

**Oral History Interview of
Alvin Davis**

**Interviewed by: Daniel Sanchez
December 14, 2016
Lubbock, Texas**

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Transcript Overview:

This oral history interview features Alvin Davis. Davis discusses growing up in Graham, meeting his wife, and his involvement in rodeo while attending Texas Tech University. Davis talks about owning a store in Post; he also discusses his interest in art.

Length of Interview: 01:12:34

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Keywords

Garza County, Post, Texas, Rodeo, Texas Tech University, western art

Daniel Sanchez DS:

Are you ready Alvin?

Alvin Davis AD:

Yeah.

DS:

Okay. My name is Daniel Sanchez. Today's date is December 14, 2016, and I'm at Alvin Davis' place out here at The Bridge—it's part of the Red Raider Club out here—and Alvin, we did an interview about ten years ago—

AD:

The first one?

DS:

The first interview we did was about ten years ago, and I kind of want to follow up on some of the things we didn't include at the beginning of that. First of all, your family history, could you start off by telling us your dad, his full name, date and place of birth?

AD:

My dad's name was Glenn Davis and he was reared in where?

Barbara Davis (BD):

Oh crossing Red River—something—

AD:

Oklahoma?

BD:

No, your mother was from Oklahoma. Tell him that both came to Post—that his grandparents came to Post when they opened up the—tell them what Post did, C. W. post, you know—

AD:

Post bought, I think it was 50,000 acres of land down here, with nothing on it but what was growing on it, you know, normally. And then started breaking out, and plowing, and planting and so forth.

BD:

We broke it up into 160 acre plots and built a home, and a barn, and drilled a well. And then offered it to people of Oklahoma or other parts of Texas to pay a down payment, and live there, and pay it out, and then he built a cotton—

AD:

Gin?

BD:

Well, mill.

AD:

Oh yeah, not mill, at Post.

BD:

Wove sheets and pillowcases.

DS:

Let me interject this, the third voice you hear is Barbara Davis, Alvin's wife, so she'll be here to help relay the record—that's just part of it you know—and so how did your folks wind up there in Post? Did they see the offer and then go down there, or did somebody tell them—?

AD:

Well it was, C. W. Post started a drive to bring people in to start farming the land in the area, as I say I think he bought 50,000 acres of land or some such astronomical number, and it was just grass land, and you know it'd never been plowed or anything, and then they divided it up into 160 acre tracks, and sold, and brought the people in to start farming it and everything. And so my parents came from east of here and took over one of their farm tracks that they had established, and started living out here. And so, that's how I came to be at Post, Texas. My parents had come there individually and then married, and then their families did, and I was the second child—I had an older brother—and anyway, that's how that situation was created.

DS:

Okay and you mentioned your mother, could you please state her name?

AD:

Martha Condary [?] was her maiden name, and the Condary family moved out from downstate—

BD:

They moved from Fredrick, Oklahoma to Post.

DS:

Fredrick, Oklahoma.

AD:

Yeah, which was just a wide place in the road in lower Oklahoma, and any rate, they came there, her family did as my dad's family did, and—

DS:

And so your parents met in Post?

AD:

Yeah.

DS:

Did either of them talk about their family life growing up, what it was like?

AD:

Not that much, not really, no. But of course they were still children when they—I mean they were children when they moved up here so they had not experienced adulthood or anything. They had started going to school, of course, but they were still youngsters and met each other in the Graham Chapel community as students, and of course were going to school together, and ultimately were married.

BD:

At a very young ages—

DS:

Ma'am?

BD:

At very young ages, I said, like they did back then.

DS:

About what age was that that they got married?

BD:

I think your mother was sixteen, and maybe your dad was eighteen.

AD:

Yeah something, in that order of teens.

DS:

And you mentioned you have an older brother, what's his name?

AD:

Elvus.

DS:

Elvus?

AD:

E-l-v-u-s

DS:

Okay

BD:

He passed away—

AD:

Ma'am?

BD:

He passed away fifteen years ago, I guess, and he has a—had a—younger brother, if you want to know about him.

AD:

What?

BD:

You had a younger brother, [inaudible], but he died when he was fifty years old.

AD:

Yeah.

BD:

So Alvin's been the only one for a long time.

DS:

Yeah, and you were the middle? The middle son? What was it like growing up in Graham?

AD:

Oh I thought it was a joy. The community was active in terms of schooling, and church, and 4-H work that I got into as a youngster, and I just thought it was wonderful. And I was able to do 4-H work and have calves and pigs, and you know, as projects and so forth. It was a joy to me to be growing up in that way.

DS:

So you were able to tie the schoolwork into what you had to do in life anyway there on the farm?

AD:

Yes, yes, yes. And ultimately, I became—or I said became in 4-H work as a youngster—I ultimately became the top 4-H boy in United States in later years. I mean I devoted my time to it, and going every direction to do whatever, and I was talented enough to handle those many different areas, and to enjoy that—

DS:

I think you mentioned you'd come to Lubbock for some meeting or something as 4H—?

AD:

Oh yeah.

DS:

How much travelling did you do back then?

AD:

Well, quite a bit, I guess in terms of going to stock shows—that's livestock shows—and always had as 4-H projects livestock—pigs, calves—and of course, that was all in terms of their being shows for those animals, and showing them in competition, and so I just enjoyed that immensely. And as I say 4-H work, which was the livestock and crop aspect of farming and ranching, but farming on a larger scale than the normal, and having the animals and so forth, and so I was as active as fully as I could be, you know, and growing up in those 4-H projects, and hitting the organizations, I mean 4-H clubs were organized in communities—state, national, so forth—I was involved in that all the time I was growing up, and had positions in the organizations, and worked up to the very top, and became top 4-H boy in the United States.

DS:

And that kind of set you up for what you did later on in life.

AD:

Absolutely.

DS:

Because you were always in different organizations—

AD:

I just continued in that fashion with the opportunities that were presented to me, and was very successful, and most enjoyable.

DS:

And we covered quite a bit of that in the previous interview, so I'm kind of—you know in there you mentioned every once in a while, you'd mention, something like, you know that story from your mother's side of the family when they were going to Lincoln, New Mexico, and they got caught in the blizzard—can you expand on that story?

AD:

Well, they were looking for new area and project and so forth, and they of course were involved in the situation that existed, in terms of the weather-wise and so forth, and they had to take care of their situation whatever it was you know at the time, had moderate summers and then extreme winters sometimes, had to govern their crops planting and harvesting and so forth, and the same with livestock. And so I grew up having 4-H involved, both in the crops area and in livestock area and had cotton acreage, and feed—growing feed for animals—and projects, all those areas, both in animals and to feed them and so forth, so you know there was something going all year long that I was involved with, and fortunately was able to handle it and succeed in it in a fashion that I was able to win awards and so forth, and to stay interested and involved with a lot of enthusiasm.

DS:

What is your earliest recollection of being involved in the 4-H stuff?

AD:

Well, I guess from the very beginning that I was involved, and whatever age—

BD:

Nine. Nine you have on that stuff there in that 4-H stuff—

AD:

Nine years old you mean?

BD:

Nine years old.

AD:

Started having, as I say, some crops in a very small way, and then calves and pigs. I'd show as projects and manage their growth, and feeding, and showing, and the competition with others like them.

DS:

You know, being involved in that area, were y'all able to learn things then that y'all could take back to the farm to expand the—

AD:

Yes, and you know, so to be able to carry that to other areas above and beyond in competition, 4-H in crops and in growing livestock—

DS:

You had mentioned how you'd gone to A&M for one semester, and then you got out and went into service?

AD:

Yes.

DS:

And in there you mentioned you went to Hawaii—well, that's where we left it at—tell us about that, what was your service years like—?

AD:

Well, I was stationed in Honolulu, and you know the biggest place in Hawaii in terms of a city and area, and of course a lot of activities worldwide, in terms of Hawaii. I was able to be a part of both before, and after, and during, and so forth, and so it was a great experience. And I would like to go there again someday, probably won't get that opportunity to because it's a far piece out to Honolulu.

DS:

How many years after Pearl Harbor were you out there?

BD:

Alvin wasn't nineteen till—Alvin was born in 1927, so you weren't nineteen till that—eighteen I mean is when you could join the service—till right after the war was over—his birthday's in November—and then he joined as soon as he was eighteen.

DS:

Yeah, because I knew it was after the war had ended, and so I was just wondering, you know, were they still in stages of redeveloping that area from what had happened during wartime?

AD:

Yeah.

BD:

Yeah.

AD:

And very enjoyable.

DS:

So what were your duties out there?

AD:

Well, I was—you're thinking military right?

DS:

Yeah.

AD:

I was chief of staff so to speak of recording activities, and putting those on paper, and everything. And my highest rank was sergeant, but I was in an area there where there was not thousands of service people—I mean just hundreds in the main—and so it was an enjoyable thing. And I was an assistant to the head-person in the outfits that I was in, and so I experienced leadership in that way, not as the head person, but as an assistant to the head person, and so was able to be a part of their activities and the things they did as obligations to the service and so forth.

BD:

He probably doesn't remember punch cards, isn't that what you said, you got all the reports from all over the country—

AD:

Yeah I had. Of course there were American service people all over the world. Here, there, and everywhere. In the Pacific area, you know, we had people on all the islands, and I was part of the headquarters outfit for all those entities that everything came in from all of the individual places, and we kept the records and everything, and at any rate, I was active in that area, and you know I didn't get to go out to all of them by any stretch of the imagination, but was able to have been a part there in Hawaii, and to have paperwork on all the others because those papers came in to us, and we put them in on paper in terms of the keeping the records.

BD:

Sent them to the pentagon, didn't you?

AD:

Yeah, yeah, we received the regular reports daily, and ultimately sent those into the Pentagon and Washington, D.C. So we knew what was going all over that part of the world in terms of U.S. military services.

DS:

How busy were y'all post war?

AD:

Busy.

DS:

As far as the activity?

AD:

It was a piece of cake [laughter]. And I enjoyed it about as much as a piece of cake too. It was an enjoyable time for me, I mean I was in a position there that was able to see, and hear and know, and you know the "biggie" activities of the military. Although, as only a sergeant, I didn't have much authority, but I was able to be a part of, and to experience, and know, and everything, and it was a joy for me truly.

DS:

And if you're an inquisitive type you really enjoy that type of—

AD:

Yes, yes, and then I was, and I got as much of the paperwork and everything else and books, and so forth on. You know those various armed entities. And so it was a good experience for me, enjoyed it.

DS:

And what was life out there like? Compared to, you know, Post?

BD:

Compared to Post? [Laughter]

AD:

Well there in Honolulu, in Hawaii, you know it was quite good, and I felt that we had an experience growing up in Post, Texas, Garza County, and found that was just about as interesting as in growing on up in my life there as it had been up to that point in [inaudible] Texas. And so, you know, some people might not have enjoyed it at all, but I did, it was a great experience.

DS:

How long were you out there?

BD:

Eighteen months, I think you've said. Alvin joined the army—I said he went to A&M and he got so smart he joined the army [laughter]—

DS:

Well, what I think he said in the first interview was something along the lines of, I turned seventeen—or I turned eighteen—and thought I didn't need college. Something like that? [Laughter]

BD:

He thought he was already smart enough. [Laughter]

AD:

Because I was getting an education that was above and beyond most any kids, you know, and so I enjoyed it very much, and any rate—

DS:

And so then you came back up to service, and you wound up at Tech, how'd that happen?

AD:

Well, again I had read and became aware of educational activities, you know for that part of the world and everything, as well as agricultural-wise and military-wise, and so I just got involved as much as I could in various ways to utilize that great experience I'd had and the knowledge that I acquired during that period of time, and you know because I could talk about, you know, various

aspects about other parts of the world, and so forth, and where I'd been, and it was a joy to spread it around.

DS:

You know and, there were a lot of—at that time—there were a lot of men like yourself that had been in the service first and then come back to school, or to school for the first round, so they were all contemporaries I guess—

AD:

Yes, yes, and then of course I handled paperwork for large military situation numbers of people involved, and it was an enjoyable experience.

DS:

So when you came to Texas, is that where you met Barbara? Or was that before?

BD:

We met at Tech, we were both in the rodeo association. You know I grew up on a ranch in New Mexico, but my mother started at Tech when it opened—

DS:

Yeah, because I knew you had those ties there—

BD:

1925. And everybody said, “Why did you come to Lubbock?” and I said I guess my mother—we thought that was the only university there was because she'd gone there, and we didn't want to go to New Mexico so we—and all my mother's family lived here. But we just casually knew each other. Alvin was kind of shy, and I kind of ran with the wild bunch, so [laughter]—

AD:

I had to straighten her out a little bit.

DS:

Did you? [Laughter] Looks like she's reverted. [Laughter]

AD:

She truly has. She was—

BD:

Well Alvin wanted to go away—you know like kids do when they graduate from high school—so he wanted to go to A&M, but then after he'd been in the service, he decided Lubbock was better to be closer to home because he'd been gone for a while—

DS:

Well Post is closer to Lubbock than—

AD:

College Station.

DS:

Than College Station [laughter]. You know, Barbara mentioned the rodeo association, could you tell us about, you know, how you became involved in that when you got to Tech?

AD:

Well I had grown up with that situation of being involved mentally as well as physically, with rodeo, and the activities surrounding it, as well as the livestock end and so forth—

BD:

Tell him about your first experience going to a rodeo though—that's why you got involved really—when you were just seven, just what, seven years old or nine?

DS:

Well, we've got that one on tape already. Yeah, when you were talking about the Stanford Rodeo and all that—

AD:

Yeah, yeah, the Texas Cowboy Reunion.

DS:

And you saw Will Rogers—you told that story—and so I was just kind of going like let's talk about the one at Tech, but before that you had mentioned, in the previous one, when you were a kid, you would help your dad, and when they—when the cowboys were out there—branding and—

AD:

Well, we were living on land rented from the Slaughter ranching operation on top of the Caprock west of Post there a few miles. And as I mentioned back then, I came to have an enthusiasm for that, and picked up on the rodeo end, mentally mainly, but going to rodeos. I went to Texas

Cowboy Reunion at Stanford, Texas, which was the biggest event of its kind in the state of Texas back then, and is still going today all these many years later. And at any rate, I wanted to be involved to some degree because I was so enthused about the whole thing, and your question again?

DS:

Well, it was, you know, you had mentioned as a child you worked with your dad, you mentioned one incident—and I was just wondering—how involved were you as a child growing up?

AD:

Well, I had livestock as 4-H projects, and had a pony from the word go, as a child thing, and then when I got old enough to be in 4-H, I was able to have a project involving, you know, horses and so forth, and so I wanted to be involved just as much as I could for the benefit of that ongoing project—4-H wise—and to experience as much of it as I could—in observations [inaudible], rather than me doing it. As I said the Texas Cowboy Reunion at Stanford was the biggest rodeo in maybe the United States, and it covered a whole state, and we went there every year, I mean that's where I first came to know about rodeos, was going down to Stanford over the Fourth of July each year to that event, and it was the best there was in terms of rodeos. And what was the question again?

DS:

I'm going to ask a totally different question. Later in life, you had started the Western Artist Association, and you were trying to get to Tech, and had done that a couple years, then you branched off, and when you started the National Cowboy Symposium and all that, did you use your past, from having gone to the Stanford and all that, to kind of go like, Hey I want to do something like we used to do when I was a child.

AD:

Yes.

DS:

What was that like kind of bringing those memories back?

AD:

Oh it was wonderful. It was exciting, and I could hardly wait each year till the Fourth of July, and the opportunity to go to the Texas Cowboy Reunion at Stanford. And then I kept enlarging my activities in that area, and kept up with what was going on, and so forth and so on, constantly. So at any rate, then did the organizing and so forth—

DS:

And you know a major part of the organizing is—

BD:

He started that Junior Rodeo in Post, that's what they just dedicated those two historical markers for in Garza County—

DS:

Wow—did the Lubbock Heritage Society go out there for that?

BD:

You sent somebody, and it was Allen—

DS:

Allen was at—Allen? H. Allen?

BD:

Yeah [laughter]. I think everybody was invited I don't know, well they sent invitations. I think the girl at the museum—the girl at the museum at Post—have you ever been to that museum?

DS:

No, I have not, but I hear there's an Alvin Davis room out there.

BD:

He's got so much junk there, there's two rooms [laughter].

DS:

There's two rooms now? Wow! [Laughter]

BD:

You'll have to go sometime—it's a very nice museum.

AD:

I'd very much like to go with you, or you go with me, or—

DS:

Yeah, yeah we can do something like that, you know that might be a good, you know, just go out there and hang out, and maybe let somebody record your thoughts out there.

BD:

I put that there, but that was in the paper after those were dedicated. It was a very nice ceremony. The lady at Post that has that museum does an excellent job for a small museum. She's really good—Linda.

AD:

Puckett

BD:

Puckett.

DS:

You know, as we were talking about—you've done a lot of things, you know within the community, and as a businessman also and service organizations on the side, and the organizations rely a lot on volunteers, how do you get people to volunteer and be as invested as you are?

AD:

Well in the context of my being so involved, and people friends and non friends observing my activities, and out of all those people, some of them turned out to be just as interested as I was, and I am, and I'd grab them and pull them in and get them involved, you know, when that's the case, and that's how that's all come together.

DS:

You know, and times have definitely changed from when you were first kicking around in Garza County, and how hard is it to maintain the cowboy culture?

AD:

Well it's not easy of course, and of course the fact that I've not lived there—back in my home county and city and everything—it's even more difficult, you know, to center your involvement and get others there, but have had enough people there to be interested and involved, and in fact the lady that's heading the county organization is retiring this year I guess, after being involved all these years. But at any rate, let's see, you've been down there haven't you? I've forgotten have we been down there together—?

DS:

No, we haven't.

AD:

We need to.

DS:

We need to go down there. We need to talk Tai into driving us down there [laughter].

AD:

Anytime, from your standpoint. And of course we've got the museum, and they've got a room or two full of things with the story told with each item. And that's saddles, and boots, and you know, so forth and so on. And you need to see that—

DS:

So you've got all the memorabilia from years of your life in those two rooms?

AD:

Yeah.

DS:

Wow.

AD:

But it has all the other people from Garza County in there as well, so to speak, so it's pretty complete, you know, in terms of covering all that. But—

DS:

Have you ever sat down to write your memoirs yet?

AD:

Well, I have written some yes, but not totally I guess. I was thinking I'd given you what I had on paper, have I not?

DS:

You might have given it to Monte and them, I don't know.

BD:

Well Alvin has got all his stuff in a mess just piddling around with them, and our son is working on getting the—has some of Alvin's stuff, but he's got a bunch, bunch more. And it'll be ready to go when Bob gets back—

DS:

Yeah because I think Monte said him and John Perrin came out here?

BD:

Maybe to our house, see we moved out here and our son was standing there trying to get—I don't know what Alvin had been doing for twenty years, he'd been retired, but he hadn't gotten it straight, he'd gotten it mixed up. You were mixing rodeo and storage and you had it all in one—

AD:

Well I just had it all together, I mean that's what I'd done all together—

BD:

They were trying to separate it a little.

DS:

Well, you know, Alvin's got one of these minds where you know where everything is, right?

AD:

No [laughter] sorry

BD:

That's a good joke! [Laughter]

AD:

Sorry, but at any rate, I daresay that there is not many other recorded situations like that, on one person—

DS:

I think we need to go look at that one day just to get the story down.

BD:

I'm going to show you where I came from, it's the reason you'll know I'm so country—that's where I lived when I was growing up.

DS:

Wow.

BD:

We didn't have any neighbors close by—

DS:

And that is where?

BD:

Apache Creek, New Mexico is where we got our mail, but we lived thirty miles north of there that's just up on top the country in western New Mexico, about ten miles I guess the backside of our ranch—maybe six miles from there—is all mine just in Catron County, west of Magdalena—

AD:

And that's still as much like now, as it was—

DS:

Oh really?

AD:

Fifty years ago.

BD:

When we first started dating Alvin said, "Well I'll tell you, I'm just a country boy from Post, Texas," and I said, "Listen boy, you don't know what country is until you see where I came from!" [Laughter] And he didn't believe me until he went out there, and then he said he decided I was telling the truth—

DS:

Yeah, you could look at this area and say oh that's where Dolly Parton was raised and you'd believe it because it's [laughter]—

BD:

We didn't catch on fire either [laughter]—

DS:

It's just so sparse there.

BD:

You're not supposed to be getting me but I—

DS:

You know you need to try and get them to scan that and make a copy for the collection.

BD:

I think maybe, you know Andy did an oral deal on me—I don't know how much he got done because I talked all the time—this is the town that I moved to from where I lived to go to school. That's Reserve, New Mexico.

DS:

Reserve, New Mexico—

BD:

Mhmm, its west of Magdalena—

AD:

That was what, thirty miles from where the ranch was?

BD:

Forty—about forty miles. No paved roads in the whole county when I was growing up, and you can see what a lovely town that is. I'll tell you how it got out there, well you're not supposed to—do you have that thing turned on?

DS:

Yes ma'am.

BD:

Goodbye.

DS:

[Laughter] It's a good thing I introduced her.

BD:

I'll never say more because I could tell about lots of wild stories. I'm going to go over there to their open house—

AD:

Okay.

DS:

Thank you Barbara [laughter].

BD:

Nice to see you.

DS:

Nice to see you. I'll try to get us back on track if we can remember where we were [laughter].

BD:

I told you I needed to leave in the first place

DS:

No, you know, before that interruption [laughter]—no, I'm kidding!

BD:

Can you erase part of that?

AD:

No, it's fine like that—you know we're all country around here, so that's just part of it—our transcribers might have fits, but at least it'll all be on the record, right?

AD:

Well her situation is such that it goes back about as far as you can go in terms of all of this—

DS:

Oh yeah—

AD:

The ranching and everything I mean, and back to the Indian days—

DS:

Oh yeah—did you cover all that with Andy?

BD:

I don't know what I said I did all the talking. [laughter] I don't remember him asking questions.

DS:

And you know and really—Alvin could probably back me up on this—that's what we'd prefer because these conversations should be like 90 percent, at least, of the interviewee and the rest of us. Because if it's more than that we're working too hard, and were not giving [laughter], giving that person—

BD:

You see, Alvin's about forgotten so much stuff, I don't know what he'll tell you, and so he just makes up stories—

AD:

Let's see, I need that stuff that you put in your pocket I think—

BD:

Oh I gave him that, you have—

DS:

Its right here, it's not in my pocket, its right here.

BD:

You have others of those, Alvin.

AD:

No, I don't.

BD:

Mhmm.

AD:

Like this, I don't.

BD:

Yes. We have several copies of that paper, and we have some more of those.

AD:

Well, these are ones that I had saved though—

BD:

I know, but those are just ones you had out here and I got them out—

AD:

Okay well get some others then.

BD:

There's a whole bunch of them in there.

AD:

Okay, get them for us please—

BD:

Well you don't need—he just needs one—and you've got one there.

AD:

No these are two different folders Barbara.

BD:

I know and we have some more of them

DS:

Yeah, we'll get it next time Barbara. Don't worry.

AD:

She acts like she's afraid to—

BD:

I don't know where they are right now—

AD:

Well, you told me that—

BD:

I just said that we had a bunch of them.

AD:

Or we can get them in Post, right?

BD:

Yeah, she has a bunch of them.

DS:

But going back to the rodeo stuff, you had taken all that from growing up around it, going out there to see it, and going to Tech and continuing to—tell us about the program when you first started it at Tech and how it grew.

AD:

Well, I started the Tech Rodeo Association. I was instrumental in getting that going, with a slate of officers and activities and so forth, and as far as I know, it's still been carried on all these years. That was my intention—I hope that it has—I haven't checked in recent years I guess. But Texas Tech Rodeo Association and the idea, or course, was to sponsor an annual Texas Tech intercollegiate rodeo which has been done all these years since then, and—what?

BD:

I need my keys.

AD:

Will these work?

BD:

Well the new rodeo coach came to see you last year and visited with you that came to Tech, so you know it's still going.

AD:

Yeah—

BD:

So you know it's still going on—

AD:

Well, I assume you visited with him probably—

DS:

We haven't yet, and we need to. You know we really need to because a lot of guys have come from Tech have won—have gone on to win world championship titles.

BD:

And this fella is from Lamesa. He's a real nice boy—I mean man—but I can't think what his name is. He just came, you know, they traded out, and they got one, and he didn't stay very long.

DS:

Yeah a few years—I interviewed two of the kids that were on the first Polo team that won the national title from Tech.

BD:

Chris Guay was there for a number of years, and then he left, and they got somebody after that, and he didn't stay long Alvin, it was Jenk's [?] nephew—your cousin's nephew that was—

DS:

Yeah, we need to go back and start talking to all those guys too.

BD:

Bye.

DS:

Bye, it was nice seeing you. And, you know, we were talking about that when you first started off and started getting those the guys—was it just guys or was it men and women both joining?

AD:

Men and women both.

DS:

How many people do you think you had when you first started?

AD:

I don't recall—

DS:

You don't? Okay—

AD:

But the records of that organization should be available to you that has it on paper, in terms of numbers and everything, and—

DS:

What was the biggest obstacle in getting it started?

AD:

Just somebody like me to do the work. I mean there was enough enthusiasm and people interested and so forth, to jump right in, and it's been going for all these years since then—I guess that was forty-something years ago now or something but—

DS:

And you mentioned early on how the rodeos at Tech were held at Jones Stadium I think—

AD:

Yes.

DS:

What would y'all have to do to make it rodeo ready?

AD:

Well, I arranged for the situation, and we had it designated for that use, and we kept that just working each year and going on, and on, and on as it were. Of course, that was a big deal in the

beginning you know, but as I said, I guess that's been forty years ago or something, but at any rate I'm just pleased that I was able to kick it off, and hit it up for its first several years and to be involved every year to some degree with the annual Tech Rodeo—

DS:

And did it move from there into the coliseum?

AD:

Yes, in terms of where it was done—

DS:

Being held—

AD:

Yes, and any rate, it became the top collegiate rodeo in the nation, and I don't know how it would rank these days, but—because there weren't any hardly when I got it started—

DS:

Well I think you were also involved with starting the national collegiate organization, right?

AD:

Yes, NIRA—National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association—which has had a management situation and all through the years since then, and has the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association and the National Intercollegiate Rodeo, and some of my records would indicate quite a story there. And they, you know, not every college that had some interest had an organization when we first kicked it off. I got them involved, and I headed the organization for some years, got it going well, and so it's been a great enjoyment to me to have that involvement.

DS:

Did y'all have any facilities, just in general, for y'all to use or keep horses or anything—livestock—at?

AD:

No, that all had to come to pass after we got going, but it was not that difficult to get some assistance and help to get it going. And of course we had the annual Texas Tech Intercollegiate Rodeo for all these many years now, and I headed the national organization, and we got the individual colleges involved and I haven't seen any recent particulars or anything of it, but it's a really big deal now. I mean there's colleges all over the United States involved, and they have teams, and so it's a really big deal. And all that though as I say has been a great joy to me to see that in my lifetime that's taken place.

DS:

And like a lot of sports, there's a lot of money now in it—

AD:

Oh yeah.

DS:

Those guys in the pro-circuits, they can earn a fair change—

AD:

Oh yeah. And of course when we first going it was tiddlywink so to speak [laughter], it didn't amount to much, but there were enough interested boys and girls to make it go and it just grew, and grew, and grew. So, at any rate, it's been a great addition to the sport of Rodeo nationally for all ages because a lot of the champions now, in rodeo as a whole, have come from those college groups across the country.

DS:

And it also is a way for some of those students to get to college to begin with.

AD:

Yes, very true. They get contributions to sustain them in their organization, and as competing for Texas Tech University for example, or whatever college it is, and that's all come about in main after my getting it started.

DS:

And one of the things that you also got started, and you mentioned it briefly, was the National Cowboy Symposium and all that that goes on at Tech—or not at Tech, the city of Lubbock—

AD:

Yeah.

DS:

Can you talk about that and how you kept that up, growing and going, you know it's still scheduled the same time of the year, it's still around—

AD:

You mean the annual rodeo?

DS:

Or the annual Cowboy Symposium that you do.

AD:

Well again, my enthusiasm for all of that was such that, you know, I wanted to do anything and everything I could to enlarge it and so forth locally, and move on up the later. So I worked with it directly for many years and headed the organization and so forth, and that was without compensation or anything at all, it was simply because of my interest and joy in doing it, so that's been a great joy for me. And I started that National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association, was its head for some years as a national organization, and now of course, I haven't had any current information in recent times. I don't know how many universities are involved, but many, and many individual college rodeos when there weren't any, when I kicked it off, and so as I say that's been a great joy for me to know that that has all happened in this lifetime of mine, and my activities, and getting it going, and keeping it going and so forth.

DS:

You know, and another part of that is, knowing when to transition to another area. How did you go about that saying that, saying it's time to let somebody else to take the reins here, and me move on?

AD:

Until I just gave out, [laughter] physically and mentally to some degree I guess, but physically I did all those things as long as I felt like I could adequately without compensation, but long after I got it going in the individual cases, so it was always a joy to have the organization turned into a home-folks kind of thing for wherever they were and so forth.

DS:

And how was it like, you know, balancing these organizations, and then you ran a business you know? Several different businesses—

AD:

Yes. Well in the context of that, I didn't get salary for all that work for years, but I had the western business, and so I was able to advertise and publicize to get buyers for those products where I did get the profit from the sales to college boys and girls, and universities, colleges and universities, and so forth. So at any rate, I had it all working up and down in that context, and as I've said, I got college rodeo started nationally, you know way back when, and organized a national organization and everything, and was able to get some compensation by having the stores, or the businesses that I created, to sell western products and everything. You know I didn't get anything for putting it together, or keeping it going, or whatever, in the main, but as I say, I had the business to sell products that, with my connections to colleges and universities and so forth, and providing bulletins and so forth, with the products we had, was able to get a lot of business—

DS:

You know and you'd also mentioned that—

AD:

And that compensated me somewhat for doing what I was doing for nothing.

DS:

Oh. You know you had mentioned earlier, in the previous interview, about how you had to move the store over to the highway—

AD:

Yes.

DS:

And y'all had gas pumps—how did that idea come about?

AD:

Well, I just thought that—inasmuch as we didn't have that much business from the rodeo products standpoint—we could have gasoline and products available there, and there were a few places out that individuals had started such, but not many, but I felt that if those people stopped to get the information or whatever—get the boots, and hats, and jeans, and so forth—and they had gas pumps right there handy for them, all they got to do is pull over a little ways and fill her up. And I thought well, there's potential for a lot of sales of gasoline and such products that way, and didn't cost all that much to get set up for it, and so I did and it worked. Worked well. So that allowed us to have the nice structures and so forth out on the highway where we had our business that there wasn't going to be that many people stopping to get western things necessarily, but everybody has to have gasoline that has an automobile, and so knowing that, they're going to be stopping to check with us on things western. Well if we have gasoline pumps available right there handy, and if we have our prices a little bit lower than the places back in town or wherever, we'd get a lot of business. Sure enough we could, and did, and that took nothing much, I mean they managed their own filling up and so forth, you know, they just had to come in, and so we got a lot of people started that came into our store, relative western goods [?], started using our gasoline, and stopping regularly, whether they needed anything western or not, filling up their cars. Or when they were going to stop on things western, they would be able to fill their cars up with gasoline since it was right there handy. So at any rate, that worked for us as well—

DS:

What lessons did you learn banking that you translated into your business life?

AD:

Well, of course, I always had to borrow money to do things that I wanted to do business-wise in the main, and I just found that it was easy to tie the things together, you know, and as much as already had the business out on the highway and everything, could work these things together, and sure enough it did, and was quite, quite pleased with the results, and it didn't cost much extra to, you know, to do that.

DS:

I think you mentioned, you ran that for twenty years was it?

AD:

I guess yeah.

DS:

And ultimately you sold, because y'all were basically tied to the business—you couldn't do anything else—what else was out there that you and Barbara wanted to go do?

AD:

Oh I don't know that we ever talked about [laughter] what else we wanted to do, but just like that of course, as I told you before, the gasoline business came about because we moved out on the highway with stores of western goods, and started selling the gasoline, and so we jumped on those kinds of opportunities, that were just there for the taking as it were, and worked well for us, and we just got to a point that we kind of had so much stuff to do that we gave up on expanding [laughter] to other areas much anymore. And at any rate, we were about the only ones doing that kind of thing, even though some others tried, and started, and quit, and so forth and so on. At any rate, it was a good experience, and as I say, I had it in my mind and I thought, Well we can do this, you know, it's not going to cost us much, and it didn't cost much, and it worked well, and we were able to provide fuel for people for somewhat less than they paid at their filling stations, and so even though a lot of people simply happened into it when they stopped to see about some western goods, well they started getting gasoline at our place all the time, you know, when they were passing by and so forth.

DS:

Well you know, back in the mid-seventies like it was, there was a lot of gas wars—at least here in Lubbock—where it was like everybody would be lowering their prices—did that ever happen there when you were running your pumps?

AD:

Not that much, not that much, but some, yeah. As we could say in our situation, you know we had them there and we were selling western products inside the building, and that's how we were

making our living as it were, so we didn't have to count on big fuel sales or anything, except for added income, and so—

DS:

It was more just a way to get people to stop—

AD:

Yeah. And we could go up or down without any great problem because that was not our main business, it was just something added.

DS:

And something else that you did that was just kind of added in your life, you decided to try your hand at being an artist.

AD:

Yes.

DS:

What was it that made you think, I can do that, when you wanted to sculpt a horse?

AD:

Well I was handling all those kinds of things, in terms of our business, and I, you know, got to doing some little things and I saw that I could do this, so I thought, Well, here we go with something else, you know, and I got to be pretty good at it, and could've done a whole lot more had I wanted to and had the time, and so forth. So I just enjoyed that very much, and of course, everything western was part of me, and so when I thought of the horse figures and everything, you know, it just fell right in, and so I just saw that as an opportunity also to get some income from, and to get my products out there—

AD:

And created a lot of awards in those figures—

DS:

Wow.

AD:

And my awards business that I was able to use. At any rate, it's been a most interesting life—I've enjoyed it immensely.

DS:

Yeah. Now I think Dr. Goss mentioned that you and him collaborated on designing that, the logo, for the Ranching Heritage Center—

AD:

Yeah.

DS:

How did that come about? Well, I guess you had the art background, right?

AD:

Yeah. And it was simply a matter of putting it all together and working it, I can't remember any of our meetings and so forth much, but point being, you know, I was just drawn into a lot of things that sort of fell into place, and—

DS:

Like your employment at Tech, you didn't even know you were going to apply for a job, huh?

AD:

That's right. At any rate—

DS:

Well Alvin, can you tell us something: one of your favorite moments from your life—you've had a very interesting life?

AD:

Yes, of course, all of these things favorite moments, my finding my wife is certainly one of those that—

DS:

How did you meet her?

AD:

Huh?

DS:

How did you meet Barbara?

AD:

Well, I'm trying to think of first meeting and so forth. I came to know about her on this ranch out in far western New Mexico, and I've forgotten what the connection was, but it was a matter of my being involved in something that needed something from that involvement, and when we went out to check it out, found out about her and her family and the area where they lived, and their involvement with ranching, and so forth, and then I'd followed up on that in terms of involvement by dating Barbara and becoming involved from that standpoint, and concluding fairly quickly that she was, hopefully, my bride-to-be, and then she seemed to concur with me in her life's attitude and thoughts about what she was looking for, and that came to be, and we've had a wonderful life, and I don't think I've taken anything away from her potential, nor have I taken anything away from her, you know in terms of her potential, I feel like we've each helped each other to have a natural background and so forth that's made our life enjoyable, and without any hindrance of consequence from either side, and so—and of course, as I've indicated, my thinking and background and everything else tied to things western, and this just fit in, and followed it to the fullest extent possible, and made it work, and I don't think that I could have certainly found a situation that would have been anything compared to the one for me with finding Barbara to be my wife, and getting involved in all the things western and their ranching, and everything, and—

DS:

In a lot of ways, her background was very similar to yours.

AD:

Yes, except I grew up on a farm per se, and she grew up on a ranch per se, but we each had the connections, and I couldn't have dreamed—I mean I had the western thinking, and cowboys, and Indians, and so forth, rodeo—I had all that in my mind, and I've been able to tie all that together in terms of livelihood, and income, and everything. You know, I wouldn't trade it for anything because my thinking of it being an enjoyable situation of having the western background as it were and everything, and thinking of that you can go out today—out to where Barbara grew up—and it's not much different to what it was 100 years ago. Now of course she grew up, I mean, there's still Indians that live close by, and have their own area, and large ranching operations with few people and everything, so it's about as western as I could ever have dreamed of growing up in, and being involved in, the leadership situation, and so forth and so on. And then with my total interest I've been able to make the living for our selling western products and so forth—

DS:

You know y'all decided as a couple to move to Raider Ranch a few years ago, how did y'all come to that decision?

AD:

Again, it was just a western connection that was made available to us, and we jumped on it, and have enjoyed every bit of it. And of course my having headed the National Ranching Heritage Center for years made me be able to soak up that connection, and for it to continue in this retirement thing is, you know, plus, plus, plus, and any rate, that's kind of it.

DS:

Well all right. Well I thank you for taking part of you afternoon with us, and—

AD:

Oh my pleasure always.

DS:

But we do need to set up that trip to go down to Post and look at that stuff.

AD:

Okay.

DS:

And I'll see if Monte or Tai wants to go and we'll get some stuff—

AD:

Okay just holler at me after you talk to them, and I can go most any time of course, so it would be mainly y'all's situation and we can visualize the past and the present and the current so to speak.

DS:

Is the old family homestead still there in Graham?

AD:

I think the house has been moved off and destroyed or whatever. Of course it was a Slaughter operation and just a plain two room house, box and strips, one-by-twelve nailed to a frame, one-by-twelves, and a small one-by-whatever nailed across the joint, and that was both the exterior and the interior walls for the houses, and you know it didn't take any time to build something like that.

DS:

Not much insulation in there either?

AD:

No, and of course that came along later, and any rate, a good experience—

DS:

Well, I thank you Alvin.

AD:

Let me get several of these things that I got for you, I want you to take those and make copies—

DS:

Okay turn this—

End of recording



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