

6-25-1974

Interview no. 135

Edwin M. Reeves

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.utep.edu/interviews>



Part of the [Oral History Commons](#), and the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Interview with Edwin M. Reeves by Robert H. Novak, 1974, "Interview no. 135," Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Institute of Oral History at ScholarWorks@UTEP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Combined Interviews by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UTEP. For more information, please contact lweber@utep.edu.

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Edwin M. Reeves

INTERVIEWER: Robert H. Novak

PROJECT: El Paso History

DATE OF INTERVIEW: June 25, 1974

TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted

TAPE NO.: 135

TRANSCRIPT NO.: 135

TRANSCRIBER: Robert H. Novak

DATE TRANSCRIBED: June, 1974



BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Experiences with the United States Border Patrol in
the El Paso area during the 1920s and 1930s.

1 hour (1 7/8 tape speed); 20 pages.

Interview with Edwin M. Reeves by Robert H. Novak on June 25, 1974.

N: Mr. Reeves, why don't we start by your giving me a little bit of biographical information about yourself--when and where you were born, that sort of information.

R: I was born in Beaumont, Texas. I'm a Texan. My dad was a railroad man, so he went to Louisiana to work and then came back to Texas like railroad men do. I went to Southwestern at Lafayette, and then came to Texas in 1916 and went to work for the railroad. In World War I, I was in France and Belgium with the naval aviation. When I came back, I went to work for the railroad again. Then they called for Border Patrol examinations that was to be at the Scottish Rite cathedral. So I took that and passed. When they called, me I asked to be excused because the railroad paid so much more than \$1680 [the starting salary at that time with the Border Patrol]. Then they cut down the forces on the railroad and I went back to the Border Patrol and asked that I be given a chance for employment. Mr. Harris, who was District Director, wired Washington and they put me on. From then on I was in the Border Patrol.

N: What year was that when you went into the Border Patrol, do you remember?

R: 1925. In the Border Patrol I've done special duty -- I was at Brownsville, I was at Laredo, I was at Raymondville -- they move you about. Then during the war I went to Chamblee, Georgia, picked up some police dogs and took them to Bismarck [North Dakota], where I handled them and trained guards to handle them. After my tour of duty there I came back to El Paso, and I've been living in El Paso ever since. I retired I think in '54.

N: About 30 years you were in, then? What was there that made you want to go into the Border Patrol in the first place? Were you just attracted to that sort of work, being outdoors?

R: Yes, being outdoors; I was always used to that, you know. Then I'd met a few fellows who were pretty good scouts, and that made me want to join them. My first night on the Border Patrol, I went down in my best blue serge trousers, a white shirt, tie, and all that stuff. To get in a full day's work, the Assistant Chief, Bud Perry, took me out to the bridges -- that's the two railroad bridges that are there now. He told me, "You watch these bridges; if anybody comes across, get them and bring them into headquarters." About that time, hell broke loose at Park Street -- that's down a couple of blocks from the Stanton Street bridge. So he said, "Come on, the fellows at Park Street are in trouble." So we got a car, drove around, and drove into the foot of Park Street. The shooting had stopped by then, and there were piles of liquor out on the water's edge. It wasn't too deep, but it was knee-deep anyhow. I was the rookie, so I was

elected to go out, wade out and get the liquor and bring it back in. My trousers and my white shirt were a mess. The stuff was in sacks -- grass sacks is what they were. By the time I got them on my shoulder and over the levee and ditched them to go back again, my Sunday blue trousers and my white shirt were an awful mess.

N: This was during Prohibition, so you had a big problem with liquor smugglers.

R: Yes. You see, Prohibition was the liquor and stuff that was in the houses and already over. We were watching the river and the nearby area where they were coming from the river. It was a Tariff Act violation for us. We didn't have anything to do with buying by the drink -- that was somebody else's job. But when they were wading the river, coming over in cars with false bottoms, that was our business. We caught an outfit just above Newman. When we checked the car, they had a Cadillac with 952 pints of whiskey. They had put boards in the side doors to keep them from spilling out and stacked that 952 pints in there, put a black canvas over it and fastened it down. There was one man, one driver. The owner and the relief driver went on ahead in a Ford coupe. Of course, we got them later, but there was no way of proving it was their liquor, their contraband. But this boy that was driving the car -- it was on him.

N: We didn't talk at all about the training you underwent when you first joined the Border Patrol. What did they do to train you -- or did you just pretty much go out and learn on the job?

R: Just give you a .45 single action revolver with a web belt -- and that was it. (Laughter). Later on we bought brown ducking -- you called

them "bugger reds." They were brown ducking, a little short jacket and your trousers. That was the uniform for a long time. I don't know when they decided to go into forest green -- of course, that's what they wear now. We had river clothes, as they were called -- they were forest green. Then later on we got the dress uniforms. We always had the Baden Powell hats for dress. We had a kind of cowboy hat for river work, to wear with your brown ducking.

N: You said that you took some sort of a civil service test before you entered the Border Patrol. Was that a written test?

R: Yes, that was a written test and everybody had to take it, even the men on duty already. You see, I wasn't in the service then, I was just taking the examination. But all the men that were on duty in the Patrol at that time had to take that same test. There's very few of them that didn't pass it. I think they had one or two that didn't make it.

N: What were some of the other people who became Border Patrolmen at that time -- were some of them old cowboys and railroad men and types like that?

R: Yes, we had a man who came in that was a railroad engineer and had a ranch up in New Mexico -- he came into the Patrol. Later he quit and went back to his ranch and bought himself a private plane, a light plane. He was riding over a freight train that was going by, just playing with the outfit, and he crashed. In these old railroad stations, they have a cable that goes from the station out to a post and they have dozens of wires in it for all purposes. His plane's wheels hit that, and it turned him over and killed him. We had men come from all

kinds of services -- the railroad. I guess there might have been some shoe clerks. (Laughter).

N: Did you all have to learn Spanish to be with the Border Patrol down here -- was that required?

R: That's part of the training too, if you didn't know Spanish. Of course, I'd worked for the railroad, worked in México, and I didn't know too much Spanish, but then I knew enough to get by. They'd train you in pistol and use of the rifle and shotgun and so forth. But there was not a regular training school. They'd just go out, take you out in the country and make you practice.

N: How about tracking or what they call sign-cutting? Did they train you in that or did you just sort of pick that up from some of the veterans?

R: Well, you worked with older men when you first came in -- you were a rookie and you worked with older men. You could watch and learn from them on sign-cutting. There's lots of stunts. They found some tracks up here of a man going to México, but he was really coming out this way when they caught him. He had a sole nailed on the bottom of his shoes in reverse. It looked like he was going back to México when he was coming the other way. He had wooden footprints cut out and nailed to his shoes, but they were in reverse of where he was going.

N: Was most of your work in terms of capturing wetbacks or illegal aliens over here -- that's mainly what you were concerned with?

R: Yes, that's mainly what we were after. Every fellow that you caught with a load of liquor on his back -- he was a wetback usually. Of course, they had some Americans who took a chance. They paid them I don't know what in Mexican money for carrying the stuff over. When we caught them,

of course, they were stuck. Whoever was the boss of the smuggling deal never showed. My partner and I drove in behind Peyton's making a search along the river. We got out at the foot of Park Street, pulled in behind some bushes to watch this Park Street crossing. We hadn't been there very long before here showed two fellows up on the levee, the railroad track. One was carrying a grip, the other didn't have anything. So we watched them. The little fellow started on up Park Street; he was going up there to see if everything was clear. I told my partner, "Run to the rear and cut him off so he can't go back. I'll get the other one." So we surrounded them. The fellow with the grip had 40 pounds of marijuana. At his trial, he got 16 months up in La Tuna. But his California friend -- I think that's where they were going -- never showed up. They let him stick it out. Another deal -- I was stationed up at Alamogordo -- on this 952 pints of liquor. They took the man to the jail in Alamogordo and the judge there set his bond for so much. He later jumped bond, so this man that owned the liquor, a man from Florida -- he put up the bond money and helped out his driver, and then they treated him that way -- they jumped the bond.

N: I guess you people in the Border Patrol cooperated with some of the other federal agencies, like the Narcotics Agency.

R: Yes we did, with them, with the Customs Service. Of course, they didn't work the river. If they did, it was because they had information that there was some narcotics coming over at a certain street, and they'd phone headquarters and come down. We'd stay out of it and let them handle their own deal. The Customs called us one night and said they

had information at Peyton's Packing Company and they wanted to work it, so our outfit said we'd stay out. We sent a team in six or eight blocks from there back towards town around the island and had them in there away from the Customs outfit. This smuggling outfit shot the Customs a curve and they didn't come over at Peyton's, they came over where our team was -- so we got them. (Laughter). There was a Fourth Street canal bridge that they could cross and get into El Paso. That was nine blocks difference. So we didn't interfere -- that was nowhere around the Customs outfit, but we got the liquor. (Laughter).

N: Did you get a lot of information from informants who would tip you off as to when things were coming across?

R: Well, each inspector had an informer or two, but they usually wouldn't tell you who it was. If you have a fellow who was an informant, who was trying to furnish information to ten inspectors, a lot of it would just be hot air. Where he was just working with one man, chances are his information would be good. Consequently, they didn't tell you who the informer was. He didn't appear in court. I had two or three good informers; in fact, I had one that worked in Peyton's. (Laughter). That's how we knew about the other things. A funny deal -- there was a fellow on a motorcycle that rode up to the railroad crossing by the stockyards, blinked his motorcycle lights, turned around and headed back for town. First thing you know, here comes a car, so we just rushed out and surrounded it, and it was plumb loaded with liquor. He signaled and they were in the Peyton's yard. Of course, I don't think they knew it; they had a guard there, but I don't know whether he had any part in it or not. When this fellow flashed his motorcycle

lights, we got suspicious of it. He turned around and pulled out. If he'd stayed there, he might have flashed another light or two and they might have turned around. The men would have got away anyhow. Different outfits had signals. If he was singing a song, that meant the coast was clear; he was somewhere near the line where they were going to come over. He'd scratch two matches; that meant the coast is clear. If he scratched one, lit it, and threw it down right quick, they'd take off. But if he had plenty of time to light a cigarette himself, that meant the coast was clear. Also so many car honks back a block from the line and so forth. The first apprehension that I made at the island, a Mexican boy, told us that there would be a red light in the window. He didn't know where it was, but to go up this street -- that was Piedras -- and there'd be a red light in the window. We handcuffed him, took his liquor, and walked up Piedras Street, and right at the canal was a house there with a red light in the window. Of course, you couldn't prove that they had anything to do with it; we just got the poor boy.

N: What would happen on any given day that you were working, say when you first started working for the Border Patrol? On any one day when you worked, would you be likely to spend all day and not apprehend anybody, or were you pretty busy picking up people? What was the pace like as far as your work?

R: Well, they divided the island up -- that was the big place. Then there was Eighth and Ninth Streets, this side of the Santa Fe bridge, and the old Standpipes -- that used to be a water system in the river. They'd assign teams to certain sections, maybe have me and my partner there

at Eighth and Ninth Streets. Somebody could be up at the headgates, and he wouldn't interfere with us and we wouldn't interfere with him. Then there'd be sometimes three or four teams around the island, from Peyton's to the foundry, from the foundry to Eighth and Ninth, the monument at Eighth and Ninth, and then on around to the river again. They'd divide it up so you wouldn't run into one another and nobody would get hurt. No, you were usually pretty busy. You didn't have to fake anything or make out like you were working -- it was there.

N: What was the procedure for dealing with people after their capture -- could you tell me just a little bit about what you would do with them after you picked up a couple of people?

R: Yes, we'd take them to headquarters, make out a report, and then they'd be fingerprinted; then we'd take them to the county jail. If it was a liquor violation, the Customs would be notified. If it was a narcotic violation, the Narcotics Division would be notified. If they were a stolen car outfit, of course the sheriff would be notified. We cooperated with them, you know, but we didn't really work the river with them.

N: And if some of them were just coming over, say, looking for work, then they would be held in the jail and then sent back to México?

R: Well, the next morning they'd take them up to the Immigration Station. There an investigator would take their case and either give them a voluntary return to México or hold them for prosecution. If it was a first offense, usually it would be a voluntary return -- they called it a "V.R." If they had been apprehended two or three times, it would be a Section 1 and they'd file on it. They would go to La Tuna and

before La Tuna, Leavenworth; that was before they had La Tuna.

N: Did you also have a lot of problems with little kids coming over just to raise cain and steal?

R: Oh, my lord, yes -- we'd catch a lot of them. Of course, they'd V.R. them back. We had two girls especially, two sisters about 14 or 15 years old, that would come across the river and come down under the Santa Fe bridge where these penny-catchers used to gather. People would come by and they'd holler, "Gimme a penny, gimme a penny." They'd pitch things down there and these boys would catch them -- we'd get them quite a few times. But these girls were little prostitutes, and they were making their money from those kids under that bridge. One night when I got down to work, we caught these two girls, these two little prostitutes. Of course, we were going to V.R. them, but I told my partner, "Get one of the girls and I'll get the other one." We took them down to the steel bridge -- that's the one just the other side of the Santa Fe bridge -- and went down on the railroad bed. I pulled up this gal's dress and paddled her butt, and I mean I paddled it. I turned her loose and she got up on that bridge and boy, she left for México. Then I got the other one and gave her a blistering and pushed her up on the bridge and boy, she took off.

N: Sometimes that's more effective than all the legal remedies.

R: Yes, because we'd just been playing seesaw with them. Of course, no one knew it officially; I might have been reprimanded or maybe fired.

N: It must have been frustrating for you sometimes to pick up people and send them back and have the same people come back over several times.

R: Yes, it happened. Of course, most of our time was 3:00 to 11:00 or

4:00 to midnight; that's when it was the big deal. They had scout cars, men in uniform, that worked the town in the daytime. They didn't do any dirty work on the river. You'd come in at night, see a bunch of men -- two or three of them would be some that you'd caught the night before and they were back again. It was really frustrating.

N: Did each man work different shifts? For instance, would you work from 3:00 until midnight one week, and then work the day shift the next week?

R: Yes, I was one of the seniors, I had a shift. They had three eight-hour seniors. He'd make the assignments, assign the men to the different places and kind of look out for their well-being. They'd have a team up here on the sandhills -- they had a corral up there and some horses. Dogie Wright rode up at the sandhills quite a bit; I don't remember him working the river too much, but I guess he did. Then the Lower Valley -- Ysleta, Fabens, Fort Hancock -- had outposts. Of course, they'd catch contraband, narcotics, wetbacks who came to work over on the farms.

N: Was that area all part of the El Paso district, down there to Ysleta and Fabens?

R: Yes.

N: How far did the El Paso district extend?

R: To about Van Horn, back in there; then the Marfa district would take over. They had a chief and so forth. The other way, they went to Lordsburg, I think, and then Arizona would take over. I never worked in that area, but I believe the Arizona district line was near Lordsburg. Then that outfit would take over. They had their district, their chief patrol

inspector, and a heck of a lot of men. I don't think they ever had more than worked in our region -- I think we were the biggest.

N: Then I guess you also had some patrols that would be inland from the border a little bit, checkpoints where you would be stationed?

R: Yes, we had regular stations -- Alamogordo, Deming or Lordsburg -- I think Lordsburg was the station. Then they'd have one maybe in Carrizozo, New Mexico. They'd spot them in different places. The men that came over, of course when they got back there they thought they were safe, and then the uniformed men would pick them up. (Laughter).

N: Did the members of the Border Patrol like yourself get moved around from duty to duty? Did you work the checkpoints inland for a while, or mostly did you stay on the river?

R: Yes, you'd be moved around. Like Alamogordo, you'd be stationed there, live there. Maybe you'd be assigned to the Alamogordo station, which I was two different times, and then you'd come back to El Paso and somebody else would go up there.

N: Did you have a problem with older people? I understand that before the Mexican Revolution there were no barriers to people coming in -- they could sort of come and go as they pleased. Did you have a problem later with older people who remembered those days when they could just come in, who didn't understand the new regulations, the new laws?

R: Oh, I don't know. Of course, they wouldn't lie to you, they'd tell you the truth. There were a lot of older people who would come in and they'd pick them up. If they were feeble, they'd feel sorry for them and they would V.R. them to México. I don't think too many of them went to La Tuna or Leavenworth.

N: Also, I wanted to ask you -- what types of people did you pick up? Were they mostly poor and uneducated people, or did you ever get people who were well educated and well dressed, upper class people trying to come to the United States?

R: Well, yes, you got some. I had one man who was trying to smuggle a gang in and go to Colorado for the beet season, to California for the fruit, and so forth. You know, they had money and were pretty well dressed. The rest of them were dressed in Mexican clothes. They weren't too bad looking, you know. These fellows that were smuggling them in dressed pretty well; one had a cowboy belt with a big buckle. (Laughter).

N: How would you say the local people here in El Paso, especially the Mexicans here -- how did they treat you? Do you think they respected the Border Patrol or did they sort of resent you here?

R: Well, there may have been some that didn't like you, but then the majority of them . . . of course, they weren't all friendly and backslapping or anything like that. They'd call you Señor and try to treat you right. We had one fellow killed at Raynor Street, an officer. His partner went to a Mexican house to use the telephone to telephone headquarters. He told them that his partner had been killed, so they let him in to use the phone. He came back out and they brought a sheet and a blanket out to lay over his body. I don't know whether too many of them would have done that or not. But they passed the hat at headquarters and gave them -- I think they got \$200 or \$300 for them to show their appreciation. There weren't too many active friends. We had one family that lived at the foot of Oregon Street.

The girls used to bring over, every holiday, a big pan of tamales. Their brother killed Milton, a patrol inspector. But the girls were nice kids, they were church workers and all. Of course, the old lady and the girls nearly died when they found out that the son had killed Milton. He was the leader of a liquor gang coming over at Park Street, he was the head of them. When Milton stood up in front of them and told them to halt, he shot him. Of course, the fellows behind him with all the liquor, they dropped it and ran back to México. The officers picked up the contraband later.

N: I understand that sometimes these various liquor gangs would get in fights between themselves and one gang would try to steal another gang's liquor.

R: Yes, you'd hear that. Maybe you'd pick up an outfit at Peyton's and we knew it belonged to them but couldn't prove it. You'd kind of hint that somebody had told you he was coming over that night, and he'd say, "I know who the SOB is." First thing you know, he had some information that he'd give you and you'd catch the other fellow that he thought gave the information. You'd just use one against the other. It wasn't a question of getting too much from the gang leaders, but then if you could kind of hint that so-and-so told you, he'd get even with him. (Laughter).

N: How about the Córdova Island down there -- was that one of the biggest problem areas because of the geography of that area?

R: Yes, they'd come over at the neck, a little outfit, and after they got in there they could just spread everywhere. You'd get up by Peyton's or the other side of the island and see the wagons come over, maybe

carrying it on their backs, but after they got on the island they'd just spread out and you'd never know where they went. Of course, you'd recognize their horse and wagon, you'd beat it around this fellow's house and watch for any stuff.

N: How about these watch towers we were talking about before -- when did they put those in?

R: I don't remember the exact date, but they were good for daylight and moonlit nights. You could put a man up there with the glasses and he could see anybody coming to the island. That saved a lot of riding around -- you'd park in back of the tower a couple of blocks back so that they couldn't see you from the Mexican side. Whenever they started their maneuver, this fellow in the tower would tell you.

N: I seem to recall hearing that later they were taken down because the Mexican government objected to having them there.

R: Oh, I don't know -- I wasn't here at the time, but I don't think they objected. If there was anybody, it would be the smugglers. (Laughter). We cooperated with the Mexican authorities some. Of course, we got shot at by some of them. When the smugglers would come over like at Eighth and Ninth Street and you'd try to catch them, you'd let them get up on the dry land and try to surround them. If any of them would get away from you and run back to the Mexican side, there might be some guys over there with their rifles and we'd get a welcoming shot or two once in a while.

N: Was the problem with illegal aliens mostly Mexicans? I understand there was a problem for a while with Chinese coming out of México too. Do you remember anything about that?

- R: Well, they got a few Chinese. There were even some Europeans who'd come up here or try to get into California. I think they caught quite a few Germans and so forth, a few Chinese. But I think the big Chinese deal was before my time. That was when Pat Garrett was sheriff and so forth -- I understand there was Chinese activity then.
- N: Maybe we could talk about some of the personalities you remember from your days in the Border Patrol. Who were some of the men you remember particularly working with? For instance, Mr. Perkins, who was the Chief Patrol Inspector here in El Paso -- could you tell us about some of those people that you worked with?
- R: Well, Cliff Perkins was the Chief Patrol Inspector, Bud Perry was his assistant. Then they had a senior for each shift, but I don't remember them. Of course, Dogie Wright came in, Jim Kelly -- he's the chief at Tucson now; he's one of the oldtimers. Keith MacDonald later went to the Immigration; he's retired and lives up here at the crossroads. I can't recall all of them.
- N: I also wanted to ask you a little bit about your emotions on the job. Did you have a feeling that you might get shot or wounded in the line of duty? Was this something that was on your mind when you went to work?
- R: No, you never worried about it. I don't know. I've got a lot of Chinese elms out here, you know, for shade trees. I wish when I planted those things that I had put pecan trees in. But then in the Patrol you'd go to work in the afternoon and you didn't know if you'd come back that night or not. I'd have had to buy them on installment, on time, and I didn't want to saddle my wife with that, so I didn't

do it. You didn't worry about it, but of course you figured your time might come. I was on a detail up at Carrizozo, New Mexico, with Bill Williams -- he was my partner. At that time it was about Christmastime; we were blocking all the roads that left El Paso for contraband. We were about a quarter mile or a half mile the other side of Carrizozo, guarding the crossroads. This Saturday night we decided we'd pull off the road and go to a yard that was right near us; nobody lived there. It had a lot of old wrecked cars and a garage, an adobe outfit. It was a wreck, but you could get in it. So we went in there and built a fire; we were going to cook our supper. I picked up a Ford coil and put it on the fire so we could set our pots on it. My pistol, a single action .44, fell out of my holster, hit that piece of steel, and went through my right lung. My partner loaded me up in the car and took me in to the doctor. The doctor wanted to probe for the bullet and he wouldn't let him. Next morning they loaded me on a passenger train to come into El Paso. At that time they had a Masonic hospital where Sears is now. They took me in there, and I don't know whether they figured I'd live or what. I slept that night, or tried to. Of course, the doctors came in and I had a nurse, Miss Kirskey. The next morning something was bothering my back. So I reached my hand back there and pulled that bullet out. It was just sticking out of the skin. I've still got it as a watch-bob. The nurse rushed into the telephone and called the doctor and he said, "Tell him to tell everybody we found the bullet." Of course, it didn't look too hot me being in there 24 hours and the doctor not probing for the bullet. But this bothered me -- of course, I was full of dope and

everything -- and I pulled that bullet out. He said, "Tell everybody we found the bullet." Poor Dr. Richmond is dead now.

N: Did you ever get wounded in the line of duty -- by that I mean in a shootout, say, with smugglers?

R: No, but I've been splattered. You know, you'd maybe go into Eighth and Ninth Street or someplace and they'd start shooting at you. You'd crawl on your belly so you could return the fire. I've had bullets throw gravel in my face; they've come pretty close.

N: Did your wife object to your being in the Border Patrol, being in a job like that?

R: No, I don't think so -- it was a living. I was working for the railroad before that for fairly good wages, but then when they merged the Southwestern and the S. P. together, they cut off a lot of jobs. Some of the fellows went to T. P., some went somewhere else and scattered around. So when I started in with the Patrol, she didn't object -- it was just a living.

N: I guess back in those days you worked all seven days, right? There was none of this five day work week or anything like we have now?

R: When I first started, there were no days off. If you made a good catch, some good apprehension, they'd give you Sunday off. Of course, later on we got the five day week. But when I first started, if you'd make a good catch or do something exceptionally well, they'd give you Sunday off.

N: Well, I think that's about all the questions I had that I wanted to ask you. Are there any other incidents that happened to you during your career that you remember particularly that you'd like to talk about,

apprehensions you made or any other things that happened to you that you'd like to tell me about?

R: I worked with a Mexican officer, Pete Torres. We were at Monument 9 and some Mexicans came over with contraband; we caught them. We handcuffed them and sat them down in front of a store. I told Pete to go over to the disposal plant, that's the septic tanks, and call headquarters to come and get them. So Pete took out and before he got two blocks away, here came some more. So by the time he got back I had a gang of them with me; I think it was six or seven. Everything was so quiet, you know, the ones in the back didn't know we had caught their partners. One night we were up away from the line and some smugglers came over. I told my partner, "Now watch these, guard them and don't let them get away." I took out for another one who was trying to get back to México. He was running like hell and so was I, and I could hear somebody's feet on the ground, running along with me or a little behind me. I finally caught up with this bird, and when I did I looked at this other man -- it was a city policeman. (Laughter). He said, "I saw those fellows break and run and I knew there was something wrong. When I got out of the car, you were the nearest." He didn't get ahold of the fellow, but he was sure pushing him. (Laughter). It was a city policeman.

N: You say it was about 1954 when you retired from the Border Patrol?

R: Yes, about then. As I say, the idea of the Patrol was to have men in it that could do anything. We had a fellow who went down for information on wetbacks and narcotics at an oilfield, where they were drilling for oil. He went to work there as an oil driller. When the time came for

the trial and they brought these fellows in, there stood that oil worker in a Border Patrol uniform, Bill Williams. Of course, they had a few kind words for him under their breath. I can't recall anything else at the present. We'd take a car out at night and ditch it two or three blocks from the line or wherever and walk in, hide it so spotters and smugglers couldn't find out where your outfit was. Sometimes there would be a man from headquarters who would load you up in his car, drive you out and drop you off. Then a car would pick you up at 11:30 if you were going to get off at 12, at a certain street like the Cebada Street pumphouse or the septic tanks. You'd usually have quite an area, and if you caught any contraband, you'd have to find a phone somewhere. We'd go to the septic tanks, or there was a fellow in the Cebada area that had a store. We'd wake him up; he was one that didn't care whether they knew it or not. We'd phone in for help. Sometimes we'd make an apprehension and be sitting on the street and a police car would come by. We'd get them to call their headquarters and call ours to tell them where we were and that we needed transportation. Once in a while the Customs would be prowling; we'd run across them and they'd telephone for us, because a lot of their cars didn't have radios.

N: Okay, I guess we've covered everything pretty well. Thank you very much, Mr. Reeves.