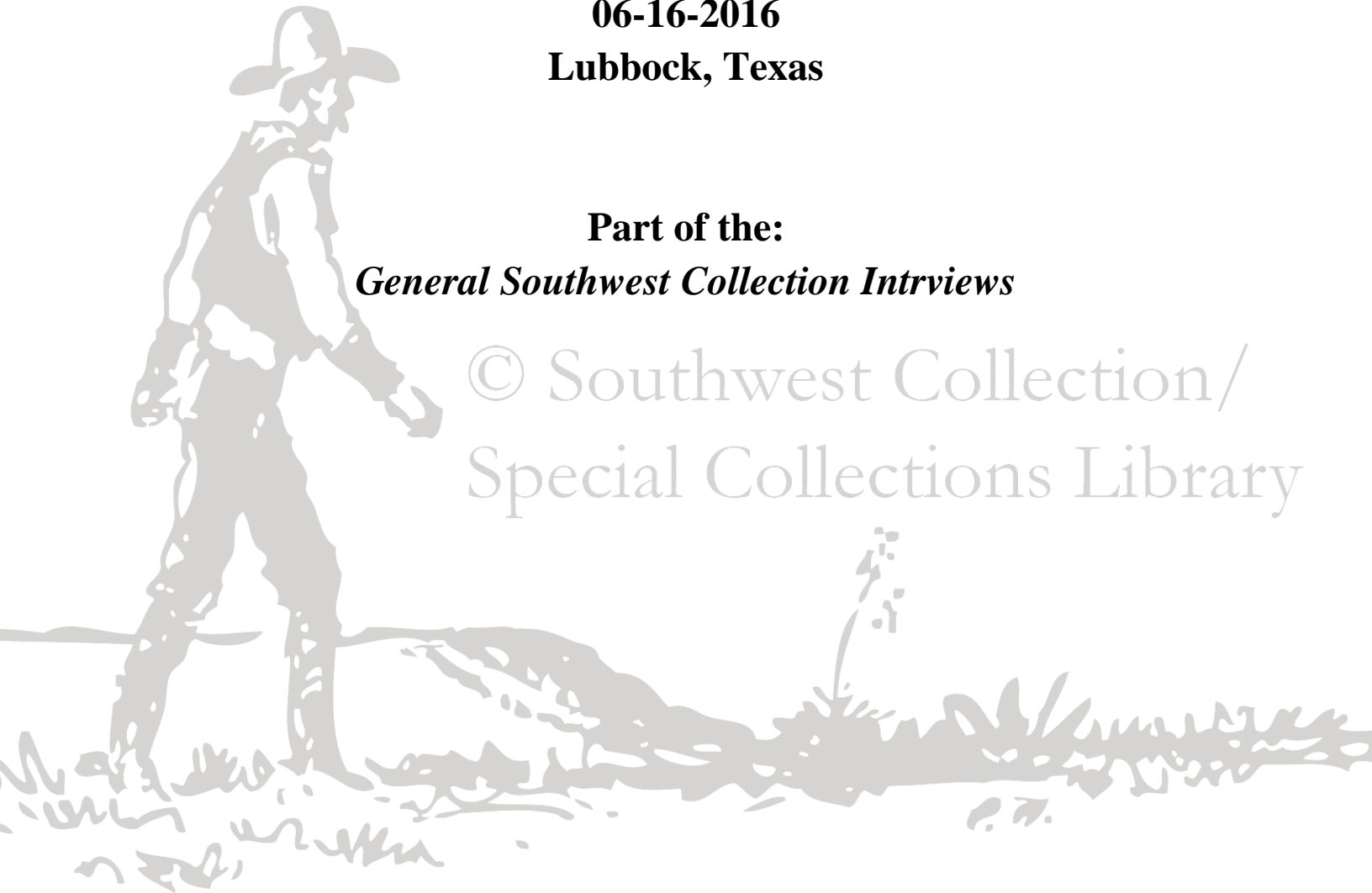


**Oral History Interview of
Mack Acheson**

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson
06-16-2016
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:
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Transcript Overview:

This interview features Mack Atcheson. Atcheson talks about his career in chemical engineering and his work in Texas, California, and Pennsylvania. Atcheson also discusses his wife, Marianne.

Length of Interview: 01:00:11

Subject	Transcript Page	Time Stamp
Meeting Marianne	5	00:00:00
Job in Pennsylvania and getting married	7	00:09:00
California	8	00:22:40
El Paso	9	00:29:39
Political involvement	11	00:36:40
Vice president of El Paso Coal	12	00:44:06
Ruidoso	13	00:46:30
Marianne's death	14	54:00:00

Keywords

chemical engineering, El Paso, Texas, Odessa, Texas, natural gas, oil and gas, oil refineries

Andy Wilkinson (AW):

June 15· Andy Wilkinson with Mack Atcheson at his home. I'm going to set that right there where it will pick you up better.

Mack Atcheson (MA):

Well, this is the story of my first wife. Her name was Marianne—was Marianne McLane when I married her. She was a California girl. And I—she—when I met her, she was a cadet nurse in the Army—medical. And she had finished her classes, and had spent the proper amount of time in the hospitals and was ready to take the final exam to become an RN. Well—and she was on her way home on a train, and I had—my brother Dooney had got out of the Army—out of the Air Force—and I had loaned him my car. I had a '41 Ford. That was a pretty nice car. And she—so I had loaned him my car, and I was living in Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. And the rumor was that I was going to be transferred, so I needed to get my car back. So I called Dooney, and I told him, "I'm coming on the train." So I got on a train and immediately went to sleep. And when I woke up, about halfway down the car was this cute little brunette that was struggling to get something off of the shelves, you know. And so I jumped up to go over and get it for her, and when I—when she sat down, I saw that she was working on something, and it looked like mathematics. And so I asked her—I says, "What are you doing?" And she says, "Well, I'm studying for the final exam." And she says, "These are solutions. What you have to do—if a person is not a normal size or you're working with a baby, you have to calculate how big the dosage has to be. I'm having trouble." And so I says, "Well, maybe I can help you." And so I sat down with her and coached her on how to make these calculations which was right up my alley because I already had a college degree, see. And so, we spent the whole rest of the trip—which was quite a few hours, you know. And we got to Dallas—why, her train ticket said Fort Worth. And I told her—I says, "Well, you know the way this thing works is—is that train stops in Fort Worth, and then—and during—and then it backs up to Dallas and starts from Dallas again. So I said, "Won't you get on—get off here, and meet my brother?" And she said, "No, I'm going on. I'm sticking to my plan." So, anyway, why, while I was there, she had—I had got her name and number and found out that she was being transferred to a paraplegic hospital in Temple. So when I got back, I got the car back—back to Camp Claiborne, why, the orders came through, transferring me to Fort Hood—or Camp Hood at the time. So I drove in to Dallas and met my brother and my cousin, and we partied a little bit. And then I started out the next—just in time to get to Fort Hood. And I stopped—there was a soldier there, and I stopped and picked him up. He was coaching me about all what was going on at Fort Hood, and he told me—he says, "Well, there's a bunch of real pretty nurses over there at a hospital nearby." And so I says—and I finally asked him—I says, "Is this hospital at Temple?" And he says, "Yeah." Well, Temple's, I guess, what—thirty miles or so from there? Doesn't make any difference. But, anyway, we—this was—I got there, this was New Year's Eve. Yeah, New Year's Eve, and, so, I called—went to the Officer's Club after I'd checked in and put my stuff in the barracks, and I called her in the hospital. And a girl took a message, and so I said, "I'll just hang around the Officer's Club." And this was early

in the afternoon. Well, pretty soon, why, I got a call, and I told her who I was and where I was, and so I asked her, I says, "Can I come and get you, and we'll—I hear there's a dance tonight." She says, "Sure. Come on." So she had a date with a doctor, and she broke that date. So anyway, why, we saw each other as much often as we could—with her time off and my time off, you know, and stuff like that. And so, pretty soon, I was discharged, and she was transferred to Fort Sam and told me that she had written me, I guess. I doubt if we were calling on the phone at that time. Well anyway, I got up to Lubbock and found out there was a convention in Houston that was hiring engineers. So I drove—drove to Fort Sam, and—to San Antonio, and my oldest brother's widow still lived there. And we had been close. And so I called her, and she told me to stay with her. And she had a new husband and a new family. Of course, they had my nephew there. And so we—and I called Marianne at Fort Sam and arranged to pick her up, and we went to a dance some place. And the next day, well, I took off to go to Houston, and they were hiring. I turned down about ten different jobs that were interested—I just didn't like—most of them were in butadiene plants that I thought were going to be shut down as soon as the war was over. And that was wrong, but anyway, I came back to Lubbock. When I came in the house, why, my sister said, "Dr. Oberg wants you to call him." So I called him, and he says that, "Duffer Crawford and Carol Claytor in Pennsylvania—and they've got a job for you. Give them a call." So I called them, and they hired me over the phone. And this was a company in Jeanette, Pennsylvania, which is about, oh, twenty-five miles east of Pittsburgh. And it's a factory called the Elliott Company, and they were the—the result of a—of a real famous company that made the—a better steam turbine called a Rateau turbine. And they had developed that program—that turbine to better than the old Rateau. And they made big, big machinery, and they had made a gas turbine that had put on the—the navy. And they had hired a group of chemists and chemical engineers and people like that, and they were working on different things. Duffer Crawford, one of the guys I went to school with here, designed a seal for the—for the centrifuges that were at Oak Ridge. And those—that seal, I understand, is still used in every one that is built. So—and Claytor was working on a—an expander, they called it, which was a deal which would take a gas—and it was a little thing about this big that ran about sixty thousand rpm, if you can imagine.

AW:

Wow. Yeah, that's fast.

MA:

But, if you took air at, let's say, a hundred pound pressure at room temperature, why, when it came out, it would be a hundred below zero, see—a real good refrigeration system. And it was a brand new design, and they had—had a contract to—and this was during the war—a contract to design an oxygen plant that could work on a submarine so that they could surface, liquefy the air—actually liquefy the oxygen—and store it, and then when they went down, well, they could stay down a lot longer. Well, the problem was head room, of course, and you have to distill the

air which means a tall column. Well, you couldn't do that, so they had invented a system of trying to make a column horizontal, you know. But that went away when the war ended, and— but they decided that they had a good plan, and it might be a—people were talking about using enriched air in the steel industry in their open hearths—furnaces, where they thought if you could just enrich the air up to maybe—maybe 40, 50 percent oxygen instead of 20 percent, well, then it could double the capacity of the deal. And it actually worked, and that's the way they do it now. But they had done a lot of calculating and designed some heat exchangers and had them tested at the University of Pennsylvania, and they had this process. They were in the stage of making the drawings and ordering the equipment. So they gave me the job of working out in the shop as well as working in the office with the drafting people, and so—and I was ordering the equipment. And it, in those days—you can't believe the shortages that we had at the end of World War II. It was amazing. You just—every factory that had ever been made to make anything had been switched over to making ammunition or something. So we ended up with a—doing that. And, since I had been a company commander, they thought I knew how to—how to run a gang. Well, it turned out I did, but I kept the boss in trouble because he—I didn't pay attention to the union rules, you know. But, anyway, when I—after I got up there, why, Marianne had gotten out of the Army and was living back at home in Bellflower, California. So I had been—had kept in touch with her and had written her and called her, and, finally, I was just spending all my money calling her on the phone. And so, I convinced her that she ought to come to Pennsylvania and marry me, so she finally, well—she says, “Okay.” So she got on a—at that time they had unscheduled flights, you know, and they were cheaper than the airlines. So she had told me when she was coming in, and, of course, figured it was an airline, went over to Pittsburgh to meet her, and, hell, there wasn't any—she wasn't there, you know. Well, I went on back home and got there, and she was on the phone. And she says, “My plane's late, but it's finally here.” So I said, “Well, what plane is it?” And she told me, and I never heard of it. And so she told me where to meet her. So I picked her up and put her in a hotel in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, which is five miles away, but it was the shopping center. Jeanette was the factory and the bedroom, and Greensburg was the—was the nice shopping place—and the county seat, probably. Well, anyway, we had to wait three days, see. So we had our bloods checked and everything like that, so we got married. And I had been living in peoples' homes, you know. You couldn't find an apartment or anything. So, finally, why, we were still in the hotel, and one of my buddies told me—he says, “Well, so-and-so's got a garage apartment.” So we moved in to that garage apartment, upstairs, and, hell, it was—it had no heat that amounted to anything, and it was pretty bad. And so—of course, she got pregnant almost immediately. And, pretty soon, why—Duffer Crawford's mother-in-law ran a boarding house, and her daughter had been living in an apartment they had put in the basement. And that daughter's husband was transferred, and, so, that became available. So I moved—we moved in there, which was a good place, and it was relatively warm and safe enough for the baby. Well, while—when we got there to Pennsylvania, why, of course, I had become acquainted with a bunch of people, and one of them was a guy who ran a service station. And he said—one day he said, “Somebody told me your wife's a nurse.”

And I said, "Yes, she's a nurse." He says, "Well, could I talk to her?" And I says, "Yeah, I'll bring her by." So I took her by, and turned out that his mother was dying. And they just couldn't find anybody to take care of her. And she was in the hospital, but they couldn't find anybody at night. So Marianne went up to the hospital, which was in Greensburg, and—with the idea, just, let's make her comfortable, you know. Well, the next morning when the family came in to see how their mother was doing, the mother was sitting up in bed with a new hairdo and makeup on. Now that's—that's one of the best examples of Marianne. She could talk to you—and she just played me like a fiddle. But, she could make you feel great, or she could make you feel miserable. And she—but, she could just almost read peoples' minds, you know, and she was so sensitive to other people's feelings, you know, that any kind of emotion or any expression on their faces, she knew exactly what that was. And she could get people to tell her things that they would never say to anybody else. It was amazing the way she was. And the—anyway, why, after a few months, why, we had the baby, and he was a little boy named Tom. And he was the sweetest kid with the biggest—biggest ole blue eyes you ever saw in your life and just sweet as he could be. And one of my bosses stopped me one time and said, "I understand your wife's a nurse." And I says, "Yeah." And he said, "I know you've got a little baby, but you think she could probably come over and spend a few nights?" She says, "My son's got pneumonia, and it's just—my wife is just beat to a nub. She just needs some time off." So I says, "Well, you bet. We'll see about that." So I—Marianne went over that night, and the next morning, why, when the guy got up, why, the kids were dressed, had their lunch made for them. The baby was doing much, much better. His breakfast ready was—and from then on, for months, the rest of the family says, "When is Marianne coming back?" But she took over the damn house, and the mama was able to get rested up, you know, and pretty—and the boys—little baby boy was starting to get well, too. And, anyway, we lived there for three years, and I knew that they weren't going to do anything. The plant that we had built was a success and everything, but there wasn't—they weren't going to continue and go in that business. It just was too foreign from the rest of their business, and they were competing with their customers. See, that was the key, right there. And so I decided, well, it's time for me to get out of there. But in the meantime, the gas company, El Paso, had discovered some gas, up at Boundary Butte up in Utah in the Four Corners area, that had about, oh, 30 percent nitrogen in it. So you couldn't mix it with the rest of the gas. It would burn, but it wouldn't, just—you couldn't sell it. So they had hired the Fluor Corporation which was a little, tiny California outfit living in a couple of Quonset huts. And—but they had a research outfit—a lab—that had some goods, and the gas company was using their treating plants. They're processed to clean up the natural gas that they produced out in New Mexico which was high in sulfur and carbon dioxide. So anyway, well, this guy came there to us because we were the only cryogenics firm that would talk to them. The rest of them wouldn't. They said, "Our process is too secret. We can't show you any part of it." Well, we sat there with this guy and worked for, oh, I guess four—three or four months, and determined the data we needed, and designed a bunch of processes that would do this work. And, so, this guy and I got acquainted. He told me that if I ever got ready to leave, why, to give him a call. He thought

maybe he would know who—where to go, and he said Fluor was expanding and they might have a job for me. Well, and he had known that I had worked out in the shop—had operated this plant, you know, and had done the design work and everything like that. So I had a pretty wide batch of experience in a short time. And he told me—well, I wrote him a letter, and Marianne and Tom and I took off in our—in a new car that Marianne—this is something else about Marianne. When we were there in Pennsylvania, why, every once in a while, I'd think that she might need some money, so I'd give her some. And every once in a while, why, she'd take some out of my pocket. And—but then I noticed that went away. She wouldn't—she had money of her own. So I got the bank statement, and she had gone to the bank and convinced them to let her add her signature to my account. Now, I didn't know anybody could do that, and I don't know that there's any other person besides Marianne that could do it, but she did it. And, so, anyway, why, she went and ordered a car. And, of course, she had learned to drive out in California—drive in a hot rod. So she bought—we knew that she had to have an automatic, and that was this Oldsmobile. It couldn't be a clutch because she was using a clutch as a hill-holder. So I was repairing clutches pretty often. And, so, she went to a—went to the local Oldsmobile place and ordered a car. So she came back and told me it was an Olds 68, which was a little body with a big engine. So I said, “Well, we got a family. We ought to have a 68, which was a bigger body—probably a four door—and a smaller engine.” Well, I went over, we talked to them about it, they says, “Okay, We'll do it.” But when the car came in, it was a 68. Anyway, we got in that car and started driving. And Tom liked my old '41 Ford, but he didn't like that Oldsmobile. That Ford wiggled him to sleep. Olds was too smooth. Well, then, we got to California. I had interviewed, oh, half a dozen people on the way. But it was 1949, and there was nobody doing anything. Korea [sic] War hadn't started. It was just a normal, after-the-war recession. So we get out to California, and I interviewed several others out there including Fluor. And Fluor didn't have anything. So this friend said, “There's one company in the world that is doing anything, and that's El Paso Natural Gas. Their engineers are on overtime. They can't find enough of them to do the job. They're building pipelines as fast as they can build them, and they're shipping the gas to California. We need three or four times the amount of gas that they're selling us now. It's a company with a beautiful future.” So he says, “I'll write them a letter, and you write them a letter and mail it and get in your car and head there, and, when you get there, go see John Eikelman.” So I—we did that, and we had—I spent about three hours sitting in his office while he was con—doing business, you know. And I could see that they needed a lot of help. And, so, he hired me on the spot, and I said, “Okay. I'm going to go to—go back to Pennsylvania. I've got to work for two more weeks.” Well, when I got back, they wanted me to work three weeks, so I called Eikelman and told him what I was going to have to do. And he said, “Fine.” And, meantime, I told him—I says, “You know, I forgot to ask you if you were going to move me.” And he said, “Yes, we'll move you.” (both laugh) So, anyway, why, when I got to El Paso—ready to go to work—why, the only place that we could find was in a motel. And we stayed in that motel until I was going broke, you know. And finally we found a house that someone had—a brand new house that the guy had failed to qualify for, so it was available. So we bought it and moved in. I hated the damn

house. It was about 830 square feet and had the floor furnace right in the middle of the key hall, and you had to jump over it to—

AW:

Yeah. I used to live in a house just like that, and you were either too hot or too cold.

MA:

Yeah. Lived there for twelve years. But anyway, Marianne—when we were downtown shopping—everything was downtown in those days. And she said, “You know, I have never seen so many people that looked like me.” And I started looking, and she—her mother was from Ireland, and it was from the County Mayo which is up in the upper north west corner. And that’s where the Spanish Armada sunk and came a score and were integrated into the family. Well, grandma’s maiden name was Gavin which is a Mexican name. So Marianne had olive skin and black hair, you know, and she was a beautiful woman. And the—and a lot of these little Mexicans girls did—they did look a lot like her. And, so, anyway, why, we started—and she started—well, she was pregnant again, and that little baby didn’t survive. And—but, she was still doing a little bit of nursery work—not much but a little bit. And she went up to this—a smaller hospital there and worked in their Intensive Care for a little bit, and one time they said, “There’s a young boy that’s not expected to live more than a day.” And she got him—took—and he started getting better, so they took him out of intensive care. Then they gave her a woman that was supposed to die within hours, and when the family came by just a few hours later expecting to find her dead, she was sitting up in the room with her hair done and makeup on and happy as hell. (both laugh) And that woman went home. So she was an unusual woman. In El Paso, why, we had another boy, and she got involved in the school and volunteered as the school nurse and kept taking care of the kids and sending the ones home that were fixing to catch—give everybody—

AW:

Yeah.

MA:

One day, at our home, she told Tom—says, “Don’t go play with so-and-so.” And he says, “Why?” She says, “He’s coming down with something.” By the next morning, well, they had a quarantine sign on him. He had something—measles or something like that. We quarantined them in those days, and that was—that kid was a block away. But she could tell from a block away that he was getting sick.

AW:

Golly. That’s pretty amazing.

MA:

Yeah. And then we—I was getting raises, and we started planning a house. And we found a house and a lot that was up on the side of the mountain and had a beautiful view of the lights, and it was on the east side so the sun went down about two hours earlier. It was a nice cool place. And we built our dream home—found out that I was being transferred to Odessa. The day we moved in, we heard a rumor, and we got to live there for three years. We spent ten years planning that damn house and six months building it, but we got—it was a big house, and we had got involved a little bit in politics. And when Eisenhower was running, why, they sent us a notice that the—that the way that the system worked was that there was a precinct, and the precinct had a meeting immediately after an election. And you—they sent the delegates to the county convention who then they selected delegates to the state convention. Then they send—they sent—to the national convention, so they says, It's important even though this is Democrats. You had to be a Democrat—a Republican to have anything in El Paso—nothing. And, so, we went to the deal. I got my buddies; they were all Army veterans. We went over there, and we took over the meeting. And they elected me and Marianne as representatives—as the delegates, and, as an afterthought, we brought along the Chairman who was a strong Democrat. So we went to the county convention. And, hell, I never knew what was going on at all, but somebody did. And, finally, why, the liberal wing got up and walked out, and the Chairman of our precinct walked out with them. And she tried to get us to go, and we said, “No, no. This is where we belong.” And, of course, the conservative Democrats outnumbered the liberals in El Paso at that time. Well—and there isn't any such thing as a conservative Democrat anymore—not as an organized party anyway. Well, she got involved in politics with us, and she—we started entertaining people at our big house. And I got to meet some of the people that mattered, and it was interesting. But, finally, one day, why, she was—it was some election—and she had been a—one of the workers during the election a couple of times, and they invited her to go along with them to check out what was going on in the precincts. So they went over to one in south El Paso, and here was a—the lady was precinct chairman was sitting there with a stack of poll tax receipts and a stack of money. And one guy—I guess there were maybe two or maybe three—would come and get a poll tax, go vote, bring it back, pick up a dollar and another poll tax—they voted every poll tax, every year, every election. And, so, Marianne says, “I don't think that's legal.” So she came back and she says, “Okay, I'm a Republican now.” So we were on the same side for the first time. But, anyway, why, she—when we moved to El Paso—I mean, moved to Odessa, why, we—it was a small town. There was a whole lot of the guys I was working with moving there, and we just couldn't find a house at all. So we finally found one that was real close to a shopping center that we could get our family in. It's hard—you know, meantime, her sister had died, and we had accumulated a niece and a nephew. And the niece was reasonably good; the nephew made my—made Marianne's life miserable, and the niece was always playing tricks on me because she thought she was smart and could get away with anything, you know. So it was a—not a very pleasant situation. So, finally, why, when they got up—old enough, why, we sent the nephew back to grandma and put him in a boarding Catholic high school, and we sent the niece to a

Catholic high school in San Antonio. And—but they—we'd see them real often, but at least they weren't there all day. Marianne's mother was having health problems, and Marianne had to spend quite a lot of time back in California taking care of her. So it wasn't a very happy situation in Odessa, but I had got a good job. I was a vice president; I was on the board of directors, and—making as good a salary. But it just—along came the Oil Embargo where the Saudi's weren't happy with our politics with Israel, so they chopped us off. And you couldn't do anything. So there was no possibility for me and my research and engineering outfit to really do anything. They were just busting their ass to survive. A guy stopped me one time, you know, at an airport. He said, "You're from El Paso," and I said, "Yeah." He said, "I got a barge full of benzene on the Mississippi. Who do I call to find out what I can swap that for?" And we had a group of kids—real smart, young boys—that just knew every bit of stuff there was in the world, you know. And they were swapping, see. And if we could get something we could use, you know, and—but they swapped for anything that they thought would be easier than what they had. So, anyway, why, they got that guy, got his benzene, and gave him something in return. But, anyway, why I wanted—I told one of my older vice presidents; I said—now, he was an old gas company hand way back from the pipeline days. I says, "You know, if anything shows up in El Paso, I'd rather live in El Paso." So he came back and told me—he says, "Yeah, they're going to—they're going to build a coal gasification plant." So I said, "Well, did you see if they would let me work on it?" And he says—he said, "They were tickled to death. They had been struggling around trying to think of somebody they had that could do it, and they said, Hell, you're the ideal one," so I took that job over and became the executive vice president of El Paso Coal Company. And we had a lot of coal mines that—coal reserves that we had bought. They didn't have any mines that were operating, but the main one we were going to use was on the Navajo reservation. So I ended up negotiating for the next seven damn years. I did nothing but negotiate with the Navajos, the federal government, the Consolidation Coal Company, the State of New Mexico, the California customers, the California Energy Committee, the Navajo Tribal Council. It was the damndest job you ever saw in your life—the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority. I mean, I negotiated a labor contract with them if you can imagine such a thing—

AW:

I'll bet that was difficult.

MA:

—and their lawyer was a communist. So I had to teach him private enterprise to where he could understand what I was saying. But anyway—finally, why, the—the coal gas project wasn't going anyplace, and the—Jimmy Carter was the president, and he was dead set against anything that would disturb the atmosphere, and this was going to put a whole lot more CO₂ in the atmosphere, except we were going to recover it and pipeline it over to use for secondary recovery. That was a good way of doing it, and matter of fact, I'm not sure, but this—they had a plant here in Lubbock that they were—I don't know whether they did it, but they were considering recovering the CO₂

from it and using it for secondary recovery. But anyway, back to Marianne. She—we had a joint venture with a German company, and, of course, it was a German engineering company that had the technology. And the South Africans had built a plant, so I was negotiating with all those guys, too. Well, the—we had a meeting, and at the end of the meeting, why—we were in San Francisco, and I had told Marianne—she was in Bellflower. I told her, “Why don’t you come up to San Francisco and—because I’m going to be there for a couple of days. So, when we went in to have the dinner, why, of course, Marianne took over the damn meeting, and I remember one of them says, “Mack’s got a secret weapon.” But anyway, why, she had those German guys just eating out of her had. It was really something to watch those— (laughs) Later on, we had—I was a workaholic. I’d go to the office on Sunday morning. And, so, Marianne says, “Let’s go up to Ruidoso.” So we went up there, and we had a friend up there. And we got to looking around, and we decided to buy a place up there. So we bought a condo, and it was just really a nice place. And, first thing you know, why, the nurse—there was a nurse that had an office there in the stands for the people—not the jockeys or anybody else, but just for the people—and she was quitting. And she knew Marianne was a nurse, so she’d come to tell us that he was—that she was leaving. That Marianne could have the job—that she had recommended her to the people. So she started being that nurse, and, for several years why she was the nurse. One day, we were fixing to load up and go home, and a man—the guy that owned the condo—had a fellow with him. And he came in, and this man said—went up to Marianne said, “I understand you’re a nurse.” She said, “Yes.” He says, “Well we—we’re making a Grizzly Adams movie here for the next six months, and we want you to work and to take care—keep us happy and healthy. Well, she did, and she learned how to—a guy that was high on cocaine, she learned how to talk him down. I didn’t know all this until later, but they—she just learned a whole lot and kept them going. And, one night, I was up there, and she got a call about three in the morning. And one of the bigshots had got ahold of something that was making him sick. So she went over and got him settled down. It was food poisoning, and got him settled down. And just—that kind of stuff that she was doing that was keeping their job going, and they kept trying to hire her for two years after that. And the producer—one of the producers was living in our upstairs apartment. We were downstairs. And he said that they had zero absenteeism. Says, “Everybody was on the job every day, every time. It was all because of Marianne. She’d go in and get them out of bed and shove them in the shower and get—get them to work. That would be worth a jillion to us, if we just had somebody that could do that every place where we are.” Then—but—this—I guess, she was still working at the racetrack and then, finally, when the season was over, well, she came home. And she started spending a lot of time with a woman who had had her breasts removed, and so—and Marianne, you couldn’t touch her at all. She just was hurting so bad, and her breasts were just like all—just like steel, almost. You can’t imagine how hard they were. And she had a tooth that had a—the root was visible, if you could imagine that.

AW:

Wow. Oh, no. That must have been awful.

MA:

And so I told her—I says, “Well, we’re going to do something.” She—at that time, I was working as a computer programmer and working eighteen hours a day and ignoring everything going around. There wasn’t—I was—I wasn’t having a beer or anything because when—that was real deep thinking. The—she—we had a—I usually went to bed at ten o’clock, and she’d stay up until after Johnny Carson and some of the other programs and would come to bed. And I’d be asleep. And so, I didn’t notice anything unusual until the next morning when I woke up and she had killed herself. She had gone and turned the automobiles—both of them in the garage—and made herself a palate in the garage and had gone to sleep and never woke up.

AW:

How old was she then?

MA:

She was—let’s see. This was 1960—I mean, 1986, so she would be sixty-four, I guess, sixty-four. Sixty—

AW:

Well, the—

MA:

—but she was born in 1924, so that would be—she would be sixty-two wouldn’t she, yeah. But it was a shame because she was such a fantastic individual. I wrote a story about her one time, and I’ll see if I can find that and send it to you.

AW:

I’d love to have that. I don’t remember seeing anything like that in the materials that you gave me already, so—

MA:

I didn’t, no—no, I didn’t talk about that too much. I was mostly documenting my family at that time.

AW:

No, I’d love to have a copy of that just to add to the—

MA:

Yeah. I talked to—I’ve talked a little bit about my career in the written stuff, mostly because I thought some of my relatives would be interested in it, you know.

AW:

And how did she spell her maiden name?

MA:

McLane? M-c-L-a-n-e.

AW:

Okay.

MA:

Her father was the, I guess—the oldest son of a fairly large family of Catholics, and they—the father, his father was a superintendent for Standard Oil in Bakersfield. And he had grown up—he was kind of a rich man's son, I guess you might say. And the—his father had worked on the second oil well that was drilled in Pennsylvania.

AW:

Oh, well that's going back to the beginning, isn't it.

MA:

And then he had moved to Arkansas and was a superintendent there. And the—and Grandma was born in Ireland, and during the time of about 1920—They had the—a real political struggle. This was the Black and Tan Rebellion, and there was shooting going on. And grandma was involved. She was a young—she was born in about 1900, I guess. And she was involved, and the word was out that they had had—somebody had put a price on her head. So the activists smuggled her out, got her over to England, and put her on a boat to come to United States. And she had an older brother that she had never known was in Boston, so she went to Boston. And then she had a sister that she had known just briefly living in Arkansas, and so she went to Arkansas. And she had been trained as a nurse, but grandma did a—she figured out—she says, “You know, you're never getting anything done when you're a nurse. You get somebody well and out of there, and, suddenly, you turn around and somebody else is back in the bed. You never get anything done.”

AW:

Never accomplish anything. Never come to an end.

MA:

So anyway, why, she became a beautician, and she met Grandpa. And her sister that you met was married to a guy named Moran who had a tank company that is—made wooden tanks for the oil business, and that company ended up—merge and split and stuff like that, and it's part of a big outfit now. Of course, not building that kind of tanks.

AW:

No

MA:

No telling what they're doing, but they're in the oil business.

AW:

Well, that's really good. Thanks. This has been helpful. I'm sorry. I've got to go to this other appointment, here—to the collection, but if you would send me that—

MA:

I will, and—but I wanted to ask you. How far back have you been able to get as far as history of this part of the country?

AW:

Well, we've got some things—I'm going to go ahead and say thank you and stop this while I explain that to you. Thanks again.

End of Recording

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