way or another?

BT:

You know, as Bob would say, “In most cases I’d say that people be that way.” That’s the way he put it. Somebody asked him one time, “You remember your first fiddle tune?” He said, “Most fiddle players would tell you they can’t,” but he said, “I remember the first time.” But anyway, get away from that. No, I didn’t. Let me see. [clears throat] Especially his brothers and sisters. I even got to meet his mother but she had Alzheimer’s and she was gone by then mentally. No, I—let’s see. I can’t say that I really had much trouble with that. They were so—even his wives. He was married six times and every one of them seemed like they told me—I’ll tell you. You know this better than I do. If you interview enough people, you can catch a phony before they open their mouth. The worst ones that you run onto—and I didn’t run onto many of them and if I did, as the Bible said, I shook the dust off my feet and took off. I said, “I want to talk to you about Bob Wills.” “Well, I knew old Bob so I know more about—” I knew then you’re screwed up,

when they tell you they know so much, it's best—you know, I can't tell you much. I do know this, the first thing you know, you've got a great interview with somebody who didn't know anything and they're not going to try to twist anything. They're just so honest, no—but those old country dances, if you want me to say a little about it.

AW:

Yeah, please.

BT:

That was an institution gone, I guess, forever. But when we lived over in that first ranch house, what we'd do is we'd take some of the furniture—and this is where I learned about country dances and music for dances. We had an old fiddle player there named John De La Mascus. So, he played for most of them. He'd pick up someone to help him, Ivan, you know, to play—to back him up. But we'd take a lot—most of the time, you just moved the furniture back but sometimes you'd put it out on the front porch or put it out. Then you would get—the fiddlers would—even in our house—would try to get in a place where you could hear it in four rooms. You could get it in the living room, which our living—thought it was just a shack—was about this long, you know. That was the biggest room in the house so most of the playing was for that room where the audience would be in front of the fiddler and the guitar. I never went to one that had any more than the two. Now, Bob and his family, they would sometimes take the girls and add a—maybe add another mandolin or whatever. But what they would do, we called them sets, the way they did that. We would say—there would be a guy who ran the book. He'd have a piece of paper and a pencil. He'd say—I can remember one of—because he used to mimic them. It's in my book. He'd say, “Chunky Lee, Jodie Keck, Ivan Cates, and Heavy. So, he'd call all four names. Well, those four then for the next song would get their partners and they'd dance. Most of it was round dancing. Then they'd say, “John D., can you play a waltz?” Well, one of the tunes that he played—and I'll bet—I don't know whether you all would remember—Bully in the Town. [Singing] “I'm looking for the bully, the bully of the town. I'm looking for the bully, the bully can't be found.” They have the music to that and he'd play those old breakdowns, mainly breakdowns, but some waltzes. I wish I could—it would've been wonderful if we had tape recorders there. Well, then they'd have a square dance. They'd go through that again. They'd say, “Heavy La Mascus, Jodie Keck, Fred Keck, Claude Townsend.” They'd get their partners. See, that's what—you got to have four for a square dance. That's why they call it a square. And he'd play Wagoner or he'd play some breakdown. I don't think Bob was, at that time, famous enough that they were using any of his songs unless he used some of the old songs, like Billy in the Lowground. You ever hear that one?

AW:

Um-hm.

BT:

That's—you ask Bob to play that and he'd say, "Oh boy, you're hitting me below the belt. I'll try it. That's a hard one to play." There were certain songs but—and then the caller would say, [square dance singing style] "Look out eight watch your talking, Eight hands up and all go walking. Lady in the lead, the gents follow on. Grab your partner and everybody swing, everybody dance and everybody swing. Two little sisters lead out to the right of the ring. Two little sisters holding hands. Let another little sister in then do-si, do-si. A little more do. Chicken in the bread pan picking out dough. Granny, will your dog bite no child. Hurry up boys and don't fool around. You're not ragged now like you was a while ago." You know, some of those things. [Singing] "Oh, the rooster crowed and the birdies sang. Grab your honey and form a ring." Then at the end you'd say, [singing] "Now grab your honey and I don't care. Take your honey to an easy chair." Then—I've called a thousand of them. I used to call them on square dances at rodeos. We'd have square—they said—they took that square dance to Madison Square Garden. But those old country dances, there'd always be some bootlegger there, like my uncle or someone, selling whiskey. Sometimes he'd have them at his house and he'd have—he was way ahead of his time—he'd have a fifty-five gallon barrel full of ice and beer and he'd be selling that beer. But there wasn't a whole lot of—but they're usually at nearly every country dance there was a fight. They'd fight across the dance then they'd fight outside, they'd break them up and we'd get back into dancing. We boys, we just loved to watch. You know, we didn't dance much as kids but we would—maybe they'd have one at our house this month and they'd have one at Uncle Dick's the next month then another at the oil field place, another one somewhere else. And that's where Bob started playing—they either called them country dances and when they moved to town they called them—what did they call them—party dances—house dances, house parties. And that's where he played in Fort Worth and continued what he had learned. They played—out here in West Texas, they played more ranch dances because there weren't as many farmers over there where—and the ranches were big enough they could draw them and they would play all night. They'd bring their children, like in there in my bedroom. Mrs. Wills would bring one of her babies, this rancher and that one. Bob said they'd have those beds full. He always joked and said—see, Luther J. was his brother that they always had fun out of. He said, "I've always thought that momma picked up the wrong baby when we got old Luke." You know, he never would get over that. And they'd play all night. See, they had to come a long ways. Some of those people—what would be long ways in those days is fifteen miles. John Lee told me that—Bob's youngest brother—he said that he liked to play at the Barton Ranch over near Turkey. So, there was a song that—and it wasn't just Bob and his dad at first, then Eloise might go sometimes or Ruby. Those are the two—Ruby's the oldest girl, Bob's the oldest child, then Eloise was down about four. I guess it was maybe Ruby, Bob, Eloise and John Lee, then of course they had other sisters and they had another brother—and Billy Jack who wrote the lyrics for Faded Love. So there was Uncle Tom. His name was Uncle Tom, Uncle Tom Wilkes, and he's the one that taught Bob "Faded Love." He says, "That's my granddad's [inaudible] [2:38:48]." Bob never wanted to take credit. A lot of guys would get those old traditional, or

what you'd call public domain PC, and put their name on it. So, Bob didn't want to do that. He didn't put his name on that until his brother wrote the lyrics then it became Bob Wills'. There was one song that Uncle Tom played. I found Uncle Tom's grave. That little town just before you circle to go across the bridge to Estelline. Can't think of the name.

AW:

I can't think of it either but I know what you're talking about.

BT:

I went up there. I know Bob put up the gravestone because John—Luke and some of the family said, "Doc, where did you find that grave?" I went up there and said—beautiful place up there. And that's where Bob first went to school, was right down below there, that little town.

MG:

It's not Harrold, is it?

BT:

No. It's a simple town. Not [inaudible] [2:39:53]. It's one of those towns I have a hang up with. But anyway, Uncle Tom came out with them. They had two wagons, two covered wagons, and they'd pick cotton all the way from Kosse, which is down close to Groesbeck, is it? And close to Texas A&M. It's on the way from Waco to A&M. That's where he grew up. One of the family, an uncle or something, had come out to West Texas and he said, "This sounded like Children of Israel. This is the land flowing with milk and honey. This is the greatest cotton country in the world. Y'all will get rich if you come out here." So, they loaded up and decided they'd come west. I said in the book they took Horse Greeley's advice and went west and Uncle Tom came with them. Uncle Tom had a song he played called "All Night Long." Johnny Gimble later recorded it. But some woman asked Uncle Tom, said, "Uncle Tom, can you play All Night Long?" He said, "Hell no I can't play till midnight." But she meant the song. And those were those—that's where he really got a start and got a feel. The thing you need to remember about him, the first time he ever played the fiddle outside of this initial one when he was trying to get another band to shut up with uncle. He said he played that song all day. He said he played and played it. I said to him, "Uncle So-and-So, I never had a fiddle in my hand in my life but I can play that better than you can play it." He said, "Well I'll tell you one thing, Bob, if you"—he didn't call him Bob—Jim Rob. They didn't call him Bob till he moved to Fort Worth. He said, "I can tell you one thing, Jim Rob, if you can, I'll take this fiddle and I'll break it." Bob said, "I'll bust it over a bed." So, he said, "Well let me have it." And so, Bob played it better than he did. As Bob said, "He must've thought I did better than he did. He went in and he said, 'Ma, that kid who never had had a fiddle in his life played that better than I did. I'm going to bust my fiddle.'" Bob said, "I'd have given anything—it was the prettiest little fiddle you ever saw." So, other than that, I don't think he'd ever played the fiddle hardly in his life if it wasn't for dancing. He

never could get away from that. It was the age of dancing for country people, city people. Well, it wasn't long until you had Benny Goodman, you had Harry James, Tommy Dorsey. And all of the big bands. They didn't know how to play for anything but dancing. It was the age of dancing and that was the age he came into and he never got over it.

AW:

One of the things that's interesting about that to me is there's—you know when—amongst the cowpunchers, there's an ultimate divide: do you tie hard and fast or dally up? Well, fiddle players, you have this divide over stage or contest, Bob Wills being the ultimate stage player. But I also hear a lot of discussion about the contest players: Eck and all that bunch. They all—they don't talk much about Bob but they do talk about his dad.

BT:

Yes. Well—

AW:

But he would've been playing a lot of country dances, too.

BT:

Oh yeah.

AW:

So, did—

BT:

He's given—Eck Robertson—for recording the first piece of country music ever recorded in 1920 or '22. He recorded Ragtime Annie. Eck—now, Bob—when he lived out here in west Texas, when he lived around—at Turkey—and first of all, they really—John Lee's told me, he said, “We didn't think we from Turkey.” He said, “The only one of us that really lived at Turkey was Bob.” He said, “We called Lakeview home.” Lakeview is between Turkey and Memphis. That's where he played. And of course, played in their home. These people, my gosh, if they made two dollars a night back in that time, that was a lot of money. People just didn't have money, like I told you in the earlier stages of the interview. But Bob, he knew Eck. I have to tell you at tragic thing about that. When I first came here, Eck Robertson was in a rest home in Borger. Isn't it awful that I was so ignorant that I didn't go up there and get to meet the great Eck Robertson? He was the—there was two things about Eck: he was great but he knew it. He said, “I'm the greatest fiddle player in the world. There's just not any”—and of course, you know, since he—he had recording before Bob ever thought about it ever—Uncle John. So, they would have fiddle contests in the theater. The old theater's still there in Turkey and it'd draw a pretty good crowd because Eck Robertson was—he was really known and dressed like a cowboy.

Guess he was. So, he would come in there and fiddle and Bob would fiddle against him. So I want to tell you a story, tells you something about the character of Bob Wills. I heard about these fiddle contests while I was researching so I called Bob and Betty one Sunday morning, as I recall. [clears throat] Eck was dead and gone. So, Bob could've said, "I could fiddle"—but Bob was never a bragger anyway. I said, "Bob, did you ever—I've heard about Eck.", "Oh yeah, Eck Rob—" I said, "Did you ever fiddle against Eck Robertson?" He said, "Many times." Eck was gone. Bob could've told any story he wanted. I said, "You ever beat him," and he said, "No. I could never beat Eck." He said, "Papa could." [Laughs] "And Mr. Wills could." He was recognized, you know, as the tops out here. But once in a while Uncle John would beat him. So they had a contest somewhere over—not in Turkey but somewhere else in some town around, pretty good-sized town, Munday or somewhere. So, they had this contest and—this is why we needed a tape recorder. They had this contest and I think Eck had played and Uncle John had played. I say, "Uncle John." That's John Wills, Bob's daddy, Tom Will's son. So, he—Eck played a second time. Everybody else was eliminated. So, Uncle John got up to play and he fiddled and he hummed just a note above it and the people just went wild. So, no one had pulled that. So, they gave the prize to John Wills. Boy, they were still on the band stand or wherever it was. Somebody said, "Eck, did old man Wills beat you?" He said, "Fiddling? Hell no, he out-hummed me." He said, "He can't beat—" well, John Wills heard it so he said, "Well, we'll just go over here to a café and play to see who can play the best. They played all night. Now, there's where we should've had the recorder. Here these two old breakdown great fiddle players played all night and no one to this day knows even what they played. But that was the story of the Wills' and Eck. I've always thought of Bob's of honesty and integrity. But I knew after that that Bob would never tell you a lie. I said, "Bob, did you ever beat him," and he said, "No." He said, "I never could beat him," but he said, "Papa could." So, that was kind of the way it all started.

AW:

How did you get into calling dances? Did you do that before you got into calling rodeo?

BT:

No. I'd call some rodeos. But Mary and I, of course, lived in Henrietta when we married and they had a clubhouse in Nocona. It was later called Justin—Enid Justin Park. Of course, she put some money into it with Nocona **boot**. So, Mary and I—well, we were going together. We would go down because momma belonged to it and Ruth Roach and some ranchers. It was at the clubhouse in the park at Nocona, in the play park, you know; had little things for children and all. I'd go down there and dance and that's where I first heard Hank Williams. We went down there and this guy was a—[singing] "I got a feeling because of blues." Well, Mary and I nearly fell down laughing. We thought this was comedy because it was so—I still think it's one of his greatest songs. But I thought it was supposed to be funny. Well, I later learned, you know, that this was the great Hank Williams. But this was one of his first. They say that in that movie, it was one of his first hits. I think it was number one. So, we'd dance. It's a good dance tune,

because he kind of patterned his band after Bob. There was no reason for Hank Williams to wear a cowboy hat. He wouldn't have known a cow from a bull. But because Bob wore those hats, he did and he had—he wanted to look like a western band. And anyway, we'd dance then we'd go back to Henrietta and we would—we'd have rodeos at Bowie. I put on one or two there. To advertise the rodeo, we would take four couples and we'd have those old record players, you know that ran on the battery in the car or on a Jeep. I used to go with a Jeep or whatever. I usually—this was before I even met Mary. Had my girlfriends or whatever and we'd say we're going to have a rodeo in Bowie, we'd go to St. Jo. Who was it that told me, "Somebody's got something in St. Jo now." Maybe it was a band or something. Anyway, we'd go to Stoneburg, we'd go to Alvord, we'd go to Henrietta. We would pull in, have music playing and then we'd stop, everybody would get out, and we'd square dance. That'd draw a crowd. And then we'd tell them about the rodeo in Bowie, Nocona, or wherever we were going to have it. And I'd call the square dances, just like I called—one of my favorites was [singing] "Look out, eight. Watch your talking. Eight hands up and we'll all go walking. Lady in the lead and the gents follow on. First couple bounce and swing and lead right out to the right of the ring. Two hold up and two go through. Tie that loop like cowboys do." You'd have a couple here in this—couple would hold their hands up, you'd hold her hand and go between them and they'd straighten it out. [singing] "Now four hands up and do-si-do." Then they'd do-si-do and I'd say, [singing] "Four hands up and two go through." Then the next couple would come through and you'd have—[singing] "Now you got six and round them up in a ring. Do-si-do and a little more do and the chicken in the bread pan picking out dough. Granny, will your dog bite no child? Up the river and around the bend. Six shooters on and you're going again." You know, that kind of a thing. And then until we got all eight of us and then the—that would be over. It was my favorite. It was called Cowboy Loop because each of you'd go through each one and straighten out. We used to dance Grapevine Twist. What you'd do, you'd have eight people, but you could do this with sixteen. After you'd say, [singing] "Promenade one. Promenade all. Promenade right around the hall." Then you'd say, [singing] "Now hold your partner's hand and do the Grapevine Twist." So if I had Natalie's hand, I'd go around her this way and then I'd wind around him and his girlfriend. It was called the Grapevine—you'd just wind between—then what was really wild, we'd say, "Now turn around and do the Grapevine Twist," and you'd do it the opposite. Well, these old girls were—it was just really fun, you know, those grand, old—but that's the way I kind of started doing—Billy Joe Hancock, Joe Hancock's son, he was the first to do those. Then he turned it over to me. But my brother Ed, he learned—he remembered more than I did. He'd some to the family reunions and he'd remember like the Texas Star. [singing] "Ladies bow and the gents bow under. And grab your partner and whirl like thunder." You know, there was so many of those—I called these cowboy dances. Then [clears throat] those singing dances came along. But anyway, so much for how I called square dances, but that was—it was a lot of fun, you know.

AW:

This is really interesting. I was—got in just at the tail end of square dancing, you know. About the time I was old enough to dance, we were starting to do the Twist and the Boogaloo, you know, all that sort of stuff. But you're talking about some moves that are kind of like nuclear physics. Some of this is pretty difficult. Did you, as a caller for the dance, did you ever have to also teach, instruct people on—

BT:

Well, sometimes if they were greenhorns, we'd kind of shovel them along.

AW:

People would know the Grapevine Twist when they came to events?

BT:

Now, it was really a fun one. But you would—we had four of us, four couples. We could dance and never open our mouth. We could dance a whole thing. We knew innately what the others were going to do. And the next—last time we got to do that was in Nocona and guess who was playing fiddle: Frankie McWhorter. I said, "Frankie, can you play Wagoner?" He said, "I sure can." He said, "They told me when I came to Texas there are two things you need to know if you're going to play in Texas: you needed to know Faded Love and Wagoner. He said, "I can play them both." We danced that last time there in Nocona. Nearly all those people are dead now. I believe all of them that were in that square. And see, it really got big. Square dancing got big in Hollywood. The greatest of all of the callers—and if you catch some of those old movies, there's one that James Stewart's in and they're playing Wagoner and they've got the greatest of all callers. I can't tell you—his name was Jonesy and he was in the movies. One year when I was working for Nocona Boot Company, Mrs. Justin was going to—the National Square Dance Convention at the State Fair of Texas. So we all went down to the square dance. Boy, we really sold the boots. You know, you had so many dudes. They'd buy more than cowboys. Cowboys know what to do but these were dudes. And Jonesy was calling. Mary and I, as long as she lived, and we'd see Jonesy and we'd know. But he was really good. Then they got into—I never cared for the singing square dance, it's more—it's more like choreography. I liked the old—when the old cowboys stomped and you had fun. But that was a—boy, that was big in the movies. Roy Acuff got to make a movie and they had a hay ride. But square dancing got big and we did it out in the country. And that's how—that's how I met my wife. She didn't know how to square dance and I said, "Well, I'll take you to the—" no romantic ideas at all, no attraction at all that we knew of. So I said, "I'll take you and teach you to square dance." So, we went out, I taught her to square to dance, went out to the—just for teenagers. I was a teenager. I was eighteen at the time, or nineteen. So, on the way home, I kissed her goodnight and that was—that was Dunkirk. [Laughter] In other words, we didn't—she was engaged to another man but we fell in love and

got married. But it was the square dancing. I owe more to square dancing than I've ever given credit for or told many people. But we did have a great time that night.

AW:

Would you talk just a little bit about something that I think's really interesting about square dance calling. I think of it because being a musician, we do something similar when we do a set, and that is you've got to think about what song leads into what other song and you can't have too much that's alike but you can't have too much that's too different either. Will you—surely as a square dance caller you had to do something similar. You have to watch what the dancers are doing and think about what you're going to call as you're doing it. Can you talk about that a little?

BT:

Well, the only thing you need to know is can they dance the call. You don't want to get too fancy. You want to do the Cowboy Loop or Two Little Sisters. [singing] "Two little sisters, form a ring, do-si-do. Two little sisters pick up two more little sisters." How did we call that? "Two little sisters form a ring and pickup two. Then four little sisters form a ring," and that couple would get in the center and pick up two till you picked them all up. Another one was really easy that you could teach people was—and Ivan may have seen this one. It's—I guess we'd call it Up the River. In other words, you'd say—you got eight people and Natalie and I are here. She'd be on my right. We'd say, [singing] "Circle, eight. Spread out wide. Grab your partner and go do-si-do." Then after they do-si-do, you go back to your—where you were—doesn't matter—then you'd say, [singing] "First couple bounce and the first couple swing," she and I. [singing] "First couple bounce and first couple swing. Up the center and divide the ring." There'd be three people here and three here. And Natalie and I'd go up the center. [singing] "Ladies go one way, gents the other. Meet your honey and do-si-do." That's Up the Middle of the Ring. That was easy to do because now you say, "Next couple bounce and swing up the river and divide the ring. Ladies go one way, gents the other. Meet in the hall and swing each other. Do-si—and everybody—Do-si-o right back home after you finish." [singing] "Do-si-do and a little more do. Chicken in a bread pan picking out dough. Granny, will you dog bite no child? Everybody go back home." It means go to your position. Then the third couple bounces and swings until all four have had their chance and then you circle and do you do a big do-si-do. And then there were more complicated ones that was really a lot of fun. You'd say, [singing] "First couple bounce and swing. Lead right out to the right of the ring and swing, grandma." Maybe the third one here—[singing] "And swing grandma and ride back home." Then they'd say, [singing] "And don't forget old Arkansas," and you'd swing her right back home to your partner. You see what I mean? Your tall would be here and grandma and then back to your partner. It wasn't complicated. It was something the cowboys could do, you know. Then one of the great ones—and I saw it one the TV the other night, a western movie—was Texas Star. Let's see, you'd—you'd do your do-si-do. [singing] "Circle out. Spread out wide. Ladies to the center, backs to the

bar.” They’d be—the four ladies would come and they’d cross. Then they’d say, [singing] “Circle four. Pick up your partner.” Then they’d pick up their partner and they’d put their arms behind them and you’d say, [singing] “Ladies bow. That’s it. Ladies bow, gents bow under. Then form that Texas Star.” Then you’d go around and they’d say—do the same thing, form that Texas Star again. It was one of the—it was one of the great old calls, The Texas Star. It was one of—we knew them all back then and it was so much fun. Let’s see, what was some of the others? Two Little Sisters. My mother always liked—oh, one was called Take a Little Peep.

AW:

I don’t think I’ve ever heard that one. What was that like?

BT:

“First couple bounce and swing,” we’ll just say Natalie and I. We’d bounce and swing. Then you and your partner here”—Natalie’d go around that side and we’d say, “And go to your next partner and take a little peep.” I’d peep at Natalie and she’d peep at me. Then we’d swing around and do-si-do with this couple. Then they’d go down to the next one and they’d take a little peep. That was called Take a Little Peep. Let’s see what others.

AW:

Ivan, had you ever heard of Take a Little Peep?

IC:

I’ve heard of Pigeon Wing. I can’t remember how that—

BT:

I didn’t hear that one.

IC:

I can’t remember. We used to play for them but that was—they were going to that era, you know, where they did the singing and changed them up a lot.

BT:

They do it to San Antonio Rose or whatever.

AW:

For the recording, Dr. Townsend, would you talk about what singing to call a dance and what that was like and how it was different from calling that you’re talking about.

BT:

Well, it was the same thing only you sang the calls.

AW:

And you sang it to the melody of the song that was being played?

BT:

Yeah. They'd be played and we would—we'd just say—[coughs] if you were doing—they would have it to Careless Love or San Antonio Rose. They'd do it to any piece of music and then when they'd make a circle, everybody—as they were promenading—you know what a promenade is? Promenade's when you get your partner, like I would take Natalie, she'd hold my left hand and I'd hold her right and we'd promenade. Then we'd all sing that song, like [singing] "Careless hands," or whatever song it might be. I don't think they used any Hank Williams because that age was pretty well over. But then it was cute when all of them would sing. I used to see them—when I'd go to Estes Park to the rodeo, they'd be campers there in the park and they—these people'd come in their Airstreams or whatever just to square dance. They'd square dance a week. It was a—that was quite a page in American history, when they did that. Gosh, all those old calls. Like I said, my brother, he knew them till he died. But it was a—and you always had good fiddlers, you know. And our favorite was Wagoner. There was two. There was the Texas Wagoner and Tennessee Wagoner and we liked Tennessee Wagoner. So, a lot of us—then we'd have a waltz and they'd have a two-step or however you wanted to dance. Then we danced to some dances at those dances called the Paul Jones. You know that one.

AW:

Um-hm.

BT:

Other words, you're dancing with your partner and they say—blow a whistle and you'd drop your partner and pick up somebody else, so it gave you a chance to dance with someone you'd been wanting to dance with anyway.

AW:

And when you were young and dating, you might not have—

BT:

Get acquainted, you know.

AW:

She might not have gone out with you. Now you had a chance.

BT:

She probably wouldn't have danced with you but now she had no choice. Then they'd finally go back into a ring and blow the whistle, you'd grab the partners. Oh, another one we did I really

loved. My cousin, Billy Joe Hancock, entered—it was called Virginia Real. This couple, you'd have them lined up. You could have twelve people. My partner's over here, I'm here, and I grab her and we dance and we go way down through the line and we circle back and then we—I danced with her and everybody dances and you go back into your line and the next couple gets to dance and they go down—the Virginia Real. We didn't do that much but I really enjoyed it. It was a lot of fun.

AW:

I remember as very young kids that's what—one of the first things you danced because you got to—everybody got to—sort of like the introductions at the beginning of an evening, you know. It was like your chance to get to see who all was there. It was sort of an icebreaker.

BT:

Especially that—yeah and it was one way to get them to dance. Boy, that's what Bob Wills wanted. Everybody began to dance and they—what were some of the other things that we danced? What I thought kind of ruined—and I think it ruins a lot of things—when you get to where you know it too well or you try to get too fancy. I've always thought a musician was headed downhill when he tried to play the other musicians and he tried to play things that the audience couldn't understand. What happened was—

AW:

Dr. Townsend, I've got some musician friends I might want to get you to call up and tell them that.

BT:

Well, what they'd do—that's what—that's why cool jazz never has had a great audience. It's always been isolated because they don't have a beat, they don't have a melody, and they're—but oh my, are they great musicians, but they're playing to the other musicians. And then they'll get somebody else to sit in and they'd play to them. Bob Wills played to the people. He gave you a jazz solo, you played it and you played it dance style then he took it back. There wouldn't be any—and that's why he wouldn't—very rarely ever let anyone sit in with him because they began to play to each other. And that's fine but you lose the people. They try to get too fancy. They try to—instead of playing the fiddle, they play the violin, if I might put it that way. I can always tell and it usually ruins them. It usually ruins them. If they've had classical training, they can't escape it. They were trained that way and they're too tense. The way they train you in classical violin is very tense. There's no monkey business. There's no soul. You play what's written down. I'll tell you where I got this, Kenneth Pits. He played fiddle for the Light Crust Doughboys and so did a fellow you may have heard of, Cecil Brower. Some people thinks he was really the greatest. He played with Milton Brown, played with Bob some. Well, Kenneth Pits, when he was a boy, eight, ten years old, he and Cecil played in the junior symphony in Fort

Worth. One year, Cecil would be first violin, next year it'd be Kenneth. Well, when they grad—got older and played in the Fort Worth Symphony, it was the same way. Cecil would play—and they could both play country fiddle. I'm going to put it that way. So, [clears throat] Cecil and—let's see, I don't know whether Pits went out there. I think he did, yeah. See, there was—Marvin Montgomery was a genius on the banjo. And there was Knocky Parker. He played piano and even played accordion if it was a cowboy song. And then—let's see, Cecil—it'd be Cecil, Pits, Marvin, and Knocky Parker. Well, they were playing and somebody said, "Now, you boys need to get a degree. You'd be more sophisticated if you got a B.S.," or whatever. So, they all went—Knocky was a genius. He ended up—a lot of records you could buy from Jazzology, Knocky Parker's on them. He was a genius.

AW:

Would you spell *Knocky* for the transcription?

BT:

K-n-o-c-k-y. Knock—his real name was John Parker. Here's the way they found him. The Light Crust Doughboys—now, this is after Bob left, after old Daniel fired him and after Burris Mills fired old Daniel. So, to draw a crowd, they would go to a college and at the time in Waxahachie, Trinity College was there, which is today in San Antonio, Trinity College—University—which is one of the really elite liberal arts.

AW:

And it was in—

BT:

It was in Waxahachie.

AW:

I didn't know that.

BT:

That's where it started. So, the Light Crust Doughboys would go down there—Knocky told me—I'm sorry, Marvin Montgomery. They called him Smokey. They always had a name because—

AW:

Yeah, Smokey Montgomery. When you say Marvin, I was thinking, I know—

BT:

Yeah, Smokey.

AW:

Yeah. All right.

BT:

Well see, they got those names because when they started Light Crust Doughboys—and old Daniel would say, “This is Bob Wills, Milton Brown, Derwood Brown, and so forth and so on.” It made them famous so they could quit. So when he got that—after Bob left, he wouldn’t give them the name. He wouldn’t say, “Marvin,” he’d say, “Smokey,” so the audience wouldn’t know if he left on his own band. He said, “That’s selfish.” It’s different, Bob wanted to make to his musicians famous but he wanted to kill that in them. And so, they went down to Trinity to—and, you know, they’re bound to have gotten some terrible musicians. But they got this—the people at Trinity in Waxahachie—is that Ellis County or Ennis?

MG:

It’s Ellis.

BT:

Huh?

MG:

It’s Ellis.

BT:

Okay, that’s what I thought it was. So anyway, they said, “We got a boy who can really—is a musician.” Well of course, the boys looked at each and sure enough—this kid, he’s sixteen years old. My gosh. They said, “We didn’t listen to him a minute and we knew he was a better musician than all of us.” Whoever won the prize got to go to Fort Worth and play on the radio. So, they brought Knocky Parker there when he was sixteen; John Parker. Later got a PhD at Columbia in literature then went back to playing—and he taught at one of the universities in whatever that college is in Tampa. I don’t know whether it’s Western Florida State or what.

AW:

I don’t know.

BT:

And the way he taught his classes, he’d play silent movies and he’d play the piano like they used to do in the—and his classes were wonderful. But anyway, they took Knocky back and they said, “Well, we’ve got to hire you.” So, he got a job with them. Now we get back. They all decided, though—they knew more music than anybody in the school of music and could play it without reading or whatever. It’s like a woman here one night saw these—saw Ricky and Ivan and all of

them. I said, "Why don't you let them come to your house and play piano?" She said, "Oh no." She said, "I can't play with those people. They know too much music. I've got to read, those people can just play. Oh no." So anyway, they decided to give them a little prestige if they got them a degree from TCU [Texas Christian University]. So, the three of them went out and boy, they just—the vulgar expression, they smoked them. The music department just loved them but there was a joker in the nick. Now, Marvin new music notes, so did Kenneth. He'd played in the symphony but Knock, he didn't, and he never did know one note from the other. So, they said, "You have to play a concert." Whether they called it an audition—

AW:

Or recital.

BT:

A recital. Well, he was going to play Rhapsody in Blue and he could play it just like Gershwin himself. So, he had to figure out—he knew that the—that they were going to know when you're supposed to turn the page. So he's sitting down, "I won't be able—I'm too tense. We'll have to get Smokey," Marvin, "To turn the page for me." So, he played just what he wanted to play. When it came to the right spots, Smokey would turn—[laughter] he would turn the page and that music school when he finished, "Oh, that man's wonderful. He's given us this recital." So anyway—wait a minute until I tell this about Pits. They gave them all a degree. Well, Pits told—I was in his home. What a nice guy he was, kind of a large fellow. He said, "Dr. Townsend," he said, "Nearly every one of these classical violinists in Fort Worth want me to teach them country fiddle. They all want to play country fiddle over there in the symphony. I can't do it. It's nearly impossible to teach a person who's classically trained to be a country fiddler." I said, "Why, Kenneth?" He said, "They're too tense. They can never really relax enough to play it, and as Bob Wills did, put your soul in it." So you could play it but you couldn't put any soul in it and you couldn't play it. He said, "I've taught one or two," but he says, "It's nearly impossible."

AW:

And you know what else reason there is to it? And I know this from the songwriting class I teach because I get kids in there that are trained to read and kids who couldn't read anything, they'd just play by ear. When you're trained to read, you don't listen the same as ear players do. Ivan, you know this. If you're playing by ear, that really means—I mean, that's not just a slang term.

BT:

It's what you hear.

AW:

You're having to listen. But if you're looking on the page, it's a different thing.

BT:

I heard an interview the other day with—and I've seen Pearlman many times at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center. He just—I loved him. So, he sent word he wanted to meet Itzhak Pearlman. He's the last word in concert violin. He wanted to meet Charlie Daniel. So, Charlie came to him—

AW:

I'd like to have been there when they—

BT:

And you know what? Charlie asked Itzhak, he said, "What is the difference in the fiddle and the violin?" Pearlman said, "Charlie, it's all the same. We're all fiddlers." Isn't that beautiful?

AW:

That is beautiful.

Woman:

I've got to go get the kids.

BT:

See you tonight.

Woman:

Nice meeting y'all.

MG:

Nice to meet you.

AW:

Nice to meet you.

BT:

Thanks for staying with us.

Woman:

Hey, you're welcome.

AW:

We might want to take a little break if—for all of us here just for a minute and come back and tell the story on tape of the elevator.

BT:

Oh yeah. Yeah. Oh that was a dandy.

AW:

Let's take a short break though, because I need one.

BT:

I'd like to—I'd love to go up there and look through the newspapers about that time and find where Rubinstein was there.

MG:

I'm going to do that for you. I'm up in Kansas City a lot.

BT:

See if you can find it.

MG:

I'll see if I can.

AW:

I'm going to pause the recording now here for a few minutes. [Pause in recording] Okay.

MG:

That's a damn good story.

AW:

We're back from our break.

BT:

Well, do you want—I didn't know whether you were—if we're going to do Bob Wills loans sometime or—

AW:

Yes. In fact, let's talk just a minute, before we get too far, about that. I think if today we could—these are a bunch of great stories about all these other fiddlers but I would like to have a separate focus on Bob Wills. But the other thing I really want to get to is your rodeo calling.

BT:

Yeah. We'll do that, too.

AW:

And Olson-Stelzer. I mean, there are so many different things but those are the things I want to remember to do. So, we can do the Orange Blossom Special or if you want to talk a little more about Joe Venuti, because I—

BT:

I know that's off the subject except Bob really liked him.

AW:

Well, I think it is on the subject thought because of what you just said.

BT:

Have you got it running?

AW:

I've got it running. And also Rubinstein.

BT:

Joe Venuti, he was considered the last word in swing music as a fiddler and he could do it just he and Eddie Lang or with whatever. So, two stories on that, on Bob. When Bob played with say the Golden Nugget or he played back when they had the Desert Inn or whatever in L.A. Bob would see to it that his dressing room was where he was right up—could look at the band stand. He said, "I want to be where I can see Joe Venuti when Joe comes to play." Bob just really admired him. And those jazz solos that Jesse Ashlock—I asked Jesse. I said, "Jesse, where'd you learn those choruses?" Some of them called them the chorus, jazz chorus or really solos. He said, "From Joe Venuti." He said, "I learned my fiddling from Bob but I learned the jazz licks from Joe Venuti." And another time, Tommy went through periods where he wanted to sing like this one or that one. A great singer. No one's ever like him. He went through one period where he wanted to be like Jimmie Rodgers. Of course, Jimmie—

AW:

Really?

BT:

Yeah because Jimmie—and he's really good on Jimmie Rogers songs like—what's that one? [Singing] "I got my one-eyed—I got my one-eyed mule and my good old Jersey cow, yodel-lay." And he could yodel, too. Then he went through a period where he wanted to be like Bing. After Bing Crosby recorded San Antonio Rose, Tommy never sang it the same because he would let somebody help him do the bridge and then he'd come back, [singing] "Broken songs." And that's the way Bing Crosby did it. Beautiful, beautiful way he did it, the ballad. So, he was

singing one time and Betty—or maybe Bob told me or Betty—he said, “Tommy, be yourself. [AW laughs] Don’t try to sound like Bing Crosby.” He said, “You don’t sound any more like Bing Crosby than I do Joe Venuti.” [AW laughs] That was the ultimate of comparisons that Bob made. Personally I liked the way Tommy was singing at that time. But [clears throat] anyway, the story about—happened, I believe it was in Kansas City. You don’t say, “Kansas City,” like you should. You say, “New York City,” but you say, “Kansas City.” It’s one word. You could always tell if they were from Kansas City. They say one word.

AW:

Really there’s only one *s* in Kansas when you say that.

BT:

There’s a dean up here and his wife and they were talking about—and I said, “Where’d you say you grew up?”, “Kansas City.” Of course, I’d love to hear her say it.” But anyway, they were playing at Kansas City and it’s a hotel, about the only place back—the hotels back in the thirties and forties, early forties, they were the center of the town and nearly every place had a Grand hotel.

AW:

With a ballroom.

BT:

Yeah, and places to broadcast. See, first time I was ever on the radio was in Abilene with the Butane—the Blue Flame Boys. They advertised propane. We’d go up there and they were all live. There was no—

AW:

And where does the broadcast occur in Abilene? Was it a hotel?

BT:

I think it was in the Windsor. I used to stay there at the Windsor. A friend of ours from Nocona owned it. He’d take my momma to a rodeo and he’d put us in the bridal suite. Oh my gosh, it was the darndest thing you ever saw; the Windsor. And his name was Joe Reed. Never will forget it. From Nocona. Let’s see, I don’t know that Abilene ever had another big hotel.

MG:

The Grace.

BT:

The Grace.

MG:

Then there was another one.

BT:

But where the old—oh, the Drake. Did you say Drake?

MG:

No, the Grace.

BT:

The old Drake Hotel, yes. I stayed there one time.

AW:

I've heard of Drake.

BT:

It's almost a rodeo story but I can tell you. When we get into rodeo, ask me about the Drake Hotel. But anyway, it was notorious. So, Bob—no, Bob wasn't playing. Rubinstein I believe it was. Could've been someone else but I think that's who it was. He had come to town to Kansas City to play a concert, you know, I'm sure with the symphony. They needed publicity just like anybody else. So, they were going to have him a show and probably he was going to—might've been a whatever kind of a show. But there in those days, they didn't play records over radio, everything was live. That's why there was such an opportunity for fiddle bands and singers because they didn't play records. They had just begun to play records at KGNC radio when I moved here in '67.

AW:

Really?

BT:

Yes. They just didn't do it. And there were no such—there might've been a country station but there's no such thing as a country station except WSM in the thirties and early forties. There weren't country stations. That came later. The only thing KGNC would play was big band swing, no more, no less. And that was the music of the age and it was. Everybody liked that music. Then later when it split, when country music got on its feet, then you had these country stations and they became bigger than the pop stations. And then when rock and roll came, it was really split, because you had rhythm and blues, maybe for the blacks, and you had country music. And Bob was kind of left out in the cold because he wasn't country enough to be on the country station and wasn't pop enough to be on the pop station. Really, Bob Wills was not played that much but some were, Bob Wills—I'll mention this again but I might forget it if I don't say it

now. You know where Bob Wills had his greatest exposure? Of course, not in the radio stations live. His greatest exposure was on jukeboxes.

AW:

Really?

BT:

Art Savely [?] [3:33:46] told me, he said, "Dr. Townsend—and I was A&R man for Columbia—Bob Wills' records were playing on three-hundred thousand jukeboxes every day." That's where we learned a lot of our songs. When a new song came out, we'd get it on the jukebox at the local restaurant or drug store or whatever. So anyway, there certainly wasn't a classical station. So Rubinstein was going to play, you know, enough to draw a crowd. So, he started—he had his fiddle case, like Glen had his today, and he walked over to this big hotel. I guess maybe it's something up along the fourth floor and some sixth. I've got to them on the ninth floor. And he—this man, elevator—in those days, you had an elevator operator we called them. He said, "Sir, don't get on." He said, "You're a musician?", "Yeah." He said, "Well, you have to take the service elevator." He said, "What?" He said, "Yes." He said, "We don't—the management will not allow musicians to go up with their instruments on the elevator." If you get a bass fiddle in there, there's not room for anybody else, you know. And it could be clumsy or whatever. He said, "I've just got this little fiddle case and I'm just going up to play. We got a concert here." He said, "That's fine." He said, "Take the service elevator," and the band said, "Look, I just have this case." He'd been used to them bowing to him in New York or Boston or somewhere. He said he didn't want to pull rank at first. [clears throat] He said, "Can I go up and take it?" He said, "No. You'll have to take the elevator. It's right around here. No problem. They'll take you right up to the studio." Some of them did have a studio. He said—they argued there a little. He said, "Look, do you know how I am?" He said, "No, I don't guess I do." He said, "I'm Rubinstein." He said, "I don't give a goddamn if you're Bob Wills, you're still going to take that service elevator." [Laughter] I guess that service elevator though Bob Wills was the ultimate—and he better understand that even Bob Wills had to take—"I don't give a goddamn if you're Bob Wills, you're still going—" and he made the man take that elevator.

AW:

Didn't you say the other day that Rubinstein himself would tell this story?

BT:

I believe so. I think that he—don't you know, he got a kick out of it. He said, "I don't know who this Bob Wills is."

AW:

"I better find out."

BT:

You better bet. Musicians all know what others are playing. He knew who was Bob Wills was, though Bob might not have known him. If he had of he respected him, you know. But then—the one on Orange Blossom Special.

AW:

Yeah, let's do that before Michael has to leave for his—

BT:

Yeah. Let's see, where were we? I guess we was in his room.

AW:

In Bob's?

BT:

Bob's. See, I interviewed him many, many times when he was on his death bed. Some days he could get up and sit in a chair. I could only go a couple of hours, he'd get tired. So, there was two things I remember about that. See, after Bob had his heart attacks and gave up his band, he just got a singer to go with him, like Tagg Lambert or Leon Rausch or whoever, mainly Tagg. And then they'd pick up a band in Las Vegas or whatever. So, Bob had to make some recordings with Kapp. Kapp, Jack Kapp, is the man who started Decca Records and the man who made them was Bing Crosby. That was his—Bing—so, Kapp was a big—so when Kapp retired, Kapp went to Nashville and made a company of his own called Kapp Records. Didn't have Jack on it, just Kapp Records. So, Bob made a few recordings down there. He made one where he dedicated to all the fiddle bands: one to Spade Cooley. I'll talk about that another time. And Spade was in prison. Bob played a song and said, "Spade, this is for you." Don't you know Spade felt good? See, he had murdered his wife.

AW:

Just as a real quick side note, I played the last Gene Autry Film and Music Festival in Gene Autry, Oklahoma. I hope it wasn't me that killed that thing. It'd been going for fifteen years. But they had on it a little exhibit, a guitar that Spade Cooley had built while he was in prison.

BT:

Oh they did?

AW:

Yeah. It was, you know, such a random thing to see.

BT:

I think Spade was a great example of what I meant trying to play what's not your music. He got eleven violinists from the Los Angeles Symphony to make some record—but he phased his fiddles in a way that lost the country sound. You listen to them? Bob would never do that. [coughs] And Leon McAuliffe tried it. It didn't have the soul, it didn't have—it didn't fit.

AW:

No guts.

BT:

Unh-uh. It didn't have blood and guts, that's it, as Walter Prescott Webb would say. And so he made these recordings and I thought they were pretty good. But I made this mistake. I said, "Bob, I sure did like those recording you did down there in Nashville in late—" he said, "That goddamn bunch in Nashville are ruining my music. Those son of a bitches," he said, "I wish they would never play my songs." Goddamn, I never will—oh boy. He didn't often raise his voice but he did about Nashville. So, I asked him—hopefully it was before that. He was so honest. He didn't tell me what [clears throat] I wanted to hear, he told me the truth. I said, "Bob, did you ever—[MG laughs] did you ever record Orange Blossom Special?" He said, "Hell no. I never played that goddamn thing. My musicians recorded it but, I sure wouldn't play it. [Laughter] That goddamn thing." And that's about what all musicians say, you know. Who was it the other day that said—some guy—this was a joke—had found a way of making people fly away. So, some fiddler said, "I hope he'll find the man that wrote Orange Blossom Special and make him fly away." [laughter]

AW:

I'm always—every time I—when I had a cover band, you know, there were a few songs that we felt the same way about. One of them—and these were good songs that you just got tired of them—but Proud Mary was, you know. In Preservation Hall in New Orleans, you know, there's a sign on the wall—

BT:

Yes.

AW:

"Request a dollar. Saints ten dollars," or something.

BT:

Yeah, "Request one dollar. Saints five dollars."

AW:

Yeah, it was five dollars.

BT:

And they didn't—well, I guess they got so tired of it. Boy, I loved to hear them play it, too. Oh gosh. One of the great moments of my life was when the Preservation Hall came here and played over in the A.C. then had a march across the campus and I got to march. When I got to march with that black band, I thought that was the greatest thing that ever happened to me. Oh, and they could play. Well, if you fellas want to—I'm not rushing you.

AW:

No, I think—

MG:

I got to flip over.

AW:

And I've got to get back to Lubbock. I've got some things to do this evening. But let's talk just a second about reconvening. I think we'll start with whatever you want to next time, won't matter to me. I've got mine—

BT:

Tell me the things—you want the Bob Wills story.

AW:

Yeah and your career around rodeo, because one of the first—

BT:

Yeah, I forgot about that.

AW:

Yeah. That's really an important thing. And as I told you, we're getting this—no, I think I told Michael we're getting this archive. We're already collecting the materials and I'm going to go do some interviews.

BT:

The boot deal.

AW:

Well, no, we already have some on the boot but we're getting the National Association of College Rodeo—

BT:

Oh you are?

AW:

Yeah. And I get to go to Casper in June to their conference. I'm going to interview some people.

BT:

Well, I think that's when they have their finals, too, isn't it?

AW:

Yeah. So, I wanted to get some—that's really gotten my interest up on the college side of rodeo and I know you're professional rodeo.

BT:

But, oh, I announced a lot of the—some of the first. I announced a lot of—but there's a man in Lubbock who can help you with that. I hope his health is still good enough. Alvin Davis.

AW:

Yeah, Alvin's—

BT:

Alvin was once the secretary that—

AW:

I know.

BT:

He was kind of the head man of that.

AW:

That's right. But I think Alvin's health for interviews now is really not—

BT:

It is?

AW:
Yeah.

BT:
Darn it. Hate to hear that.

AW:
I talked to him just the other day and he's just not—

BT:
They're living in assisted living now.

AW:
Uh-huh.

BT:
And I talked to him every once in a while. We've known each other since I started rodeoing and he did—organizing those American Junior Rodeo Association.

AW:
One of the most memorable afternoons I had was the two of you called a cutting horse—

BT:
Oh yeah.

AW:
—at the Cowboy Symposium. I was in the stands and I don't think anybody was paying any attention to the cutting horses. We were listening to Alvin and Bud talk.

BT:
And they had team roping that day. Yeah. It was over there I guess at the Fairgrounds.

AW:
Yeah it was at the Fairgrounds.

BT:
They don't do that anymore.

AW:
No. No they don't.

BT:

But Alvin—if you could talk to him just a little, he should be able to help you.

AW:

I think Alvin's one of the reasons we're getting the archive.

BT:

That's what I'm thinking.

AW:

But anyway, I'll want to do that.

BT:

I wonder whom you get that from.

AW:

Well, we're getting it from the actual organization, which still exists, and they're—they just want—they were looking for a place for their records.

BT:

That's great.

AW:

It is great. And they have a lot of photographs as well as their documents. But the thing that I'm really interested in is their oral histories. We had lunch last year with a whole group that came down to look at the archive and it really struck me. I was telling Michael that the number of those people who could've gone to college anywhere, they picked colleges where they could rodeo and the number then that continued to rodeo into their fifties, some of them into their sixties, and yet all of them were professional people. They were doctors, lawyers, college professors. And I think it's just a beautiful story and it's the kind of story that doesn't get told very often and I'm really looking forward to us getting to do that.

BT:

I started with them when they first started. We had rodeos at Kingsville, Texas A&I. That was when Harley May—you know who that is.

AW:

Um-hm.

BT:

He was one of the founders of it when Harley May and that bunch came. Back then, Texas University had a team, Baylor had a team, A&M had a team. One of the biggest, of course, was Oklahoma State. Boy, some of them went on to win world's titles, you know, basically. Harley, I think, won the bulldogging three times. He was a nice guy. Sul Ross was really the big—Sul Ross and Cal Poly [**California Polytechnic**] were two of the biggest. I'll tell you, there's a woman you need to see and she could give you a lot of stuff. She wrote a book on it. This woman over at Vernon.

AW:

Sylvia, is that right?

BT:

Yes.

AW:

Yeah. We've—she came with them and we're—

BT:

All right. Good.

AW:

Yeah, we do know her. But if you can think of someone else—

BT:

She was—she's really—I'll be able to find—another guy, if you could—he'd be hard to pin down, it'd cost you something to get him, is Cotton Rosser. He's one of the big rodeo producers now and he was part of that first team that Cal Poly had.

AW:

Really? Spell his last name.

BT:

Rosser, R-o-s-s-e-r. Cotton Rosser.

MG:

I got to get, boys. I got a meeting over there at four o'clock.

AW:

Okay.

BT:
Enjoy it.

MG:
It's been one of my best days ever. Thank you.

BT:
Thanks for dinner.

MG:
Let me know what date—I might—

BT:
It'd be my time to take you next. You and I will slip off some Friday and—

MG:
We'll sure do it. And I'll get Dr. Green to join us for lunch.

AW:
I'll send you a list of my available dates and you match it up with yours and we'll go from there.

MG:
Sounds great.

AW:
Thanks a lot.

MG:
Let's don't forget you talking about your journey academically, too, because that's a very interesting story, getting up to the University of Wisconsin. Oh man.

BT:
Cy Taillon, the announcer, used to say, he said—I'd be at the show and he'd say, "Bud's smarter than the rest of us. He's got an education." Poor old Cy had to announce as long as he lived. I was glad that I combined the two.

MG:
Thank y'all for letting me sit in. I'll see you next time.

AW:

Thanks Michael. With that statement of Bud's smarter than the rest of us, I'm going to say that we're going to end it today on that high note.

BT:

Okay. Oh, is it still going?

AW:

Yeah. Well, it's not now. Thank you so much. I'm so looking forward to taking this up again.

BT:

Well, it was fun. Thank you for doing it.

IC:

It was a privilege for me, fellows. It sure was.

BT:

You please tell Alvin that Bud said what you're doing.

AW:

I will.

BT:

We'd been—well, just look at the awards he's given me right up there.

End of recording