

**Oral History Interview of  
Clyde May**

**Interviewed by: David Marshall  
July 20, 2017  
Wilson, Texas**

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*General Southwest Collection Interviews*

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### Recording Notes:

*Original Format:* Born Digital Audio

*Digitization Details:* N/A

*Audio Metadata:* 96kHz/24bit WAV file

*Further Access Restrictions:* N/A

*Related Interviews:* Clyde May was also interviewed on July 27, 2017 and November 16, 2017. This is part one of the series.

### Transcription Notes:

*Interviewer:* David Marshall

*Audio Editor:* N/A

*Transcription:* Elizabeth Groening

*Editor(s):* Kayci Rush

## Transcript Overview:

This interview features Clyde May as she discusses her life. Clyde describes her and her husband's family history, and the museums with which she was involved.

**Length of Interview:** 02:02:50

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### Keywords

Family life and background, Tahoka, Texas

**Clyde May (CM):**

I'm not shy about saying if I have to go bathroom.

**David Marshall (DM):**

Oh good. Okay. All right. So the date is July 20<sup>th</sup> of 2017. This is David Marshall interviewing Clyde May on her home at Tahoka Lake and we're in Lynn County, right?

CM:

Right.

DM:

Okay. So we can just set that right there and let's start with your date and place of birth, if that's okay.

CM:

Okay. I was born in St. Louis County, Missouri. October 30<sup>th</sup>, 1935. I joke about it. I say the reason I was born on the thirtieth is my mother was a witch and she needed to have the next day off. But since St. Louis County is not in St. Louis, St. Louis is not a county. It's a different kind of local government up there, so this was one of the suburban cities.

DM:

Where is it exactly? From St. Louis? What?

CM:

Well, it's close. Like the metropolitan area of Fort Worth, Dallas, it's got all the little suburban cities that are actually part of the larger city now, and even then, almost eighty-two years ago—actually, the hospital was a [recorder shuffling, inaudible word 00:01:31] hospital in, I think it was University City.

DM:

Okay. Uh-huh.

CM:

We lived there again years later when I was teenager, but we were in Webster Groves.

DM:

Okay.

CM:

Same sort of—

DM:

Same kind of thing, outside of St. Louis.

CM:

Uh-huh, but it's just—daddy worked at St. Louis. Run the trains, when I went back as a teenager.

DM:

Okay. Now, can you give me your full name including your maiden name?

CM:

Okay. I dropped my first name Ellen.

DM:

Ellen?

CM:

Yeah. It's—I don't like my cousin named Ellen. My middle name's Clyde, and my mother had always said if she ever had a daughter, she'd name her Clyde, so—and my last name was Smith.

DM:

Smith. Okay.

CM:

And I know a little of my family's history.

DM:

Yes, yes. I would like to hear that. I know your father was with Corps of Engineers. If you can give me your mother's and father's names also and where they're from.

CM:

Okay. Well, daddy was in Fort Worth from the time he was about six months old. His dad—he was born in Cawood [?], Kentucky, and his dad was a widower that remarried, so he had six sisters all older than him, and then there were other children who had died, and his dad evidently sold lumber and cattle and stuff. So he moved down to the Fort Worth area and because daddy had just been born, they were waiting until my grandmother was able to travel with all the kids and by the time they got to Fort Worth, he had died.

DM:

Oh, my.



CM:

And so, and then his mother died by the time he was five years old so he was raised by his sisters, especially the oldest sister whose name was—it was kind of important—Ella J. Smith is the way she—her middle name was Jackson or Johnson. I don't remember, but she, along with a lady named Miss Charlie Noble, started a children's museum in Lubbock that became—I think it's the—

DM:

Museum of Science and History, now. Yeah, but I know it is as a children's museum.

CM:

And she also started the teacher retirement home down in Waco and was able to live there some after her retirement, and was on the president's first council on the ages or whatever they called that—I think Kennedy. She was an avid Democrat, but she was always single because she had to raise that family. In those days, there was no—she would've had to quit work because there wasn't very many nice things that women could do.

DM:

Right. To get the chronological aspect here, what year was your father born? When was all this happening?

CM:

Nineteen three. He was born April 8<sup>th</sup> of 1903.

DM:

Okay. Well, while we're on the subject, what can you tell me about the beginning of that museum?

CM:

Well, it started in an old Victorian building. I think it was Summit Avenue. Their idea was they were educators, and they needed to have things that would appeal to children, and we moved back to Fort Worth when this was going on and I was sixteen, and of course, she had all these ideas for me to do and I was rebellious, but I was, what they call now, a docent at that time.

DM:

At that Victorian home?

CM:

Uh-huh. And—

DM:

But that was in the early fifties.

CM:

Yeah. That was—I came back '51.

DM:

Yeah. I just figured it was older than that, but yeah. '51. Okay.

CM:

They did build the South Hi Mount [?] Elementary School according to her plans. She was principal of that for years, and so they lived—she lived on Clover Lane with one of the sisters and a brother-in-law. They raised them—that sister raised three daughters there.

DM:

Okay. I know I'm kind of getting out of chronological order here, but let's go ahead and talk about—a little bit more about the museum and then we'll go back and back track a little bit. What can you remember about the museum exhibits? What kind of groups? Was it school kids that came to see it?

CM:

Yeah, it was school kids or there was—you know, there wasn't that much TV at that time, and there were scouting groups, there were other groups. You know, special interest groups out of the elementary and other public schools, and those groups would come out and then they would have so-called clubs at the museum. Like the astronomy club, and I remember sitting out in the backyard of that place near the old garage or something and them looking at stars. I didn't want to be there just because they wanted me to be, but I did it anyway. It didn't hurt me, and one of the displays I remember in the museum is what my children later wanted to go see, and it was a representation of—like a statue, a model-- life-size model of a woman with all the organs visible. In the light—you can punch things and the lights would show up—show the skeleton or the heart. I remember my kids called it—they wanted to go see the naked lady, and that was embarrassing sometimes to hear them say that, and they had dioramas and I think those are marvelous.

DM:

We were talking about that before, and they are. They are marvelous. I'd love to know where they are now.



CM:

Yeah. And well, you can imagine the artistic skill to put it together and still be representative of history. I remember some that looked like Indian camps.

DM:

Exactly.

CM:

And then there were some that were just nature things.

DM:

Do you remember where they came from? The dioramas?

CM:

No, I don't. I just assume there was somebody hired to do that, some skilled person hired to do that. They probably go into forensic stuff nowadays.

DM:

I wonder if they were made specifically for the children's museum or if they were brought in from a previous museum. Did you ever hear?

CM:

No, I don't know about any of that.

DM:

Okay, but I think it was mostly Texas Indians. I don't recall for sure.

CM:

I remember the wildlife stuff too.

DM:

Okay.

CM:

And then there would be life-size stuff. Like this is what an inside of a cabin would like in 1880 or something like that, and it would be indoors within the museum, but—

DM:

Was this in the house? In the Victorian house?

CM:

No, this was after the—

DM:

After.

CM:

Yeah. I was there when they had the ceremony to—you know, with the shovel and all. Amon Carter was there. That was during the time when the big discussion between Fort Worth and Dallas. They built the Amon Carter Airfield there. The competition between the politicians in the two cities, there was almost no DFW Airport.

DM:

Was it Jim Wright that was in the middle of that?

CM:

Jim Wright was in the middle of that, and I don't know who from the Dallas area. And this was, of course, we're skipping many years back and forth here, but by the time they were building that airport, we were living in the mid-cities. And our kids were teenagers, and my boys would sneak out there, through the backwoods way and—with other boys, and drive on the runways before there was any terminals or anything out there. Of course, it was a big no-no and they were not supposed to. They never got caught at that. They got caught at other things.

DM:

[Laughs] Oh, that's funny. When did the children's museum move into the new building?

CM:

Gosh, I don't know. I think while I was still in high school or not long after that.

DM:

Oh, so it wasn't in the Victorian house for very long?

CM:

No.

DM:

Okay.

CM:

I think they did that on whatever Miss Noble and anybody else could—money they could

provide, and then when they got taxes and what not to help provide it, and build it, that's when they moved out. I kind of like the old Victorian house. I mean, you couldn't—it was limited in space.

DM:

I wonder if it's still there.

CM:

I don't know. It was kind of on a hill on Summit Avenue. Of course, there was no freeways going through there or any of that.

DM:

I'll try to find it. If I find it and get a picture of it sometime when I'm in Fort Worth, I'll show it to you.

CM:

Okay.

DM:

I'll send you a picture. Well, so Amon Carter was involved in this? This is Junior? Amon Carter Jr.?

CM:

Yeah. Well, no.

DM:

Senior?

CM:

Well, this was in the fifties.

DM:

Um-hm. Well, yeah.

CM:

Maybe.

DM:

Could've been either of them in the fifties, I think.

CM:

He was at least as old as my aunt was at that time, and she was in her sixties.

DM:

Okay. Yeah. Did you know Amon Carter Sr. was the first board of directors at Texas Tech?

CM:

No, I didn't realize that.

DM:

Yeah, I didn't know until a while back looking at the history, but yeah. There's a Fort Worth-Texas Tech tie early on. But anyway, so this was about ten years before the Amon Carter Museum of Western Art started, I guess. The children's museum was a bit older.

CM:

Yes. Uh-huh.

DM:

Okay.

CM:

I don't remember.

DM:

I think early—around '60 or so is when that art museum started, but what a cultural center Fort Worth was becoming. Pretty amazing. Always made Dallas cringe, I think.

CM:

Well, then they decided to be the banking center or something. They had money.

DM:

Yeah. Well let's go back to family again. We're talking about your father, when he was born. 1903, you said, and so he grew up.

CM:

In Fort Worth.

DM:

In Fort Worth. Do you know where he went to school and all that?

CM:

Northside.

DM:

Northside.

CM:

But I don't think they called it Northside then. I'm not sure.

DM:

Okay.

CM:

I know that he—they lived most of the time, from the way he told—because out—what would've been called the Jacksboro Highway at the time. He had a—he worked most of the time. The family had to. One of the jobs he had was to take people's cows out to graze so they'd bring them back in. Take them out before school and then he'd bring them back in.

DM:

Right there from Jacksboro Highway. Kind of out in the country.

CM:

Yeah. They would send him out during the summer to visit with kinfolks, and he did come out to Goree.

DM:

To where?

CM:

Goree, near—East out of Abilene.

DM:

Okay.

CM:

And stayed with an aunt and uncle there and I can't—he used to say what their name was and I don't remember. I remember the tales because he used to tell us fantastic tales. When we moved, you know, we were in the car moving around, and most of the time he didn't do a whole lot of talking. I recognized my daddy because he was sitting in my daddy's chair. He'd say, "Mind your mother." He told Texas tales, especially when we weren't in Texas. We believed like—it

got so hot in West Texas that all the corn in the field popped and the meals froze to death because they thought it was snow.

DM:

Tall tales.

CM:

The sand would blow so deep that the prairie dogs were digging their holes six feet up in the air. He had a coyote pet when he was there—the aunt from Goree.

DM:

Really?

CM:

Had to end up taking it back out and leaving it out in the boonies because it was eating the chickens.

DM:

That's wonderful. Remember any other tales or stories he told about when he was a kid?

CM:

No. He didn't tell. I know that when he was high school age, he went out for a while to stay with one of the sisters that was married and living in California. Somewhere, I had—I hope I'll find it one of these days when we unpack that box car, because I want to unpack it and get rid of the trash and save the—I had a letter that he wrote back to this aunt, Ella J. Smith, that we called Lala, but everybody else in the family called her, Sister. It was written to Sister. He decided he wanted to be a scientific farmer. This horrified the rest of the family because they were trying to move themselves up socially, not just those poor orphan kids. The one thing that Aunt Lala insisted on was they all got college educations. That was the important thing, and she ended up with a master's and all but one of the six sisters got their degree from the normal school in Denton.

DM:

Now, Texas Women's, or which was?

CM:

Un-uhn. No.

DM:

Oh, North Texas.



CM:

North Texas.

DM:

Became North Texas. Okay. Texas Women's University was still—was around at that time though—was it there?

CM:

I think so.

DM:

Okay. All right.

CM:

It was around when I was there as a freshman, too. They pushed him to go to A&M. He went to Arizona part of the time, and made his living while he was going to college there as a—you know, working in the labs with Gila monsters.

DM:

Really?

CM:

Somebody was doing some kind of study with Gila monsters.

DM:

University of Arizona?

CM:

Uh-huh.

DM:

Okay.

CM:

But I think he was only there one semester, so the rest of the time was at A&M.

DM:

At A&M. That's where he got his degree that launched him into Corps of Engineers.

CM:

Um-hm, and he was in the corps at A&M, too.

DM:

He was in the corps. Those were the pre—of course, well before the women were admitted into A&M.

CM:

Uh-huh, but my brother's daughter graduated from A&M. Well, his two sons and he did too.

DM:

Okay. By the way, when he was living in Fort Worth out on the Jacksboro Highway, those were pretty rough times in Fort Worth and especially, this included out around Jacksboro Highway, there was gangster activity in Fort Worth. Did he ever talk about any of that?

CM:

No.

DM:

There was quite a deal going on between law enforcement and some of these gangs, gangsters. That might've been a little later than him, actually. That might've been in the thirties. He might've already been out at college station by then.

CM:

Yeah, because he would've been—the thirties, he would've been close to thirty anyway.

DM:

A guy I know that was a Star-Telegram journalist wrote a book about all that.

CM:

Who?

DM:

Been a while since I talked to him. I came across his name just the other day, and I can't remember—I'll let you know. You'll recognize his name.

CM:

Yeah, there was—we got the Star-Telegram all the time. I didn't read the newspaper, but he read anything, articles, to me. My husband did. I would fix breakfast or whatever while we were

getting ready to go to work and he would read the interesting articles, and there was a columnist—I cannot remember his name. Somewhere, I've got a—

DM:

We're in the same boat then and we're probably talking about the same person.

CM:

Yeah, wrote a book about it. But he retired—

DM:

Yeah. He was retired when I interviewed him and that's been ten years ago, probably. Yeah, I bet it's the same person.

CM:

George—I'll remember at two o'clock in the morning.

DM:

Yeah. [Laughter]

CM:

But I've learned since, that daddy's name was in a bibliography of some engineering text books. My brother has come across that.

DM:

He had some publications or something? Or some studies that made it in.

CM:

Yeah. Well I know—I don't know what he was working on when we were in St. Louis, but when we were in the Panama Canal Zone, he—this was in the early forties. We went down there in September of '40. Maybe the summer, because we only lived there for ten months, but he designed the third lot for the Panama Canal, but they never built it because the war came on. We had to get out of there.

DM:

I see.

CM:

We went down on a cruise ship and came back on a banana boat. Left New Orleans and had to come get civilian employees out of the danger area.

DM:

Um-hm. Right, right.

CM:

And so we ended up in New York, but we had to—that's how we had to get back to the United States was the Canal Zone, Panama Canal.

DM:

Never really thought about it, but yeah. That sure would be a dangerous spot because everybody would want to grab the canal.

CM:

Uh-huh, and see, after the war, the big tankers and things got so big that the third lock wouldn't have helped, and they do something different now. I haven't been there since then. I do remember being there.

DM:

Golly.

CM:

I remember picnicking one time and telling daddy that there was a big cat in the tree, and it was a black panther.

DM:

Golly. Wow.

CM:

But mostly, we lived in the government reservation there.

DM:

Okay, okay. What an adventure. Now, when your daddy—when did he graduate from A&M?

CM:

I'm not sure.

DM:

See, he was born in '03. Probably graduated from high school in '21 or so, so somewhere in the twenties, mid-twenties. Does that sound right?

CM:

Yeah. I know that he had—there were times where he had to stop and actually work to make money and then go back to school, but I think by the time he got into A&M, I think he went all the way through, and I don't know what year he—if I know, I don't remember.

DM:

Did he enter the military after that? Okay, so he went straight into Corps of Engineers?

CM:

Uh-huh.

DM:

It was the army though. Army Corps of Engineers.

CM:

Yeah, but it was a civilian—always a civilian job.

DM:

Okay.

CM:

His boss was always an army colonel, and that's changed. During war years, early years, we moved a lot.

DM:

Okay. Now, when did he meet your mom?

CM:

He was working in New Orleans and my grandmother had to look after her mother, who couldn't care for herself. Not that she wasn't physically able at the time, but she never had to take care of herself, and so they had bought a house across the street from where they lived, and set it up as a boarding house. And it belonged to my great grandmother and daddy was staying there, and he and my uncle, who still lived with my grandmother, became close friends. I do know that my granddad made my dad and mother be engaged for a full year before they could get married.

DM:

Give me your mother's name.

CM:

Edna May Russell Smith. But grandparents—

DM:

Okay. That's funny. There's May falling in there.

CM:

Uh-huh. Well, southern girls had two names.

DM:

May or Lynn or Anne or something. Yeah. Well, so she was from New Orleans?

CM:

Um-hm.

DM:

That's kind of an interesting cultural mix there that you have. Fort Worth and New Orleans.

CM:

Well, my great grandmother came during Reconstruction from France.

DM:

Really?

CM:

And there are tales about her. She's a little bitty redheaded woman and real spunky and everything, but like I said, she couldn't care for herself. She'd always had mammies, even though there were no slaves as such. The slaves had become family retainers, but when she first came from France, they lived in a French embassy, which of course, was French territory and they tell tales of her standing out just barely off the edge of the sidewalk where she stayed in French territory and called the Yankee soldiers that were still there—called them names.

DM:

She was in France, technically so she could.

CM:

Yeah. They couldn't do a thing about it. They say her husband—you know, I can't remember. I remember the last names. I don't remember his first. I think his name was John or something. Their last name, when she married was du Cheron. No, her name was du Cheron and the family name was Bozant.

DM:

Was what?



CM:

Bozant.

DM:

Bozant. Can you help me with spellings on those?

CM:

Ducheron. Little d-u- space c-h-e-r-o-n, I think.

DM:

Okay.

CM:

Bozant was b-o-z-a-n-t.

DM:

Okay.

CM:

So my grandmother was Edna Marie Bozant. My great grandmother was Marie Antionette Ducheron Bozant.

DM:

Huh. Really? Golly, how interesting.

CM:

Yeah. My mother used to brag about—my mother was so much of a social clown, which is probably why I'm so much the opposite.

DM:

[Laughter] How did they—okay. Yeah, I know how they met, but when did they get married? Your mother and father.

CM:

Let's see. They were married almost three years when I was born. I was born in '35. They were married in January. January twenty-fourth.

DM:

Thirty-two, maybe?

CM:

Thirty-two. Must've been.

DM:

Okay. And then did they stay in New Orleans for a while or did they move?

CM:

Well, then they—that's when they moved to St. Louis.

DM:

St. Louis, where you were born. He ever talk about specific projects he was involved in with the Corps of Engineers?

CM:

Well the Panama Canal thing, and then when we were in Galveston, when we came back from Panama anyway, I don't know what his first deal in Galveston was. I just remember how we lived. You know, I can remember being a toddler and being completely naked on the beach just running. I assumed, at the time, there wasn't anybody else there. Of course, being eighteen months, two years old, I wasn't very far, but I can remember. I remember things like standing in the edge of the surf and you could feel the sand pull away from your toes.

DM:

Yeah. How nice.

CM:

But when we came back to Galveston from Panama, he was working on some of the stuff, the protective stuff on the shore and then he—

DM:

The sea wall and all of that?

CM:

Uh-huh. Well, I think there was some kind of buffer thing. Stuff like that.

DM:

Right.

CM:

And then, also, he would tell us things he did in sort of a discounting way. He said they were nothing, but he devised some sort of thing for training young men to—the targets would move.

DM:

Training soldiers.

CM:

Training soldiers and other—well, one thing he did design, I say, the River Walk in San Antonio put me through my first weekend. He took—I mean, my first year in college because when I was a sophomore in high school, he took—no. When I was a junior in high school, he took the summer off and took a job in San Antonio for flood control on the San Antonio River. And he's—well you know, it's another deal. It's just like the bulb in the bathtub. In the bath—I mean, in the toilet tank. He says the flow would open and close and that's the way it's controlled. He always discounted things like that.

DM:

Made it sound simple, but you know it's not.

CM:

Yeah. I mean, as an adult I could—

DM:

Right.

CM:

Because—

DM:

Maybe he was just simplifying it where you would understand more easily as a kid.

CM:

Well, I do remember when I was very little and asking, “What you do when you go to work?” He said, “Well, I draw lines.” And I thought he said he was drawing lions. For the longest time I tried to figure out, why would he go to work just to draw lions?

DM:

Like African lions?

CM:

Uh-huh. Just kid language stuff.

DM:

[Laughter] Right.

CM:

And he was baldheaded by the time my mother met him, so those were tales they told to us. His sister said, "Well, it was the hazing at A&M that made him bald," and he said the reason he was bald was because his daddy was bald.

DM:

So he was down at San Antonio for a project or for a while?

CM:

No, he took a leave of absence. You know, you could accumulate leave.

DM:

Right, right.

CM:

So he'd accumulated leave. He took the leave off that summer and went down there because an engineering firm down there—I don't know—had asked him to come and work.

DM:

Right. I got you. Okay.

CM:

Another time that he took a different kind of leave. I don't know. It was right after the war. He—I'm jumping back and forth in time.

DM:

That's fine.

CM:

But in '47, he went to work for the Atomic Energy Commission. And it's my belief that that's what killed him in the long run because we lived at Oakridge, Tennessee, and we lived there—I think we were ten months there. I have to sit down and figure out where I was, what age I was when we went. But I went there and finished out fifth grade, and started sixth grade there. He was designing radiation containment, something. It's my belief, since he died of a very strange lung illness years later, that he probably had some form of radiation sickness that cut him later because there was no other reason for it. He had stopped smoking for years before that.

DM:

Yeah, and it could certainly happen.

CM:

Uh-huh. And they changed what degree of radiation is safe over time. It's not near as safe as we thought it was. In Florida, though, he designed the Trans Florida Canal and that was another thing they didn't put in because the tankers got too big. And he always wanted to design something so you could travel up the Trinity River to Fort Worth from the Gulf.

DM:

Oh, wow.

CM:

Nobody wanted to build that.

DM:

Right. [Pause in Recording] Well, sounds like y'all moved around a lot. Oakridge, Tennessee, and Galveston, and Panama.

CM:

Florida. We lived—I bet the place we lived in Florida has probably been covered up by Disney World now. We were outside of Orlando in another government reservation. It was an old CCC [**Civilian Conservation Corps**] camp that the Corps of Engineers took over.

DM:

Who did you tell me—weren't you telling me somebody worked for CCC? Maybe I'm thinking of someone else. I interview so many people I sometimes get my stories mixed up.

CM:

I can imagine. You're covering history. That's a lot of people. There's a lot of people. They're not here anymore.

DM:

That's right. Where else did y'all live?

CM:

We lived outside of Galveston, too. I mean, outside of Jacksonville, too.

DM:

Oh, you did? What was he doing in Florida? What kind of work?

CM:

That's when he was designing the Trans Florida Canal. It was during the war. He may've them

doing other stuff because, like the Oakridge thing and the radiation—when he got sick, he never—he was not supposed to know these things. I figured out a lot of things. I was twelve years old and I didn't talk like I do now. Now, I run my mouth all the time, but I had been told that children should be seen and not heard. I would, in the attitude that people have that children don't know what you're talking about—and so things that he and some of his coworkers talk about, I would be sitting over in the corner somewhere reading a book and hear it and my mother never knew these things. I told her stuff like that. She's just, "Oh, no. That didn't happen." I can remember things that happened when I was twelve years old. I remember turning twelve there and being so proud because that meant I was an adult because I had to go get photographed and get I.D. cards. Of course, now I object to that, but that was—

DM:

What are some things you remember from their discussions?

CM:

Well, a lot of it's scientific, but that's when Russia was becoming a bugaboo.

DM:

Right.

CM:

And they were very afraid and Oakridge was supposed to be kind of hidden. Of course, communications were not like—I'm sure Russia knew there was something there, but in the CCC camp, campers felt—in Florida and then in Oakridge-- they did not cut down a tree they didn't have to. They would fit houses and both of those were wooded areas. Very different. One was old Jack pine, Yellow pine. Sandy place in Florida. Oakridge was a very hard wood area. Oh, it was a marvelous place for kids because they had guards with dogs and plank sidewalks that would go over hills and around places and we'd sneak around smoking cigarettes so the guards would catch us, but not tell. Folks felt safe turning us loose in those places because like now, you don't even turn kids—don't let them play past one block where you can see them or something. We were really free to be outdoors and getting into trouble and just come home dirty and they didn't know.

DM:

You had an amazing childhood. The way you moved around from place, was that difficult?

CM:

It was for me. I was shy. It was difficult. Educationally, it wasn't difficult, though it did leave holes in my education. Like if I'd stayed in Texas, I would've had Texas history in what? Seventh grade or something like that. So most of the Texas history I know is either my Lala



insisted I read something or you know, I've picked it up since one way or another just because it's interesting. Books are my friends so.

DM:

Yeah. How many different schools did you attend?

CM:

Thirteen.

DM:

Really? Thirteen in twelve years.

CM:

When I went in tenth grade, that was the thirteenth school and I graduated from high school.

DM:

That was Polly?

CM:

Polly.

DM:

Back in Fort Worth by that time.

CM:

Um-hm. That was 1954.

DM:

And your dad was still working for the Corps of Engineers?

CM:

Yeah. I don't know what the Corps—I know his expertise was in flood control and stuff like that. Seems to me, he was doing relocation, I think, because he would talk about—well he would—I think it's when they were condemning land for whatever, like Lake Grapevine. I do remember going up to the Grapevine when they closed things out there and going to that dam. It was all backroads to get up from the East side of Fort Worth.

DM:

What was his full name again? John?

CM:

John Lawrence.

DM:

Lawrence Smith.

CM:

Uh-huh.

DM:

Do you know what year he retired from Corps of Engineers?

CM:

No. I think I have a picture in my album in there of it, but—

DM:

My dad was born in '32, but he was with the Corps of Engineers right out of the army so that would've been in '52, or so. He was in the Corps of Engineers probably right about at the same time. He was young, but I bet he knew your daddy. And this was in Fort Worth.

CM:

My family's closest friend there was Gene Bradshaw. He worked for the Corps too. He did not have the education that daddy had, so his GS number was different. I know daddy was GS 11 at one time and GS 13 at one time and afterwards, after that, I didn't pay much attention. I was told at times, that GS 11 made eleven thousand a year and GS 13 made thirteen thousand. Then, it was adequate.

DM:

That was a lot of money. The fifties?

CM:

Uh-huh.

DM:

Yeah. Thirteen's a high rank. He was a high ranking Corps of Engineers fellow. My dad started out there, but he went to general services administration and climbed up that way, but yeah. In those early years, they might've—they were probably in at the same time in Fort Worth so I'll ask him.

CM:

Everybody called him Smitty.

DM:

Smitty. Did he ever do any work? I know Corps of Engineers has a lot of projects around Texas. Did he ever happen to do any work out at Lake of the Pines in East Texas? Remember him mentioning that?

CM:

No, he did that one down at Glen Rose, though.

DM:

Oh, he did?

CM:

Um-hm. He needed it. At that time, they wanted him to double dip. That was after my husband and I were back in that part of the world. I got a picture somewhere. He took Michael, one of my sons, down to show him stuff so he could get boy-scout information. He went—part of the reason he went down and took whatever job he was doing down there at Glen Rose was to get some quarters for social security so they could get social security and count as well as government retirement. And then we hired—he didn't have quite enough quarters, so we hired him to design us a house that we would've liked to have built [Inaudible 00:49:03] and never did. Turned in these quarters for him so he got enough, so mother got social security benefits as well as other benefits.

DM:

Okay. Good. Now, let's talk a little bit about—let's talk a little bit about you back in Fort Worth and going to Polly and your archery and these kinds of things. But before we do, is there anything else you'd like to add about your mother or father?

CM:

Not at the moment that I can think of it.

DM:

Maybe we'll think of something later. Good thing about this is we can fill in gaps anytime.

CM:

I do remember when Katrina hit that I worried about my grandmother's house in New Orleans on Fern Street. Somewhere, I got that address, but I had one of my daughters Google right after and they found it, the aerial thing, and it was not—

DM:

Good. Wasn't hurt. Good.

CM:

Unh-uh. And my grandmother talked a lot about New Orleans and stuff like that and her life there so I knew some of that. Her dad was—he headed up a boys' school. A headmaster, I guess they called it. They said he spoke seven languages or read. He wrote some. Mother did—I know she rode horses—fancy—in parade stuff.

DM:

Oh really?

CM:

Doing stuff. You know, where you'd stand up?

DM:

Trick riding, kind of?

CM:

Yeah. Two different horses.

DM:

Oh wow.

CM:

In all the parades, they did—my graduation present from my parents was to send me down to stay with my godmother during Mardi gras, so I got to see some of the parades and got to go to one of the balls. Not—I wasn't social quality to be down and get to be asked to dance. I had to sit with my grandmother up in the balcony. You know, still have—

DM:

A chaperone.

CM:

Well, it's just—you know, I didn't belong to their club or something so.

DM:

Right, right. Very traditional. Very Deep South. This was a graduation, high school graduation present?

CM:

Yeah. To be on the train, to go down to—

DM:

Your parents were really cool. I mean, that's—

CM:

My mother was a terror, for me anyway.

DM:

You know, I mean, they wanted you to have experiences like that. That's not the usual, I wouldn't say or wasn't back then.

CM:

I was pretty naïve. Pretty socially naïve.

DM:

But what experiences you had in childhood, just living in different places and experiencing different things.

CM:

Yeah, sometimes me and the other ladies around here—because I don't have a history with these people but more than about ten years. But we talk about how things were. I remember loving when we got a shoebox because I could turn it upside down. I could make it a doll bed or I could turn it over and draw on the bottom of it and it would be a stove and we did this out in the shade of trees, but there was not any air conditioning in the houses in those days. In Florida, we could use Spanish moss for the doll bed and things like that. Didn't have cellphones, and didn't have tablets.

DM:

I think we were wonderfully fortunate to have those kinds of things.

CM:

Yeah. The freedom to be kids. Get out—oh, and my mother started making me do things. Daddy insisted we learn to cook because he said when he got married, mother couldn't boil water without burning it so—and it's true. They had colored help the whole time and we did too. I know they paid—Pearl took care of us. I thought Pearl was an old mammie. She must've been eighteen, nineteen years old. They paid her five dollars a week. And you tell people from other parts of the country, oh your folks are rich. No, they weren't. Daddy worked for the government. He helped take care of some of his sisters. But I remember the freedom of it. I remember

climbing up a big magnolia tree in Florida behind the house where the upper branches were really big around and sitting up there with a book, and mother would come out on the porch, and call, and call, and call, and she couldn't see me. There was all that foliage. She couldn't find me and I'd just sit there and let her get tired of calling me. I didn't want to go clean up my room or whatever it was.

DM:

Much nicer in the magnolia tree.

CM:

And I drank every—this was during the war and right after it and that was in Arlington, Florida, which is a suburb now in Jackson. I remember just being free to do stuff. No danger out there. I was much more intimidated by social danger just because every place we'd go, the right way to be was different, and it took a while to say words the right way. The accents would be different. So something, when we came from St. Louis, living there the second time—we came to Fort Worth when I was in high school. It was Bobby Socks' time, but I rode the bus one day and one of the girls said, "Your socks are not turned down." Well, in junior high in St. Louis, we wore the socks up, and we wore Saddle Oxfords that were deliberately dirty. My mother would not let me take mine to the shoe shop. They were deliberately dirty. She barely let me have Saddle Oxfords because she wouldn't let me have loafers, penny loafers, which weren't important. But it is hard to fit in and there were so many different places. We were eighteen months here, ten months there, eight months here. I was terrified of swimming down in Panama. That was one of the things you had to do because it was in a pool. A beach is the kind of water I was used to. Little things like that that you just don't think.

DM:

Well, you know what, that's just so very interesting because they never—not having been a person who moved around a lot as a kid, I never would've thought of that, that you would have to adapt to different customs among children in different places. Very interesting.

CM:

Evidently, it wasn't that much for the adults. Mother belonged to the Engineer's Wives Club, which they were all—it was like—we moved like army brats, but we did not go living on base, to go to base schools, or anything.

DM:

Right, right. Very interesting. Therefore, you would be more exposed to differences in customs among kids. Wow.



CM:

Yeah, even hopscotch was different.

DM:

Even the way games were played. Wow. That would be a real adjustment, especially as much as y'all moved. You ended up in Fort Worth. You went straight to Polly. You came to Fort Worth in high school. You had already had a couple of high school years?

CM:

I had junior high through the ninth grade. We were three years in Webster Grove. Well, I started seventh grade in San Antonio. What was—we expected to stay there, but then something happened. I think Truman was closing engineering offices in different places like they do close military camps. My folks didn't like Truman because of that, but that was on my thirteenth birthday, we had to move. And daddy had already gone to the St. Louis area to find us a house. That was a usual thing. He would go.

DM:

In advance.

CM:

In advance. So and always, the federal government paid for our move, and so the movers would come in and that time, the movers packed everything. A great big outdoor garbage can full of garbage. My birthday cake, which did not travel well, and then daddy came back and we didn't go to restaurants. We didn't go out to eat at restaurants hardly ever, and so it was a big deal. We didn't just get the car and go all the way from San Antonio to St. Louis and we stopped, eating breakfast at some café and there was a man by himself. You know, I remember it that way. He was right over there by himself and reading the newspaper and he got up and tore the newspaper, and threw the silverware on the ground, and of course, restaurants were places where you were supposed to behave yourself. He was furious because he knew that doing it would [?] [01:02:15] and he hadn't. Why would anybody care? He cared who got to be president. I was appalled at the behavior. I finished seventh grade and went eighth and ninth grade in the school at Webster Grove. I say St. Louis Webster Grove. And started Polly in tenth grade, and finished there.

DM:

What were your interests at that point in school? Did you have any particular subject interests?

CM:

Um-hm. Biology and math stuff. I took the algebra. Three years of algebra and then also two years of geometry, trigonometry. They did not have some of the more advanced math that my kids got, but the biology, science stuff. When I was younger, history. I remember a whole bunch

of biographies in the library in the Florida school. I read every one of them and I still remember some of those. They would be of a particular historical person.

DM:

You certainly got a dose at the children's museum too. Pretty good. Well, you also were interested in archery, I know.

CM:

Well I got to be on the archery team.

DM:

Schools don't even have archery teams anymore. Was it common?

CM:

Well, that was the last one they had at Polly too because—I guess it was because the teacher position, but they had—Polly girls had won archery for eleven years. That long.

DM:

I'm curious to know how you became interested in that because you were a shy child, you mentioned, and you're a person of small stature, you know, but I guess it doesn't matter in archery though, does it?

CM:

The football, basketball, softball things were not things that my parents were interested in. We went fishing. We camped.

DM:

Outdoor.

CM:

It was that kind of thing and I remember hating the P.E. classes. Basketball, I liked because I was good at it, but by the time we got to Fort Worth, they didn't have girls' basketball. I mean, they had some, played some in the gym in a later time, but that was—but they had competitive stuff and so I was—that teacher was training us for high school. But that was back when girls could not play full court. But softball stuff, I don't know whether it was my vision that had anything to do with it, or getting chosen for a team in a P.E. class, but I got as far outfield. There was a big P.E. class, then I could be the out, out, out field and I could go sit on the far outs and I'd read my book, and not have to worry about a ball ever coming. [DM laughs] As far as I know, I have never actually hit a ball with a bat. So the archery team was not that many girls and the teacher—teacher pet sort of thing—and we'd get out of study hall to go practice.

DM:

Well, you were really good at this obviously. You taught Scouts and groups later. I guess it was later.

CM:

When my kids.

DM:

Oh, is that right? So you continued. Your interest continued. You still have your bows.

CM:

Well, and this laminated bow was one that my son used.

DM:

Oh really?

CM:

His badges in Scouts.

DM:

So laminates are recurved. And then you have that tall, that long, wooden bow.

CM:

Yeah. That's the one that I used. I'm going to take my shoes off. Got a little bit of a rock in my feet. It's easier to walk barefoot.

DM:

Okay. I'm going to follow you with this recorder. Really, an amazing bow. I need to get a picture of it. You want me to reach back there? I didn't even see that string.

CM:

Yeah. Fish and wire on there so we could hang this up. That's the one I used in high school. That held my sight. That's where the arrow was supposed to place.

DM:

So you used your finger as the rest. Golly.

CM:

And remember to get my elbow out there.

DM:

Beautiful bow. Can I hold it?

CM:

Yeah. I'm afraid to put a string on it because—

DM:

Might break.

CM:

Uh-huh.

DM:

You know, it can get so dry out in this country. I'd be worried about that too. That's a really long bow. It's a good, what? Five feet, probably or a little over five feet.

CM:

Yeah. My arrows were twenty-seven inches long.

DM:

And you continued—you want me to try to reach back there and do it?

CM:

No, that's okay. You want to look at the other one?

DM:

Oh, I can see it okay.

CM:

This is junk. I need to get rid of this. Anyhow, I need another TV for people to watch. I haven't even watched mine. I've got a big television on the wall on the other side.

DM:

Yeah, I just wouldn't. You read a lot, so.

CM:

Well I actually completely quit watching a year ago, this past November, because I was getting angry at something I could do nothing about. Listening to all the rhetoric.

DM:

You know what? Same here. Same here. I just don't need it. When my wife was alive, she would read the news. She kept up on the news real well so I would, like you were talking about, I would get the recap from her in a nice manner and that was a lot easier to digest. I can hang this up if you like.

CM:

Oh, if you can.

DM:

I think I can reach back there. It was turned this way, wasn't it? Is there a particular way?

CM:

I don't know. It's just a matter of getting it up there.

DM:

I think I can—I think I can maybe get back there. I'm just almost there. Got it. Glad you still have that. So what kind of groups? You talked about you taught Boy Scouts how to—archery? You taught them archery?

CM:

Yeah. Well I had—at one time or another, I had three Scout troops that I was involved with.

DM:

Do you remember the numbers by any way? By any chance? The troop numbers?

CM:

It was all in Tarrant County.

DM:

I ask because I know some of those troops so.

CM:

Well, they were all in the mid-cities area. Started out in Hurst and then in Euless.

DM:

Okay.

CM:

And the Boy Scouts were very active in Euless. I had eight Cub Scouts in Hurst and Junior Girl

Scouts and Cadet Girl scouts and then later Brownie. They didn't have daisy scouts in those days. It was one of my ways of keeping up with what the kids were involved in.

DM:

Right, right.

CM:

If they got a bit out of hand later, as they were high school age and what not, raising kids in the sixties and seventies was not easy. As long as they were young, junior high and below was okay, but there's no way to really—my son, Michael, being very small, was not competitive. The others managed to get in music. Well, Michael was in music too, but he played guitar. The fact is, I've got several guitars, banjos, got a harp I found up in the shelves up there in that closet. I can't make music at all. I was able to dance back when I had a dancing body. [DM laughs] But Michael thought he couldn't be in the band because of his asthma. Some friend convinced him of that, and you can't push a kid into doing something like that. You have to make them go to school, but he and Michael—Michael and Lance were both very artistic. Lance, especially. Graphic arts. He played the clarinet, the keyboard, the banjo, guitar. He was playing some with the harmonica and he also did a bunch of artwork. When I first partitioned this place that—that's a picture of my husband standing at the Northeast—Northwest corner, I guess. No, just the Northeast corner, looking down the North end of the lake. He's got a stash there and he's got binoculars he's looking in. We snapped a photograph. So lance painted that.

DM:

He's a good artist.

CM:

And the animal paintings that are on the wall as you go into that other room are things he did when he was little. Well, we tried to find something that each one of them was good at. April was good academics. Coral was very social.

DM:

How many kids in all?

CM:

Four.

DM:

Okay.



CM:

Three of them—remains out here at our little cemetery. Coral isn't, but she's got a marker out there anyway.

DM:

Is Gerald?

CM:

Her husband won't let her ashes come out here.

DM:

Oh, is Gerald out there?

CM:

Um-hm.

DM:

Let's talk about how y'all met.

CM:

It was one of my mother's goof ups. I was going to North Texas and I thought I was going to major in geology. The place to go would've been Oklahoma back then, but North Texas did not have a geology department. By the way, I didn't want to major—I wanted to major in psychology, but daddy said there wasn't any way I could make a living at that, and geology was big so they chose by nature, but that's—they also chose all the clothes I wore before I got away. Whether I wore my glasses or not, I got glasses when I was two years old, which back in those days was unusual so I grew up as a four eyes, which was another thing that made it hard to fit in. But anyhow, okay. I'll come out here and I'll go to school out here, and getting far away from home, you know, that was good, I thought at the time. So when school started, we came out here to register and mother decided I was going to also join a sorority because it was a big school and I should fit in. Well, you don't just come out and decide to join a sorority. She didn't know that. You have to register with a panel and association ahead of time and you come out during rush. Well they were having rush and there was no place for me to stay in the dormitory. I couldn't stay where all the girls going through rush were and it was a dilemma because they didn't want to turn around and come back, bring me back in a week. So daddy went and talked to somebody and they gave me a room in one of the dormitories. There was just two girls' dormitories at Tech at that time.

DM:

Horn and Knapp?

CM:

Yeah. It was Knapp, I think. And some of the sorority girls, I mean rush girls, were staying there and because I wasn't in rush, I didn't have to do some of the things that they had to do, and there was something called an open rush later and I was going to be able to participate in that, but at this time, there wasn't. I was able to eat in the cafeteria and what not, and run around with some of these girls. They couldn't talk to any men or boys at the time. That was one of their restrictions, but I could. So that's how I met Gerry [?] [01:19:32]. He was living—he was just out of the service in Korea.

DM:

Was he overseas?

CM:

No. He said he missed going overseas two or three times because he was in the military. I mean, in the medical corps part.

DM:

Right. Okay.

CM:

He didn't have—I forget ordinary words.

DM:

I do too sometimes.

CM:

He wasn't an officer. He got to be a private first class, but his commander wanted him to stay. He found him very useful and doing the psyche stuff. He was where they were bringing back what they call PTSD [**Post-Traumatic Stress disorder**] now. He could tell some tales about those that came back.

DM:

Really?

CM:

He was stationed at Long Polk in California during the Korean War.

DM:

Okay. Did he grow up out here?

CM:  
Yeah.

DM:  
Okay.

CM:  
He—

DM:  
Oh. We need to get his family background a little bit, in fact.

CM:  
Yeah. Well we can show some of them, a bunch of them, at the plot in the cemetery out there so we can really get dates for that. One of my granddaughters went and took rubbings on it at one point in time, but his mother is not buried there because she just died in recent years and she was living in New Mexico with my sister-in-law at the time, but they were divorced, which was not good in those—when Gerry was growing up. But yeah, he was. He was born in his grandparent's home. There's a little museum here and my friend, Dana, was working in it at the time. I told you about it. It's just open just on Fridays and Saturdays from ten to two.

DM:  
Are you talking about in Wilson?

CM:  
In Tahoka.

DM:  
In Tahoka. Yeah, that's right.

CM:  
When she was working in there, I would go poking around with her on the days that it wasn't open, and I don't know what happened to it. I wish I could find it again, but she's not associated with it. I don't know who is, but found a doctor's will where he was keeping track of what he was charging for who and what, and May Ranch, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1930, delivered.

DM:  
Really? Gerald?

CM:

Yeah. He didn't—his name wasn't there, but—

DM:

Baby May?

CM:

Yeah. Baby boy. I don't know. They charged him something like five dollars or nine dollars or something. There wasn't a copier here up at the museum or I would've copied that page. Just a bunch of journals and stuff that were stuck back in a cabinet.

DM:

You don't have a copy of it? Well, go over there and take a picture of it sometime.

CM:

Well, if they have it available. I don't know. I haven't been back in that museum in several years.

DM:

Who's running it? Do you know?

CM:

I think—I'm not sure. I can find out. Have you ever looked at the book called *Grassroots Upside Down*, about Lynn County?

DM:

If I have, I don't remember it. I'm surrounded by those things, you know, at work and so we look at that kind of thing all the time, but it just doesn't.

CM:

Yeah. It was written by a journalist that owned the Lynn County News at the time and he interviewed a bunch of people that had been living in the 1880's and '90's, while they were—and did a bunch of correspondence, and Dana found a lot of the correspondence. She found and old file cabinet.

DM:

Tell me the name again of the book.

CM:

*Grassroots Upside Down*. I can show you.

DM:

*Grassroots Upside Down.*

CM:

I think I know where my copy is. Sneak around so the dogs don't hear.

DM:

Yeah. [Pause in Recording] Turn it back on here.

CM:

I think I got copies of those.

DM:

Do you know the name of that museum in Tahoka? [Papers crinkle]

CM:

Tahoka Museum.

DM:

Okay. I wouldn't mind—if you'd be interested in this, sometime, running over there with you and taking a look at that and saying, "Pull that out, and we'll get a picture of it."

CM:

Oh, I guess we got—The Tahoka Daisy was discovered out here and somewhere, I've got where I wrote the—dug out everything I knew, both botanically and historically on the Tahoka Daisy.

DM:

On the Tahoka Daisy.

CM:

Did you see that patch of them when you came in right near that sign? Or do you even know what—

DM:

No, I was just kind of blowing because I was trying to get here on time, but they are all over my place. They are just so beautiful. So it was discovered out here or described? First described out here?

CM:

Um-hm.

DM:  
Golly.

CM:  
A friend, Mrs. Jack Ally, was here and visiting. That's from one of my tours out here.

DM:  
Do you know about what year that was that they described the Tahoka Daisy? It's all in this book, though.

CM:  
It may be.

DM:  
Okay.

CM:  
He's writing about the word Tahoka, there. This a picture of the diorama thing. Fairly large with a mural behind it.

DM:  
Yeah, nice.

CM:  
At the museum.

DM:  
This is at the museum. Okay.

CM:  
[Inaudible] We had a big celebration here.

DM:  
I like that. This mural. It's nice. It's been a while—oh, wait. When's the last time you were over at the museum?

CM:  
Not recently. Anyhow, let's—take any information off of it you want to.



DM:

Well, I just wrote it down. I know we have to have it, so I'll look at it at work. Yeah. I'll look through the information on the Tahoka Daisy. I was going to ask you about that.

CM:

Anyhow, Mrs—Jack Ally was living out here, he and his wife, and then this was a friend from off somewhere, came to visit. She was impressed with it. And I think I got a bunch of that information out of that book. Those would be the pages on that yellow sheet on the Tahoka Daisy. I think if I was researching something like that through there.

DM:

Page numbers. Yeah. 213.

CM:

Anyhow, evidently—

DM:

Jack Ally. This is Jack Ally, 1898. Noticed a little wallflower, lavender blue with a yellow center. You can't miss it, I'm telling you. Okay.

CM:

Anyhow, I paraphrased that and then went and got botanical information and used it as a handout here for a while. But anyhow, this guy wrote this book and interviewed these people and there's a bunch of stuff that we found that's not in the book and his daughter finished it, and I think you can buy copies, I think, from the news office. Lynn County News Office.

DM:

Okay. I was in contact with one of those twin sisters that run that newspaper, right?

CM:

Yes.

DM:

Mrs. Elliot? Kent Elliot's wife? Do you know them? I was talking to them not long ago because Kent Elliot's father was a World War II captain. I was getting some history. Come to find out, Mrs. Elliot, I think, is one of those twins.

CM:

It's—I'm blocking. I think they gave me those big pictures in there. They came out when this building—before we actually moved in and brought their mother out, so she could see it because

she'd been through the first tour we had out here, and wanted to see what was going on and they came in and visited. Its Juanelle and Vandalle [?] [01:30:48].

DM:

Oh, okay. Yeah.

CM:

And one of the twins said, "Oh we've got something out in the car," and I thought, well they're bringing me some of my bills because I had them do my printing. No, they brought me those photographs they had taken with a cellphone, and it's when the lake was dry. Anyhow, I thought that was just really nice of them. I really enjoy living in a rural area.

DM:

You bet. You bet. What can you tell me about the May's? How they got started out here and then just right up to Gerald? You were telling me about it before because you got their saddles right back behind. Can you give me the names?

CM:

Well Miss May—Kate, Katherine, I think her name was, but she always went by Kate—lived in Comanche County.

DM:

Okay. Down closer to Fort Worth.

CM:

Yes, and old Mr. May, Walter Hedrick, he was just W.H. He was one of several brothers in a Mississippi town. I'm not sure which one, but he was the youngest and evidently, the father had died and the mother was not well, and so he—the other brothers had married, had families, and so he hadn't, so he had to stay there until his mother died. He worked at a gin during cotton ginning season and the same business, apparently, was a lumber mill during the rest of the year and he worked there until he could save up enough money to go west. He had a horse and he headed west. Hamilton County. Did I say that? Comanche or Hamilton was the town.

DM:

Hamilton, okay.

CM:

Yeah. He had not finished school. He'd been to the third grade, and so when he got there, he decided to go to school. Of course, he was older than any of the rest of the kids, but he met Miss May there and she was—he met her at a spelling bee. Apparently, she was the catch of the

county at the time, and they packed up in a covered wagon and she drove the wagon and she had—well her grandfather had been scout—killed by the Comanche's. That's what it details. But anyhow, they came—first, I think they came around the Plainview area and then came down to Lubbock, and eventually here. He kept trading farms. He kept trading up. Or ranches.

DM:

About what year are we talking here? That they were coming out here?

CM:

I think around 1898 through 19—he was born in 1903, also. Gerry's dad, as well as my dad. Born then. But the two sisters were older.

DM:

I see.

CM:

Edwin was born, I think, in Lubbock County. But they came down here and bought, you know, ranches. The house is still there. I had a hard time finding it.

DM:

How far from right here?

CM:

About six miles straight East.

DM:

Straight East. Okay. So they weren't on Tahoka Lake?

CM:

No. Not at that time.

DM:

By the way, do you know the name of the grandfather that was scout? Okay. What was Miss May's maiden name?

CM:

[Inaudible] Brown.

DM:

Brown? I might have some information for you on that, but we'll get back to that in a little bit. Do you know her first name?

CM:

Kate. I think she even had Kate. They put Kate on the—

DM:

Kate Brown was her—

CM:

Uh-huh, and her—she had a sister that they brought out later. Aunt Mel. Aunt Mel's house is still there. You pass it every time you come here, but I guess Mel had had another one named Bell and I know Aunt Bell lived down in Abilene, but Aunt Mel lived here.

DM:

Okay. Tell me again. Kate—he met Kate at Comanche County or Hamilton County?

CM:

I guess Hamilton. Anyhow, at school-- he went back to school and went through the eighth grade in a couple of years. Anyhow, they came and her—she packed her China and whatnot in cottonseed. Didn't have any idea whether cotton would grow out here or not, and the family lore is—it may not be true—the family lore is she just decided to take some of those cotton seeds and plant them and see if they grow here. And supposedly, that's how the cotton—according to the May family—that's how the cotton industry started.

DM:

Golly. That's a great story.

CM:

Yeah, whether it's true or not. Well, it is true that she packed her—

DM:

Yeah, yeah. And that makes sense.

CM:

And he rode on horseback and she rode whatever was—I guess, a horse probably—was pulling the wagon. And they lived in a half dugout and then built the house nineteen—I know the barn went in first, and she tells tales about she wanted a window in this half dugout.

DM:

Wanted a what?

CM:

A window.

DM:

A window in the half dugout. Okay.

CM:

Yeah. And Mr. May didn't give her a window. He was busy or whatever his reasons were. She always called him Boss, and everybody laughs about that because everybody knew that he was not the boss. He said that she tried to interfere with his business and he was evidently, a good businessman. But one time, when he went—it was to carry cows to market or something, she just proceeded to cut a window in the house.

DM:

Now, where? This, you said six miles East of here. Is there—what's it near now? Would that be—that's not as far as Slaton. That'd be South of Slaton?

CM:

Oh, no. it's still in Lynn County and not too—

DM:

Not too far from Wilson?

CM:

Yeah, it's not too far from Wilson. He went to Wilson. Well, my husband went to Wilson School. There wasn't a school in Wilson at the time that his aunts and dad were growing up. They—oh Shorty More knows a bunch of that. I thought she was going to come over and see me today. I'll get her over here during sometime. She's probably forgotten.

DM:

I'd like to meet her and interview her.

CM:

She talks about she and her brother coming down—they weren't supposed to, but they come down and swim in the Tahoka Lake. Oh, she's got all sorts of tales. She's got kinfolk that killed in gun fights.

DM:

Oh, wow.

CM:

And she can tell those tales.

DM:

Walter and Kate May lived east of here? Maybe South of Wilson, a little bit, in a dugout and then built a house there?

CM:

And built the barn. The barn and the house are still there, and the house that was here.

DM:

They then moved here. Then they moved here.

CM:

No, they never lived here. Since the Ally's lived here, there's nobody lived here until we were. Until we came. But when Mr. May bought this place and I think it was in the late twenties, early thirties, and if that ever becomes important, I know people who have showed me how to get into the court—the stuff at the courthouse, but well, you can't even get in the courthouse right now. They've got it fenced off. It took a while to get local, historical divisions. We were proud of that. They had part of that hundred year celebration out here at the earl [?] [01:41:54] for the courthouse. But anyhow, they ranched and then later farmed and they tell me at one point in time, he owned more land in Lynn County than anybody else owned at that time.

DM:

Wow. He did okay, didn't he?

CM:

Yeah, but he also lost some. Evidently, he had a big thirty section ranch over in the Brownfield area, out in Lynn County.

DM:

Really? This is Walter May we're talking about?

CM:

Um-hm.



DM:

Thirty sections?

CM:

Yeah, but he lost it because they made deals on handshake.

DM:

Yeah, yeah.

CM:

And my husband's dad's first wife—this is back when nobody married more than once, but he was the daughter of the person that he had bought the land from, and so he sent—Walter sent Edwin over to manage the ranch.

DM:

Edwin's the—

CM:

The son.

DM:

Son. Okay.

CM:

Uh-huh. Who is my husband's father.

DM:

Father. It's Edwin? Just Edwin May?

CM:

It's Walter Edwin May.

DM:

Walter Edwin May. Okay. He sent him over to manage the ranch?

CM:

Uh-huh.

DM:

Okay.

CM:

And evidently, there was some sort of contention between Edwin and his wife that he married. My husband and those kids and everything, nobody knew anything about this history, were not aware at all that they had a half-sister somewhere. I don't know what became contentious, but the people that—the man that owned the place before sued and got it back and that was a big blow to him, but he used to tell Gerry he was a trader. He had to—if nothing else, he'd have to trade his pocket knife one day if he didn't have some other trading to do.

DM:

What were they using that land for? Were they ranching or farming?

CM:

They were ranching to begin with and then later on, they were farming.

DM:

Was it—I mean, with Walter, it's easy to get confused here, but it's Walter Hedrick and then Walter Edwin?

CM:

Yeah. Well Walter Hedrick went by W.H.

DM:

Okay. So W.H., he was ranching at first.

CM:

Uh-huh.

DM:

But they started doing a little farming and that must've included cotton because they brought cottonseed out.

CM:

Yeah. Well, they had—of course, they had gardens.

DM:

Yeah. I wonder if they grew crops—grain crops for their cattle too.

CM:

I don't—Gerry could've told you all that, but he decided to die.

DM:

So anyway, yeah. Those are large spreads of land, more like a ranch than a farm.

CM:

Yeah. Well, and he ended up or I mean, not ended up—later years, gave each one of his kids a section, and then they kept the section or whatever around the house there.

DM:

Out east”

CM:

Uh-huh.

DM:

Yeah. Well, he still had a lot of land then.

CM:

Oh, he did.

DM:

He might’ve lost a lot, but he sure still had a lot. Now, what about—now, Walter Edwin—he went by Edwin?

CM:

Uh-huh.

DM:

Edwin.

CM:

Or Red. Mostly, he went by Red.

DM:

Red? He was born out there on the place then, East of here.

CM:

No. I think he was born in Lubbock County.

DM:

Oh, in Lubbock County. Okay.

CM:

My husband, Gerald, was born on the place in the suburbs with Bernie's [?] [01:46:59] sister.

DM:

Was born where?

CM:

In the grandparent's house.

DM:

Yeah. Okay. Out east of here. But Edwin was born in Lubbock County in 1903? Okay. Walter was born down here in 1930? I mean, Gerald. Gerald was born.

CM:

Gerald.

DM:

Okay. Was he Walter Gerald?

CM:

No. Marvin.

DM:

What happened to the Walter?

CM:

I don't know. I think—let's see. I don't know whether Pinkie, his brother—his older brother is Lawrence. I don't know whether he's a Walter or not.

DM:

Okay. Was it Marvin Gerald or Gerald Marvin?

CM:

Marvin Gerald, and in the service, he was always Marvin. Always.

DM:

Okay. He was born out here and then went to Tech from out here. He grew up over here.

CM:

Well, he went to Hardin-Simmons.

DM:

That's right. That's right. You had mentioned that. I want you to talk a little bit about that.

CM:

Because that's when they organized the collegiate—intercollegiate rodeo.

DM:

Okay. He was in the rodeo. You have his chaps hanging over there.

CM:

Yes, I do. And if you know of anybody that could preserve those. I'd mentioned it to Eileen [?] and she told me, well their fabrics person was—at that time—was leaving or something and I never have gotten. She and I used to have lunch every once and a while. Just meet in Lubbock for lunch, but we both got busy in different directions.

DM:

Okay. Are they in need of any kind of repair or anything like that?

CM:

Yeah. A little bit of repair because my grandson tried it on and he's probably twice the size Gerry was, and so they tore a little bit in the front.

DM:

Yeah. I don't even know if you'd want to repair that then. I'm just talking about if there was—well you know, like if there's mold on them or anything like that, well they'd need to be treated or do they just need to be kept in a cool, dark place in a box.

CM:

Yeah. Just how to do it, and I also have his little saddle thing that they use bareback.

DM:

Oh that's right. His bareback saddle.

CM:

Bareback rigging.

DM:

Yeah, his bareback rig, you sure do. It's hanging over there too. I'll see what I can find out about that. Southwest Collection takes care of some artifact items like that, but that's—we're mostly manuscripts and photographs, but I can check around and see.

CM:

Well, the museum should have. If I had a full faculty out here to mop, and sweep, and my hair. And what I think more than anything else, besides money of course, is a volunteer, volunteer coordinator.

DM:

Well, there's plenty to do out here. The historical, anthropological, geological, biological nature. For sure.

CM:

This building itself is a great disappointment to me.

DM:

Oh, it is?

CM:

It is.

DM:

This building? It looks great.

CM:

It's not what I designed at the time I had the money, and things were not done quickly enough, and IRS came and took seventy thousand dollars away from me.

DM:

Oh my goodness.

CM:

And it's sitting where it is sitting right now because I still have the spot over there. It had a—I had planned a real residence for a manager because, I think, at some point, somebody should be here being a hired manager, and so it was a three bedroom, two bath sort of apartment on it, and then large meeting rooms where you could have thirty people. And then had big attached garage area with—or shop area—with a dust roof that you could put the tractor there and pull it. That kind of thing. And then the second story area, which at that time, I had planned on finishing out. The front part would've been a library with windows that you could see out to the lake area.

DM:

Nice. Wow.



CM:

Then the rest of it was places where students could sleep. You have a bunk where you could preserve botanical things. They would have places to put stuff and some of the bathing done in the—I had a place where—you know how muddy they can get? Dirty they can get? So they can go in and clean up. There was showers and bathrooms where they wouldn't have to come into the building if they didn't want to.

DM:

Right. So that was the original plan.

CM:

Yeah, I've still got them.

DM:

Wow. That's quite a complex.

CM:

If money came from outer space right now—

DM:

Right. That's what you would do.

CM:

And without the IRS having anything to do with it, I'd turn this into an administrative building and have the one I want.

DM:

Yeah, right. Well how did y'all get to Tahoka Lake? This is not—is this something that came about after you and Gerry were married or did his family?

CM:

No. Old Mr. May bought this. He bought seven and a half sections.

DM:

Okay. Now, Mr. May. By Mr. May, you're talking about?

CM:

W—old W.H. May.

DM:

W.H. May bought this?

CM:

Uh-huh.

DM:

Okay. Okay.

CM:

And he ran a cattle out here.

DM:

Yeah, I just didn't know how that came about.

CM:

He raised registered cows.

DM:

Oh. He's got Herf. [Hereford cows]

CM:

That's fourth anxieties that I don't know about cattle. I'm going to take another pause.

DM:

Sure, sure. [Pause in Recording] Well so it was H.W.—W.H., excuse me. W.H. May, who bought this land around Tahoka Lake. All the way around?

CM:

Except for the South end. I don't know what—he had some sort of disagreement with the people that owned the South end at the time and I don't know what—he wanted to buy it. When the guy was ready to sell it, he made sure he sold it to somebody else.

DM:

Oh. Do you know the name of the guy that owned the South end?

CM:

The one that—there's I think a family trust or something owns it now.

DM:

Okay. But not—you're not—would it be the same family that owned it back then?

CM:

I think it's not.

DM:

Now, how about the Ally's? The Ally's were out here?

CM:

Uh-huh.

DM:

Did he buy from the Ally's? Did Mr. May?

CM:

No. I think somebody else bought it before that.

DM:

And then he bought it from them?

CM:

Uh-huh.

DM:

I see. But the Ally's were the first ones out here?

CM:

Yeah. Well actually, Christopher Columbus Slaughter owned it, and the Ally's were proving it up or whatever term they used. Old Mr. May, W.H., I call him Mr. May, took that house out of here, moved it over near his home because to save it from vandalism. Parts of it had burned at one time and half of it was still over there. I took some people from the museum over to see it. We were afraid to go—the outside stairs still on it—we were kind of afraid to walk up it because it's not been used and even in the house, I don't know. Family was so contentious. We were going to fix up the house if they would let us for my son to come live out here at one point in time because he lived out here from '92 to '97, is when we—that's why there's a crew car here. That's his house. But they wouldn't let us fix up the old ranch house. It's just sitting there. Vandals come in, but mostly, little four legged vandals of different kinds.

DM:

Yeah, yeah. Now, where is the ranch house?

CM:

It's East of here.

DM:

East of here?

CM:

Uh-huh. The barn's still there.

DM:

This is the place that's six miles East?

CM:

Uh-huh.

DM:

Okay. Whose house did he move from here? The people who previously owned the land or the Ally's?

CM:

The Ally's.

DM:

The Ally's? Really? Is some of that still standing?

CM:

The windmill house is still standing right over here. You want to put on shoes and walk over there or drive down there by the trailer house?

DM:

Sure.

CM:

I was going to incorporate it into—at one point, I had the car park put in and I was going to turn it into kind of a picnic area, shaded area, for people right next to the old windmill house. It was still standing when I was first coming out here. I've got some snapshots of it still standing. I

remember taking my grandkids and showing them through the window and the trough of the back where you put the eggs and the milk. The windmill blades all the way to the ground there.

DM:

Okay. I'd like to see that and I'd like to see the cemetery, too. Are some of Jerry's—

CM:

It's only my family.

DM:

It's only your family that's there?

CM:

Uh-huh.

DM:

Okay. Where are Jerry's father and mother and all?

CM:

Green Cemetery in Wilson.

DM:

Oh. Right up here on the road.

CM:

Uh-huh. And we can go in there anytime and I know where the plot is.

DM:

Okay. So that's how it came into the family and then they ranched this country?

CM:

Uh-huh.

DM:

It was all ranch?

CM:

Yeah. Did you see?

DM:

Here' Herefords. Got a big Hereford bull there it looks like.

CM:

That's the one. I think that's a weird name. Fourth Anxiety—something for a bull, but anyhow, I think it was in the fifties. When the drought hit in the fifties, they sold off the registered herd and then since then, he's been leasing it like I'm doing now. But not anybody was watching after it and it was over grazed and in '80, the family decided to partition that, and the farmland that had been inherited from the main estate.

DM:

Okay. Did it go through a phase from Hereford to mixed breeds, like mixed with Angus or some exotic breeds?

CM:

I don't think of any exotic breeds.

DM:

I know you have longhorns out here now.

CM:

Well, the longhorns are recent. They were kept up there close to Tahoka. Ronnie Robertson or someone that owns—what do you call this little grass patch up there? There's no longhorn bull out here. There's an old steer and some of these—or the last two years are crossbreed, so there's just a few old mama's left in the longhorns. He's got a grass lease. He's also got the other cows that are out here. White faced black cows. My son was raising Angus out here before we let the grass lease and he had bought those from his uncle out in New Mexico.

DM:

Well, I can just see it at one time, though, with Hereford roaming everywhere. And is the water, is it too salty or can the cattle drink it?

CM:

The water's too salty in the lake.

DM:

But the spring.



CM:

But the springs. When you want to take a break or something, we can get in the car and tour some of this. I need to put shoes on.

DM:

Well, why don't we do that if you're ready to, and then when we come back I need to get back to the—if you want to do some more recording today, I need to get back to how you and Jerry met and you know, take it on from there a little bit. But you want to go ahead and pause it?

CM:

Yeah.

*[end of recording]*



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