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Interview no. 27

Chester Chope

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Chester Chope
INTERVIEWER: Wilma Cleveland
PROJECT: El Paso History
DATE OF INTERVIEW: July 27, 1968
TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted

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BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Former reporter and city editor of the El Paso Times, 1917-1925; former reporter managing editor and associate editor of the El Paso Post and El Paso Herald-Post, 1925-1962.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Early 20th Century El Paso and Ciudad Juárez; size and atmosphere of the two cities; personalities of members of the newspaper staff; political corruption; social life; Chinese population; Ciudad Juárez during Prohibition; Fort Bliss; Pancho Villa; improvements in transportation.

Mr. Chester Chope
Interviewed by Wilma Cleveland
July 27, 1968

WC: Mr. Chope, you were telling me about the second time you came to El Paso. Will you tell me some about this?

CC: I came to El Paso to work in 1917. I went to work for the El Paso Times the day I got here. At that, El Paso was a city of about 75,000 people. In addition to that, there were numerous troops that had been brought here to the border following the Columbus Raid in which Villa attacked Columbus and killed several people. Perhaps I shouldn't tell you about the raid because it was covered thoroughly in the newspaper. What I could tell you would be hear-say mostly. I was acquainted with the men who were in Columbus at that time and I knew some of the soldiers who were sent to Columbus after the raid.

WC: What was your first job with the Times?

CC: My first job was as a police reporter. At that time, the police station and the central fire station were in one building at the corner of Overland and Stanton. It was a two-story building. The second floor was devoted to the police court. At that time, a very colorful character was Police Judge C.P. Pollock. He was a retired railroad man and he is now dead. The clerk of the court was Alex H. Gonzáles. Later in life, he became well known as a County Commissioner in Ysleta. He built the first bridge between Ysleta and Zaragoza on the Río Grande. Mr. Pollock was a wise-cracker and as a result the Times assigned a reporter to cover his court everyday, and to write a column of "Pollockisms". He was a roly-poly man and he smiled constantly. He was pleasant to talk to and he was kind to the prisoners.

In those days, El Paso was a wide open town. The prisoners were primarily dope addicts, drunks, etc. Marijuana was common in those days and narcotics addicts came to El Paso because it was easy to get drugs. The drugs were manufactured across the border. There were frequent fights and killings; every Saturday night we expected to have a shooting before the first edition.

One of the most colorful members of the police force was J.D. Veater, who later became police chief. He was a big man, tall and heavyset. He patrolled south El Paso. That was known as Chihuahuita. It was below First Street and extended to the river to a point where the Peyton Packing Plant is now. This was the Second Ward. It was dangerous for people who didn't live there to go down there at night. So, he was the only one who patrolled that area. He rode a huge Percheron horse. He carried a rifle that was in a scabbard on his saddle; he wore a belt of cartridges around his middle. He carried two pistols in holsters /and/ also carried a long chain to which was attached leg irons used to bring in prisoners, plus he carried two sets of handcuffs. El Paso, as I said, was wide open. There were several saloons on San Antonio and there was gambling behind closed doors. It was a known fact and no one made an attempt to shut it down.

In the fire station, the old steam engine that had been used in earlier days was still on stand-by service. I saw it pulled out one time, and after that it was retired. Horses were used when I came here to pull some of the equipment. Soon after that, they were replaced with motorized trucks. When I came here, many of the old timers were still alive. Among them was Llewellyn H. Davis; he was mining editor of the Times. He came

here in 1881 soon after the first train. He and Mr. Pollard established the first drugstore here. He told me it was on the north side of San Antonio Street between El Paso Street and the alley. He was a tall, slender man. He wore a moustache and he was a pleasant man to talk to. He was a graduate of the University of Michigan and wore a Phi Beta Kappa key.

Most of the troops that had been brought here from the east were National Guardsmen. I recall that on Thanksgiving Day, 1916, when I had been here two months, there was a terrific wind and sand storm. This wind blew down the dining tent at the point where the Technical High School now stands. Sand covered the turkeys and all the other food that had been prepared for the soldiers. They had to eat canned rations for Thanksgiving Day. I recall that one of the pioneer buildings still standing when I got here was a one story adobe at the corner where the Knox Hotel now stands. It housed a saloon which in pioneer days was very popular and was still popular among the oldtimers. The Knox Hotel is at 216 San Francisco Street. On the corner of San Francisco and Santa Fe was a building that was in the old days used as the Overland Stage building.

The Times occupied a building on South Oregon Street, which is now used by the Labor Advocate. Members of the staff joked about us publishing the largest paper in Chinatown. Chinatown began immediately south of the Times building. There were about three hundred Chinese in El Paso and their stores and rooming houses occupied either side of Oregon Street for a distance of two blocks. There was a Chinese temple two doors south of what is now Paisano. Chinatown no longer exists as such. The Chinese

came to El Paso as railroad workers originally. Some came across the river illegally and were never discovered or reported. The Chinese people as a whole were law abiding and gave no trouble to anyone. One incident in which a Chinese was involved where the police were called in, was when this Chinese man hanged himself with a belt from a bed post in a house on South Mesa that was at one time an elegant house of prostitution. The reason for this hanging has never been discovered. For many years, the man who was mayor of Chinatown or who spoke for his people was Mar Ben. He still has relatives here. He worked principally as a cook in a restaurant on South El Paso Street.

There was also a large military camp in Deming and the Times published an edition especially for Deming. When I came here, the Times had a staff that included J.D. Ponder, who had been part-time owner and editor of the Times. He was the father of Dan Ponder, who later became mayor of El Paso. Another was Forbes Parkhill, who later became a nationally known fiction writer. An interesting sideline about the Times was the rats who lived in the sewers in the alley behind the Times. They were so bold that at night they would come up to the second floor and use their tails to dig paste from the paste jars. Another member of the Times staff was Peggy Hull, a pretty young lady who came to El Paso with her mother to work for the Times and later developed a shopping column for the Times. She was sent to France; she was probably the first woman foreign correspondent with the troops. She later married Harvey Duell, who was managing editor of the New York News. He was rated as being the highest paid managing editor of a newspaper and was later killed on an expressway in New York. After

that, Peggy became a free-lance writer, and the last time I heard about her she was in China writing dispatches and stories for Newspaper Enterprises Association. The city editor was Claude Brown, an exceptional young man who joined the Army shortly after I arrived. Following his discharge, he went to Little Rock, Arkansas where he married an oil heiress who had large interests in the Eldorado Oil field.

The editor of the Times was James Black, who was the most able man who had ever served as an editor in El Paso. He was a quiet, easy-going gentleman. He never raised his voice to a member of his staff but he was fearless in the operation of the paper. I recall that one time, Texas Rangers were sent here to enforce the Prohibition law. Three of them stopped Attorney Cleveland W. Croom and his wife and another couple as they were coming from his home over by the Lakeside Shopping Center. Croom said that his wife and other members of the party were roughed up by the Rangers. Black immediately wrote an editorial demanded that the Rangers be removed from El Paso. Reports came to the Times that the Rangers were unhappy about this report and intended to visit Black. The police, to protect Mr. Black, stationed two men in the Times Building. They occupied the room that during that day was used as the Women's Department. They were armed with shotguns. This room looked out into the large editorial room. One evening, these three tall men with guns on their hips came into the editorial room and asked for Mr. Black. I was city editor at that time and I told them that Mr. Black was out to dinner. I asked them if they were Rangers and they just said that they wanted to see Mr. Black. But they never returned. There was no shooting because they turned and walked

out of the building and never came back.

Black opposed the organization of the Ku Klux Klan in 1921. He took a fearless stand. I recall interviewing C.L. Ferman, the organizer, who came here to direct establishment of the Klan. I talked to him in the lobby of the old Sheldon Hotel. Another time I was sent to write down the names of the men who entered the Odd Fellows Lodge building, where a Klan meeting was being held. I also checked the car license to gain a list of the members of the Klan. Because of his fearless stand in denouncing the Klan, many threats were made on Black's life. A few evenings after some threats were made, Mr. Black went home in a police prowl car. But a few weeks later, he started going home with me about 11:00 or 11:30 in the evening on the streetcar. He lived on North Florence a block from where I lived.

In those days, El Paso was a haven for lungers, as tuberculosis patients were called. There were three large sanitarium devoted expressly to the treatment of tuberculosis. One was Hendricks, one was Homan and the other was Rolston.

You asked me what happened to Mr. Black. When the Times was purchased by Hughes D. Slater of the Herald, Mr. Black went to Los Angeles with Eddy Simmons, who was the owner of the Times when it was sold. They went with the purpose of purchasing the Los Angeles News. It was owned by young Vanderbilt. That job fell through and Mr. Black took over a job as a financial writer for a brokerage house. He was in semi-retirement while he also worked as a trouble-shooter for the Hearst newspapers. One time he was sent to Atlanta to straighten out a deal that Mr. Hearst didn't like. I visited Mr. Black a few times in Los Angeles and he came here also. He

died several years ago and was buried in Los Angeles.

In those days there was a large number of correspondents with northern newspapers and eastern newspapers because of the Mexican Revolution. Many stayed at the Paso del Norte on an expense account. It was referred to as the brewers dream because of its ornate columns and marble tile. The Sheldon Hotel was the center of activity in the downtown area; cattlemen, ranchers, people from México, and people from all over the southwest stayed there. Burt Orndorff was the manager. He later went to Brimingham, Alabama. His brother, Seth, was a county commissioner at one time and a popular sheriff. His mother, Mrs. DeGaulle was interested in politics. She operated the Orndorff Hotel where the Cortez is now. I recall on one occassion she asked me to accompany her and her chauffeur to Fabens where she met Governor Pat Neff, who was coming to El Paso for a visit. He came by train to Fabens and from Fabens he was brought into El Paso by Mrs. DeGaulle. She was an interesting person. She as a widow had operated a hotel in Tucson and brought her boys to El Paso when they established the Orndorff Hotel. She had a brilliant mind and a forceful character. She was of medium height, plump, and quite active. Seth was probably one of El Paso's most highly known men. He said that he was always campaigning for his next office. He was popular with newspapermen because he frequently would call and give us tips. As an active politician, he usually carried a book of Poll Tax receipts so that he could sign up prospective voters.

Machine politics was common in those days. It was generally conceded that buying votes was common practice. In other words, come Poll Tax time, taxes were paid with cash which was given to the voters. I have no absolute

proof of this except one time a reporter brought me \$1.50 and laid it down on my desk and told me that it was for my Poll Tax. I told him to take it back to the person who gave it to him. I recall that the city hall machine controlled a certain amount of votes and on one occasion, reports on the trend of voting was received in a back room of the city water works office. Art Woods, who was superintendent of the water works, was in charge. When I came here, ex-mayor Kelly was still a powerful political figure but his power faded soon after that. Among the colorful characters of the political world was J. Porter Bender, who in his earlier days had been a reporter on the old New York Herald. He came to El Paso for his health, and became interested in politics. He lived in Stormsville, a settlement on the mesa where the Rim Road mansions now stand. Stormsville was a group of adobe houses occupied principally by Mexican-Americans. Bender voted them as a block. In those days, some of the voting precincts in the city and the county held back their returns until the trend of voting was established.

In my time in El Paso, we have been fortunate to have some strong mayors. Some of them were Tom Lea, R.E. Sherman, R.E. Thomason, and J.M. Dudley. Mayor Tom Lea was a prominent attorney, who was widely known as a defense attorney in criminal cases. He was the father of Tom Lea, the artist. Mayor Sherman took office at a time when finances of the city were under deplorable conditions. He's especially known for his ability in putting the city on a better financial foundation. Mr. Sherman was a real estate dealer. Mr. Thomason was an attorney. He came to El Paso for his health and later became a Congressman, then United States District Judge. Mr. Dudley was a contractor who in earlier days constructed part of the Mexican Central Railway.

He was a strong mayor.

Getting back to the lungers, in early days nearly all houses and rooming houses had sleeping porches; that was because lungers were advised to stay in the open as much as possible and sleep in the open. Also there was no air-conditioning in those days in El Paso. El Paso was hot as it is now and the porches were used as bedrooms in the summertime. Houses were constructed in brick in those days. City ordinance required that houses be fire proof on the outside. That was because of the possibility of fire spreading during high winds. After World War I, troops were pulled out of El Paso, and El Paso suffered a severe depression. Population dropped, the real estate became a drug on the market. Houses that sold for \$6,000 or more prior to the depression, which would nowadays sell for \$20,000 or \$30,000, were selling for easily \$4,000 or \$4,500.

In the early 1920's, Myrtle and Magoffin were still good residential areas. Sunset Heights was being developed as an outstanding residential area. Some of the most prominent citizens had homes on Magoffin and Myrtle, including the Coles brothers, and Mayor Charles Davis, City National Bank president; Ulysses S. Stewart was also in that area. The Burges brothers built fine homes there. In Sunset Heights, Mayor Davis built his home; J.F. Williams, the banker, also built his home out there. James L. Marr, a real estate dealer, developed Austin Terrace, which is still a very nice residential area. In that day it was most outstanding in El Paso. He imported exotic shrubs and trees from many parts of the world, to plant in the street dividers. Some of the plants and shrubs died, and in recent years they were cut out when the streets were widened by the city. Cotton was not the

big crop when I came here. There were extensive pear orchards between El Paso and Ysleta. Smith's Orchard, between the Southern Pacific and what is now North Loop road, looked like a forest. The Cadwallader orchard was also huge. Those orchards have been cut off in recent years for residential development. In those days pears were shipped from a packing plant in Ysleta as far off as London, England.

There's been a great change in transportation in El Paso in the last fifty years. The railroads came in 1881. Highway development had not been remarkable in that period. For instance, between Las Cruces in the 1920's there was nothing but a dirt road. Arizona boasted of its fine highways, which were nothing but gravel roads. I recall making a trip in 1920 to Los Angeles that was quite an experience. Between Tucson and Florence, there was no gravel in the dips, which were dry streams. When it rained, the highway department filled the dips with brush. A trip from El Paso to Los Angeles was an adventure in those days. I recall that one trip made by Paul Harvey was considered quite a feat because of its location in the Pass of the North. El Paso saw the coming of the first planes. The first planes were brought to El Paso for the chase of Villa in México. After that came the commercial planes. The first mail planes were open cockpit DeHavilans. One of the DeHavilans flying west from the airfield crashed behind what is now Kern Place. The pilot was uninjured. Later one of the first commercial passenger planes crashed near the same spot. The amusing incident reported in the newspaper about that was of a young man who was using the toilet at time and got caught with his pants down. He was uninjured. In the early days the Army's around-the-world fliers stopped at Fort Bliss. Lindberg landed

at the balloon hanger at Fort Bliss. He was greeted by a large crowd as he stopped here overnight on his return from his trans-atlantic flight. He was taken in a motorcade to the Paso del Norte Hotel. There, he was interviewed by the newspapers. On landing, he referred to him and his plane as 'we'. Lindberg was a young man then--tall, slender, retiring, and handsome. The American and Continental Airlines pioneered through El Paso.

Early day planes looked something like cigars. For instance, the first that flew the mail to México was a Lockheed Vega; the cabin was made of plywood. Among the marvels of air travel, El Paso saw an early day experiment in lighter than air dirigibles when the ill-fated Shenandoah traveled over the city and through the low-altitude pass in the mountains on its maiden western voyage. Wireless telegraph operators of the Army Signal Corps at Fort Bliss kept in touch with the Shenandoah while it was in this region. The big, cigar-shaped silver bag glistened in the early dusk as it headed through the pass into the setting sun. Passengers and crew members asked for major league baseball scores, which they received immediately. Press association reporters sent dispatches describing the beauty of the desert sunset as the ship glided over El Paso. Operators were kept busy copying messages in headquarters at the base of tall wireless towers on the mesa immediately east of the Fort Bliss Officers' Quarters. The Shenandoah later was destroyed in an accident. The first beacon to guide pilots of night-flying planes, especially open cockpit mail planes, in early days of aviation was constructed by the Standard Oil Company. It was on the tip of Mount Franklin above Scenic Drive. It was one of the first beacons in the entire country. Later, the federal government installed a transcontinental

system of beacons.

Most travel through El Paso in the early days was by passenger train. Luxurious trains stopped here for twenty to thirty minutes. Newspaper reporters made regular calls to the train station to interview prominent people. I recall that Colonel Huntington, the railroad magnate, brought art purchases from the east coast to his private gallery in Los Angeles. One of the paintings was gainsborough's "Blueboy". Another time, he brought "Mrs. Siddens", another celebrated painting, through El Paso. In the early days, paved roads did not extend very far beyond El Paso. Highway 80 was only a two-lane road and travel was light. I recall travelling from El Paso to my home in the valley nine miles down at 80 miles an hour. There was no traffic to bother me. Large cottonwood trees on either side of the road formed a canopy between El Paso and Ysleta. One of El Paso's most heavily travelled streets was subject to criticism when it was constructed originally. The Army wanted a second outlet from Fort Bliss east. At that time, Highway 80 was the only road available. County Judge E.B. McClintock pushed through the construction of what was Womble Boulevard. He was severely criticized at that time. It is now Trowbridge Street. Passenger trains have been replaced by fast jet planes, and trucks have replaced a large amount of the freight business that the railroad used to handle.

In the early twenty's one of the gathering places was Roberts Brothers' Café, which was in the basement of the Mills Buildings. It was one of El Paso's best eating places. The food was outstanding and attracted the best clientele. In those days food was comparatively cheap, especially the

Chinese restaurants. The Chinese in Juárez came to México directly from China. They were not the same as the ones who came to El Paso to build the railroad. Some of them eventually got to El Paso as merchants and students. The Chews came from Juárez. Mrs. Herlinda Chew was one of my best friends. She represented Southern Pacific Railroad and Steamship Lines, which sold transportation to Chinese in Juárez who travelled to San Francisco where they took steamships to China to visit their families. Some of them went to China from Juárez to marry and rear a family which they supported by sending money from Juárez back to China. Mrs. Chew and her husband operated a grocery store in Juárez for years; later they were admitted into the United States and they became prominent in El Paso.

In the Roaring Twenties, Juárez was a Mecca for thousands of thirsty Americans. Bars and cafés--they were called cabarets in those days--stood wall to wall on the 16th of September Street. Owners imported bands and orchestras from the United States for the cabarets. People came here, especially on weekends, to make 'whoopee'. Part of the time the bridge closed at 10:00 or at 12:00, depending on the conditions at that time. At one time I was the only newspaper reporter who had a pass to return across the border after 12:00. It was issued by the Assistant Customs Collector, Mr. Warren Carpenter. Customs inspector, Louie Holzman, was in charge of the bridge at night. It was his duty to open the gate for me when I yelled for admission into the United States. On some occasions he was too busy to come down and open the gate, so I had to climb over. I recall that one time I tore the seat of my pants and became very angry. I reported the incident to Mr. Carpenter and then he issued strict orders that there-

after the gate was to be opened for me.

On many occasions, people were trapped in Juárez when the early closing hours were inaugurated. One time when the bridge was to stay open until 12:00 but orders came to close it at 9:00, El Pasoans didn't believe that the bridge would be closed at that hour and remained in Juárez. When they came to the bridge it was closed and they couldn't get over. I usually telephoned my office before returning from the Río Bravo, which was the best hotel in Juárez at that time. On this occasion, the lobby was filled with young women, most of them members of prominent families of El Paso, most of them wailing that they wouldn't get home at the time they had promised their families. They were using the phone and when they saw me using the phone they tried to get me to use my influence to get them through the gate, which I could not do, of course. On such occasions, some El Pasoans slept on tables, especially in the Big Kid Café. The bridge was opened at 1:00 a.m. to permit me and a taxi and John Phillips, another reporter, to cross from Juárez. I covered a train robbery 40 miles south of Juárez that had taken place earlier in the day. Bandits from Juárez held up the Eruption Mining Company payroll train and escaped. They escaped with \$25,000 after they had derailed the train and executed all six men on the train.

Along about noon I was tipped by a friend of mine at the Río Bravo Hotel that the train had been robbed and the men had apparently been killed. The troops train from Juárez left about 4:30 in the afternoon. With permission of the general, I went with the troops. The entire train crew and the paymaster of the Eruption mines had been lined up by an embankment on a curve

and shot in the head. It was not until 1:00 in the morning that we returned to Juárez. On the return trip, I received the worst fright of my entire life. Although I had been under fire at the river prior to that time, I was still frightened. I was sitting on the step of an open passenger car when we approached a small town. Occasionally the train stopped so the soldiers could go ahead to see if anyone was trying to derail it. When we stopped at this particular place, I heard a noise in the high brush at the side of the tracks. I froze for I thought perhaps it was the bandits returning to attack the train. Out of the brush came a burro laden with mesquite brush, logs. They were used there to burn for charcoal. When we arrived in Juárez, John Phillips was there with a taxi to take me to El Paso. The Associated Press held it's wire open for this story. And as I wrote, sentence by sentence, the copy was torn from the typewriter and put on the wires and also sent to the composing room in time for the presses to roll at 2:00 in the morning. The bandits were never captured although the police and military felt sure they knew who the leader was. No one talked and no arrests were made.

A few years later during the Escobar Revolution, Escobar troops had evacuated Juárez and no one was in charge of the police for several hours. The man who was head of the bandits took over as police chief. In other words, the head of the bandits was chief of police for several hours. He was disarmed and jailed temporarily after the government was reorganized in Juárez.

One of the most interesting people in Juárez in the twenties during the period when I was working there, was U.S. Consul John W. Dye. Mr. Dye

was the tweed type. He was slender, quiet, and retiring. He was very courageous. He was the source of several interesting stories that I covered. One occasion he received a note that was brought to him by messenger from a young woman who said she was being held prisoner by a Chinese in an abandoned dance hall on the Street of the Devil, which was the zone of tolerance in Juárez. He asked me to investigate for him. I went to the place and found the woman lying on a mattress filled with straw in the back room of this building that was partially dilapidated. At one time it had been a huge house of prostitution and dance hall. I conferred with Mr. Dye and decided we had better get help. I contacted Mother Mary Warren of the Salvation Army. She had never been to Juárez prior to that time. She accompanied me to that place, and by candlelight as the vesper bells were ringing in the old church in Juárez, she knelt on the ground beside the bed and took this dirty disheveled woman in her arms and prayed. She immediately arranged to take this woman to El Paso.

I called Mr. Dye to get permission from the immigration authorities. The woman told Mr. Dye that her brother was a prominent banker in Ohio. Mr. Dye wired Ohio and established that she was the sister of this man. She had been a drug addict and drifted down and down until she ended up in this abandoned dancehall. She had become indebted to the Chinese for morphine and he had used her as a prostitute to get payment for the drugs. She had reached the point where she was no longer usable as a prostitute and he was simply allowing her to die in this abandoned dancehall. The young woman was later returned to her hometown and Mr. Dye told me that she had been placed in a sanitarium. I would have judged the woman to be 22 to maybe 24.

She was emaciated, her hair was matted and tangled, her clothes were in tatters; she was a terrible sight. She was practically a skeleton. She was so sick that she could hardly move. That is how Mother Warren became a rescue agent for the Salvation Army in Juárez. In years following she became one of the most widely known people in Juárez.

On another occasion, Mr. Dye asked me to see what I could do about exposing a group of confidence men who were fleecing Americans in Juárez. They were operating out of a bar on the 16th of September Street. Their method was to pick up unsuspecting American tourists and tell them how easy it would be to pick up some money in a Chinese gambling house on Ugarte Street, which was known as the Street of the Devil. Eventually the victims would be stripped of all their cash. Mr. Dye suggested that I undertake this project after two of them had tried to pick me up in front of the Customhouse. The police were doing nothing about it. After a series of stories we had run of Americans' experiences and interviews with the officials in Juárez, Mr. Dye went to the mayor and demanded that these men be expelled from México. They were jailed temporarily and finally expelled from Juárez across the Santa Fe Street bridge.

At one time, horse racing was a big legitimate business in Juárez. It was closed during the Revolution. There were three different attempts to reopen the tracks during the twenties. The last time business was so bad that the races were fixed so horse could win the purse to pay their feed bills. In the early twenties, in Juárez, food was very cheap in restaurants. Twenty-five cents would buy a large steak, German or French-fried potatoes, several radishes, several green onions, bread and butter, sometimes a side order of squash or spinach, a cut of pie, and coffee. I

had such a breakfast there the day after Villa was driven from Juárez in 1919. I ate that breakfast at the Annex Café, adjoining the Annex Bar on the 16th of September Street. I looked from the window and a two-wheeled cart full of dead men was being drawn to a church on a hill, from which point the bodies were taken to the cemetery for burial.

During Prohibition days, battles between the gangsters and the border guards were frequent. One time, it was not liquor that was the cause of the fight, but ammunition that was being smuggled to Juárez. Two smugglers attempted to carry two cases of ammunition across the river which was very low, immediately west of the Santa Fe Street bridge. U.S. soldiers, who were on guard at the bridge, saw them and shouted for them to stop. When the soldiers attempted to apprehend the men, they were fired upon by the men from the Juárez side of the river. The smugglers dropped the cases of ammunition and fled to the Juárez side of the river under cover of gunfire from men on the Juárez side of the river. The U.S. soldiers took refuge behind a pile of adobe brick on the river side. Customs agents and immigration men telephoned for police. Captain Bill Simpson of the police force and two other men including Charlie Wood, a patrolman, hurried to the Santa Fe Street bridge. Captain Simpson spoke Spanish fluently; he shouted across the river that he was going out into the river to recover the ammunition. At that time, no one knew what was in the cases. Later it was presumed that the ammunition was destined for the Juárez garrison. When he was fired upon, Captain Simpson retreated hurriedly behind the pile of adobe brick. The soldiers returned the fire and the gunfire across the river lasted several minutes.

The shooting from the south side of the river stopped when the commander of the Juárez garrison sent a detachment of cavalry to the battle scene. The rattle of sabers and other equipment could be heard distinctly as the horsemen moved along the levee like silhouettes in the night. Captain Simpson, who spoke Spanish, yelled to the Mexican soldiers not to shoot--that he was going to walk out on a sandbar to recover the two large boxes that had been dropped by the smugglers. The Mexican troop commander agreed. Under the circumstances, we believed Captain Simpson was taking a big risk. He lugged the heavy cases to the edge of the river, where the U.S. Customs agents took over. Captain Simpson shouted to the Mexican soldiers that the cases were packed tight with rifle ammunition. The Mexican troop commander replied with a courteous 'good night', and the horses clopped slowly away.

That was one river battle in which no blood was shed but other men died in border fights between rum-runners and U.S. officers during Prohibition days. At that time I was working as city editor of the Times. Most of the staff had gone home for the night and I turned my work over to the assistant editor. I called a taxi and told the driver to hurry down to the Santa Fe bridge. Later he told me that he thought I was drunk because I was running into a gunfight. The purpose of this story is to tell an amusing incident. After I got there the firing subsided and I was standing as one side of a brick pile. Suddenly the firing started again from the other side of the river. Everybody ran for cover behind the pile of bricks. There I was, with half of my body exposed on the end of the pile. I shouted to Charlie Wood, who was next to me, to scoot over; too much of me was

sticking out. And years after, the police always reminded me that too much of me was sticking out.

I was city editor of the Times when Villa attacked Juárez the last time on June 5, 1919. John Middaugh, who is head of the Journalism Department at the university, in his book, FRONTIER NEWSPAPER, devotes several paragraphs to the fact that I received a written message from Villa addressed to the Mexican Consulate in El Paso to surrender the town to avoid bloodshed. The message was sent to the Times by Villa by a runner for Mr. Black, the editor. Mr. Black was home for dinner at that time. The first edition had been put to press, put to bed. I was sitting in the window in the editorial room, looking out on Santa Fe Street, when a dusty, tall, light-complexioned young man entered the room and asked for the editor. I told him that I was sitting in for the editor, the editor was out to dinner. He handed me a note and this note was addressed to the Mexican Consulate in El Paso. I got in touch with the Consul, Andreas Garcías, at the Jockey Club in Juárez. I knew he ate there in the evenings. I delivered the message that said that Villa would attack the city that evening if he had received no reply by 11:00 that night. The Mexican Consulate laughed and said that Villa couldn't take Juárez. At 11:00, that night the first shot was fired. Villa did attack Juárez. The battle raged for two days. Finally, several bullets had been fired into El Paso and two people had been killed, so American troops crossed the river and drove Villa's men out of their camp at the Juárez race track. Before they crossed the river, a battery of 75 millimeter artillery was placed along the river front immediately east of the Stanton Street bridge to shell the race track

in order to drive the Villistas out. For several years, evidence of the shelling could be seen on the roof of the grandstands.

One of the interesting stories that came out of México in the early twenties was that of the expulsion of David LaMarr, known as the Wolf of Wall Street. After his indictment in New York, he fled to México where he remained for several months before he was deported by the Mexican government. It was my good fortune to be granted the only interview he gave after he was deported to El Paso. The Wolf of Wall Street, or David LaMarr, had impersonated members of the cabinet to obtain information with which he used to raid the stock market in New York. He was taken by federal agents to the office of A.J.W. Schmid, U.S. Commissioner, where he was arraigned on the warrant that had been sent from New York. He was taken to jail by Deputy Marshal A. H. Woelber. LaMarr talked freely to the commissioner. But he did not answer all the questions that I would have liked to have had for a news story. So as he walked with Woelber to the jail, I walked along side of him on the sidewalk and talked to him. Woelber threatened to arrest me for interfering with a federal prisoner, but I continued to walk beside him. /But/ I wasn't arrested; and as a result, I received a very good interview. It was the only one obtained for a long time. He was later convicted and served time in a federal penitentiary.

A little-known fact is that there is low-grade coal in the mountains back of Juárez. Mr. Davis, better known as Judge Davis to his friends and pioneers, took me to an out-cropping of a vein of lignite in a short canyon high in the Juárez mountains which he said he had owned for many years. Lignite is a soft, brownish-black coal. The Juárez deposit has not been mined commercially, so far as I know.

The first talking motion picture was shown at the Crawford Theater. "The Jazz Singer", starring Al Jolson, was the beginning of modern talkies. It created a local sensation and drew sellout audiences. There is a parking lot today at North Mesa and Main Street where the Crawford Theater stood for many years. Then there was the time when Mary Garden, the opera star, came to town for a concert. Len Schneider, a Times reporter was assigned to interview her. He called at the suite in the Paso del Norte Hotel and found her gracious but bored in a strange place. "Why not see the sights in Juárez?" Len suggested. "Let's go," said Mary. After touring the Mexican town in a taxi, the pair stopped at the Tívoli, a long established gambling hall that was the chief attraction in Juárez. Mary liked the people, the color and the excitement in the place. And the people liked her. Many didn't know who she was, but they responded with enthusiasm to this friendly, magnetic person. It wasn't long before she was sitting on the bar and singing a request number. Then she remembered her engagement in El Paso. So Mary and Len were again in a taxi, this time bound for El Paso. That night in Liberty Hall, Mary was in excellent voice. Her afternoon with Len in Juárez had a therapeutic effect. Len Schneider went to larger fields. He was city editor of the New York City Mirror, a Hearst newspaper, when he died.

Mrs. Hallett Johnson, affectionately known as Ma Johnson, brought culture to El Paso. As impresario, she introduced and organized the Community Concert Association and sponsored theatrical companies out of New York. She brought several companies of México's best artists to El Paso. Not all were financial successes, but Ma continued in her efforts

to give El Paso the best of stage productions. El Pasoans often said they wanted to see the best of Broadway's musical comedy productions. Ma booked the big companies for Liberty Hall. Some drew large audiences, others were financial failures. Dramas and comedies were received with the same fate. But Ma never quit. She was determined to give El Paso the best, and she did. Musicians, singers, in groups and as individuals, all top stars, came to El Paso under Ma management. There were sell-out houses and there were sparse audiences. Until the day she passed away, she never retreated. El Paso is richer aesthetically because Ma Johnson lived and labored here. She should not be forgotten.

In the twenties, El Paso was a focal point in the search of Clara Phillips, who was wanted in Los Angeles for the murder of another woman. Clara's case became celebrated because she disappeared. Her husband was a sea captain. She was charged with killing a woman who was innocent of being involved with her husband. Clara became known as the 'tiger woman' in the newspapers. During the search, two young men who were the sons of a prominent Juárez physician, the Uribe brothers, were arrested in Los Angeles and charged as being the brains of a ring that stole expensive automobiles in the mid-western states. They took the cars to Los Angeles for re-sale. One of the Uribe brothers was married to a beautiful young woman who said that she had been a Follies chorus girl in New York at one time. She made a deal with Police Chief Oaks in Los Angeles that she would help find Clara Phillips for the release of her husband and his brother. She came to El Paso and started her search from here when it was reported that Clara had come to Juárez. For some two weeks, Mrs. Uribe

Lived at the Paso del Norte where she kept under cover and away from the newspaper men. I happened to see her enter the lobby of the hotel one day and followed her to her room. I had known her husband and she knew that I knew her husband. I promised her that I would not reveal her hiding place if she would let me have her stories exclusively. In ten days to two weeks I did have her story exclusively although other reporters from Los Angeles had been searching for her. It developed that Clara Phillips had not come to Juárez but had fled to Honduras. Her husband had been misled into coming to El Paso to search for her so he apparently did not know where she was. Clara was traced to Honduras by a reporter from the Los Angeles Examiner. She was returned to Los Angeles by way of New Orleans and El Paso on the Southern Pacific railroad. While the train stopped in El Paso, she refused to talk except that she had never been to Juárez. The Uribe brothers were eventually released and returned to México. The Uribe family left Juárez and where they went, I do not know. Clara Phillips was convicted and served time in prison for the murder.

Among the many celebrities who have come to El Paso over the years was Miss Gloria Swanson. A movie picture company headed by Gloria made a picture in Fabens. During the filming she nearly drowned when a horse she was riding fell into the river. Gloria became indignant when newspaper reporters questioned her about her reported romance, which she denied. In the presence of everyone in the lobby of Paso del Norte, she dressed down her press agent for allowing reporters to question her on such a subject.

In my opinion, one of the most interesting characters or maybe I should say personalities in El Paso's more modern history was Sam Dreben. He was

known as the Fighting Jew. Sam was a professional soldier of fortune. He operated as a machine gunner in Nicaragua, came to El Paso and Juárez to join the rebel army. When the Madero revolution started, he operated as a machine gunner. He returned to El Paso, and through friendship was let in on the ground floor of a copper mining field that became very prosperous in Arizona. When World War I started, he accompanied Major Richard Burges' El Paso troops to Europe as sergeant of the company. His corporal is still in El Paso. His name is Dick (Richard) Filleman. Mr. Filleman was superintendent of the press room of the El Paso newspapers for many years. He retired recently. Sam acquired his title as the Fighting Jew because he was a Jew and a very fearless fighting man. He returned to El Paso with Major Burges' troops and remained here for several years after World War I. He is no longer living.

The El Paso Herald-Post was the first newspaper to get prominent play of the explosion of the atomic bomb. However, no one on the newspaper knew that the explosion was that of an atomic bomb. That story starts with Don Lusk, a widely known New Mexico Newspaperman. Don, at that time, was editor of a weekly newspaper in Silver City, New Mexico, where he lived a greater part of his life and where he died recently. He was correspondent for the Herald-Post. I had worked for him briefly after leaving the army hospital at Fort Bard, in 1916. When the Herald-Post extended coverage to New Mexico, I asked Don to serve as our correspondent, which he did for several years. On the day the first atomic bomb was exploded in Alamogordo, Don sent a telegram to the Herald-Post saying that Silver City had been rocked by an earthquake, then accompanied by a brilliant light in the sky and a terrific

wind which broke windows in Silver City. When the telegram was received in the Herald-Post editorial department, I was in the composing room making up the first edition. I was standing by the copy tube waiting for the weather report, when H.A. Michael, the city editor sent the edited telegram down with a small headline, marked for page 1. I took the copy out of the tube and somehow sensed that it was more than just an ordinary shake at Silver City. So I increased the size of the headline for the first edition, and sent the paper to press. I sat down in my desk and suggested that we get on the story immediately. Mike said that they were working on it now. We called Don again, and he said that the forest rangers had reported a tremendous light in the sky east of Silver City, which indicated that this was more than an ordinary earthquake. From then on, it was a case of searching for the spot where the flash occurred.

Mr. Michael said that he did not have sufficient staff to put more than one person on the story, so I suggested that he call Mary Beck from the society department. Mary was placed on one of the phones and under Mike's direction and my suggestions, frequently, calls were placed to Socorro, New Mexico, Alamogordo, New Mexico, and elsewhere in the southwest. I suggested that we call the Public Information Officer at Biggs Air Force Base. He said that he knew nothing about such an explosion and had not heard of anything of that nature. It was this public information officer who got in touch with the security officer in Albuquerque and told him we were working on such a story, it later developed. I was explaining that I had called the public information officer at the base especially because I had heard on the radio early in the morning that a large United

States refueling plane had been abandoned in Montana and was running wild somewhere in the United States. I had an idea that perhaps the plane had crashed somewhere east of Socorro and that was the explosion that we had seen. No one else seemed to have the same hunch. It was not until the bomb had been dropped on Japan that we knew that this was the atomic bomb. As we were nearing press time, the security officer at Albuquerque issued a statement to the Associated Press, which was marked for publication in only El Paso, New Mexico and western Arizona. In this he stated that an ammunition dump had exploded near Alamogordo. This was incorporated in the story that Mr. Michael wrote. He passed the copy over to me and I didn't like the lead, so I wrote the lead, one paragraph. I wrote a three column, three line head with a one column dropout. I made it the play story of the day. Now, mind you, this was during the war and the war was the big news of the day. And as I said previously no one knew, I didn't know. No one had any idea that it was an atomic bomb or anything approaching an atomic bomb. But we did wonder what kind of an explosive it was other than ordinary ammunition. It was not until the bomb was dropped on Japan that we knew that we had played the story of the first atomic bomb in world history.

A few years later as we were discussing the story, Mr. Michael told me that he thought I was nuts to play the story at that time over the war. Now there's more to this story. After we turned in the home edition carrying the story of the explosion, a young man walked into the office, quite worried. He pulled out his identification as a military security officer and he asked Mr. Michael to kill the story. Mr. Michael referred him to me.

He came around to my desk and told me that he wanted the story killed. It was a military order, under censorship. He was courteous about it but he was insistent. I told him that we had simply printed what the security officer in Albuquerque had given us and what the people in Albuquerque had seen. Incidentally, three printers on the Herald-Post had seen the flash and after the story had gone to the composing room, Mr. Elwood Carpenter, the foreman, had mentioned to me that they had seen the flash while coming to work at five o'clock in the morning. I went back to the editorial department and told Mr. Michael and he sent Virginia Turner, who later became city editor of the paper, down to talk to them and their statements were incorporated into the story.

Now to get back to the security officer who was talking to me, I asked him why it involved the security of the United States that they should kill this story. He said he couldn't tell me. I told him the story was already on the street and it was on the wires and that it had been carried to the Associated Press. He said that he knew about that but for us not to print anymore about it. And I told him that we had already sent in a bigger headline for the final edition. He asked me to get in touch with the editor, Mr. Pooley, who was not in the office. I told him that Mr. Pooley was not available. So I decided that the story should run in as much as it had already been published and it could not hurt anybody anyway. And if I had known it was the first atomic bomb story, I doubt that he could have stopped it anyway since it had already been published. Considerable hindsight, several versions of this story had been reported in the past. But this is the exact story as how it happened and principle credit

for this story should go to Don Lusk of Silver City, New Mexico. We had not heard anything of such an incident; however the woman who called Mary Beck and the engineer, a friend of Mr. Michael, produced the substance that made the story really something big. Mr. Michael has since said that he regretted very much that he didn't describe the explosion as the engineer had described it to him, because that was the first description of the atomic bomb mushroom. You may wonder why I chose this particular story as the play story of the day. I have no explanation except that it was a hunch. All during my newspaper career, I operated on hunches. And most of the time, they payed off. Someone would call it thinking but I just call it hunches.

The city editor for whom I worked at one time, Hal Kelly, a big time city editor, incidentally told me, "Chester, God just keeps His arm around you." Kelly made this remark one day after I had an interview with a lady who had been inaccessable to reporters who were attempting to get her story. This lady was Cherry Moller, a well-known person in El Paso at that time. She had been shot nine times when she tried to climb a hill in an attempt to take over a ranch house from her husband in Arizona. She was brought to El Paso on the train and taken to the county hospital. She had no money. Reporters had been denied admittance into the ward where she was lying. One afternoon, Kelly told me to go out and see what I could do about it. So I took a streetcar out to the county hospital, walked up to the clerk's desk and told them I wanted to see Mrs. Moller and asked where she was. She directed me up the stairs, to the first bed on the left in the ward. It later developed that she thought I was a physician, I didn't tell her who I was.

And I told /Cherry/ I wanted her story. She told me if I would get her out of there she would tell me the whole thing. I agreed to get her moved to Hotel Dieu; I didn't know how I was going to get her into Hotel Dieu but I made the agreement. So, she told me her story. She insisted that she was going to die. It was miraculous that she didn't die with nine bullet holes through her body. She was a large woman, healthy, husky; that perhaps accounts for the fact that she lived. I saw Dr. Paul Gallagher and he talked to the Sisters at Hotel Dieu and I also talked to them, and she was moved to Hotel Dieu. Dr. Gallagher took care of her knowing that he would not receive any pay until she became able to pay him. She recovered to the point to where she was able to sit up. One day she tied her bed sheets together and slid down from the second floor, called a taxi, and went to a hotel operated by a woman friend on San Francisco Street. There I found her when the woman operator called me up and told me she was there. When I got there, much to my disappointment, there were other reporters there. They had been tipped off by the police who were looking for her at the request of the hospital authorities and had found her at the hotel. Cherry lived to marry a second husband. I saw her two or three times after that. I consider her a friend and she considers me a friend. Previously when I reported back to the Times office with my exclusive story about Cherry, it was then that Hal Kelly remarked that God kept His arms around me.

During the time I worked in Juárez as a reporter I was treated with the utmost courtesy, principally, I believe, because I respected the Mexican people and their customs. Not all American reporters did that.

Only on one occasion was I threatened with expulsion from Juárez. That was during the de la Huerta Revolution at a time when a strict censorship had been imposed on news dispatches out of México City, where the principal newspaper correspondents resided and at which point their stories were filed. Knowing that no news was to be acquired over the wires, I made it a point to meet the trains that came from México City each day. I talked to the pullman conductor, the porters, the people who got off the train from México City. Consequently, I got many exclusive stories about what was going on in México. One day, I was approached by a Mexican citizen who had frequently been in the editorial department of the Times, posing as a representative and a friend of ours and a representative of the Chamber of Commerce of Juárez. It developed that he was an agent of the Mexican government and as I got off the train, after talking to passengers, he took me by the arm and said, "Chope, I'm going to arrest you; you have been abusing privileges accorded visitors in our country." I thought he was joking. But he wasn't joking; he was an agent of the Department of the Interior of México. He was going to take me to military headquarters and have me jailed. He was a fine friend if he was serious, I said. He said he was serious because I had been getting stories out of México that were not true. I told him that if they were not true it was because people had misinformed me. I told him I was a friend of the Mexican government as far as that individual was concerned. So after considerable legal hassle, he let me go and warned me that if I continued to visit the train he would arrest me and put me in jail. I continued to visit the train. The people would seldom talk; the word got around that I was undesirable over there.

As I stated previously, El Paso was wide-open town when I got here and remained so for many years. Even during Prohibition attempts were made to run bars openly and they did so for a short time and then they were closed. Prostitution was an accepted thing in the early days. When I came here, police were moving night life women from downtown houses and hotels to a newly established zone of tolerance as they called it. It was located at 9th and Mesa. With two exceptions, the place consisted of one story buildings of light colored brick. In good weather, the girls stood in the doorways and beckoned to prospective customers. There were two two-story buildings where bars were housed. These buildings occupied approximately two blocks. They were eventually forced to close when the military objected. Then when World War II came along and more troops were moved in, the military told the city officials that they wanted the women driven out of the city. And the prostitutes were put out of business through a series of police raids. Since then, El Paso has been very tight in the enforcing of the laws against prostitution.

We have digressed in our conversation. Let us return to the marvelous progress in transportation El Paso has witnessed during the last fifty years--the change from horse and buggy days to the modern jet airplane age. El Paso was a horse and buggy town as late as the year 1925. That is, horse-drawn drays still delivered freight in 1926 and farmers still used horse-drawn wagons in this vicinity. However, motor trucks were rapidly replacing horses. In 1917 and 1918 Pomeroy's stable still was being operated in a large brick building on South Oregon street, diagonally across the street from the Times building at 223 South Oregon. At that

time it housed a transfer business and was a storage place for old-fashioned horse-drawn carriages that once were in common use. Some of the vehicles were fine products of the carriage-maker's trade. The main entrance to this building was arched at the top and was big enough for a team of horses and a large vehicle to pass through easily.

Public horse-drawn carriages, commonly called hacks, still did a thriving business as late as 1919. Their stand was along the north side of San Jacinto Plaza on Main Street. Drivers and horses dozed while waiting for fares. The hacks transported fares to all parts of the city and also to Juárez. Hacks were forced out of business by automobiles, principally Fords, which operated under city license over specified routes from the north side of San Jacinto Plaza where the horse-drawn buggies once stood. The autos were called "jitneys". The name was derived from the standard fare, which was five cents. A five-cent coin, or nickel, was called a "jitney" in those days. Taxicabs as we know them today, and growing operating costs, put the "jitneys" out of business.

In 1917 merchants were still using horse-drawn light-weight wagons to make deliveries. Among them were Joe Peyton's butcher shop, Watson's grocery store and Nation's grocery store--all downtown businesses. Peyton's shop was in a one-story building at the southeast corner of Texas and Stanton, where the El Paso Natural Gas Co. skyscraper now stands. Mr. Peyton founded today's packing company that bears his name. Watson's large grocery store was in a two-story building on the south side of Texas street in the 200 block. Nation's popular grocery store and meat market was on the east side of the 200 block of North Mesa Street. Another

thriving butcher shop was on the south side of the 200 block of North Mesa Street. A common early morning sight in those days was a line of light-weight wagons (each drawn by one horse) at the Santa Fe Street International Bridge waiting for customs inspection. They were loaded with vegetables from Juárez valley farms which were being brought to El Paso markets. Chinese peddlers delivered vegetables and fruit to housewives from horse-drawn wagons.

Milk and ice were delivered from horse-drawn wagons. Horses that pulled milk wagons were so familiar with their routes they stopped at places for regular deliveries without command from their drivers. Today the motor vehicle has made horse-drawn vehicles a rare sight, although there has been a wide-spread revival of horseback riding in the city.

El Pasoans today speed to distant points over fine paved highways, but as recent as 1925 an automobile trip to Ruidoso or Cloudcroft was an adventure due to the fact that the road between Newman, New Mexico and Orogrande was a hazard. The road from the El Paso city limits to Newman was paved, and from Orogrande to Alamogordo the road was surfaced with gravel. But between Newman and Orogrande there was nothing more than a trail that wound around large sand dunes like a snake. Attempts were made to keep the surface sand scraped away down to hard caliche, but wind frequently covered the caliche with sand. The road also was wide enough for only one vehicle, consequently passing was a problem that sometimes saw a car bogged in the sand. Until the 1930's there was no road between El Paso and Carlsbad, New Mexico, although ruts made by pioneer Butterfield stage coaches were and still are visible in the vicinity of Hueco Tanks and the Cornudas mountains. I recall accompanying a party

of engineers who traveled by automobile in 1927 from El Paso to Artesia and later Carlsbad while making a preliminary investigation for the Chamber of Commerce, of a possible route for a proposed railroad between El Paso and Quanah. There were occasional trails and a few stretches of primitive roads along the way, but no through route. In some places we picked up the Butterfield trail--nothing more than deep ruts. The railroad was not built.

In the 1930's Edward M. Pooley started a campaign for construction of a modern paved highway between El Paso and Carlsbad and the Carlsbad Caverns. He got Texas officials at Austin interested in the project. In turn, New Mexico was challenged to build it's section of the highway. Editor Pooley continued to push the idea until both states started construction in a race to see who could finish first. Completion was celebrated at the state line with a beans and beef barbecue. Construction of transcontinental highways and thousands of miles of paved rural roads, with always increasing movement of people by automobiles and buses, and the use of huge motor trucks to transport freight, has brought about a great change in railroading in this era.

Situated at the low altitude Pass to the North through which the Río Grande flows, El Paso always has been a traffic center. For many years it was a bustling railroad town. The G.H. & S.A. (Southern Pacific) and El Paso and Southwestern railroads maintained huge construction and repair shops, and large roundhouses that employed hundreds of skilled, highly paid men. The Santa Fe and Texas and Pacific railroads had smaller roundhouses and repair facilities. The Southwestern also employed a large

number of persons in its headquarters. Engineers and conductors were the big-salaried elite crews on the numerous trains that rolled into and out of the city. Modern railroad equipment and growing highway and airplane transportation have brought about marked changes in the operation of railroads in recent years. The big railroad shops have been closed and torn down, thus throwing employees out of work. The Southern Pacific bought the Southwestern and closed the latter's headquarters here. Recently the railroads have suspended operation of passenger trains. The companies claimed they lost money operating luxury passenger trains, as well as ordinary local passenger carriers.

Streetcars operated by the El Paso Electric Co. served the greater part of the city until they were supplanted by motor buses. Halloween pranksters always soaped streetcar tracks on inclines. With wheels unable to get traction, the cars were stalled until a relief crew spread sand over the soap. Pranksters usually greased tracks of the Sunset Heights line on the West Río Grande Street hill. Oregon Street also reported trouble. Copia street was not immune. Service on the Copia line sometimes was halted for several hours when water from heavy rain flooded the underpass beneath the Southwestern railroad. An electric interurban railway was operated between El Paso and Ysleta for several years. Automobiles put it out of business. The right-of-way from the El Paso city limits in the vicinity of today's Thomason General Hospital extended through a sparsely settled rural area that now is Alameda avenue to the Franklin Canal near today's Lakeside shopping center, thence generally along Franklin Canal to a point near Ysleta, where the rails ran down the main street (now Highway 80) to a terminus. That portion of the right-of-way that now is Alameda Avenue was

fenced with barbed wire and for most part was lined with weeds and desert plants.

Among the many men who had important roles in changing the face of El Paso over the years was Edgar Park, real estate dealer. Edgar Park had a dream in the 1920's. He envisioned and repeatedly advocated construction of a highline irrigation canal from Elephant Butte Dam that would deliver water to make a garden spot of the desert north of Ft. Bliss. In his dream, Mr. Park saw homes and business houses on vast acreage he owned from Dyer Street and Newman Road to the mountains. He laid out streets and drilled a deep well for a water system. Had he lived long enough, he would have seen much of his dream materialize. Within the last few years, homes and business places have sprung up as if by magic on Edgar Park's Sunrise Acres land, now known as Northeast El Paso. Once a sparsely settled region of sand, rocks, scraggly desert shrubs and the habitat of jackrabbits, coyotes, rattlesnakes and other desert varmints, Edgar Park's dreamland now is a booming section of a rapidly expanding metropolis. Edgar Park was a man of vision. He lived a few years too soon. He was an impressive figure--tall, heavy set, neat and well dressed, and a forceful speaker who never abandoned his dream. Although the highline canal was not constructed, Edgar Park's land has blossomed.

Like the face of El Paso, names of prominent citizens and interesting characters change with the years, and impressions frequently are forgotten. For instance, there were the Krakauer brothers, members of the firm of Krakauer, Zork and Moyer. They were an important force in the business world and prominent civic leaders in 1918, and '19, and early 1920's. Their

wholesale hardware firm constructed one of El Paso's finest business buildings at San Francisco and El Paso Streets. It extended north to Main Street. The building today (August, 1968) is being wrecked to make way for a new Greyhound Bus Co. station. The building was so solidly constructed wreckers had difficulty demolishing it.

Jack McDonald, a handsome, intelligent young man who came here for his health, became well-known and influential in political circles. For a time he operated a small confectionary store in a "cubbyhole" next to the Wigwam theater, which now is the State. His store was a gathering place for young men and teenagers, many of whom are today's prominent citizens. Later, he was amusement concessionaire at Washington Park. After that he farmed cotton acreage in the Cotton Estate near the old Peyton Packing Co. plant which now is in the Chamizal Zone ceded to México. Jack was killed on a railroad crossing while he was returning at night to his home on the farm. A train which he apparently did not see or hear hit his automobile.

The late C.N. Bassett, president and principal owner of the State National Bank, left a heritage of civic welfare and municipal development that will not be erased by time. The fact that he was referred to simply as Charlie Bassett emphasizes the esteem and friendship he enjoyed among associates and a large number of acquaintances. Although he was a man of great power and influence, he never threw his weight around in public as so many persons in such a position are prone to do. In public, he was reserved and self-effacing. Behind the scenes, his advice and suggestions were sought and heeded. As a newspaper man, I found him easy to approach, easy to talk to and helpful. I liked him. I especially recall a night

when I was working as city editor of the Times. Mr. Bassett telephoned and asked me to come to his home in Austin Terrace. When I arrived he was at the dinner table with his family. Immediately after a maid answered the doorbell and ushered me to the living room, Mr. Bassett entered and asked me to wait a few minutes while he finished his meal. He told the maid to give me a glass of eggnog to keep me occupied. This was during the Christmas season. A large Christmas tree stood by the fireplace. Within a short time, Mr. Bassett returned and told me the State National Bank building would be enlarged and that I would get the announcement first. I thanked him and departed, happy with the knowledge that Mr. Bassett trusted me with his information and he would reward me with a "scoop".

John M. Wyatt, a banker and later a stock broker, served his city as alderman. He was a tall, slender man, always neat, kind and unassuming. He spoke with a distinct, but low voice. His impressive air engendered confidence. After speaking to me in the lobby of the State National Bank, where he was making a deposit, he casually mentioned I might be interested in the fact the Nichols Copper Co. had purchased land on which it would build a large refinery, which is owned today by Phelps Dodge. On another occasion he told me the Standard Oil Co. was going to build a refinery here. Both tips developed "scoops" for me. John Wyatt owed me nothing and wanted nothing. He told me about the coming of those two large industries merely as a friendly gesture.

Ben Levy of the Union Clothing Co. was a pioneer merchant who had numerous friends. Wiry and energetic, he was well liked and known as a merchant who dealt honestly with his customers. He built and maintained a

successful business with personality and good merchandise. Long a member of El Paso's pioneer Volunteer Firemen, he also served his city as an alderman.

Sol I. Berg operated a large men's clothing store on San Antonio Street. A large, likable man, his name was one of the most widely-known during his days. He quietly supported many civic projects. On one occasion he gave western hats to friends as his way of supporting and promoting Rodeo Days in El Paso.