

**Oral History Interview of
Burle Pettit**

**Interviewed by: Daniel Sanchez
June 9, 2015
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:
*Sports History Initiative***

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

**Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library**

15th and Detroit | 806.742.3749 | <http://swco.ttu.edu>

Copyright and Usage Information:

An oral history release form was signed by Burle Pettit on September 27, 2001. This transfers all rights of this interview to the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University.

This oral history transcript is protected by U.S. copyright law. By viewing this document, the researcher agrees to abide by the fair use standards of U.S. Copyright Law (1976) and its amendments. This interview may be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes only. Any reproduction or transmission of this protected item beyond fair use requires the written and explicit permission of the Southwest Collection. Please contact Southwest Collection Reference staff for further information.

Preferred Citation for this Document:

Pettit, Burle Oral History Interview, June 9, 2015. Interview by Daniel Sanchez, Online Transcription, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library. URL of PDF, date accessed.

The Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library houses almost 6000 oral history interviews dating back to the late 1940s. The historians who conduct these interviews seek to uncover the personal narratives of individuals living on the South Plains and beyond. These interviews should be considered a primary source document that does not implicate the final verified narrative of any event. These are recollections dependent upon an individual's memory and experiences. The views expressed in these interviews are those only of the people speaking and do not reflect the views of the Southwest Collection or Texas Tech University.

Technical Processing Information:

The Audio/Visual Department of the Southwest Collection is the curator of this ever-growing oral history collection and is in the process of digitizing all interviews. While all of our interviews will have an abbreviated abstract available online, we are continually transcribing and adding information for each interview. Audio recordings of these interviews can be listened to in the Reading Room of the Southwest Collection. Please contact our Reference Staff for policies and procedures. Family members may request digitized copies directly from Reference Staff.

Consult the Southwest Collection website for more information.

<http://swco.ttu.edu/Reference/policies.php>

Recording Notes:

Original Format: Born Digital Audio

Digitization Details: N/A

Audio Metadata: 96kHz/ 24bit WAV file

Further Access Restrictions: N/A

Related Interviews:

Transcription Notes:

Interviewer: Daniel Sanchez

Audio Editor: N/A

Transcription: Emilie Meadors

Editor(s): Katelin Dixon

Interview Series Background:

The Sports History interviews encompass interviews conducted by members of the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library staff. They hope to document the evolution of sports and the role of sports in the social fabric of this region.

Transcript Overview:

This interview features sports writer Burle Pettit. Pettit talks about his career in journalism and the way the field of sports writing has changed. Pettit discusses his experiences with different coaches and players at Texas Tech and notes some of the highlights of his career.

Length of Interview: 00:54:11

Subject	Transcript Page	Time Stamp
Relationships between coaches and writers	5	00:00:00
Differences today when interacting with coaches and players	6	00:08:43
Hayden Fry and violations	7	00:15:28
Texas A&M's relationship with Tech	8	00:20:25
UNT and Gene Stallings	9	00:24:28
Mike Liner	10	00:31:24
Connelly	13	00:43:09

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

Keywords

athletics, football, NCAA, Texas Tech University, Southwest Conference

Daniel Sanchez (DS):

My name is Daniel Sanchez; today's date is June 9, 2015. We're at the Southwest Collection, and today we're going to be speaking with Burle Pettit. I want to introduce Burle and have him spell his complete name. That way our transcribers will get it right. Also, Burle has noted that he wants to restrict access to these interviews for a few years, so we'll probably sit down afterwards, and him and Tai decide how many years that will be. So Burle, start off with your name.

Burle Pettit (BP):

Burle Pettit. B-u-r-l-e, Pettit, P-e-t-t-i-t.

DS:

And Burle, you know, we were walking around the building, and one thing that struck me as we walked around, you were talking about relationships between coaches and coaches and writers and coaches and writers and writers. Would you like to expand on that?

BP:

I think that's been, Daniel, the biggest change in the new way of coaches and writers, and it's been a change for the worst. I can't mark when it started, when that change started coming about, but I like to blame everything on the Watergate Investigation. After that every young reporter came out thinking that their job was to turn over rocks and see what they could find instead of telling people what the hell's going on, which is what our basic job is about. Well, this predates me a long ways. Relationships were already in place when I came on scene in 1960 when I first came to Lubbock to spend one year—I'm still here. The coaches, by and large, were all pretty good friends. Darrell Royal and Frank Broyles' relationships, well documented, they loved to play golf together. Going on to it, Darrell and Frank, J. T. King at Tech, John Bridges at Baylor, Hayden Fry at SMU, and when I first came on, Hank Foldberg, I guess, was at A&M, and Abe Martin at TCU. Well, all those guys were—all the coaches got along well. They played golf together and they spent their summers conversing and just had a good friendly relationship.

A&M was always a little bit almost on the outside going back to Bear Bryant. When he came to A&M, it's been well documented in a number of books and publications that Bear recruited with hundred dollar bills. He had supposedly, according to Jim Dent's book on *Junction Boys*, he had a drawer full of money that he'd hand to assistants when they were going recruiting. So A&M was always walking on the outside edge, and consequently, the A&M coach didn't have quite the relationship with the other coaches who all—well they felt like that—hell, they knew they were cheating. Oh, Jones Ramsey who was the sports information director at Texas—and this was another special breed of people, too, the SIDs that were on board at that time. He was at Texas and it used to be he was at A&M when Bear Bryant was there. And Jones told me one time, he says, "You know, the Aggies always felt they had the right to cheat because they needed to cheat because they were not co-educational, and it was an all-male school. College station was not

exactly a an oasis, and they had so many things going against them that they had to even the score—they going a little farther beyond a car here and there, whatever it took to get the players.” Well, he said they just said that was their birth right. To the best of my knowledge, most of the coaches played by the rules in recruiting. Hayden Fry got crosswise in ’64 and got put on probation. A lot of them—I think Hayden’s was more—everybody walked the line. I don’t care what they tell you, they did. And sometimes they’d veer off of it a little bit. Well, when Hayden veered off, he happened to be caught. He got nailed by the Tech assistant named John Connelly who was assistant head coach at Tech. Yeah, he recruited in the Dallas area, so he and Hayden weren’t very good friends. But anyway, by and large, they all had a lot of respect for each other as human beings, and a lot of respect as coaches. They had a lot of respect for their skill set as coaches. The fellowshipped and got along well. Well the writers, Dallas had competing newspapers, and Fort Worth had competing newspapers, and San Antonio had competing newspapers. But the writers on those papers, even though they were competing in the same town, all of us were out there trying to get the best angle on any stories that was going, but we’re all close friends and still are today, most of them—hell, I’m eighty, and I was with a kid on the block end [?] [00:06:43], and I still talk to Dave Campbell, and Dave’s in his nineties. Something I didn’t realize till I went to the hall of fame thing a couple years ago in the Texas Sports Hall of Fame. They were recognizing Dave, and he had been a Silver Star winner in World War II, I had never guessed that, in as many hours as I spent with him. I wrote for his magazine for years. I did Tech, SMU, and then sometimes other schools, but I did those two every year for him. We’ve been close friends a long time, and he is very quiet, almost a shy type of guy, and god, of all the people I wouldn’t have thought of as a—that gave me another aspect of Dave and put in perspective of a lot of things, and then it fell into place with his courage in writing. Anyway, my heroes, you know, Blackie Sherrods of the world, Jim Trinkle, some of those guys I was reading when I was growing up—Trinkle, all those World War II veterans were coming back out of the army about the time that to me that the Southwest Conference was in its heyday was at the end of the World War II period when the guys like Bobby Layne and Doug Walker came back out of the service, and a new breed of young players like Rote and of course Kyle Rote and Hayden played against each other in what may have been the best high school football game ever played. I want to digress a second here. I guess it must have been ’45 or ’46, Odessa High and San Antonio Jefferson, both played for the state championship undefeated. Hayden was quarterback at Odessa. A guy named Byron “Santone” Townsend was a fullback. Oh gosh, two Gabriel boys and a bunch on the Odessa team. Kyle Rote and four or five other guys, yeah, out of that game, seven players started for major college teams. Hayden told me one time it was the only game he ever coached, saw, or played in that was a perfect football game. There was not a penalty and not a fumble, not an interception, not a mistake was made in that game. Odessa won the game, but it was a close game, a five or six point difference. Anyway, he still loves talking about that game. And the thing that I appreciated about this whole group of coaches, so many of them like Hayden, I could sit and listen to him, and he’d tell me stories from West Texas high school football to his times as an assistant and his head coaching experience

and who he played against when he was quarterbacking at Baylor. Of course, he was second team quarterback at Baylor, Adrian Burke was the starter and Hayden's roommate and very close friends. The relationship between the writers and the coaches was great with some exception. Now Hayden, after '64 when he got put on probation here, he fell out with a couple of writers for whatever reason, I don't know. So he had a bad reputation among three or four writers, and he was inaccessible. Every time I called Hayden I got right through to him, or he returned my call immediately. Well, David Cawood who was his sports information director at the time, told me later that Hayden's secretary had two lists of names on either side of her phone. "Call me if these call. Get rid of these." (laughter) And so I fortunately was on the good list. Covering Tech, I had full access, you know, J. T. I would wonder in and out of their coach's meetings, and the way he looked at it was the more I know about what they were doing, the more accurate my stories were going to be. Royal was a lot the same way. He opened up to a lot of guys, there were guys he really trusted. The thing that was different then, you'd go on a press tour every year, we made all the press tours, you went into every town or every school, the hometown for each school, and you'd interview players—this was done in August, preseason football season. At every stop, you get a list of players that you might want to talk to during the year. Maybe they're from somebody playing at Rice that was from the Lubbock area or playing at Arkansas or wherever, might want to call them, had their phone number. I mean, you didn't have to go through—now if you want to talk to a player you have to call a SID and then he has to see if it's okay with the coach, and then the coach sets it up, the time and when. I had full access to all the Tech players. I'd sit there and go to workouts and talk to the kids that were standing on the—that weren't in scrimmage or whatever. Nobody ever paid any attention to me. Sometimes I'd write things that the Tech staff would like, sometimes I'd write things they didn't like, but neither way did it affect the relationship. My relationship with Tech was very typical of beat writers all over the conference, and I know that Hayden in '64, the conference meeting was in Lubbock. At the spring meetings, that's when the conference track meet was. If there's anything I always hated more than track, it was field. There was the kid that would track writers [?] [00:14:25] that the fact one guy could outrun another and didn't mean a damn thing unless one had the ball and the other chasing him, then it was significant. Anyhow, I always went to the conference meet because that's when the business meetings were, the suggested rule changes and who's getting accused of violations and all that. Well, in '64, it was pretty clear that SMU was on the hot seat. Sure enough, they got put on probation. This is something I've never written but I've thought about many times and I've visited, joked about it with Hayden. Since then he had recruited—I mean, he had a fantastic recruiting year in '64. One of the violations he was accused of had to do with a kid from Lamesa, another Dallas player, and evidentially they had the goods on both places because they nailed him. Hayden, for the first time in his career—going back to—he came to SMU in '59 or '61 or '2. Anyway, it doesn't matter. He wouldn't talk to the media. You know, In Town Inn was brand new, I don't know if you remember that motel, some kind of a halfway house or something out on K and I guess Broadway and K. Anyway, that's where the conference meeting was held. That's easy walking distance from the paper, so I was over there most all the time during the

meetings. Hayden, his SID at the time was—I think that's before Cawood, Cawood was still at Baylor then. Anyway, it was Junior Eldrige was the SID. He came out and said Hayden would have no comments to the media. Of course, we're all jumping all over poor Junior. He was doing what his boss told him to do. So everybody leaves meeting, breaks up. I went back over to the paper, and I came back over to the motel, and I knew the—I got some football tickets for the guy that worked the desk at the hotel one time at Inn Town Inn, and he gave me Hayden's room number. So I went and knocked on the door and he said, "Come on in." He said, "I'm not going to talk to you." He said, "I can't comment on all this." Anyhow, I was pleading with him saying, "I've got to have a damn story. This is my hometown happening in Lubbock at my paper." He finally agreed that I could go through the reasons that he didn't want to talk, you know, which is what made it a story. Then I started leaving, he said, "This is off the record, but I'll tell you one thing, they nailed me today, but I'll kick their ass. I'll win this championship season in '66." He said, "That's a guarantee." Of course, he had all those players that he'd got, they weren't eligible to compete for the title the next year which they wouldn't have won it anyhow that year because these guys were all a year away. He come back, and he won it in '66. The writers, we love to get stories that nobody else had. I don't know any two writers that didn't like each other, wasn't like, you know—when Genes Stallings came in, Tech and A&M's relationship went south in a hurry; J. T. and Beevus [?] [00:19:24] didn't like each other worth a damn. It's kind of strange because Stalling's, J. T. was on Bear Bryant's staff when Stallings was playing us, we coached him [?]. Anyhow, they didn't—and this was exaggerated when in '67 when A&M won the conference. They beat Tech at Jones Stadium with three seconds left, Edd Hargett about the third yard line about to pass, nobody's open and he ran in for a touchdown because everybody's spread out, and he weaved right through them. Well, just the guy about to make a tackle on him, Tech defensive end—I can never think of his name—anyway—oh Larry Stegent, Aggie running back clipped him, hit him from behind, tore up his knee, George—anyway, he was out, his career was over. They didn't—very clear on film. An official was standing right there, but he didn't throw a flag or you know, that play would have been nullified, Tech would have won the game and eventually the Southwest Conference because that loss gave the Aggies the conference title, when in fact they won the conference with a 6-4 record. The next year Tech went to A&M and physically mauled the Aggies. Stegent got taken out of the game pretty quick. I mean, this was one physical Tech football team. After the game was over, Stallings told J. T., says, "Y'all just came down here to hurt Stegent, to pay back Stegent." They had a lot of words coming off the field. Anyway, I didn't have a very good relationship with Stallings because unfairly, he connected me with Tech, you know, he figured that whatever Tech was for I was for, and whatever they were against, I was against, and they were against him. Well, it never occurred to him that I didn't like him because I thought he was a horse's ass, you know. That's the plainest language I can put it. But old Stalings and I would get in an argument every time we were around each other. Anyway, after that ball game, they tried to pull a swinging gate play on a fake field goal which probably cost them the ball game. A guy named Jerry Watson from Ranger was a cornerback for Tech. When they snapped the ball and threw it over to a guy that on the fake field

goal, Jerry saw it and just ran and threw the guy down for fifteen yard loss. It was a fourth down play, and if it had been lined up straight and kicked the field goal, they probably won the game. But anyhow, it's neither here nor there. Years go by and people change. Gene Stallings, right now, I have nothing but respect for. We're the same age, graduated from high school the same year, we were both at that time young and pretty proud of ourselves. There was no real reason for our relationship to be bad except we didn't like each other. Then years later, in those recent years right after Stallings retired from Alabama—where he won a national championship, by the way. There was a regent at University of North Texas at that time, and we were trying to decide which route to go with their athletic program. North Texas is the third largest university in the state, and yet our athletic program's never quite lived up to our academics and school size, although Hayden Fry, which is another story, went there after he got fired from SMU and kicked everybody's butt, including SMU's. That's what got him the Iowa job when he was done at North Texas. But anyway, the president of the university, a guy named Norval Pohl—we were visiting one day, it was about the athletics, he told me, he said, "You know what I'd like to do is get somebody totally neutral, totally objective to come in and just analyze our situation, the whole athletic situation. I said, "I know exactly the guy to do it if he'll do it." He said, "Who's that?" I said, "Gene Stallings." I said, "Gene Stallings, he's back home in Paris now, retired." I said, "His thing that he'd bring to the table is he coached at Alabama which is a super program. He's also on the board of regents for Abilene Christian, which is even smaller than we are football wise. He's pretty astute on their athletics, I'm positive." I said, "If he'd do it, he'd be the guy." Well, earlier I guess after maybe Rex Dockery, Stallings assistant coach for the Cowboys. The guy that used to work for me in sports named Carlton Stowers was a *Dallas News*, was a cowboy beat guy from the news. Stallings wanted to apply for the Tech job, and he asked Carlton, he says, "Can you find out because I won't apply if Burle and that paper's going to oppose because I wouldn't have a shot at it, but could you find out how Burle would respond if I applied for the Tech job?" So Carlton called me and asked me, and I said, "I'll tell you what, I'd fight it with every damn ounce of influence I have and could garner." So he didn't apply, but that was—then here we come along these years later, and Bebes came to Denton. The president got him an office and a secretary, and I mean, he did a stud—he was there for six weeks, had a room in a dorm, and I mean he'd go home on weekends, but spent every day and night, he talked to every athlete on the campus, he talked to former athletes, he talked to all the coaches. He physically looked at every bit of the facilities, you know, and he wrote us about a—gosh it was about a 450, 500 page report, single-spaced typed report, on his findings and his recommendations and all that. But going back to when I was in Denton, oh, not long after Norval and I had that conversation, I had to go in and see him, you know, people think regent's an easy job, you just meet once every quarter. Hell, I was on that North Texas campus three or four times a month for twelve years as a regent because there's always something going on. Anyway, I went in there, Norval says, "You know, Stallings has agreed to do this." And said, "In fact, we were almost through determining exactly what we wanted from him and all that before we ever talked the money we'd appropriated for it." And said, "In fact, I told him, now this is what we're

prepared to pay for that.” And he said, “Yeah, that’d be fine.” I said, “Hell, he didn’t need any money, Alabama fired him and he walked out of there with seven million dollars.” He’s not going to go hungry because we don’t pay him enough. He says, “You know, funny thing, I called him, and when I contacted him and asked him if he would consider doing that.” He said, “First thing he asked me, he says, ‘Is Burle Pettit still on the board of regents?’” Norval said, “Yeah, in fact he’s head of the athletic committee of the board of regents.” And then he says, “Well, what did he think of this?” He says. “Well coach, he’s the one that recommended you.” And he says, Stallings said, “No shit.” Anyway, he’s a good Church of Christ guy, he was a _____ [00:29:41]. But anyway, he came and did a fantastic job. I gained an altogether different view of Gene Stallings. That and what I’ve learned since about his relationship—he’s got a downs son, you know, he’s a heck of a good guy. He was just an asshole at the time that I was also an asshole. You know how those things go. You’ll have to excuse my French, but jerk doesn’t quite cover it. It takes two words to really define, which brings up John Connelly’s disdain for SMU. Connelly and Hayden hated each other, I think went back probably to ’64 when Connelly was the one that turned him in on the Lamesa guy, or maybe in—Connelly was recruiting Dallas and they had some butted heads there or something. Connelly was, in my opinion, the best assistant coach ever in the Southwest Conference. He should’ve been a head coach.

DS:

That’s high praise.

BP:

I know, and I don’t have any doubts that he was going back to 1960 when I was associated. I doubt there was ever a better one than he. Anyway, one of the most undiplomatic human beings that’s ever been, which cost him the athletic director jobs for—well, once at Tech he finally wound up with it, but he would’ve had it immediately if he’d had a little bit more diplomacy about him. He told the vice president at Tech one time—and it looked like en route to your PhD, you would have learned the round pegs go in the round holes and the square pegs go in the square holes. The president at the time was in the room when that conversation was, and that really chapped him at Connelly, and I thought looking back on it, he was pretty accurate about that particular individual. Anyway, Connelly then he started getting a special award to whatever kid had the best game against SMU in a Tech game. I don’t know who he got to make it, but it was a rear end of a horse for the mustang with his bushy tail and all that. It was called the Horses Ass Award, Tech versus SMU. I don’t remember exactly, but that’s close. I know the horse’s ass part is right. One time—and here’s where we get into personalities—a story that Tech had a kid named Mike Liner that could not stay out of trouble, fantastic football player, was a running back. He followed Donny Anderson. In fact, he played one year with Donny, and then he was the premier running back for Tech the year after Anderson, two years after Anderson had gone, great running back, but he couldn’t stay out of trouble. He stole a pair of shoes at old Clark’s Discount House over here on Avenue Q one time and ran through the window, this was in the spring, cut

his leg. He got put in jail and all kinds of stuff. Anyway, he had been in and out of trouble forever. And then the summer before his—the spring before his senior year, Tech had just finished spring training, and Liner got drunk and beat the hell out of somebody or something, I don't remember what he did. Anyway, he was getting into trouble with the police. Well, J. T. called me and said, "Burle, come out here—" No, I got a tip; one of one of the Tech kids called and said, "Hey, old Liner got kicked off the football team." I said, "You're kidding me?" He said, "No." So I went out there, went out to Tech, went to Jack's office, said, "Hey what's this about Liner—you booting him off the team?" He says, "I did. I'm tired of putting up with the little son of a bitch. I'm through with him." And that was a direct quote. I said, "Well, Golly—I need to write that." He said, "Go ahead, I don't care. It's the truth." I said, "What's the reason for it?" He says, "Well, for the record all I'm saying is another violation of team rules and a long series of problems. We've just gone with him as far as we can." So I said, "All right." So I started to leave, and old Connelly steps into his office, said "Come here." So I went back there, and he says, "Don't print that till I've had a chance to talk to the old man." That's what everybody called him, head coach like _____ [00:35:48]. I said, "John, his mind's made up on this." He says, "Burle, give me one day before you write that story." I said, "John, that's going to get out, if I get my ass beat to the story that I've got the scoop on right now—it's going to get out." He said, "Look, give me a shot at it." "Okay." I was worrying to death about it. Well anyhow, that night, I was down at the paper thinking I ought to go ahead and write it. It was about ten o'clock. The deadline was coming up. My phone rings, and it's J. T., and he said, "Burle, hold off on that story for a day or two." He said, "I don't think it's going to change, but Connelly has talked me into at least thinking it over for a couple of days, but I don't think my mind's going to change." Well, John with those two days to work convinced him otherwise. Here he comes into his senior year; they're playing SMU at Dallas. By then they picked up a new assistant football coach named Burl Bartlett from Amarillo to join the Tech staff. That meant there were three of us Burles hanging around then, Burle Huffman and Burl Bartlett. Anyway, Bartlett was new on the job; this was his first season of college coaching. Connelly of course was assistant head coach, was his title, there in Dallas. The newest coach always had to do the bad checks. Connelly and all the other guys went and partied Friday night before the football games. Bartlett was the new guy and he had to stay there. Of course, Grant—well he'd replaced Grant so Grant was gone. Anyway, Connelly was making his rounds, and he had keys to all the rooms, well he opened Liner's room and walks in, and there's obviously been a girl in the room with him. In fact, he catches her in there, and he comes down and he's waiting to tell, you know he's going to tell King. Well, Connelly comes in, he's been partying, and Bartlett came over to him and said, "I've got to wake up Coach King." King was saying with John, his son in Vietnam was on leave, and he'd come to Dallas and he'd stay at the same hotel he was. He says, "So I need to call him. Or should I wait till in the morning?" Connelly said, "You just keep your damn mouth shut." Bartlett said, "Look, this is what happened, I saw it. Coach King is my boss, I have to report it." He said, "No, it doesn't work that way. There's a chain of command. I'm your boss, I'm the assistant head coach, you have reported it. And these are the last words your ass is going

to say about it.” The next day Tech beats SMU 21-14. Liner scored three touchdowns, rushed for 160 yards. Connelly told him, “You better have a hell of a ballgame.” Well, he couldn’t let him get by without it. Now J. T. never knew anything about this until ten years later. He had to punish him, but he had to do it without King knowing he was being punished. So every day afterwards, King would go home for the day after practice, Connelly would have Liner up there running down stands until he couldn’t walk. Anyhow, he had all kinds of punishments going on with Liner and J. T. never knew, but hell, if he ever made All Southwest Conference and everything. No, but was always in trouble, and nobody knows where he is now. Roger Freeman who played with him was another back in the ’68 backfield, ’66 and ’67 backfield I guess it was. I asked him four, five years ago. I said, “You ever hear from Liner?” He says, “He came through Dallas.” Roger’s owned one nightclub after another, so he’s made a ton of money with them. He had one here called Uncle Nasty’s.

DS:

Yeah, it was right on Main Street?

BP:

Yeah. Anyway, Roger never drank, but he had made a jillion dollars on selling booze, especially around college kids. Anyway, he said Liner came to his place. He said, “I’ve got to have a hundred dollar bill. I’ve got to have \$100.” He says, “What for?” He said, “I’ve got to have it and I’ve got to have it in a hurry.” Roger said he asked him, he said, “Well tell me what you’re needing. Are you in trouble, what’s happening?” He said, “Are you going to let me have a \$100 or not?” He said he handed him a hundred dollar bill, and he hadn’t seen or heard from him since.

DS:

Wow.

BP:

Of course, his dad ran a whorehouse, and the kid had no upbringing. His dad old Bill Liner was a police character in Houston. He grew up in a very bad environment, and his dad had been married five or six times. He lived with his dad and his dad ran gals and probably sold drugs, and I don’t know what all else he was in. He had a lot of money, but it was earned honest [?] [00:42:38]. But that was one of the stories that I was never able to write, but then when J. T., they had a party for him after about ten years after he retired, and Connelly told that story, and J. T. got madder than hell. He got over it pretty quick. I’m skipping around here.

DS:

That’s fine, that’s fine. We’re just trying to—

BP:

These things come to mind. I've got back to Conn as football coach and maybe kind of document what I said about his being the best one that I know of. In 1965 Tech goes to Austin and just gets the heck kicked out of them by Texas, second game of the season. I came back that night, and their offense, I mean, they didn't make any yardage at all even with Anderson in the backfield and Wilson and that whole crew. They were running just a strong I formation, even Donny Anderson and Johnny Hagen, two good running backs with a mediocre line of scrimmage, but a lot of good-skilled people, receivers and running backs, and Wilson was a fantastic quarterback. Anyway, they get back that night and they go straight to the athletic department, they don't even go home. J. T. and Connelly sit there and throw out that whole offense. They come up with what they called a tandem offense. They put a wingback, instead of having a stack they had a tailback and a fullback and a tailback, and then Hagen as wingback would go either to the right or the left, whichever side the formation was, which gave them a third blocker on a two-man side and spread the field out a little bit. They used that—they took that offense and they started kicking butt. The last game of the season Arkansas was I guess number two in the nation, and Tech and Arkansas played and Arkansas had beaten Texas, and SMU beat Texas. So Texas was out of it. Tech then Arkansas played the last game of the season with the winner going to the Cotton Bowl, and the loser going to the Gator Bowl, and it was already set up. Heck of a ballgame, but Arkansas finally won it. That offense then, that next spring, John McKay who was coaching at Southern Cal at that time, he sent some guys out, two of his assistants out to go through Tech's spring training and see how they worked at offense. They had a little motion in it and had a swing pass that Anderson would break out and Wilson would throw the ball out to him, and if he's isolated one on one with the a cornerback, there's no way a cornerback's going to tackle Donny Anderson. And then they had a whole serious plays, counters, and everything off of that same play. Nobody ever figured it out, but McKay took that offense and won a national championship. All of a sudden the media, this is Southern Cal offense, nobody ever heard of Texas Tech. Well, similar thing, Tech went to Austin in I guess it was '67, yeah it'd been '67. Connelly was an eternal pessimist. I used to ask him, "Well, what do you think Saturday?" "We're going to get our butts kicked." Always his first thing. He was the coach of the offensive line and nobody's ever playing to what he thought was up to their abilities. Always pessimistic as heck; I don't care if they'd been playing Smiley Wilson Junior High, Connelly would've doubted they were going to win in his sincereness, believing it. Well '67, I'd gone to Austin, I'd gone in early to go to the Tech game because Austin is a fun place to be. So I went in on Wednesday, and the game's Saturday. Stuff like that is what got me moved out of sports because I was having too much fun. A beautiful part about being a sports editor, nobody—it wasn't that they didn't know where I was, they weren't even sure where I was supposed to be. Anyway, I go out in a raft car [?] [00:48:18] and it was Texas-S ID _____ [?][00:48:19], probably the best in the business. Every school in the conference had a fantastic SID____, but _____ [?][00:48:24]. Anyway, I went with them out to meet the team, and I needed to get a couple quotes for that advance for the next morning. You know, Connelly got off a plane and I thought, Well, I'll go

over and grab me an opinion on this. I said, "John, what do you think?" He said, "We're going to kick their ass." And Carver is standing there, and I said, "Was that John Connelly or an imposter?" And he said, "I was wondering the same thing." Well, they'd put in these plays a triple option. John Scovell was quarterback, he rushed for 175 yards in that game. I mean, they turned those tackles loose, it's like if he came after the ball, Scovell would pitch it, and if he trailed, John would cut inside him and run and Jackie Stewart was fullback, and on that first option, after they'd run a time or two, that middle got very soft and he was ripping them up the middle. Tech had their heads spinning, Texas didn't know what Tech's going to do, and Tech upsets them. Here's another advantage of Darrell Royal's class. After that ball game, I mean he had been like a twenty-one point favorite, wasn't even supposed to be a close ballgame. At the press conference—coaches always had a press conference after every football game which I miss having now over at the old _____ [?] [00:50:35] Hotel. That's where the hospitality room was set up, and the coach would come there after the ball game and interview. Somebody said something to Darrell about the upset. He says, "We didn't get upset tonight, we got our butts kicked. We got beat by a better football team. We were out played and we were out coached, but I don't know where J. T. and them came up with that offense." He said, "Our defensive line couldn't find our ass with both hands." Anyhow, then—and Royal has long credited J. T. even though didn't get as much play when they came with the wishbone. He said that they got that from Tech, that triple option part of that on what Tech had pulled against them. But Tech didn't go back to that. After that game they didn't run much triple option, they'd use it in spots, but they didn't major in it like that in Austin that night. I know Dicky Grigg was a defensive tackle for Tech, big time lawyer in Austin now. He stayed in the Texas backfield the entire night. I mean he had one heck of a ballgame. Anyway, Royal was so complimentary after that game. Well then when Rodney Allison was a senior, Tech beat Texas and had to make a winning drive—I don't know if you were here at that time. Allison, I mean that was the most competitive kid I believe I ever saw as quarterback. Tech had to march almost the distance of the field to score the winning touchdown. About three times, they came up on fourth down, and from a long short [?] [00:52:57]. One time it was fourth down and thirteen, and Rodney was trying to pass and they had big rush on him. He got hit about twice in the back field, I don't know how many times. He dove and made a first down by this much, at fourth and thirteen. He went in and Tech won. Well, Royal, before he went to his dressing room, went to Tech's dressing room and shook hands with Allison and told him, he said, "That's the best individual performance I have ever seen." It was very complimentary to him, that was Royal.

DS:

I had a totally different perspective on that game.

BP:

Yeah.

DS:

I was there, but I really couldn't enjoy it because I was with the band, so we were busy.

BP:

Oh yeah. Anyway, I'm going to need to go.

DS:

Sounds good, thank you so much. And this is the first of many we hope.

BP:

Okay. Yeah, I would be glad to sit down with you again because there's so much stuff to talk about.

DS:

But this is the format we're going to do. We're just going to let you talk and go back on your memories.

BP:

Well, I tend to digress because when I'm—

[End of Recording]

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library