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Interview no. 61

Denny Moses

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Denny Moses (? - 1979)
INTERVIEWER: Mildred Torok and David Salazar
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BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Former English professor at UTEP.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Early days of the University and sketches of former University presidents.

1 hour, 24 pages.

MinutesSubjects

(SIDE II)

- 0 -- 4 Faculty and salary cuts during Depression (continued); upgrading of B.A. program; loss of students during Depression.
- 4 -- 10 Dean Puckett: misunderstanding with, other impressions of.
- 10 -- 13 Comments on engineering students and on Dean Thomas.
- 13 -- 18 Dean Kidd; President Elkins.
- 18 -- 22 Faculty members, including Bert Haigh; custom of calling people by their first name (influence of Franklin D. Roosevelt); comments on his own name.
- 22 -- 32 Comments on his family, including his sister, his mother and father.

Denny Moses

Interviewed by David Salazar and Mildred Torok
February 27, 1973

S: Mr. Moses, can you tell us a little bit about your background, such as your folks, just a little about yourself just to start us off?

M: I was born in Kentucky and went to school up there about through junior college. And then I went to Columbia University in New York, took a Bachelor's at Columbia College and Master's at Columbia University, then came to the University of Texas at Austin to teach English. I taught there three years, 1924 to 1927, and then came west to grow up with the College of Mines.

S: Can you tell us a little about your family, your parents?

M: Well, my father and my mother were farmers of a long generation of farmers. They grew up with very little education, of course, like most farmers of their day and time. They were always ambitious for their fair-haired son to get ahead in the world, and they figured that education was one of the ways to get ahead. But they couldn't do anything about it, so he had to do it for himself.

T: So you're a self-made man, educated.

M: For better or for worse.

T: Well, it's definitely for better.

M: They gave me the start and I finished the job.

T: When did you come out to Texas first?

M: To this part of Texas?

T: No, to Austin, Texas.

M: To Austin? 1924.

T: And what were you doing in Austin before you came to UTEP?

M: I was teaching, I was an instructor in English at the main University in Austin. And it was a rather interesting little story. I accidentally

drew a student, anonymously--the instructors' names were not on the schedule--but I accidentally got a young lady in my class, freshman class, who was three or four years older than the average student. She's from Weather Ford, Texas up near Fort Worth. And it turned out that she and I like each other all right, and after the course was over, she came to me and said, "You know, I am first cousin to the Director of Placement and my cousin tells me that she has a job opening and wanted to know if you would be interested?" So I said, "I don't think so." And so this girl came back a week or so later and said, "The job is still open, are you interested now?" "Oh, what is it?" She told me. It was the first time I knew that the College was being expanded that year. Prior to 1927, there had been for several years a mining school which admitted a few women and others who wanted to take just a course or two of academic work, and the rest of it was Engineering, especially Mining Engineering, under the direction of Dean Kidd, John W. Kidd. And then there was junior college on the top floor of El Paso High School. The city fathers of El Paso decided that they didn't want to keep up that extra expense of having a junior college, so they decided to dump it. And the state very graciously offered to let the College of Mines expand the academic department for two years, give two years of credited work in academic subjects. So about 1927 or something like that, instructors from the junior college came over to Mines.

T: But you weren't one of them of course?

M: No, no I was not there, I'd never been to El Paso. And a professor in the junior college became the head of the school, the actual head of the school. He did the hiring and firing; but if it involved Engineering,

of course Dean Kidd, as Dean in Engineering, was consulted on all matters pertaining to the Engineering School. But Dean Puckett, C.A. Puckett, who had a Master's Degree from Harvard--B.A. from Texas and Master's from Harvard, majored in Mathematics--was the actual senior officer of the school.

T: May I interrupt a minute?

M: Yes.

T: You said that this young lady that was in your class in Austin knew the Personnel Director.

M: She was first cousin to her.

T: And who was she first cousin to? Is it anybody we know about here?

M: Miriam Dosier was her name, Miss Miriam Dosier was the Director of Placements at the main University. She knew me, I had recommended some students to her for jobs in other places. And she knew me, and she knew that her cousin was in my class. And she and I got along all right, no fights. So she told her cousin to ask me if I would be interested in transferring to the mining branch of the University of Texas.

T: But Miss Dosier was not an El Pasoan?

M: No, she was in Austin. She directed Placements there for a number of years. And Dean Puckett got me confused with...that is, how I came to Mines, he got /me/ confused with another instructor who came about a month after.

T: Willet?

M: Willet, yeah. In his reminiscences recorded in Fugate's Frontier College, he got me and Willet mixed up just a little bit, but nothing serious. If Fugate had submitted that manuscript to me, I could've corrected that, but he didn't submit it to me. I was interviewed all over the place, but not

on the final manuscript.

And so when I came out here we had the old Mining faculty and then about twice as many Academic faculty, most of them being new and from junior college. I was from the main university. So was Berkman.

T: Berkman came the same year as you?

M: Same time.

T: So actually who was the faculty here at the time when you arrived in 1927?

M: Well, I don't know that I can name all of them, I can name a great many.

But anyone who wants to check that can go to the catalogues for around 1931-32, and find their names. I don't have those catalogues. For some crazy reason, I discarded my old catalogues for several years. I don't know why I did it. I just wasn't an archivist then, I guess, lor a/ collector. But they are on file in the Registrar's office.

T: Also, we have them at the UTEP Archives.

M: And Puckett was collecting them and Nelson was collecting them.

T: Was Nelson here at that time?

M: Yes, Nelson was already here. He came in 1920, he was here seven years before I was. And he outlasted me about two years.

S: What can you tell us about the University when you first came? Did it impress you?

M: The University of Texas at Austin?

S: No, the College of Mines.

T: The College of Mines, we called it then. Well, it consisted of...now the names have been changed on most of these buildings. It consisted of Old Main, and Kelly; and then Burges, which is called something else now, over on the side of the hill towards the Kidd Field from the main campus. And I think Kelly has it's own name. I believe it's Graham Hall now, isn't it?

S: Right.

M: And it was Burges then. B-u-r-g-e-s, not double "s", just s. And then the bottom half, the lower end, the two story end, of what was then called the Chemistry Building, sometimes called the Geology Building, over toward Mexico from the Main building. And then we had the Power House, which consisted of a smokestack with a room around it, and then there was a little rock crusher way out beyond where Seamon Hall is now, or right close to Seamon Hall now.

T: What did they use all that for, is that part of the equipment of the College?

M: Yes, they crushed rock in order to teach them how to make ore samples. It was a real mining school, and that's all there was. And the roads were unpaved, they were kind of blocked out, but you rock-a-bye baby as you drove a Model T along those roads. And you just parked at Magic Circle there in front of the main building, the main driveway there. They'd just drive up there and stop. Then when they got ready to go home, they'd just took off, right down through the sagebrush.

T: You mean it was sagebrush between the campus and Mesa?

M: Well, sagebrush between the campus, down where the Union Building is now.

T: Were they kind of trails, or what?

M: Well, kind of trails, sagebrush and hummocks you know, with little lover lane-like things. I parked there one day. I had a Model T, like practically everybody else that had anything at all, and came out to go to lunch at about one o'clock, and the car was gone. I had to claw around for it, found it on top of a turtle back knoll down just below where the flagpole is now, just down toward between the flagpole and town, right

there in one of those sagebrush knolls. Kids had pushed it up there, my students had to, to tease me, you know? So I had no idea who it was, and I wasn't even interested in finding out, I wanted to enjoy the joke. And a whole line of buzzards set up there on the wall in front of Main and watched me go down and get it.

T: Buzzards meaning students?

M: Students /and/ spectators. (Laughter)

T: Tell me, how did people go from the campus to town? Did they go down Mesa, or did they go down Oregon, or what?

M: Well, there was a way down. It's open again most of the time, going down around the publications' office, around that way and on to the end of Hawthorne, circling back to the end of Hawthorne. Hawthorne itself wasn't cut through about a block west of...I can't think of the name of that street now. It's had two names, the one that goes across there that has so many apartment houses on it.

S: Schuster is one of them.

M: Schuster, yeah, what's now Schuster. And Hawthorne extends about one block west of Schuster, and then detoured over toward the tracks and went around. And then the other way was to go up Mesa and turn left on the intersection of what is now University.

T: Did they call it College in those days, College Avenue?

M: I don't think so. I'm inclined to think they did not. I've never paid much attention to names of streets because I drive by geography anyhow. And Kansas Street was paved up to about where that hospital /is/, the one southeast of the General Hospital. What's its name? Sun Towers. It was paved up to the neighborhood of Sun Towers. It was not cut through to what is now College or University, and it was not cut through from University on to Baltimore, I guess. It wasn't a street.

T: You were really out in the sticks then, weren't you?

M: Yeah. There's a little joke on that. I had a son about two years old, and we lived out on Yandell at that time. And he was about two; he said "I know how to go to Daddy's school. You go up a big hill, and you go out across the bridge." There was a plank bridge with an iron facing on the floor at the point where the check-in point is on University Avenue now, near the corner of the Union Building.

T: Did it cover an arroyo?

M: It covered that arroyo there, where it's kind of a bridge-like effect. That was a bridge, a country bridge. It's a cover more than a bridge now. And he said, "You go out across the bridge, and out to the rocks." (Laughter)

T: The College was on the rocks.

M: I told the interviewer for Fugate in that Frontier College, some way got it among the rocks, but he said out to the rocks, and that phrase has been used in Fugate's book and also in Frank Mangan's book, A Picture History of Texas. I had an old roommate from the main university who got transferred to the Alamogordo area and he had just got himself a new wife. And he was thinking about living in El Paso and working up there on the side, and he wanted to live in El Paso because it'd be close to college and she could do some college work. I think he married a sophomore, and sophomores were older then than they are today. So he took her out to see the College. "Absolutely not! I wouldn't go to school here if it was the last place in the world!" So the College of Mines lost one student and the city of El Paso lost a population of two, just because the college was out among the rocks. (Laughter) It was a royal place.

S: Well, it was extremely small, so the teachers and the students must've had a much closer association then.

M: Yes. And yet there were ghosts fixed between certain people. But it's just like the difference between a small campus and a big campus, or a small town and a big town. In a small town you know everybody, but you don't know very many people. In a big town you don't know very many people but there's about the same number as you'd know in a small town or on a small campus. Am I right?

S: I guess so.

M: The campus has 200 people on it, so you know nearly all of them, and you know about 200 on a college campus of 20,000. You know, about the same number. But you see so many more strangers, you know, in a big town or on a big campus that you feel that you're a stranger in a strange land. But it's very interesting to me to meditate on those. The English Department had had the year before one associate professor named Drake whom Sonnichsen mentions always in his books and interviews, and he was about 72 at that time and had a grey beard, a small beard.

T: Was it sort of a goatee?

M: Yeah, it was kind of a goatee-like effect. He had transferred down to Mines from New Mexico School of Mines. Now Sonnichsen made a mistake on that. In Sonnichsen's character sketch of Professor Drake in the last book, Dale Walker's book, he gives the impression that Drake had never taught. Now Drake had taught several years and was Chairman of the Faculty at New Mexico School of Mines in Socorro before he came down here. At any rate the climate or something bribed him to come down here. He was well fixed and his wife was well fixed, they made and saved considerable money. Incidentally they both graduated from the University of Wisconsin in the class of 1881. They got out of college. As far as I know, they'd never been sweethearts, but she

went ahead and got married and he went ahead and remained an old bachelor. About 30 years later, 40 years later maybe, her husband died and left her well fixed, and in the meantime he had done some investing in cotton and copper. I don't know about cattle, but he'd had cotton and copper in his career, and he had accumulated-- not being married, no expenses much--he had accumulated a nice little sum. So they decided to pool their interests, their lives, and so they got married, came to El Paso. And he paid as much rent for a suite of rooms at the Hotel Hussman...no, I beg your pardon, Orndorf, which became the Hussman which became the Cortez, which became something else. He lived at the Orndorf and he paid more rent for his suite of rooms there than I received in salary. He had a Packard which he couldn't drive, but he hired a fellow to drive it for him once in a while.

T: You mean a student drove it for him?

M: No, he had a special man that he hired and he didn't keep him all the time, he just hired him when he wanted to go somewhere. And the rest of the time his Packard stayed parked in the garage, I guess. He couldn't drive.

T: What did he teach then?

M: He taught English. And we had had I believe, one or two sections of Freshman English taught by Miss Mary Kelly, who later married Hardy Quinn.

T: Mary Quinn?

M: Mary Quinn, Mary Kelly Quinn. I think she had taught a couple of classes of English to relieve the pressure. And then she transferred to the History and Government Department when the college expanded in 1927

and remained there till her final retirement.

T: About seven or eight years ago.

M: Yes, it's been about somewhere around 1966 I think, wasn't it, /or/ 1967? It's hard to keep track of other people when you aren't with them frequently. But we started off the year 1927 with three instructors, Professor Drake and two assistant professors--a Mrs. McKinney who later married and became Mrs. Zimmerman; she was already Mrs. McKinney, she married a Zimmerman, second marriage, and became known as Mrs. Zimmerman, or Dr. Zimmerman--and I. I was the third member of the English Department as such. And then along about the first of October, we were so overcrowded that another instructor was brought in from the graduate school of the University of Texas--not from teaching but from graduate school. His name was Willet. So then the next year we got Miss Egg, whose name is still known on campus.

T: Yes, she was here when I first came.

M: I think she retired in 1954.

T: She retired the year I came.

M: You came in the summer and she retired in the fall, I think.

T: Something like that.

M: After summer school. You just barely said, "Ship ahoy."

T: That's right, almost ships that passed in the night. But I did meet her.

M: She was a very well liked young instructor, too. She and Dr. Gregory of the Government Department, History and Government Department, had a house in common, they lived together. So then other instructors and part-time instructors would come and go, but that was the backbone of the faculty, till about 1939 or '40.

Oh, I'm sorry, I lost the thread there. In 1931 Sonnichsen came as a young Ph.D. and associate professor. Drake remained head of the department till 1934, then Drake retired and Sonnichsen became head of the department. Of course it was just a matter of time till he would retire because he was about 73 or 74 when he retired.

S: As far as the presidents at campus, can you tell me of any of them that really impressed you?

M: Well, that I don't wanna go on record too much here. The first president was John G. Perry who had his degree from MIT. And I believe his only degree was a B.S. in Geology, and that was from MIT. Then the war had come up and he had gone into the Army and become a Colonel of Artillery. Puckett was Captain of Artillery in the First World War too. Then Berry became an advisory geologist, a consultant, a geological consultant, and had his offices here when they elected him president. He came in 1931 and stayed till the spring of 1934, and then he resigned and we had an acting president for a year.

Then in 1935 President D.M. Wiggins came. He stayed from 1935 to 1949. Then President Elkins came and he stayed till I think 1954. And then we had an acting president or two in there...Dean Thomas of the Engineering Department and A.A. Smith from the Business Administration and Business part of the campus. But I'm just giving the regularly elected presidents. Holcomb served about three years and then Dr. Smiley came and served about three years, and he became president of the University of Texas. And let's see, who took his place as president here?

T: Dr. Ray.

M: Ray, yeah. See how names are fading from my alleged memory? Dr. Ray came and served about five years, I guess, didn't he? Or six?

T: No, longer.

M: Maybe. Yeah, maybe more than that. At any rate, he presided over my departure.

T: Perhaps you better explain that. (Laughs)

M: Well, he stayed after I left. I left and he stayed. No, Dr. Ray and I got along just fine. And then President Smiley came back again.

S: Well, you know all this is on record really, but what they don't have on record is what type of man was Berry or Mr. Puckett.

T: Or Captain Kidd.

S: Right.

M: Well, I could do a radio recording on their personalities. I was very fond of President Berry. I felt that he meant exactly what he said, and I felt he said the right thing. I had utmost respect for the man. He took no foolishness, but I wasn't a fool anyway, see, so he and I hit it off fine. (Chuckles)

Now here's an interesting chapter that I've never seen written up. In about 1932 the legislature got a bill introduced to kill the College of Mines--just kill it, abandon it. Vamoose. And cut about four or five of the teachers' colleges to junior college standing. And I think Sul Ross was to be retained as a junior college and in that way unload a great deal of tax money, you see; I mean, just cut down. Well, the bill failed to pass, but the next year a bill did pass to this effect:

/PAUSE/

All state supported colleges must get rid of 25 percent of their faculty--no particular department, but 25 percent of the number of teachers employed. And those who remained, presidents on down, got a 25 percent cut in salary.

Well, as a result of that, that was an excuse on the part of a great many college presidents to get rid of some of the dead wood. Some of them didn't regard it very bad, they fired with a clearer conscience, you know. But they didn't have to come from any particular department. If they wanted to abandon a department, why that'd count toward their 25 percent deduction, you see. But then [there was] the 25 percent cut in salary. So beginning in 1934 for two years we all suffered under a 25 percent deduction in salary. That's deductions we don't like. And then they began to restore some; oh, a hundred dollars, two hundred dollars here and there each year. It took me about eight years, I guess, to get my salary back to where it had been. Maybe six, I might've got back at six. Then salary boosts were additional gravy from there on, you see. But it took me about six years to get back to my salary of 1927.

T: Well, that was sort of general because of the Depression, all the way through.

M: Yes. Yeah, but we lost about eight faculty members, I would guess, in the reductions. And I stayed. I was glad to stay. I thanked President Berry after he resigned. I went to him and said, "You know, I appreciate the fact that I got to stay on at a 25 percent reduction in salary." He said...now don't quote me on this, but he said, "You were doing a good job, hell's bell's." (Laughs)
Hell's bell's was a popular cuss word in those days after a certain

popular play that had been on Broadway. But I felt sorry for those people who went out into the cold world. And that came just a couple of years after we started our expanded B.A. program here, giving a B.A. degree. I don't remember the exact year, I believe it was 1934.

T: Did it hamper the new program?

M: No. We lost about 20 percent of the students, about 20 percent which would be about 100, a little over 100 students. Then we started climbing again. In 1941 the war came and we lost students again, and then after the war we started climbing at an alarming speed.

S: What about Dean Puckett? What can you tell us about him?

M: I was very fond of Dean Puckett. I felt that he was absolutely fair in everything he ever did concerning me, except one, which was a misunderstanding on his part and which I was too proud to try to explain to him at the time. And I think if he and I start playing golf together in the celestial hereafter, I might tell him about it someday when he'd beat me at golf. It was a misunderstanding on his part. He was perfectly honest in it, but it hurt. I don't mean professionally, but it hurt me financially, which is one of the worst kinds of hurts that a young instructor can have.

T: Can you tell us what it was?

M: Well yes, believe I will. The first year I was out here, summer of 1928 would be my first summer in El Paso, there was no summer school. So I went to the Dean say about a couple or three months before summer school would have started, if there had been a summer school, and I told him, "Is there gonna be a summer school?" "No money for it, no money for it." So I got an offer to teach English in the Lady of the Lake in San Antonio. It's run by Catholic sisters. The students

were all women and about 90 percent of them were nuns in for summer school. I got a chance to go to the Lady of the Lake. It's a first class school, its one of the first schools in Texas to be admitted to AAU. It was in AAU before the University of Texas was. Fine school, San Antonio. And I got a chance to go there, I was very proud of myself.

After I had already made the agreement to go, it turned out that the Dean was organizing a summer school on a tuition basis. The teacher got the student's tuition--unofficially, you see, but accredited. If a teacher had 10 students and a student paid \$10.00 dollars tuition, why the teacher got a hundred dollars of that, you see, and so on. And of course salaries were pretty small in those days anyway. I think tuition was about \$30.00 or \$40.00 dollars for the summer term. But Puckett was sore at me because I was absent, 'cause he wanted me to teach in that summer school and I had already made the contract to go to San Antonio and teach in the Lady of the Lake. I didn't know about it till my plans were finalized to go. I didn't know there would be a summer school here.

So the next year when time came for summer school to get ready to begin, I went to the Dean, I said, "I understand you're gonna have a summer school this summer," "Yep," he says, "But you ran out and left us last year." And he'd forgotten what he had said. Pretty good bit of advice: if you want something official, it you can without offending some fellow, get him to put his initial on the statement. (Laughs) I know students who lose credit for certain strange unusual courses because they didn't get the permission to take it initialed. And, well, I lost my teeth, and before I could get them back he said,

"Well, stick around and we'll see if anything does turn up." But if turned up that they had one class more than they had teachers for, and I taught half-time. And you know, I never told the Dean about his misunderstanding, not even after he retired.

T: Why was that?

M: I just couldn't get around to it.

T: Well, sometimes you can't tell things that hurt a little bit.

M: It hurt me. And I think it would've hurt him if he had known that he had been unfair to me, even unconsciously unfair. I don't think he intended to be unfair. But he had his choice between me and another instructor who had been faithful, who had not had an offer to go to the Lady of the Lake, so he stayed around here and taught first term summer school 1928. And at least I had the offer to go to Lady of the Lake, and it's a wonderful place.

And Dean Kidd was as gruff as an old grizzly, but I never did feel that he had a hard streak anywhere in him. It was just his way of talking. He had had tuberculosis years before and it had given him a kind of a high-pitched voice, it didn't sound quite natural. And his students just worshipped him, those engineers. They'd spit their tobacco and say, "Yes sir, Dean Kidd." He was the hero of the engineers, if they ever had a hero.

And I taught engineers and academes both, whichever one came. I taught English Literature, which engineers usually did not take. I taught advanced courses in English Literature, which engineers never took. But in my freshman classes I think I probably had at least as many engineers as I had academes, and I got along with my engineers just fine. In fact, I got along too well with them for my own good.

I was trying to build up my advance courses. Well there I had to get a couple of engineering sections for freshmen, and the students wouldn't know me and of course if the students didn't know me they couldn't like me. If they didn't know me as freshmen, they couldn't like me as upper classmen; and as a result I failed to get acquainted with my future advance students and it cut down on my enrollment in my advanced classes.

I've got to put this in a kind of a brag. It may sound slightly unmodest, cut it out if you think so. First of all, I told Dr. Sonnichsen that I was getting too many engineering sections, I wanted some more academic sections. And he said, "Dean Thomas made that part of the schedule out." And so I went to Thomas and Thomas said, "I wanted as many of my engineers as possible to take your course."

T: He wasn't thinking about you, he was thinking about the good of his students.

M: Well, yes. He was not interested at all in whether I missed getting future English majors in my advanced courses, you know. I taught more different advanced courses than anybody else in the history of the college, I guess. I taught several just once or twice, and then somebody else would take them over or I'd go on to something else. I'm sure I taught more different advanced courses than anybody else. I once counted them, I've forgotten what it was now--nine, I think, different advanced courses. They would work me to death 'cause the first year is the hardest. And I taught some courses that were never taught again. Nobody else ever taught them.

And so that's getting off of the presidents that I was sketching somewhat, my reactions to them, in getting more onto the two deans.

But naturally Dean Kidd would come immediately after Dean Puckett.

I'll say this, when Dean Kidd dropped dead on the campus in December vacation, Christmas vacation of 1940, and was taken to the mortuary to be funeralized, there were more handkerchiefs there than any other funeral I was ever in. They were those tobacco-spittin' engineers, too.

T: Yeah, I bet there were. They felt that a friend had gone, too.

M: They knew it.

T: Was he an old man when he died?

M: I don't remember his age. I think he was only about 63 or 64. I think I mentioned a while ago, he had tuberculosis in his young days and it kind of gave his voice a non-earthly sort of sound, which I could imitate if I wanted. I know several anecdotes on him that I could tell, but won't.

Now President Elkins, who came in 1949, was a four-star athlete and Phi Beta Kappa in this country, and then was a Rhodes scholar and got his Ph.D. at Oxford on a Rhodes scholarship. He was probably the most sensational personality that ever hit the campus as far as his scholarship was concerned.

T: Do you know where he came from?

M: Down in East Texas somewhere.

T: Was this his first job as an administrator?

M: I don't know about that. It could be, but I just don't know. But he was a farm boy from down Southeast Texas, somewhere in the neighborhood between Galveston and Houston, in there somewhere, East Texas. And he was a four-star athlete, he had letters in four sports, a Phi Beta Kappa Key, and a Rhodes scholarship. No wonder he went to the

University of Maryland and proceeded to make it one of the big universities.

T: He's still there, as far as I know.

M: Yes, yes, he's still there. He's just too big for us. A pretty good golfer, too. I played golf with about three heads of this school. Elkins was the best golfer of the bunch. Puckett couldn't play worth anything. And Wiggins was a little better than I was but he wasn't as good as Elkins. The rest of them didn't play golf, as far as I know.

T: Did you say Wiggins?

M: Yeah, I played with Wiggins. No, I don't think he was quite as good as I was. Elkins was a little bit better. I was pretty good in those days.

T: You still are.

M: I was shooting in the middle and high 30s right along, breaking par once in a while on a nine. But Puckett was a rotten golfer, Wiggins was almost good, and Elkins was just a little too good, from my point of view.

T: I was wondering how we happened to get Elkins, with all those credentials.

M: I don't know. Never heard the story. I guess it was the best job that was open at that particular time. He wasn't very old you know.

T: No, he must've been just a young man.

M: I don't think he had had a great deal of experience as a teacher. I believe his major was history, wasn't it?

T: I don't remember.

M: I think it was. He left just before you came.

T: He hired me.

M: And then he left?

T: Yeah, and then he left. Well, that's a pretty good resume of the presidents. Can you think of anything else we'd like to ask, specifically?

M: Well, it's not the biographical side. I want to apologize for giving those dates. Of course on second thought, when you reminded me, those could be dug up in the rotunda of the Administration Building if nowhere else, on the pictures.

There were two or three of the original faculty that left us and went to other institutions. Some went into other business. Berte Haigh left. (Now some people recently have called him "Hay," but I understood him he said Haigh, as though it was spelled without that "h" on it, H-a-i-g-.) He transferred from Mines to the Geology works of the University of Texas endowment, the oil endowment. And a wonderful guy. He was one of the first to call me Denny.

I'd like to put in a footnote here for all time. Prior to a fellow named Franklin D. Roosevelt, practically nobody called anybody else by first names, unless it was members of the family and so on. Franklin D. Roosevelt made first naming a popular sport in this United States. When I was in Austin, I had three office mates in the English Department there who called me Denny, and J. Frank Dobie called me Denny. And so help me, I believe those were the only people outside my family, family-in-law, that called me Denny. When I came out here, everybody called me Moses all up to about 1938. And then we all quit calling each other by last names without handles. If we wanted to be familiar, we called them by first name, and even by nickname, just like FDR. He called more people by nicknames than, say Calvin Coolidge called by first name or by last name without handle. Woodrow Wilson

wouldn't have thought about referring to people as "Henny Penny" and I don't know, the other nicknames don't come to me right now, but FDR made nicknames and first names the in thing in the official life of the United States. That is an original discovery. I don't believe I've ever seen it or heard it in any other place. It's the only way I can explain it. Just as the Queen of England sets the style of address and so forth in her realm.

T: You were called Leon before they started calling you Denny, isn't that right?

M: No, I never been called Leon, by anybody except for somebody who's wanted to be super familiar, you know, let me know they knew my unused first name. The fact is I was named for my father's cousin, a school teacher named Lee, presumably spelled Lee, Caddell. And my daddy saw him a day after I was named and he said, "Lee, I named my boy for you." Lee said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Lee Denny." He said, "My name is not Lee, it's Leon." So Daddy went home, got down the old Bible and changed Lee to Leon. But nearly everybody pronounces it Leon. I've met a few Leons in my time, but not very many. But I never went by that name, except a super familiar sort of person. Denny has been my name and 99 percent of the people who call me Denny don't know what my first name is.

T: Did you have brothers and sisters?

M: Yes, I had three older brothers and a sister who's just older than I. And my middle brother, my third brother, died of diphtheria or something before I was born. And my two older brothers grew up to be 14 and 16, and then they went swimming one day and got drowned. And so my sister and I were left...not alone, but all the persons she had to play with was her little brother, and my only person I had to play

with in my house--that is, fight with--usually was /my/ sister.

It was pretty nice. Our fights were fairly evenly balanced. I was much more unscrupulous than she was, she was much more careful about whether she really bruised me and hurt me permanently or not. And being a boy I was just a little stronger than she was for a year, so we were pretty evenly matched. It was almost a case of Katzenjammer twins.

And of course all of that had to go on in secret. No fighting was one of the cardinal rules of conduct in the families of my class of people. We had to keep our fights secret. Which meant...it was a wonder I didn't start writing fiction, because there were certain bruises that had to be explained away, you know, and I had to invent schemes. As for instance one time I struck at her, hit her, punched her in the jaw, and got a little too close to her tooth, and my knuckle was bleeding. That had to be explained away. I said that it was...my sister of course backed me in it, naturally...that I was making shadow boxes at a corner of the house or something, I don't know what, and just happened to hit a little too close.

T: And rapped your knuckles.

M: And my mother'd say, "Never lie to me, you never tell me lies." So she'd believe almost anything we'd say. (Laughs) She was a pretty smart woman, but strange how we could lie our way out of things. She could see through anybody else besides my sister and me.

T: Perhaps she didn't want to see too closely.

M: Maybe so. She was a great singer. Her father was an old Methodist singing master. They'd get ready to have a revival somewhere and my

granddaddy would go ahead and organize a choir and give them some of the rudiments, very rude rudiments, perhaps of music, singing. And by the time the revivists got there, why, the'd have a choir singing "Glory Hallelujah," you know, "The Saints Are Marching In." And then he also had a way of making money. And one of his ways was to give singing lessons at \$10.00 dollars for a series of 10 lessons, dollar a lesson, high prices. They'd buy 20 pounds of beef for an hours' work. It's hard to beat, five cents a pound.

T: Even to this day.

M: It's more than I can make now. And he'd give these lessons and all he wanted was \$10.00 dollars. And whatever is for the victims to figure out how much each one was to pay him, but it was usually about a dollar apiece for 10 of them, and he'd give the lessons. Ten dollars in the pocket. And he had married a Crowley, and Crowleys were proverbially stingy, saving, you know. So when he got \$10.00 dollars, that meant \$10.00 dollars in savings. (Laughs) He was one of the wealthier people around there, land of poor people. But my mother was a coloratura soprano, and she was his pride and joy. He had her go along with him to help him start his choirs and to lead the soprano section in the singing. She was famous all over the county as a singer. And my father's people, well, he was a farmer. He had a big farm and a big family to go with it, of course. And if he wanted to take time off and teach some singing and get some more cash, why, he had two or three sons around the farm while he was on his singing vacation. He was lucky. Children paid in those days.

T: That's why they had big families.

M: Yeah, there were economic advantages to having them. My father's people were just big farmers. I'm proud of one thing--my great-grandfather and my grandfather could both read and write, which was rather rare in those days and times. I have had writing of both of them. And I ran into a census of their time, when they were both alive, and about an average of 85 percent all over the United States, about 85 percent of the American people couldn't read and write. It's all on record. And in the South, it was a little mope illiterate than in the north, but you'd be surprised how many people in New England couldn't even read and write. And New England was perhaps the best educated section.