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Interview no. 689

Pollard Rodgers

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Pollard Rodgers
INTERVIEWER: Rebecca Craver
PROJECT: History of the University
DATE OF INTERVIEW: February 14, 1984
TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted
TAPE NO.: 689
TRANSCRIPT NO.: 689

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Mining Engineer graduate of the Texas College of Mines, 1941.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Recollections of college life, 1936-41, including buildings, professors (especially Cap Kidd), students, dances, pranks, engineer initiation; reunions with Mexican engineering ex-students; the Ex-students Association; Homecoming activities in the 1930s and 1940s.

Length of interview: 1 hour, 20 minutes Length of transcript: 34 pages

POLLARD RODGERS
by Rebecca Craver
February 14, 1984

Tape I

C: Okay, what years were you a student?

R: Well, from 1936 to 1941, graduated in 1941.

C: Right in time for the war, huh?

R: Yes, yes. Oh, there were, I guess practically all of the students that were new at that time were in some of the Armed Forces.

C: Were you a local boy?

R: Well, no, from West Texas. I went to high school at Barstow, Texas, you know, near Pecos, about 200 miles from here. But I've called this home ever since 1936, although I get away from it once in a while. I worked as a civil engineer. I graduated as a mining engineer, worked as a civil engineer.

C: The school was the College of Mines when you were here.

R: Yes, yes. We called it Texas College of Mines.

C: Where did you live, in the dorm?

R: Well, the first year...well, when I got out of high school, course the Depression, so I worked three years on construction and saved enough to come to school for a year. So I lived in the dorm my first year, and that was the first year that they had the new dorm then. It was, oh, it's a little building. Let's see. [Looks for photograph.]

C: Oh, look at this. A picture, a photograph. Oh, it's beautiful!

R: Well, why I got this is, before I graduated this is the way it looked. But at the time I got there it looked like this except the library building wasn't there. And see, here was the new dorm (chuckles), the boys' dorm, and then over here was the girls' dorm. Of course, this is just a little building with a large dormitory on each side

now, and let's see, Hawthorne [Street] wasn't through. But otherwise it looked about like it did when I first came there. There was a little mill down here at the Metallurgy building, the little tin building there.

C: Well, what did you think when you first saw that campus?

R: Oh, I liked it. I liked it from the time I saw it, and I still like it. (Laughter) But then, you know, it fit in so with the mountains. I think at that time it still had more of the original concept of, you know, looking like the buildings in Tibet or Bhutan or wherever it is. But, yes, we would walk across this rough ground over...the dining hall was in the girls' dorm, so we'd walk across this rough ground. Now, this pavement wasn't in. This was probably about the time I graduated. I think this was taken probably about 1940 or '41, because it does have the new library building.

C: The library was built while you were a student then?

R: Yes. But in 1936 they just finished the Centennial Museum and these two dormitories, so, boy, the school was really expanding. And I thought there was about 700 students there, but I notice in that Frontier College book it says 825 the first year. At any rate, it was so small that everybody knew everybody else. The profs knew you, you knew the profs, and well, in fact the profs knew about everything about you, which was fortunate in some ways because we needed help sometimes. I mean, not on the school work, but financial help. And of course it was still Depression days, and sometimes these profs helped you out of their own pocket--a loan, you know.

C: Really.

R: But my gosh (chuckles), they weren't getting hardly anything in those days, I mean compared to now.

C: Did you ever get a loan from one of the professors?

R: Well, from Cap Kidd during my senior year, the mining students took a trip of two weeks in your senior year and went and visited mines in New Mexico, Colorado and Arizona. And so I borrowed \$50 dollars from him. And then of course after I graduated and went to work, well, I repaid it. And of course what most of the mining students did when they borrowed anything from Cap, well, when they paid it back, they paid a little bit more, see. So, he had a chance to build up a very small loan fund. And according to Cap, every penny was paid back, and usually plus a little bit more if they could afford it.

C: He must have been quite a man.

R: Oh, yes. Yes, he was wonderful.

C: Tell me about him.

R: Oh, it could go on all day on Cap Kidd stories. (Chuckles)

C: Okay. (Chuckles)

R: Well, gosh, recording it, I don't like to say it, but he wasn't much of a teacher, but gosh, he was such a wonderful man and he had so many practical things that he taught us. I mean, of course the college at that time, what they tried to do in the mining engineering was prepare you to go out to a mining district, an isolated mining district, where you were probably the most educated person there, and the one that so many people look up to you. So my gosh, we had a first aid course that was practically like a pre-med course. And then of course what Cap was so good on was, you know, teaching us practical things. And of course he...I didn't realize it at the

time, I realize it now, he instilled in us high standards. In fact, all the profs up there, they were just unusual, and, boy, dedicated.

What I've always thought about so much is the closeness of everybody. All the students knew each other, and even when I graduated from there there was I think about something over a thousand then. But still, that still existed. And of course we always tried to keep the old profs informed of what we were doing, and they had a real interest. You know, if you came to Homecoming a few years after that, well, these profs knew your wife's name. If you had some children, they wanted to hear about it, and the next time you saw them, they remembered the names of children. Just unbelievable.

But let's see, on Cap, these Cap stories probably you've heard a lot of them. Let's see, I think one of my favorites was, he had an 8 o'clock class in Surveying, and there were two students called the Mitchum twins, they were twins, and they lived up the valley. But of course they had a hard time getting to school for an 8 o'clock class because they caught a ride or ever how you could get there, so they were usually late. Well, Cap didn't like anybody being late for his class, so one day he gave us this talk about that, "Now, boys, when you get out of here and you go to work in a mine, the cage to go down into the mine will leave at a certain time. If that cage goes down and you're not there, you've just lost a day's work." So, okay. (Chuckles) So a couple of days go by and the next class, 8 o'clock class of Cap's, we were there and the Mitchum boys weren't there. So old Cap got up and marched over to the door and slammed the door closed and locked it, and then he looked at the back of the door, and we'd printed this big sign, "The cage has gone down!" (Laughter)

C: What was his reaction?

R: Oh, well, we kind of held our breaths because he was kind of tough, but he didn't say anything, but he went on about it. But that turned out to be one of his favorite stories, too.

C: That's cute.

R: Oh, let's see, there's so many of Cap. In fact, I think if you start talking to people in those days, they'll all have a lot of Cap Kidd stories.

One that I heard there that, see, Cap took care of maintaining all the buildings and all, and just took care of everything. And so they needed a little paving to go from up to Holliday Hall to where the Kidd Field is, you know. But Cap just had a little bit of money to do this, a very small amount for the college to maintain anything or let alone build anything. So he called this fellow Jack Vowell that had a paving company, and of course Jack Vowell had helped the college, and I think he maybe even coached the football team. At any rate, he had something in the background, a real booster to the college. So the phone conversation went like this. [PAUSE] Cap called Jack Vowell and told him that he needed some paving done and he said, "I have \$500 dollars to do it." And so he found out how much paving it was and so forth, and so Jack Vowell says, "Well, Cap, I'd like to do it, but that don't even come close to paying for just raw materials." And so Cap said, "Well, that's too bad, Jack, but be here Monday and start the paving." (Laughter) I didn't tell it real well, but that was what it amounted to. And sure enough it was paved.

But Cap helped so many people. And you know, these mining engineers, we were still close through a lot of years, and a few years ago we had a little convention of our own down in Mexico City with Mexican engineers, see. Now, at that time there were lots of Mexican students here from Mexico, and my gosh, nearly all the mining engineers in Mexico were graduates of the Texas College of Mines. So gosh, when we were down there, these Mexican engineers, they had a lot of stories, too, about Cap.

C: I'll bet.

R: And, and one of them was, there was this fellow Morales that Cap used most of the time to help him dynamite, and you've heard about all the dynamiting on the campus. So once in a while he'd need some help so he'd get two or three people. And I think there was the NRA or something, where you could pay a student 20 cents an hour or something. But it was very limited, see. So Morales would get the people [to help]. Now, this is the way the Mexicans tell it. So Morales said one day Cap called him in and said, "Morales, I've been looking over the list of these people that you have helping you, and I see Garcia, Valdez, so forth. I have to turn in this list. We're going to have to get an O'Reilly and a Jones and a Smith in here." (Laughter) But see, the Mexican engineers, they loved him, see, like we all did. And, oh, he's always up to something. But his blasting, that was his pride and joy.

C: He was a real powder monkey, huh?

R: Yeah, well, he was pretty good, he was pretty good. Because I'm sure other people have told you, if you interview 40 people you're



going to hear it again, about where he, like in the Old Main Building, there's several rooms in the back on the ground floor that he blasted out of the rock, this is after the building was built. And then I was reading here in this Frontier College that he also did that in Kelly Hall, the first floor.

Oh, and by the way, I was thinking, we was looking at that new library building. See, the library, when I first was here, was on the third floor of Kelly Hall. And as I remember it was just half of the floor. It wasn't much, you know. But so then from the day when the new library was finished--and of course Baxter Polk was the librarian--he needed to move the books over to the library. Well, so I think he had one NRA student at 20 cents an hour to help him, but as soon as we heard about it, well, various ones of us started helping him. And he had an old flatbed truck that he loaded some books on, but then a lot of it was just carried by hand from there over here. And of course anybody that came by the building, whether they were working or not, we hollered out the window to come up and get a load of books to take over there. (Laughter) My gosh, when I think about that new library they're getting now, and there was just practically nothing in that old Kelly. Of course we had so much to do, we didn't really do much researching anyway.

But on the, on research, though, like on the mining problems and things, at that time down at the public library there were some real good files, and what it was is, engineers in the southwest and Mexico had turned over to the Public Library their files. And, boy, they were real, real valuable. I don't know whether they're still

around or not, but they were sure big help to us.

C: Well, that's wonderful.

R: Well, let's see. As I say, there's no end to this, let me tell you one thing that might be interesting. Of course these mining students were problems, I guess. Most of our classes, you know, were math and engineering and so forth, but we had some academic classes like economics, and oh, there was something on Texas government and so forth. Well, at any rate, on an economics class, the engineers had to take it. So there was a fellow in there called Jordan, and he was kind of a character. And, let's see, that's him right here.  Shows picture.  So, what he did, he decided that he was bored with this economics class, so he put out a newspaper while the class was going on and called it The Daily Borer. Now, this is one of the later ones. Now, the first ones, it had Daily Borer for Bored Engineering Economics Students, but I think he finally took that off because he didn't want to offend...let's see, the teacher was Miss Gregory.

Now this particular one is the resource edition, and then he put one out for, oh, for Christmas shopping. Oh, I think there was about five of them. Well, I have copies of three of them. This is the only copy I can find right now.

C: Oh, I see you contributed a recipe here.

R: Oh well, see, he just wrote about the people in the class.

C: "Your Party Drink." (Laughs)

R: Now, this is "Treviño, A Cousin Jack."

C: What is that?

R: That's the Welsh miners, isn't it?

C: Oh, yes.

R: And of course Treviño was here for Homecoming, and by gosh, he carried a copy of this around every place he went, I think.

C: Doc Quinn, did you have him?

R: Oh, yes, yes. Dr. Quinn and Speedy Nelson, they were the Geology Department, just the two of them. And, you know, they got such small allotments to carry on their work. One year Dr. Quinn said, I think he had \$700 dollars available, and he was trying to horde it so he could buy a couple of microscopes that he needed. So his Minerology class, you know you need lots of samples of minerals for this class, and of course what Doc Quinn did, well, when anybody graduated and went to work in a mine, well he told them, "Well, send me a sack of every what type of ore they're mining." And of course post paid, you know. (Chuckles) And a lot of them did it and so forth.

But I think about when I took Minerology, the hardest part of the course was that he had some great big shelves that he'd found down in another building that were about 10 feet high and, gosh, 20 feet long. So us, the students, we moved them from that building up to the third floor of Main. And to get it around the stairwells, you know, they were so long you couldn't do it, so you had to lift it up over. And we always said, "That was the hardest part of Doc Quinn's Minerology course, moving those damn shelves." (Laughter) But he was a great fellow and such a gentleman. And you know, we got something from all of those profs. I'd say from Doc Quinn that he kind of smoothed off some of our rough edges and tried to get us to act more like gentlemen.

And then of course Speedy was the other Geology prof, Speedy Nelson.

C: He had a store.

R: Well, he had the co-op down in the west end of Main, and of course he'd taken that over because somebody tried it and it just never... Never did make any money, as far as that goes. It had the Post Office in there, and cold drinks and so forth, and books. They had books, that was the bookstore.

But talking about Speedy, the nicknames, you know, I don't know how it happened up there but it just seemed like that most of the people had some kind of a nickname. Now, how I wound up with this Barstow Bill nickname was when I first went up there, [Bill was] a nickname for me, but there was another Bill Rodgers up there. My gosh, with only those few students there's two, still two of them. So people were always getting them mixed up. And both of us were living in the dorm that first year. I remember what happened one time was, the phone rang one Sunday morning and somebody hollered that, "Hey, Bill, there's a phone call for you." So, I went down and answered the phone. And so this girl says, "Is that you, Bill?" And I said, "Yes." And then boy she started chewing me out. Well, what had happened, this other Bill Rodgers had had a date with her to take her to the dance the night before, but he'd gone over to Juarez with some of his friends and he missed picking her up. I think by the time he got to her house, well, she give up and gone somewhere else. Any rate, missed the dance. So she started chewing me out. And I kept trying to tell her that, "I'm not that Bill Rodgers," see. And boy, she never let up, she kept going. So I don't know how they ever solved that, but any rate, later on they got married.

C: Really?

R: So, I guess that she finally forgave him, I guess. (Chuckles)

But this fellow Treviño right here, he's the one that started calling me Barstow Bill Rodgers, and the other one Wink Bill Rodgers. But he was a senior--he graduated and he was gone--but by that time the Barstow Bill stuck with me. But there's a John _____ that for years was head of the Geology Department in the University of Arizona at Tucson. Well, he was a great big, heavy-set guy--not fat, just big. And so he worked up in Alaska a couple of years before he came to Mines, you know, to get a little money to go to school. So somebody referred to him one time as, "that Alaskan moose." Well, the moose stuck, and to this day, well, any of us who know him, we'd call him the Moose, you know.

C: Well, how did Speedy Nelson get called Speedy?

R: Well, he was called that as far back as I know, but it was apparently when he was going to Mines as a student. I'm sure I've heard the story but I don't remember, except it goes back to his school days.

C: Well, you were mentioning dances. Did they have dances on the campus, then?

R: Yes, at Holliday Hall, yeah.

C: Was that a gym?

R: Yes. It was everything. (Laughs) When they registered the first time, we registered in the gym. And there was plenty of room for everybody, you know, for 700 then. Yes, I was reading somewhere here a while ago, what all the student activities fee was. It cost \$10 dollars and it was optional, but I think they listed 20 dances, and 32 issues of the Prospector, and the Flowsheet, and six football

games, and I don't know how many basketball games. And then, of course nearly all the engineers paid that activity fee because you had to pay that to vote in the student elections. And of course at that time the academic students were already outnumbering the mining students except that the engineers still liked to hold the offices. So there was really a lot of politics. So, well, say maybe 200 engineers out of 800, and by gosh, the engineers would wind up with the offices.

C: Were you an officer?

R: Oh, I don't know. I don't think I was ever an officer in the Student Council, those other things. But I spent a lot of time politicking. And of course there was a lot of girls that, you know, backed the engineers, and they called themselves engineers, you know. There wasn't any really taking engineering at that time, you know. But you know, when some girl said, "Well, I'm an engineer," well, she voted for the engineering ticket. That's what it meant. And of course, then it was turn-about when the most popular girl or this or that, well, we backed them to the hilt.

C: Did you go to the football games?

R: Well, yes. I think all the students went to football. Certainly all of them that had a student activity...well, no, I think practically everybody did.

C: How was the team? Did you win some?

R: Sure! Sure, we won some. They were in the Border Conference. I don't remember winning the Conference title, but I know some years they won more than they lost. But then, you know, there was, oh, like Hardin-Simmons, Aggies, the Arizona schools and New Mexico University, West Texas State. Oh, West Texas State, you knew Ross Moore?

C: Yes, I do.

R: Yeah? Well, he was playing football when I was there, and I guess he played fullback. But any rate, he did the kicking. So, there was a game with West Texas, and West Texas was winning it, but it was a sandstorm. And when old Ross would kick, the wind was against him, and I think some of his kicks maybe went 10 yards up in the air and the wind just stopped them, you know, and so forth. So, West Texas was just a point or two ahead, but the game was just about over in the last minute or something. In those days that was just practically...the game was over. But the Miners got down to about the ____.

/PAUSE/

R: So here old Ross got back to kick a field goal and everybody in the stands just groaned, you know. "My God, kicking into the wind." Oh, and it was over at an angle, too, and in those days, you know, you didn't have the lines where you moved the ball out. It was practically over at one of the sidelines, a horrible angle. So old Ross went back to kick the field goal, and we thought the game was over and everybody just moaned, you know. And Ross hauled off and kicked a perfect field goal and the Miners won. Boy, terrific! And you know the amazing thing, I don't have the information, but nearly the same thing happened years later at a game at West Texas with the same team, but I don't know who did it. But it was in the last minute, and nearly identical thing happened. But that's the way I remember old Ross. But oh boy, that Ross, he was a tough football player. Of course, he looked tough in his later years, but he softened up a lot from those days.

Oh, there's one thing that we used to /do/. One of my hobbies

is collecting Flowsheets, and I think the earliest one I have is 1924. I didn't find it just now, but there's '25. But see, I have over here a collection of them. I understand that the College has stopped putting them out. I think that's a shame because there's so much. Here's a Flowsheet the first year I was out here. This was copper, of course the copper disappeared. Oh, talking about nicknames, there was a girl called Stormy. (Laughter) Jane Booker, nice little girl. I'm not sure how she got the name Stormy, but you know, as I say, nearly everybody had some kind of a nickname. And you know, they weren't vicious, they were just a nickname.

There's something that, I don't know, you might want to pursue this. As I understand it, this fellow was the last graduate in Mining Engineering at Mines.

C: Felipe Moreno of Charcas, San Luis Potosí.

R: Gosh, don't I have a date on that?

Oh, say, gosh, up there in the Main Building, you know, to the left of the steps you go up, that tall palm? Well I thought that one of these books would show, I guess the palm wasn't even planted then, but it was planted while I was at the school. And here's a picture, let's see if I can find it right quick. Right here. See, now this was taken right on the steps there. You see, there's the palm. It was probably about not over five or six feet tall when this picture was taken.

C: Look at you with a beard.

R: Well, now that (laughs)... You know, I'd kind of catch it from my kids when I complained about these people that wear beards and so forth, and they'd say, "Yeah, how about that picture of you?" But what that was, each year we'd have the Hard Luck Dance. This was something that

went way back with the early engineering days, and it was put on by the Scientific Club. And so the deal was to grow a beard, beard-growing contest. But boy, the day after the dance, well, boy, everybody took it off.

C: Would the people dress up like hobos for the Hard Luck Dance?

R: Yeah, yeah.

C: The girls too?

R: Yeah, yeah. Oh, it was...everybody got into the spirit of it.

C: Well, was that at Holliday Hall?

R: Yes, Holliday Hall.

C: Did you have a live band?

R: Yes, yes, but it was the school band. Yeah, they had a band, the Varsitonians they called them. And they were the school band, but they played dance music.

C: Do you remember if there are any people that were in the Varsitonians that still live here?

R: Yeah, I'm sure there is. Let's see. Stanley Wright I think is still in town here. Well, here they are. [Shows pictures.] And here's the fellow that as far as I know is still in town.

C: Well, this looks like a formal dance, everyone in tuxes.

R: Well, they tried to dress up. They didn't always look this nice.

C: Tell me about some pranks.

R: Oh well, I don't know. Just before Homecoming [Pres. Monroe] had the president of the Ex-Students Association over to something at the college, and gosh, we told old stories there. They put some of them in the newspaper. One of the ones that I remember so well was, the freshmen had a dance each year that they promoted and all. So the

big thing was, just before the freshman president went into the dance, that he'd be kidnapped. Now, what they did, when the dance started, they had this grand parade thing, you know, around the gym, which was led by the freshman president. But the deal was to keep him from leading that parade. So they usually tried to kidnap him just before he went into the gym. Well, when I was a sophomore, we were I guess a pretty tough bunch, so what we had figured out, "Okay, we'll kidnap him three days before the dance," and that's what we did. And what we were going to do was take him way up about where Transmountain Road crosses the mountain and hide out for three days, but each day move down a little closer to El Paso. And then the day of the dance, we'd be down there, you know, at the end of Mount Franklin and we'd come down to the dance.

Well, so that was the grand plan. So we drove by his house over in East El Paso as he was coming out to go to school and grabbed him and put him in the car. And we went up the...well it's where the War Road is now, or that extension of North-South Freeway. But it was just a dirt road up there. So we went up to a place where there was an old tin mine, and it's approximately where the Transmountain Road goes over the mountain. So we took him there to a sheepherder's house. And in the meantime, our president, the sophomore president, we'd hid him out with the sheepherder further down the mountain, see, so they wouldn't capture him.

So, okay, now the grand plan was that, okay, somebody might figure out that we'd gone up to the tin mine, but what we'd figured, we'd go over the mountain and then some other sophomores would

drive from Highway 80 way down there up to where Tom Mays Park is now. And now at that time there wasn't a road, but you could drive up these gravel gulleys. So they were going to bring up blankets and food and so forth to get us started on our trek down following the ridge of the mountain, and then also we were going to meet other times, too. That was our logistics. Except it turned out that this freshman bunch, that they were just as tough as we were. So they watched every single sophomore on the campus. And in the meantime the school had just stopped operating. Everybody was acting on this. (Chuckles)

So we got out to the tin mine, there was about three or four of us and this freshman president, Clarence Walker. So, then we went over the mountain to the west side where Tom Mays Park is and Cottonwood Springs is. And gosh, we waited all day for our car to get the food and blankets and so forth. So, well, we did have a little water from Cottonwood Springs, that was all, but nothing to eat. So it come, oh, about an hour or two of dark, so we said, "Well, we'd better go back over the mountain to the shepherders house at the tin mine." So we went back over the mountain. And this is going over the top, you know. Our shoes, the rocks just wore the soles off of them. So, we got over there and we slept in the shepherd's house that night. But in the middle of the night Clarence Walker just got up and left and walked off down the road back toward town; and these freshman were still looking for him, so some of them found him on the road and took him. And in the meantime, during that day when we were on the west side of the mountain, those freshman had found out that we were somewhere around the tin mine. They

didn't know we'd gone over the mountain. But they just covered all of the east side of the mountain searching, and they found our president, our sophomore president, so they captured him.

So, here come the sunup the next day, and the situation that we were in, the sophomores, we'd lost the freshman president, they captured our own president. And so we come back to town, and by that time, well, the president of the school, Dr. Wiggins, was trying to get the school operating again. So he called in some of the freshman and some of us sophomores and said that, "This has to stop. I want you all to get together and come to some decision," and so forth. So he suggested that the freshman president and the sophomore president jointly lead the dance. Well, course, the sophomores agreed. We didn't have anything, we could agree to anything, no sacrifice to us. (Laughter) But any rate, that was the last of the kidnapping. And then here is the Prospector, let's see, May 21, 1938, where "Athletics Will Replace Kidnapping." (Laughter) So they come up with some kind of games or something, but of course that never got anywhere. But at any rate, it ended the kidnapping. So our big plans, the sophomores come in second there.

You know, there was one little political trick. I hope it's not too complicated. I hope I'm not getting too long-winded.

C: Oh, no, no. This is wonderful.

R: They had on these elections for Student Association, course as the enrollment of academic students got larger and larger, it was harder and harder for the few engineers to win the election. So this particular year it looked like the academic platform or slate was going

to win. But they decided, the academic students decided to put out a campaign sheet showing each office to vote for, and then they were going to pass these out, you know, just before the people went in to vote so that everybody would be sure to vote for academic students.

So the engineering students found out about this. So that night they took the sheet that the academics had made up and made another one just exactly like it and used the same names--except if somebody was for president here, well, he was Secretary here; and if it was treasurer here, well, maybe he's a president here or vice-president, see. And they looked just alike, printed on the same thing up there at school. So the next day, well the academic students were passing out those; and then of course we had some of our girl engineers, well they were passing some out, too. And so when it was all over, the engineers had won. And I remember this fellow Cookie Howard that was running for the academic president, he got so mad he said, "I got enough votes to win, but half of them were for president and half of them were for secretary, and some of them were for something else!" (Laughter) So the engineers won that race. But eventually, of course, we got overwhelmed, but it was, oh, lots of fun. But, you know, we all knew each other, and this, we took it as fun. And of course sometimes there was jokes pulled on the engineers. It was kind of hard to smile about, but we were all friends. And through the years it's been that way.

C: Well, on the freshman hazing, did you have to wear beanies, did they do that?

R: Yeah, yeah.

C: And they made them paint the M on the mountain?

R: Well, yes. But I'll tell you, that painting the M on the mountain, we held the freshman responsible for that, but by gosh, everybody went there, everybody. And the wonderful thing, too, now that painting the M was promoted by this Scientific Club that you saw here. Now that Scientific Club was kind of a...well, it was actually a superpolitical organization, but what it was supposed to be was what the name said, Scientific Society, which was the student chapter of AIME, the American Institute of Mining Engineers. But they handled politics, the painting the M on the mountain, the Hard Luck Dance. Nearly anything to come along, well, they'd push it for the school.

Now, on painting the M on Mount Franklin, there was an organization of the girl students. I can't think of what it was.

C: Was it the Coed Council?

R: Yeah. It was the Coed Association, I think they called it.

C: Okay.

R: Yeah! Oh, they were great. Now what they did, they saw that there was some food and drink and so forth up there. And then we usually got a water truck from the city, which the city never admitted from the first day that they were loaning it to the college students, but that's where it come from.

C: And you'd go up here sort of where Scenic Drive is?

R: Yes. Right at the top of Scenic Drive where the lookout is, and the flag, where there's a path that goes right up to the mountain. And that's where we'd have the water truck and we'd have the picnic and all. But then [to] carry these sacks of lime and barrels of water was a real job. And as I say, you expected every freshman to be

there, but actually everybody helped out, and even including the girls.

C: This was in the fall?

R: It must have been.

C: Tell me about St. Pat's Day.

R: Well, we used to have St. Patrick's up at Oro Grande at the old mines there, and that was participated. And of course the thing, St. Pat's Day was to initiate the freshman engineers, but of course the girls went along. Now on these days like this, there wasn't any school holiday, but the profs never seemed to be worried much about it. If everybody was at St. Pat's or everybody out painting the mountain... Well, course, once in a while one of those would show up. Like old Speedy Nelson, he'd show up once in a while.

C: Well, did the girls go through the initiation?

R: In general, no, but there was two or three girls who said they were real engineers, and they went.

C: They'd make you crawl through.

R: Oh, oh, yes. But my God, we watched them. We were so scared that something would happen to them. (Chuckles) We did lots of talking but we really watched them like hawks, because we didn't just didn't want anything to happen to them. Of course I guess then maybe we looked at the girls a little different, but we sure didn't want them to get hurt.

C: And you had to kiss the Blarney Stone?

R: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

C: What was the Blarney Stone?

R: Oh, it was usually just a rock with some horrible stuff on it. I think they usually had it at Oro Grande. Now, through the years they've had it other places, but all the time that I was in school, it was at Oro Grande. And then after we got back from Oro Grande we usually had a beer bust over at the German beer gardens in Juarez.

C: Where were some of the other places you went in Juarez?

R: Well, let's see. I'm all prepared for that.

C: Okay.

R: Here's something that I found a year or two ago, and I'm really glad to have kept it. It's kind of a cartoon map of Juarez in 1938.

C: Oh, what a treasure.

R: Now, see, right here was the place students went to, the Rio Grande Bar. But it was called Steve's Place. This Steve, this fellow was a Spaniard and he was there for years, and then even after the war he was there for a while but finally retired and moved back to Spain. But we'd go in there. And then also, well, when I was a freshman they had big parties, the whole school, usually before football games or something, the night before, in Spanish Town. That had a real large dance floor and so forth. But Steve's is where everybody went to Juarez.

C: Well, did you walk across?

R: Yes. Yes. In fact, we may have even walked from where we lived to there. (Laughter) And then the German beer garden.

C: That was a brewery?

R: Yes, Cruz Blanca. Course that's about the only place we went, here or there.

C: Well, I'd heard about The Lobby.

R: Yes. Oh, there was quite a few bars through here, but where the students, mining students, went, was Steve's.

C: On Juarez Avenue.

R: Yeah. It always amazed me how much we walked around then, but gosh, you just didn't have [a car]. There at Homecoming, you know, I was saying that, well, when I was up there that I felt there was only two or three cars on the whole campus. And then Lucky Leveritt, do you know him?

C: No, I don't.

R: Well, he was a later student. He said, well, things were getting better when he was there-- there was four cars. (Laughter) But, well, I can't remember that there was much paving up there. I think it was paved right here in front of Main, but now this Hawthorne, that wasn't even through at first. And well, I think the first years there I don't believe there was any paving except right around there, and then I think that maybe from about here out to Mesa was paved.

C: Well, now what house is this?

R: Now that is called Ware House, a fellow named Ware that constructed some of these buildings. And that stayed there. Now when I was going to school here some people named Hunts lived there, but after the war the college got it and fixed it up, and the president of the college lived there for a few years.

C: That's where Liberal Arts Building is now, approximately.

R: I guess it is because, you know, the Student Union is right across there.

But see, I started to say this is 1941, [but it] must have been before that, because the last year I was there, the Zeta house

was here, and then the Tri Delts and the Chi Omegas.

C: So they began to build houses about 1939?

R: I'd say about '39 or '40.

C: But they were organizations on campus before that time?

R: Yes, but not any houses.

C: Well, did they have any dances, the sororities?

R: Yes, yes. See, seemed like nearly every Saturday night there was a dance in Holliday Hall. Some different organizations promoted like the Hard Luck Dance, the engineers or the Scientific Club; the freshman gave a dance; and the Student Association put on some dances. As I say, I think they quoted 20 dances during the year. I didn't remember 20, but any rate, I don't doubt there was that many, always. But you know, nobody had any money then. Gosh, it was unbelievable how poor everybody was. But we were all in the same boat. (Chuckles)

C: Well, tell me about your dorm room. Were there two guys to a room?

R: Well, just ever how you wanted it-- most of us just one to a room. Because my gosh, all the rooms weren't even filled up. And then that was applied to both boys and the girls dorm. Well as I say, the first year I was here was the first year that the dorm was opened, so everybody was the first one in that room. No, as I remember everybody had a room of their own. I guess it might have been a couple of rooms where there were two, but I think just because they wanted to study together or something, there wasn't any problem.

C: What are some of these?

R: Oh, after we got out, this is the Ex-Student Association, I guess the Alumni Association now. And so they published this for a few years, and then some of us thought that well, let's try to put

out a magazine. And by gosh, we put out a magazine.

C: The Nugget.

R: Let me see, I think it was either every other month or every three months. And now this was the ex-students did this, and it amazed me now. And of course we had to scratch and work to get enough advertising to pay for it. But by gosh, this was really an active organization then. Oh, we used to have get-togethers down in Chihuahua City on the old Labor Day. For about eight years we'd get with the Mexican graduates. Now, there's Barstow [Bill]. (Laughter)
[Shows picture.]

C: Oh, I see, the president's car. You were president of the association.

R: Yeah. But I was proud of this because you really run for the office. I mean, there's a nominating committee but there was always at least two candidates. And oh yes, I was telling this not long ago, that the ballot was...course I told them though, maybe they went in more for spectacular stuff and didn't go in much for quality then. (Chuckles) Because the two candidates, here's the way the ballot read: For President, Barstow Bill Rodgers, Dynamite Thomas. (Laughter) See this, that's another one of those nicknames. Now, this Thomas, I don't know to this day what his first name is. But when he was going to school, he [was called Dynamite Thomas].

Tape II

R: I tell you, we'd go down to Chihuahua City. Here's I guess the sixth time we were down there in 1955. And we'd go down and stay at the Victoria Hotel and spend a day there. And then there was a ranch about 60 kilometers, ever how much that is, out of town, and

we'd go out to this ranch and spend the rest of the day. And this ranch house was...well, I never did see a cow there, it was a place to go and have a good time. And it belonged to an uncle of one of the students, and it had a little river running by it. Oh, here's where we played Burro Polo.

C: With a broom.

R: Yeah, and usually a softball or something. No, see we had what we called the El Paso team and the Juarez team; although, gosh, the El Paso team, there were people from Houston and all kinds, and the Chihuahua team, there were people from all over Chihuahua.

But it started out real formal the first time we went down there. Everything was, you know, strictly a formalized reunion and so forth. But we went down there eight years running, so by the time the last years were there, by gosh, instead of going down for a couple of days we'd usually spend about a week down there. And it would take another week to recover from it. (Laughter) Oh, and those Mexican engineers were so wonderful, and just couldn't do enough things to see we had a good time. And of course most of them we'd gone to school with, and the ones we hadn't gone to school with, by the time that eight years had gone by we were real familiar. So we got acquainted with a lot of the earlier ex-students and a lot of the later ones.

C: Do you know any Mexican nationals that went over here that live in El Paso now, the old mining engineers?

R: Mexican nationals, I don't know off hand.

C: This Treviño comes up from Mexico.

R: Yeah, Mexico City.

C: Most of them live in Mexico.

R: Yes. Oh, that Salvador Treviño, that's the best friend I ever had. We kept close contact through the years.

Oh, say, one thing might be interesting to you. I'm a ham radio operator. And so several of these miners that worked in South America and Mexico and Central America, I've talked with them various times on my ham radio. In fact, there's one, this John Hanes that worked all over South America and Central America, I've talked to him in practically every place he was--Lima, Peru; Rio de Janeiro; and then down in Central America; Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

Now, Treviño, I talked a couple of times with him by radio, but usually he was gone so I'd talk to his wife. And course we've kept such close contact, we know each other real well, because we had a little reunion, I don't know whether I mentioned it, down in Mexico City about three or four years ago. Now, this started out Treviño, myself, and then Primo Miller, which works as a mining engineer in Virginia. We got together in Mexico City. But then Sal, Salvador Treviño, rounded up these Mexican engineers, graduates, in Mexico City. And so my gosh, we had a real reunion there. One night we got together for a little banquet, and I don't know, there must have been 20, 25 of these people. And of course, a lot of those we knew well, and some of them were older and some younger. So we kept pretty close contact.

You know, of course I guess all this is recorded stuff, but I'm just wondering if you all would like sometime maybe if I brought over some home movies. But what they have is, they of course have a lot of movies of these gatherings down in Chihuahua, but they have one

reel that I took when my wife, Pat, graduated in 1948. And so that year, '47-'48, we tried to take pictures of activities through that year. And my gosh, there's so many things in there. You know, the stables were still up north of the Kidd Field, and the swimming pool wasn't covered, and they had the beauty contests. And the stables...

C: Was it rental stables or what?

R: Well, I guess it was. But any rate, the students rode horseback. You know, they'd go, these little trails around up the hills above the mines and so forth. And then some of these movies showed where they had races, musical chairs, you know, where they'd drive the horses around the circle. And then when the music stopped, well, they jumped off the horse to sit in a chair. And then they had the sombrero races, you know, where they'd put these big Mexican hats on and then you raced your horse down to the line, but you had to get there wearing your hat. And oh, then they had other things like that.

And at that time, too, there was a little golf course right where the Special Events Center is. It was kind of a draw there.

C: How many holes?

R: Well, I started to say nine. It couldn't have been nine there, but there was certainly five or six holes.

And let's see. What else happened here? Of course Memorial Gym hadn't been built yet.

C: Was that when they had the Little Abner Day?

R: Yeah, yeah. Sadie Hawkins' Day.

C: Was that it?

R: Yeah. Well, see, in these movies, that is covered too. As I say, we

tried to cover just about everything. Oh, and painting the M on the mountain. So what this is is a reel, and I guess it's what might be 10 minutes, 16mm.

C: Well, has the Heritage Commission talked to you about giving all this stuff to UTEP?

R: No. Well, I've got to do something with it because, well, I'm 69 now.

C: Well, in the new Library there's going to be a portion devoted to archives having to do with the history of the school. And I know they would just be thrilled to have this.

R: Well, see if anybody's interested.

C: I sure will tell him.

R: And then they have one movie that was taken when they was going to school, and some of the mining engineers made a trip over to the Carlsbad mines. So it's really nothing too much to it except it does have pictures, like Cap Kidd's in there, Speedy Nelson, Dr. Quinn and several other professors, Dr. Berkman-- I mean, those who made the trip with the group.

C: When you graduated, did you go into the war or did you go to work?

R: Well, no, I worked for _____ McComb and Parsons as a civil engineer out in San Francisco. And then about a year later I went into the Navy.

C: When did you come back to El Paso?

R: As soon as I could. When the war was over, well, I came back to El Paso.

C: And who'd you work for then?

R: J. Morgan and Sons, Construction Company. I worked for them about, oh, 18 or 19 years. And then I worked for the International Boundary and Water Commission for about the last 15, and retired

from there. Now, by the way, the Commissioner of the Boundary Commission, the U.S. section, is Joe Friedkin, and he's a graduate. And I think that he would be worth talking to.

C: When would you have graduated?

R: Oh, probably about 1934. He was four or five years before me.

Do you know anything about him?

C: A little bit.

R: He was a great basketball player, and he was captain of the basketball team. And, you know, my gosh, how tall these guys are now, and he's not that [/tall/]. Let's see. [/Looks in annual./] Well, there he is, president of the Student Association. I gave Joe Friedkin the copy of the [/Flowsheet/] where he was the captain of the team. Now, let's see, that's '33. I don't see him here. I guess he must have... he must have graduated in '32, maybe.

C: Well, you were a member of APOs, huh?

R: Yes. I understand that they've disappeared up there now.

C: Well, it's not just for engineers anymore.

R: Well, see, there's another organization called APO. Well, but this was before that time, and actually it was the oldest organization on the campus, I think 1917 or '18, and it was engineers.

C: They weren't painting the green line on campus yet, then, when you were a student?

R: You know I was listening to Gen. Malone, that he painted the first one there. But I don't think that is the first one. But they weren't doing it while I was there. But later on when the name was changed, you know, somebody painted a line. Well, you know how the Chemistry building is. Well, let me see, they

call it Geology building now. Well, about the time of the name change, somebody painted a line back like this, with TCM on one side. But far be it from me, I don't want to contest him. But that's what I remember when they first started on the name change.

You know, something I was thinking about working on one time, on this Outstanding Ex-Students, I was the chairman of the first one that was picked, and for various times I've been on the committee to pick. But what I thought I'd do is sit down and get information on each one of them starting with the first one. And it's one of those things that I think about, but I haven't got to. But here is what I was starting out with, and then just write what I knew about them, and then also a little more information that appeared in The Nugget or Nova or something. So I don't know, if I last long enough, I might get that done, and then just make it available to future student bodies.

Now see this, you might be interested. /Reading/ This S.L.A.M. Marshall, "Marshall, during discussion of the selection committee, there was a question that was raised on when Marshall attended the Texas College of Mines. But it was decided to leave well enough alone and not do any checking. In later years, General Marshall indicated that he might have been a bonafide student for at least one semester (laughter) in 1920. But any rate, we _____, for in later years Marshall became even more famous, in 1974 presented an extensive personal library to the University," and so forth and so on.

Oh, and it might be of interest, too, here this first committee, I was on the Board of Directors, but it was in the process of

changing the name from Texas College of Mines to something else. And of course the mining students didn't want the name changed. Well, course that's the side I was on, although actually I was in favor, if the name was changed, well, change it to something with the University of Texas. Because, see, like our diplomas say College of Mines and Metallurgy, then in small letters, a branch of the University of Texas. So I wanted to get away from that damn "a branch" deal and be called a part of the University. But any rate, I was on that side. So they appointed me chairman of the committee for the outstanding ex-students, so I had something to do with the suggesting, as chairman. But here's what it was. [Reading] "I was appointed chairman of the first selection, but with the restriction that I was to serve only as chairman and would not have a vote, even in the case of a tie. (Laughter) The reason of this restriction was a good-natured joke that [I was not to] be trusted because I was the only mining engineer and graduate on the Board, and that I'd participated in the objections to changing the name of Texas College of Mines. However, even in jest those fears are not justified, because I felt that the selection of S.L.A.M. Marshall was a great selection. The only disappointment in this selection was the fact that the Army sent Marshall off to Korea before Homecoming."

But see, I think that if I'd get around to it that it could add a little bit, and maybe somebody could take it and add something to it. Because gosh, there are so many of these people now. And of course, that's up to just a certain date. But in one way or another, I knew all of them except just three or four of these

earlier ones. Course I know them now, but I didn't [then].

These two right here, I knew as a kid. They lived in the same county-- Dr. Gordon Black and Pete Snelson.

C: Well, now, when you were a student, what was Homecoming like?

R: Well, I'll tell you what I remember. The first Homecoming...and by the way, this Joe Friedkin, I think, was the president of the Ex-students. And what they did, they'd come up to the campus, and they put on a hotdog and bean feed where the...I don't know what building it is. At that time they were tennis courts right south of Old Main. What is that?

C: Psychology.

R: Well, see, there used to be tennis courts there. And so that would be the place that the Ex-student Association put on this for the students. And gosh, of course we enjoyed it. Now there wasn't a regular banquet. That thing at the tennis court, that was the only get-together like that. But of course we had a bonfire the night before the game, and usually a parade downtown. Not too formal a parade, it was just parade through [downtown].

C: But you weren't making floats?

R: Well, not at that time, not at that time. And we'd have these pep rallies.

C: Where would they be?

R: Well, like the Cortez Hotel, up in the mezzanine, and then over at the Del Norte. You know, a pep rally here and then a pep rally at another place. And of course then they had, I guess the hotels must have had these mariachi bands, you know, and they'd go with us, see. So, we'd have all this music playing and so forth. And then after the football game there was a dance. Now of course,

usually I think that Homecoming game was in the afternoon, so we had the dances that night.

Oh, that poor Holliday Hall. (Chuckles) It got such a workout because it was, well, it's the only place, the place really, to have dances in. And then of course besides the regular basketball in there, well, all the physical education, you know. Then you know, the freshman had to play basketball or do something, just intramural. And so that was... Yeah, Holliday Hall really served its purpose.

Well, I don't know, you have to kind of think, but actually we felt like we were doing something all the time.

C: It sounds like you were.

R: We didn't have any money, but we still had a great time. And I say money, like over at the German beer gardens, we pitched in a quarter. And of course we got the student dances and the football games on our student activity fee. And then these other things, like painting the M or going to Oro Grande and all, you know, very little cost there. So we had a wonderful time without much expense.

(Chuckles)

C: Sounds like you did. Well, I don't want to take up your whole morning.

R: Well, I tell you, no, I thank you. I'm just so sorry that really, you need more time.

C: I know it.