

**Oral History Interview of  
Eric Strong**

**Interviewed by: Daniel Sanchez  
November 7, 2011  
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:  
*African American Interview Series/Lubbock History***

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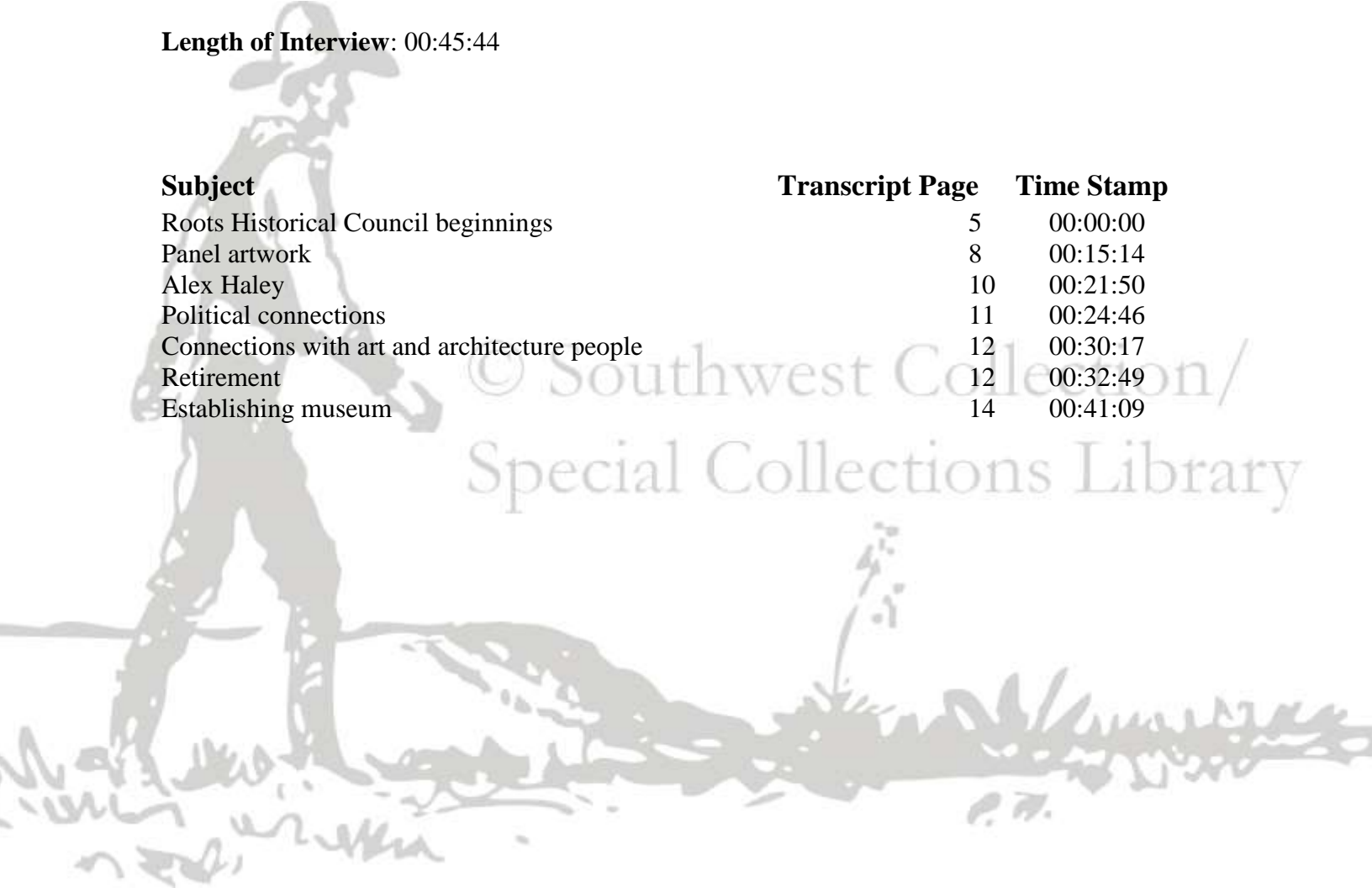
## Interview Series Background:

The African-American Oral History Collection documents the diverse perspectives of the African-American people of Lubbock and the South Plains. These interviews and accompanying manuscript materials cover a myriad of topics including; early Lubbock, segregation, discrimination, politics, education, music, art, cultural celebrations, the May 11<sup>th</sup> 1970 tornado, commerce, and sport.

## Transcript Overview:

This interview features Eric Strong of Lubbock. Strong talks about his work on various cultural projects associated with East Lubbock. He discusses working with and establishing various community organizations.

**Length of Interview:** 00:45:44



<b>Subject</b>	<b>Transcript Page</b>	<b>Time Stamp</b>
Roots Historical Council beginnings	5	00:00:00
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Connections with art and architecture people	12	00:30:17
Retirement	12	00:32:49
Establishing museum	14	00:41:09

### Keywords

African-American, art and architecture East Lubbock, Lubbock, Texas, Texas Tech University

**Daniel Sanchez (DS):**

This sounds like we need to bring in the collection

**Eric Strong (ES):**

I keep saying that, and I was going to go get this picture for your thing. It's a picture of early black leaders.

DS:

Oh, cool.

ES:

And it's got like, maybe thirty couples on it.

DS:

Okay, let me get the header on and then we can just start, how does that sound?

ES:

Okay

DS:

My name is Daniel Sanchez, today's date is November 7, 2011. We're at the Southwest Collection, and we're here with Eric Strong. Eric Strong is a retired administrator from Texas Tech University and has been a lifelong advocate of history and the Roots Historical Society is a topic we're going to be talking about today.

ES:

Okay, I am the—Roots Historical Arts Council is what it's called now—we had our genesis back in about 1976 or '77, when the movie *Roots* came out. And it was a group of guys who was so inspired by *Roots* that we wanted to kind of demonstrated to the city of Lubbock that, you know, everybody has roots, everybody has history and a story. So we wanted to tell the story of the African American community in a mural. And at the time, I want to say it was viewed as something that was kind of radical, you know, something that was like “Wow.” You know, like why would you want to put up a wall that would do that? In about 1977 we went to Parks Board, and I can't remember who was the director of Parks and Recreation then, it might have been somebody Alfred I think was his last name. And then there was some minister on the Parks Board whose name was Cleaver, that was his last name. And then Mario Perez was on there and we went and we told him what we wanted to do, and basically what happened is they said, “Well, go on with your research and come back and let us know what you find.” And we went and started looking into the history of African Americans in Lubbock County, and we discovered the Nolan's Lost Expedition among some other things, and we discovered that the first recorded



death in Lubbock County was the death of a black cowboy, a lot of different things. So we went back to the city and we said “This is what we found” you know and came up with this idea where we going to reenact this thing called Nolan’s Lost Expedition. And Nolan’s Lost Expedition was a thing where a group of black cavalymen were camped out near Devil Lake where Tahoka is. A group of buffalo hunters whose camp had been raided the night before, a couple of days before, they came up to here on the Llano Estacado, to near Devil Lake in Tahoka and they told them, they said, “The Indians raided our camp, they took our horses, we need you to help us get our horses back.” And their commander was a guy named Nicholas Nolan, and he said it was an opportunity because there were like, twenty-one white hunters, and he had a group of fighters who had gotten into combat, he decided not to fight. He said, “We’re not ready yet,” so this time he was ready. And it was the kind of stuff that heroes and dime novels are made of. So he said, “You know, I’ll get your horses back.” Anyway, they—guy came back said he saw forty Indians riding slow like they were in a parade or something. They saddle up as soon as they could and they begin to chase these Indians. The Indians led them away from water, after about four and half days without water, they survived by drinking the blood and urine of their horses and then biting in to their flesh. Well we decide to recreate that to see how far we could ride without water, and we had a water truck, we got some horses, some old horses from Buffalo Lake Riding Stable. And we got some ragtag Calvary uniforms, and they were really ragtag. And we saddled up and begin to ride toward the New Mexico state line, which is the place where they got up on the hill and turned around, was on this little hill in New Mexico. They called it Nigger Hill for a long time, until just recently. And then it had been a real hot summer, and it was so many consecutive days over a hundred kind of like it was this past summer. Well, the first day out, one of the guys fainted and the people, and the people from the associated press or somebody was there so it made National news, and in the interview we explained that we were trying to establish memorial for, you know, African Americans from in the west and, you know, Lubbock and some kind of way it turned into establishing a monument to tell the story of blacks in the Old West. And our group, at the time, was called the Roots Committee and we got into it, somebody showed us a picture, I forgot what newspaper it was from, it was probably somewhere in Montana, but our pictures were on the front page, like “Whoa!” talking about a monument to African Americans in the Old West because they had a connection to the west. And then we went back to the city, and we, you know, told them what happened and we scheduled a fundraising event. We had a fundraising event, and it was called The People’s Jam and it was at Mae Simmons Community Center. Well Mae Simmons Community Center, at that time, would hold 210 people and we were passing out flyers in English and Spanish, and the flyers said “La Jalea de la gente,” you know, The People’s Jam, and we announced that we were going to be giving out money, we had collected a lot, 7—800 dollars and we were going to be passing out five, ten dollars. The building would hold 210 people. On the night of the event, and we had the DJ was from Texas Tech, we were going to have like a little jam off or whatever it’s called. We had a thousand people that couldn’t get in, and we had about 8 or 900 people in the building. And the lady who was the center director, she said, “We can’t let another person in. We let someone in,

and I'm going to call the fire marshal myself." And it was successful, we put the money in some kind of account with the city bought the center a TV, and then we came back and we asked the Parks Board, "Where's our money?" you know, you've had it for two or three years. And it was kind of like a different style moves. What they did is they eventually, one article came out in the paper and it said that the Board favored the Roots Committee. The other article came out and said the Board shot the Roots Committee down. Same—it was *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal* had like a Friday paper of something, so they said two different things, so that's how I kind of learned, you know, how politics and the media works. We begin to do different projects. I was, at the time, working at a place called OIC, which is where I met my wife, and eventually I came to work at Texas Tech. And when I came to work at Texas Tech, the OIC place, they were struggling to keep the doors open because they had lost some of their Federal Funding, which is why I left. And then, I don't know, this man I was on the Board of OIC, and a guy made a presentation about OIC going in to Bingo, and at the time I was like, Hey, that's a good idea. So I think it was in 1983 or '82, somewhere in there, my son was small, the Roots, we incorporated as the Roots Historical Arts Council. And we became Bingo operators. But what happened is the people that were operating the Bingo, they never gave us really any of the money that we were supposed to get. The money, a certain percentage of it, was supposed to go to operations, and another percent was supposed to go to the non-profits. Well we had been in this Bingo for about a year and a half and we hadn't gotten any money. We had a director and his name was Rudolph Davis, he got his PhD in Art Administration here at Tech, and he wasn't getting paid. We were doing small activities, particularly with the community of Greenfair, little arts projects and tours and stuff like that. And then we—what happened is one day a guy came into the Bingo and he said "I'm taking all the equipment." We worked hard and got the business built up, passing out hundreds and hundreds of flyers. And one of the things we were doing differently is we had decided to give away airline trips to—and a cruise—you know, because we had made packages for under five hundred dollars—the limit on what you could give away for single winner was five hundred dollars. But we pushed it real hard and we got the clientele built up, and then one night this guy came in and he said, "I'm taking the Bingo equipment, I'm taking the tables and the chairs, and the only way you're going to play is if you play by my rules." So I'm like, "What?" and he said, "Well, you better talk to Burt." Burt was the guy who was, the guy that was the director of the OIC. And he was more or less the main person, and my wife and I had put in some extra money to be able to operate the snack bar. We had come into a little bit of money, just by fate, through a—she was in a union, and we had gotten a little bit of money when the union sued the company she was working for. So this guy came in, he said, "I'm taking the equipment, I'm taking everything," and he started loading it up, you know, in trailers, the chairs and everything. And I went to Burt and he said—Burt didn't, we gave Burt money to buy equipment, several people invested, and they had these little things called pull tabs, and the investors were just going to get a percentage of the pull tabs. Well investors didn't get any of the pull tab money because the governor, I don't remember who it was at the time, they said, and I think it's when they were thinking about going into the lottery in Texas, they declared them

illegal, you couldn't do them anymore, so that left the people invested without any money. And my wife and I had the snack bar, we had paid extra, but this guy came in and told us he was taking equipment, he began and I went to Burt and he said, "Well what happened was we had our staff at OIC, it was a jobs program, and we had to pay them, so the money y'all invested, I used to pay the staff, and then I rented the equipment from the guy and we would pay for the equipment through what we made in proceeds off the Bingo," and so he took the equipment, took everything, and he moved the Bingo out to Carlisle, right on the edge of Carlisle, this side of Carlisle, east of Carlisle, I mean east of Wolfforth, not Carlisle. The Bingo started making a lot of money then. This guy was paying his wife a bunch of money to keep the books, paying his son thousands of dollars to take out the trash every week, we were renting the building from this guy, and eventually the comptroller's office came in, and I told them everything I knew, then I told them, I said "Well the comptroller's office is, is coming in and they're going to be doing some checking," and I said, "My name is on the license, but my name is not on the checks, and that's going to look funny." So—and I, at the time, was the president of Roots, so they put my name on the check. About two days later, I went to the bank and drew all the money out. They wanted to kill me, I mean it was some kind of tough people, but I took all the money out, and it was only about five or six thousand dollars that was in the account at the time. And we used it to match a grant, we submitted a grant to the Lubbock Cultural Affairs Council is what it was called back then. And the grant, I think, was for like 20,000 dollars and it was to build a scale model of a monument to blacks in the West that we wanted to build. And Eddie Dixon sculpted the monument, the unveiling was going to be at the Juneteenth, and I want to say that was in 1976 or '77, somewhere back in there. Because, it was during the—whenever the Texas Tech Centennial was, might have been later, when was the Texas Centennial? I don't remember when it was, but it was during—it wasn't the bicentennial for America. It was a Texas Centennial, so it might have been in like '86, because the Bingo started in about '83, '84. And we were going to unveil that model at the park, and Eddie, Eddie sculpted it and took it to be cast in Sanderson, Texas, down in, I guess in the Big Bend area, close to Marfa, somewhere down that way. There was an explosion in the kiln, and out of three panels, he brought back two panels. And those two panels are today in the Texas Tech Museum. We would take those panels, we had a truck, and I wish I could find a picture of that truck. It was called The Roots Truck, and it had a picture of a black cowboy, real beautiful artwork, and a picture of a Buffalo Soldier on one side of the step, and it was to be a little new museum, and then my job at Texas tech, I guess I started getting promoted and stuff and didn't really have the time to devote to it that I needed, we'd drive it in parades and stuff like that. So one day it stopped, and I, with my dumb self, I just walked off and left it, I just—we didn't have anywhere to store it, I was moving to another house and it had some big old longhorns on the front of it [laugh]. It had a horn that played "The Yellow Rose of Texas," and it was detailed on the inside. We got some people in that, who had some community service hours, and they detailed them in in exchange for their community service hours, it was real pretty on the inside. And we had some little memorabilia and stuff like that. And it ended up going to somebody, and they said, "Man that was a good motor in that van" [laugh]. And I was like, I



don't know whatever happened to it, I was just saddened by the whole thing. We took the monument to—we ended up giving it to the Texas Tech Museum because it was sitting outside of my house in a truck for a long time. And I was going to move to a new neighborhood and didn't want pay the storage fees to keep it at an RV place. And so the guy at the museum at that time was Gary Edson, and for a long time, it may still be, it was on permanent display at the museum. Then, we had worked out a deal at the Governor's Office and they wanted us to bring it to the rotunda in the Capitol because it had toured for a long time. And we had this big event set, you know, planned, had Buffalo Soldiers and flags and the preview, riding club, we had about thirty or forty guys on horseback that was parading through the Capital grounds to unveil it, and Gary Edson said, "We're not going to let it go" because, and I think the reason is it's museum property, and you might not be equipped to take care of it. And I about freaked out, and I was like "What, what are you talking about man?" So what we did, we got some great big pictures, six foot pictures with people, and we had that on display in the rotunda and the cowboys did a—and the Buffalo Soldiers did a certain thing about it.

And then I was, I would speak a lot about the history of blacks in the Old West. And then I went to St. Louis, Missouri, I think it was about 1987, '86, somewhere in there. Right after sesquicentennial. And I was telling stories and an article came out in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, I was talking about history, and it said, "Texas Storyteller" or something like that, and I was like "Hey, I like that, Storyteller." That's something you can do when you get old, you know? I didn't know that's what I was doing was called but I was talking about, you know, Buffalo Soldiers and black cowboys and black explorers and stuff like that, but I was doing it in story. And I had even worked in some stories, some group participation stories that I had written, and I had never really met another storyteller, so I would use the storytelling as a vehicle to get the word out about what we wanted to do. And then, we put together some packages, and then I met a guy, and this was before we went to New York—oh, Jesse Jackson. I have a picture here somewhere. He was coming to Lubbock, and this guy said, "Well, what you do is, you get Jesse Jackson on a horse, put him in a ten gallon hat, put him in a duster, and put him on that horse next to your monument and we'll get it on the front page of the *New York Times*. And I was like, "Okay." So at the time, Bob Nash was the chairman of the Lubbock County Democratic Party, and I went to, what was his name, Arch Lamb, wrangled some horses, he was going to let me use them. Got a duster from Bill Price Western Wear and a hat, and we had the sculpture, I don't remember exactly where it was that Jesse Jackson was going to speak, he was running for president, and called his office to get his hat size and his coat size and stuff. So when he came to town, we met, he said, "Where is the duster, where is the hat?" He was ready, he said, "Man I need the horse." Well Bob Nash had told us, "If you put Jesse Jackson on a horse, somebody is going to shoot him" because there's been death threats on him, said he'd make too easy of a target on a horse. So I didn't get the horse, but Jesse Jackson said, "Man, I needed a horse." And then when he looked at the sculpture he said, "Man this is cold blooded," you know, he sounded so hood, you know [laugh]?

DS:

Yeah! [laugh]

ES:

I was like—and then we took it, we had, I wrote a letter to Alex Haley and I told—and this was after it was at the Museum—and then I told Alex Haley that we wanted to build a Roots Park and the name of our group was called Roots and we had been inspired by the movie *Roots* and our goal was to build a national monument in Lubbock to build some tourism in East Lubbock. And Alex Haley called me on the phone one day, I was asleep, and my niece at the time was living with us and helping to watch the kids and she said, “Uncle Eric, it’s the telephone,” and I said, “Tell them I’m asleep.” “No he says he needs to talk to you; he says it’s Alex Haley” and I said, “Alex Haley’s not on the phone!” [laugh], that Alex Haley. Had a friend named Leon and Leon Button [?] is a real good friend of mine, he was always calling the phone playing tricks. So I got up to go get the phone and he said, “Eric Strong? This is Alex Haley,” and I said, “Leon, you bs-ing man, you woke me up, this is not Alex Haley, this is Leon Button.” He said “No, no this is Alex Haley and I got your letter” and I caught his voice, you know? And he was going to be in Fort Davis and we set up a meeting in Fort Davis, and we took about twenty-five or so students who were in the black history class at Lubbock High and some people from Midland. So I commissioned a sculpture from Eddie Dixon of a Buffalo Soldier, and we were going to present the sculpture to Alex Haley and he was going to pose by the thing that we wanted to build and try to get some traction for it. And he came and he did, and we had a plate on the—it was a beautiful, beautiful bust of a Buffalo Soldier, it was beautiful, one of the best things that he’s done. And we had a little plaque that said you know, “Donated to Alex Haley for Inspiring Roots,” and Eddie, for some reason, left the plaque off of it. It just had Eddie Dixon on the back, you know, so I was like “Man” but we gave him—and I think it’s in his museum in Henning, Tennessee, in Alex Haley’s Museum, and we made a presentation to another guy. We commissioned two of them, and one was to a guy whose name—wow, his name escapes my mind, he is a professor at Florida A&M University, somewhere in Florida, and he wrote the definitive book on Buffalo Soldiers, and we gave him one of those. And he and Eddie got to be good friends. And then later we gave one to Danny Glover when he was here, so we had three of them. And then, with this project, just kind of you know, off and on, off and on, we saw some land we wanted to buy. And this land was fifty thousand dollars, and my friend George, he’s a very astute PR man—I talked to his wife today—and he and his wife, George Richardson, they met in one of the Freedom Riders campaign down in the south, and he was the first black elected official, state-wide, in New Jersey and—eventually. And she was a Nazi Holocaust survivor, so they met on one of these Freedom Riders down in the South. And they’re still together, many, many, many years later, they’re both in their eighties and they’re still together. Anyway, I was in Washington, D.C.—and I used to have to go to Washington from time to time for Upward Bound, and in the halls of Washington, D.C. I met, on the capitol building somewhere or one of the senate buildings, I met Mickey Leland. And Mickey Leland was born out here; his parents

were stationed at Reese Air Force Base. Mickey Leland was a congressman from Houston, from the same district that Barbara Jordan was from and I'm not sure who's from there now. But at the time, Mickey Leland was the chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus. And we got to talking and I was telling him what I wanted to do, he said "I'm going to give you the name of a lady that can help you." He said, "This lady's name is Amelia Parker. I want you to go to her, tell her Mickey Leland sent you. Tell her I was born in Lubbock and I want her to help you," so I was excited, I was walking on clouds, I was down in Washington. And I went to the office of the Congressional Black Caucus looking for Amelia Parker, and Amelia Parker—it was this lady there that was cleaning up, like a janitorial lady and I said, "I'm looking for Ms. Amelia Parker, is she in this afternoon?" And the lady said, "I don't know," and I said, "Well my name is Eric Strong, I'm looking for Amelia Parker." She said, "Well, what do you want with her?" I said "I wanted to talk with her about a project that we have in Lubbock." She said, "Well, that depends, I'm Amelia Parker." And I thought she was a janitor at first. And we hit it off, and she said, "Well, I'll tell you what we're going to do. I want to see what your group can do. I want you to raise some money, \$50,000, to buy—to have a Juneteenth in Washington, D.C. If you can raise the \$50,000 what we'll do is we'll have a Juneteenth even in Washington and we'll use it as a catalyst to raise \$6,000,000 to do your project." Man, I thought I was going to float away. It was just exciting. I came back home, I started writing grants. I wrote a grant to Bull's-eye Barbecue Sauce, and they were interested in it, but in the end they just decided not to do it, and in the end I couldn't make it happen by the deadline she gave me. But she was really nice to me, and it was the time that I got really really excited. I also got excited first time I ever met George. George was a guy in New York. He made a movie about Black Rodeo, he was in to the Black West, he had a movement called *Coming Home to America's Roots*, and his movie, Aretha Franklin and Muhammad Ali were in this movie, a black movie here in Harlem, and Cleo Hearn—Cleo Hearn is an African American rodeo producer near a \_\_\_\_\_ [0:26:52]. They almost tried to bring one of his rodeos here in 2011 to Lubbock, there were one hundred black men, tried to bring one to Cleo's, it's called Cowboys of Color Rodeo. But it's been sometimes, you know, with the Roots Historic Arts Council, off and on, where I've been very excited. And the guy that Rudy, who was our director, he determined that we should name it the Roots Historical Art Council because Arts Councils gives you some flexibility and some access—access to different kinds of money pots that you may not have if you're just a regular group. And that was one of the times that I was really excited and we saw some land over there right across from the baseball field at the Loving's Baseball Field over in east Lubbock, a beautiful piece of land, it used to be. Apartments sit over there, it's about six acres, almost six acres, and it sits right on the edge of that canyon, right on the edge of that waterfall. And we tried, we wrote a grant to the CH Foundation, the CH Foundation came back in a letter, and they said "That's a little bit much for property in east Lubbock. We like the idea, we like what you're trying to do, but we think that's too much to pay for property in east Lubbock." Well as it turns out, somebody bought the property for \$10,000 more than what were because it was in a very good spot. And the housing authority bought it to put up some apartments. And I think there was some kind of agreement



that they couldn't build new apartments, the other ones were getting old, if they were anywhere within in a mile of the other ones. So they ended up either donating it or selling it very cheap to the church across the street. And the church across the street wants to put a church there. And we worked with a guy by the name of Dr. Ping, George Ping, George Ping, in my opinion, was a genius. He's another one of my mentors like George Richardson and some other people, and Bob Nash. George Ping was an architecture professor and urban planner. He had designed a building in China that I think housed like 30,000 people, apartment complex, in a single building. The Overton revitalization, the Broadway landscaping, and the International Culture center all came from George Ping. And George Ping was so excited about the project. I mean he used to call me—he had a real strong Chinese accent—and he would say, he would be trying to say midnight, but he, I used to laugh because he would say, "You can call me at miller light," sounded like he was saying Miller Light, but he was—I loved Dr. Ping, he and his class parted with landscape architecture and they came up with some designs of master plan. And I still have that model of that master plan at my house, and it has that memorial that's in the museum and how it would look with the dimensions we wanted, the length of a football field in bronze relief sculptures. And then Dr. Ping, he eventually passed away, he had cancer. I remember one time, we were, I would go to his house and he had these little, tiny tables, I mean chairs I guess, it was like benches that they would sit on. You take your shoes off and stuff like that and every time I would leave my back would hurt because it was so low to the ground and hard to get up. And his wife was an excellent hostess and liked to cook and have people over and little desserts and treats and stuff like that. And he would talk about, you know, he would say that Lubbock is like a person standing on one strong leg and one weak leg. And he said that weak leg is east Lubbock, the strong leg is west Lubbock. The other legs are pretty much balanced, but in order for Lubbock to go from a mediocre city to a great city, it has to have something dynamic in east Lubbock, something that would bring people back to east Lubbock and give the town some synergy, a kind of a central location. And worked on models, he would meet—develop plans, lot of plans together, a strategic plan. And as I was working at Tech I would take classes that I thought would help. I took a museum science Class, arts management, and a lot of things that I just like and eventually earned enough credit for interdisciplinary master's degree with a focus in Art's Management/History and—what else—education, bilingual education. We—when I was working at Texas Tech I got promoted, eventually, to director, and when I got to be a director, my time was kind of sparse. We still had Roots, but we didn't do as many projects. We did that Take Pride in the East Side project and some other art projects, but not as active as we had been years earlier and this was in the late nineties, you know, coming in to the 2000s, I think, and maybe the mid-nineties, we kind of waned away from it. And then I begin to, you know, kind of just wait for the day for when I could retire and devote more time to Roots and to storytelling and to working on building something in east Lubbock that would have the excitement that Dr. Ping talked about that was needed. And on the day I retired at Texas Tech I remember that it was quite a few people at the Merket Alumni Center and they were lined up, and people saying a lot of neat stuff and somebody asked me the question, they said "Well you know you love your job,



if you love your job so much, why are you retiring?" I'm retiring because I want to work in the community and, you know, I've been waiting for this day. I love Upward Bound, I used to dream about it every night, I'd dream about Upward Bound. And since the time that I have retired, we have had—the budget has been growing by leaps and bounds almost every year. This will probably be our first year to have a budget over a \$100,000, and I anticipate, if it keeps going like it is going, we'll have a budget of over half a million dollars in the next two or three years at the rate it's going. We just—back in April of 2011, we got a call from—we used to have a Roots office, we have an office on Nineteenth and R, and it's got some of my stuff from Upward Bound, it's got a lot of artwork that people have donated to the Roots group and from some exhibits that were done and we've had that for about three years and got it, probably the second year after I retired, and then we've done exhibits with Eugene Roquemore and his photographs. We've done exhibits with the Tech Pride in the East Side, we've done exhibits with different black artists, and we've had an exhibit each year. We had a some storytelling events that we put together; one is the annual storytelling festival we put together at Barnes and Noble during Black History Month, and then we have—we used to have a thing called The Great Stories Academy. And The Great Stories Academy was kids telling stories that were, that had morals to them. They'd present these stories as a summer camp at Mae Simmons, and we partnered with the summer camp and we gave all the kids backpacks and a bunch of school supplies. And at the end of the thing, they'd come and they'd get their school supplies, but they'd also tell their stories. And the little bitty ones, they would—they had a little choir and they would sing songs that were stories, and it went real well, it was me and another lady that told stories by the name of Lorraine McCullough [?] who was an advisor over at the International Culture Center. She was International travel advisor, and I think people coming in to enroll in school, she served as their counselor advisor. And then she just up and died, you know, she just died, I'm not real sure why. I guess, eventually, I think they said she may have had an enlarged heart or something, but we hadn't done that Great Stories Academy since she passed away, but it was very successful. The first one we had, we had about 200 people to come, parents and stuff. And then we've had some other events, we partnered with the Lincoln-Douglass Committee, and when we partnered with the Lincoln-Douglass Committee—and how that happened, they asked me to speak, I think I was the emcee, and they said, "Well you be Frederick Douglass," and I said, "I don't know how to be Frederick Douglass," and I got up there and I told a story and it wasn't quite related to Frederick Douglass, it was a story about slavery, and so they said, Ms. Jackson said, "Come on, help us," so the following year, we put together this thing where we brought in people who portrayed Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln and let them have a discussion, you know. It was very elaborate, but we brought in these real quality—and they don't call themselves performers, they're presenters—and one guy was from Kentucky, the next guy was from Colorado, and they did an awesome job. And then Bill Kerns, who is a friend of ours, he put it on the front page of the paper, and man, when it hit the paper like that, it sold out. It was like [makes noise of an object moving quickly through the air], it sold out, and one of things I've always been good at is getting people to come to stuff. We put together two different concerts with Tom Braxton, who's

a jazz player, and he just came during the roast for TJ Patterson. We had one in the Allen Theatre and we raised \$10,000 for an endowment for music students, and then they went to JT Braxton, which is Tom Braxton's father. We also had a thing called The Freedom to Succeed and The Freedom to Succeed came shortly after I retired. Freedom to Succeed was, we took a group of kids who, they call them—they have a word for it, I forgot what it is, maybe kids in the cusp, people that probably should have passed the TAKS test, but for whatever reason, they weren't passing it. Took twenty-five kids from Dunbar Estacado, I mean Dunbar Cavazos in Alderson, and we brought them in, we brought in speakers, we brought in the little boy who spoke in Dallas at the convocation. His mother did a workshop on bringing the brilliance out of your kids. Little kid has been on the Today Show, Oprah, lot of stuff. And he was hot in the time that we brought him. We brought him in, and we had workshops and we went to Gene Messer Ford and we told Gene Messer Ford, "We want to buy a car for what you paid for it. What you'll get out of it, you'll get advertising your name, but we're going to give away this car at this event to one of the parents because we're trying to get parents to come." I'm not sure why, but only three parents showed up. And we had, you know, we was going to give away a Saturn or something, it was an older car. And it wasn't new but, you know, it ran good, and the body style looked pretty good and we decided not to do it. We told the people from Gene Messer, we just, you know I think with the cost it was like \$2,700, what they got for an auction they were probably going to sell it for maybe 6 or \$7,000 and then he had a Volkswagen, he said, "What y'all ought to get at that Volkswagen." It was a couple of years old, it was a convertible Volkswagen, shiny and new, and I said, "Well if you could sell that because my daughter is looking for a car," so he made a deal where she got the car for cost, and the parents picked for a \$1,000. But what was successful about that event is the next time that the kids took the test, a 100% passed the test, so it worked out real good. And the workshops, they had workshops with people who were retired principals talking with principals and teachers about how to work with at-risk kids. And we also started an activity called *Tomorrow's Leaders*, we partnered with a group called Hombres Nobles and another group called Ministril [spelling unknown 40:08], and we helped Hombres Nobles get their 501(c)(3) and that's another kind of a mission of our group is we help different groups get their 501(c)(3) . We've helped the Roots Historical Arts Council group in Midland, the—what was his name—80 John Wallace Culture Center over in Colorado City, a group of Buffalo Soldiers over in Vernon, and just the—the Ballet Folklorico Aztlan, here in Lubbock, the Sickle Cell Ministries here in Lubbock. Just, probably about ten or twelve different groups get their 50—at no charge, and its kind another effort of the Roots Historical Arts Council. In April of this year, Billie Caviel, who's a pharmacist in Lubbock called and said, "We have a building. We want to give you the building for a Museum," and the first time I thought about it, you know, I was like, "Man, that's a lot of work, I'm retired. You know, I would have to work hard every day and I'm not—you know, I like to work and tell stories and do what I feel like doing." But the more I thought about it, the more I said, "Well this may be the opportunity," so we accepted the building, and the Dunbar class of 1982 has come over and helped us clean up to get it cleaned out. We submitted a grant to the CH Foundation, and we were going to receive \$70,000 to

renovate the building. And it's not in real bad shape, it's just, for some reason, here wires running everywhere [laugh]. Would do you call those surge protectors coming out of every wall with four or five wires going to all of them. So I guess it didn't have a lot of electric plugs, but we got a lot of bids on renovation. And we wrote in to the grant \$17,000 to buy someone's surrounding property, and in about three weeks, we should be receiving the money. And we got a grant from the DieKemper Foundation, we just submitted a grant to the Lubbock Area foundation to hire interns, and these interns would take a group of students from Landscape Architecture looked at the land surrounding the museum and the building and the building itself to interpret it, the civil rights, into the landscape design and to see what the possibilities were. Some of their ideas are very, very exciting, some of them very expensive and complicated to pull off. What we want to do is to get probably four interns from different disciplines, one of them would be architecture, landscape architecture, museum science, construction engineering, to come and develop a master plan under the direction of somebody who has expertise to help them put it together into a workable plan—something that's challenging but yet attainable. And so at this point, the grant was submitted about a week or so ago, and we should be hearing something in—the Lubbock Area Foundation encouraged us to submit the proposal, so my hopes are kind of high. We submitted a proposal to the Mayor Foundation for \$34,000 to landscape the outside of it, and it didn't go through, and I think it's because it wasn't that well written, it was something that was put together because the deadline was like, the next day. So I've been doing some research, and I was doing some today on where to get some of the funding from. So basically, what I'm learning from this process is a lot of the efforts that we started a long time ago have the chance to come to fruition, you know, step by step. We put together a roast of TJ Patterson, we approached TJ, and TJ and them started a group called Each One Reach One. I helped them get their 501(c)(3), and the lady who works for TJ named Faye Brown, Annie Rich, and TJ, and a couple of other people and they used a group to put money into the TJ and Bobby Patterson Scholarship fund started by Chancellor Hance. And so basically the proposal was, "What we want to do is roast you, TJ, and half the money would go to the Museum Project and half to the scholarship fund," and we did, and it turned out successful. It cost about \$18,000 to raise \$18,000 to pull it off. And then after the cost and all the bills have been paid, it looks like we'll come out somewhere, hopefully in the neighborhood of about \$14,000, which we'll split seven and seven. A lot of the entities that are small non-profits, and Lubbock's got dozens of them, one of the problems is that they don't have paid staff.

DS:  
Right.

ES:  
And you have—I think it might have been you that I was talking about Sam Harper—how he was over there with a little sign at the football game "Park here for \$7."

DS:

I didn't see that.

ES:

The sun was hot, his head is bald, it was on a hot day, and they let people tailgate—

*[End of Recording]*



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