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Interview no. 703

Tom Rogers

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Tom Rogers (1908 -)
INTERVIEWER: Clyde McCarty
PROJECT: Class Project
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BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Longtime El Paso resident.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Biographical data; the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1918; the Mexican Revolution; Pete Kern; the Depression; rationing during World War II; opinion on illegal aliens; assorted recollections of early El Paso; Elephant Butte Dam; the Prohibition era.

Length of interview: 1 hour Length of transcript: 27 pages

Tom Rogers
By Clyde McCarty
March 28, 1978

Mc: Mr. Rogers, will you tell us where you live?

TR: Well, I live in the Lower Valley down on Walsh Lane in Tigua, at 314 Walsh Lane.

Mc: Okay. Would you tell us something of your background-- that is, concerning your parents.

TR: I was born in El Paso on August 8, 1906, at Hotel Dieu. I have very little memory of what took place in my life up to the time I was seven years old. But I can tell you a few things that I remember at a younger age that happened around our own home.

Mc: Fine.

TR: My father was in the furniture business here on Stanton Street. His first store was 110 North Stanton and later on he was at 216 North Stanton. I grew up in El Paso and I remember some of the things that went on. When I became seven years old, we had a bad case of scarlet fever in our home. I cannot verify that it was an epidemic here, but I know that there was three or four in my family that had it. I lost one sister, and thank the Lord, we have the rest of us from that.

Mc: Do you remember any other people who died at that time?

TR: Not outside of our family. Just my one sister is the only one I can remember, and as I said before I have no recollection of there being an epidemic. It may have been. It was in our home. My mother had it. My two sisters had it.

I had it. And my other brother didn't have it, and another sister.

Mc: Do you recall when your parents first came here or why they first came here to El Paso?

TR: My father came to El Paso at the turn of the century. I don't know whether it was 1901 or 1902. And he worked at what was then E.B. Welch Furniture Company for about a year or two before he went in business for himself. My mother came from Austin, Texas. My grandfather, my mother's father, was a superintendent of the El Paso Electric Company, who then had their plant on South Santa Fe. And the plant still stands as far as I know. I was born here in 1906, as I said before, on August 8. There's some doubt in my mind as whether I was born in the hospital or at home. We were right across the street from Hotel Dieu when I was born, and some say I was born in the hospital and some say I was born at home, which they did in those days, a good deal. I first attended school at the old Bailey School, which stood where the YMCA stands on Montana Street now, the kindergarten there. And then I later transferred to the Morehead School, which had been the old high school before the new high school was built.

Mc: What year did you start high school?

TR: My guess is 1920.

Mc: 1920, okay. You mentioned to me something before about the high school championships.

TR: El Paso High, as I remember, won the first state championship in basketball that was held in the state of Texas. I still know and still see once in a while some of those men, who were boys then, who were on that team.

Mc: Tell me something about the 1918 Spanish flu epidemic.

TR: This flu epidemic was very bad. It was prevalent. There was a lot of servicemen out at Fort Bliss who died. There were quite a number of deaths out there. And I remember the funeral home that handled most of it was Peak-Hagedorn, which is now owned by Pete McDaniel--Harding, Orr and McDaniel. And I remember the caissons were one right after the other carrying those caskets to the depot and I was amazed at the way they did it. They had the caisson and the soldier's horse with the saddle turned backwards as they drove to the depot. It was on my mind, something that I will never forget.

Mc: You mentioned to me about them having the caskets stacked up out in the alley.

TR: In the alley. They were there then where the telephone company has their building now. And there was an alley in there which is no longer there where they had to, as they sent these boys away, they had to set the caskets out there. And they were picked up by the army on these caissons and carried to the depot. This impressed me, something that I won't forget as a child. At that time

I was about twelve years old, and it's something that has indented my mind and stayed with me.

Mc: Along about this time was the signing of the Armistice.

TR: The Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918. And that's where we got our name Armistice Day. Don't hear it much anymore, but that's what it was. My father was a block captain, what they called a block captain. He called home and told me to go around to all the neighbors and tell them to be up at the El Paso High School stadium that night, that there would be a big bonfire and that they were going to burn the Kaiser. Child like I was, just tickled to death to run and tell the story.

Mc: What was the purpose of the block captain to begin with?

TR: Well, it had to do with war bonds and security measures, I imagine. However, they had no reason to believe that any of the warring nations were going to come over here. The revolutions in Mexico were still on the minds of the people. There was a lot of refugees coming in from Mexico into this country at that time.

Mc: Let's talk about the Revolution in Mexico and Pancho Villa.

TR: Well, I remember Black Jack Pershing in 1916. He was here. And, now one thing you must remember is that I am trying to make this as authentic as I can, and some of this that I am saying may be something that I heard my father say or some other person, but actually believe it to be something that I saw with my own eyes. I remember they shot a big gun from Mount Franklin.

Mc: That would be General Pershing.

TR: Yes, that would be back there during 1916. We've gone back there a little bit. And the shell went right over the house where we lived and hit the racetrack over there. It woke me up. It was early in the morning, two or three o'clock in the morning. I was 10 years old and scared to death. I went looking for my dad and he was gone. I looked back up on the mesa, which we called the mesa, which is now Rim Road. Then it was a bunch of abode shacks. On the edge of the mesa, I could see car lights. People were up there watching the battle of Juarez. We were within two or three blocks, so I walked up there. I got to talking around with people and found out that most of the businessmen were downtown watching their stores.

Mc: They were armed, weren't they?

TR: Well, I was told that. I was told they had shotguns. As I said before I would like to be authentic in what I say, but I believe that to be true, yes. They actually thought that Villa was going to try to come over here.

Mc: Do you remember any time of the soldiers from Mexico coming into the United States?

TR: I do remember when Columbus, New Mexico, was raided by Villa. They did a lot of damage up there. I remember the troops that left here, the cavalry and artillery, that left to go up to Columbus passed right in front of our house.

Being a boy, I was out there watching those horses and the men as they would stop to rest, reform and things of that line.

Mc: Did they ever ask for water or anything like that?

TR: I did give water to one group. I don't know how many men were in this particular group, but all the neighbors were giving them water. Then they went up there and, of course, went into Mexico. They actually went into Mexico from here in '16, too. Went way down into Mexico. It was the first World War and it was being thought pretty much at hand, and I considered it after hearing grownups talk that this was more of a practice or something like that for what they thought they were going to run into in Europe. I think it was maneuvers. Actually they did go way into Mexico after Villa. They didn't catch him.

Mc: Can you tell us anything about the effect on business that the Revolution in Mexico had?

TR: I sort of have reason to believe, I was quite young, but I have reason to believe, and I think this came from my dad, that business was a little better. These refugees who were monied people from Mexico spent quite a little money. They bought homes, they bought furniture. Most of them moved up into what we used to know as Sunset Heights. There's this one street up there that I know named after one of the Mexican Presidents, Porfirio Diaz. Maybe some others [in there].

One thing while I was in high school I remember, a young fellow who was going to school, he was a little older than I, a little ahead of me in school, he was eight and a half feet tall. I have mentioned this to several other people who were new here and they can't imagine such a thing. They think I am making it up. Some time ago there was a picture in the paper where he was a member of the Sheriff's Department. It showed his picture and gave his height. I carried that with me for some time to prove to people that I knew what I was talking about.

Mc: And what was his name?

TR: Jake Ehrlick. He has a brother living here now. I think he has a pawn shop or something like that downtown. He may be retired, I don't know.

Mc: Do you know what happened to Jake?

TR: Well, Jake passed away. They said he was anemic. He didn't have enough blood to satisfy his height.

Mc: Another man I'd like for you to tell about is Peter Kern.

TR: Peter Kern was an old man that prospected and laid out. . . he had staked out most of the west side of Mount Franklin. That's where Kern Place gets its name, from old Peter Kern. My father grubstaked him. He didn't have any luck here. He went to Alaska. My father grubstaked him. He came back again broke. And he wanted to go back and my dad grubstaked him a second time. And he did all right. I remember,

I can't tell you what year it was, but he brought back with him some Alaskan totems. He built two rock pillars there on Kansas Street in the dip in Kern Place and put these totems up there and lit them up like Christmas trees. I remember as a boy, my father taking me up there to see them. The time and dates of this, I can't remember, but it's things that actually happened. I don't remember myself ever meeting the man. Yes, I did meet him too, that was when I went to see those pillars that time. That's where they got their name, Kern Place.

Mc: And he did strike it rich then in Alaska?

TR: He did very well up there to be able to come back with what he did, buy all those totem things, Alaskan Indian totems. I don't know how many people remember that, but there was houses in the area at the time and there must be some people still around that know and remember and can verify it. I was very young. Although as a fact, it is very clear in my mind as to all the details.

Mc: Would you tell me about when you first started to work?

TR: When I was in high school, I wasn't much to get out and play or anything. I went straight to my dad's warehouse. I worked down there with the refinishers in the warehouse and I worked at anything that they would let me do to learn about furniture. I learned a great deal the next four or five years that way, till I went off to school,

I went to military school. At about 18, I think that's when I went to military school. Of course, there was a period there of about three years when I was away from home. When I came home, the first year I went to college down in Abilene, Texas. I went to McMurray College in Abilene.

Mc: What did you study?

TR: Really I wasn't studying. I didn't stay there very long. Spent a lot of money and dad decided I'd be better off at home, so I came home and I went to work immediately in his store as a sales person.

Mc: How long then did you work in the sales line?

TR: I worked there till the Depression hit and he was going broke. You might say the Depression broke him.

Mc: Do you think that the Depression was worse here on the border than it was in Northern cities?

TR: I don't think it was any worse. I do think it was a little late in getting here. I said things were getting better back east when things were getting real bad here. I have a statistic that. . .you know, my father was one of the first organizers or the first man to organize the Mutual Federal--Mutual Building and Loan in those days. And every time they have had a growth and built a new building, they put out a brochure. They give some facts that I didn't even know myself. I remember one fact. In 1933 they said there were only eight new homes built in El Paso.

I heard the other say that some 2300 were built this year. I'm not sure what that statistic stands for.

Mc: Quit a bit of difference.

TR: Of course, Mutual had been defunct, but they paid off dollar for dollar. My father was president of it at one time. They paid off and they kept going and they [have] been growing ever since.

Mc: Did quite a few businesses go out of business during the Depression days here in El Paso?

TR: Quite a number of businesses. I have here a city directory that I have from 1928 - 29. If I had the time, I could go through and name the number of businesses that no longer existed. That doesn't mean that they all went broke, some simply went out of business.

Mc: I see.

TR: But there's quite a number of them in here that did go broke. Things were pretty rough. Money was hard to get. There was no help for them as there is today from the government.

Mc: No welfare.

TR: No welfare. I see a question here regarding ethnic discrimination in employment. I think there was a great deal of that in some places. My father had a man working for him that lived in Juarez, and still does if he is still living. He went to work for him when he was 16 years old, a fellow by the name of Frank Ochoa. If he's still living, he has

a little business out in the East part of town called El Paso Furniture Company. They do re-upholstering and various things. I haven't kept up with Frank. Last time I saw him he was wearing a pacemaker. As far as I know, he's still around.

Mc: Do you know whether or not the Mexican labor was paid as much as the Anglo labor at that time?

TR: I think that they had some discrimination there. I feel that during the Depression things were pretty rough here. I remember I worked on the Scenic Drive with a pick and shovel when we built the Scenic Drive for the WPA. I was working with a pick and shovel, and a man came by who was in charge of it that knew me personally, and he said, "What are you doing?", and I said, "I'm working." He said, "You come on with me," and he made a supervisor of me right on the spot. We were making \$2.40 a day. From what I had had and what I came to was a hard lump to swallow.

Mc: You were married at that time?

TR: I was married, yes. But I used to take that \$2.40, walk to work, and when I got paid go buy groceries. We could get a taxi for a dime anywhere in the United States, anywhere in El Paso city limits. I'd take a ten-cent taxi home because I couldn't carry the groceries.

Mc: What year would that have been?

TR: That would have been 1932.

Mc: Were groceries hard to get in El Paso?

TR: I can't remember them hard to get. I remember buying eggs, oh, six or seven dozen for a dollar. Food was cheap, but so was wages.

Mc: It was hard to get any money.

TR: There wasn't any money, which brought prices down. It's a matter of supply and demand. If you've got a supply and people haven't got the money, they can buy it for nothing. My first job back in El Paso, I did leave here for a while. I was in Houston. I came back here and my first job paid me \$15 a week. My wife and one child and myself lived on that. Paid rent, utilities, ate, and had enough Saturday night to go to the picture show.

Mc: That's hard to imagine.

TR: Well, that's a fact.

Mc: Fifteen dollars now just doesn't even buy a day's groceries hardly.

TR: Of course, didn't have any tax on that. Got the whole \$15 take home pay.

Mc: Did you over to Juarez much?

TR: In my earlier days I did. During Prohibition I used to frequent Juarez quite a bit, which I am not exactly proud of. I did, but in later years I didn't. I remember during World War II, when they were rationing sugar, a number of times I went over there and bought sugar and brought it back,

which was allowable. There was no law against it. Used to go over there every once in a while and buy a tank of gas when it was rationed. I remember rationing stamps for meat, shoes, sugar; they had them in book form.

Mc: People stand in line to get those things?

TR: No, they mailed them out to you, I believe. Now, if you needed tires for your car, you had to go to the office to get the authority to get the tires. You had your shoe stamps. And a lot of times those stamps were traded as money. I mean people wouldn't eat a lot of meat and somebody wanted meat stamps come along. They'd want to take them from you, either barter or pay actual cash for them. Now this is something I heard of because we used all we had. This was a rough period. People still weren't making a great deal of money. In those days it was not what you knew but who you knew to get something that you wanted. The grocerman you did a lot of business with, he always had a means to let you have some sugar. (I'm like the doctor I asked one time a question concerning ethics. He said 'Tom, I will answer everything you ask me, but if you take me to court, I will call you a liar.') Did that go on here?

Mc: Yes.

TR: I see a question here concerning political involvement. My first vote was in 1928. I went to the poll with my father

and voted as he did, which was for Herbert Hoover. I am not a party person. I vote for the man.

Mc: Independent?

TR: I'm an independent voter. I am one of the silent majority.

My father was owed quite a sum of money by a rancher. He wrote him a letter, nice letter, and he got no answer. Then he wrote him another letter which was much hotter, much stronger. So he gets an answer back from the rancher. He says, "Mr. Rogers," he said, "I don't have any money. I can't get any money. Now if you can get it, get it." I remember that. That actually happened.

Mc: He just didn't have any way of getting any money at all to pay.

TR: That's right.

Mc: He just didn't have it. Did you go on and do anything else besides being a salesperson?

TR: I've trained salesmen, I've bought for the stores, I've designed homes here. I coordinated their rooms. I have a lot of good friends. I have a lot of people around asking for help in various roles.

Mc: Did you then go into the construction and interior decoration business after the furniture business?

TR: No, only in the stores where I worked.

Mc: I see.

TR: But I have never considered myself and don't want to be

considered an interior decorator, because I feel like that's a little misrepresentation on my part. But I feel fully qualified to do it, to have been able to do anything any of the rest of them do. I was never afraid to take a challenge. I've even had people tell, they told one of the men I was working for, he came and ask me did I need a decorator. And the party told him, he said, "We don't need one, he's doing all right." And I went to the man after the customer left and I said, "If I can't close that deal, you don't have a decorator in the store that can." And the man smiled and looked at me and said, "Atta boy. I like that."

Mc: What other jobs then did you have besides these?

TR: I had the job during the Depression. Of course, there was a time there in El Paso where I either had to work for one of my father's ex-competitors or do something else. I tried hotel clerking, tourist camp. As I told you before, I worked up there on the road up there, Scenic Drive.

Mc: What was it like in this tourist camp? Were there a lot of tourists in those days in El Paso?

TR: We had an old dilapidated-type place. We used to rent rooms as low as 50 cents a night, things like that. Run on a business-like basis, but when it became midnight and we had some empty ones and you wanted to go to bed when somebody came in, you'd let them have it a little cheaper.

Because that was an incentive for them to come in and stay there. Some truckers come in--we had a service station with it--and if they filled up with gas, we'd just give them a room.

Mc: Where was this located?

TR: On Alameda. It was made out of old streetcars.

Mc: Really?

TR: Streetcars were put in there. It was owned by a fellow by the name of, by he and his wife, a fellow named Kenneth Gibson. A great friend of mine.

Mc: These streetcars were. . .

TR: Were the cabins, where they slept. Of course, there was a couple of buildings attached, but they were mostly all streetcars. It was right across the street from Evergreen Cemetery, but I don't know whether it's still there or not.

The first time I heard the words Chicano, I put no meaning to it except that it meant Mexican American, was my interpretation. To me, I think they are only an ethnic group that's trying to get what's due them. And as far as illegal aliens is concerned, there isn't a family in El Paso of any consequence who at some time or other hasn't hired a maid from Juarez, and reluctantly I say this, don't pay them very much or didn't. This is the thing that I think hurts the labor movement in El Paso in bringing in new business, new factories, new everything like that. I feel that an illegal alien is hurting the Mexican American

more than they are anybody, the citizens who are of Mexican descent. That's a short summary of the way I feel about it. I wouldn't care to go any further on it.

Mc: Okay. You had mentioned to me before about General Pershing shooting this shell over into the racetrack in Juarez back in the early 1900s, and I wondered if you would tell me about this man.

TR: During the battle over there a good many Americans got out of town and down to the racetrack, and they were stuck down there with no protection. Of course, it had walls. And I must say that this is all hearsay; not something that I saw, but the story was told to me afterwards. And they had a shuttle streetcar that ran from the center of Juarez out to the racetrack. These people were out there. And there was a man...nobody would go after them, but this man got on one of the cars and went out there to get them. In the meantime he was shot in the head. He lived, but the shot in the head affected him. I knew him afterwards and he was not just right. Somebody would have to research this with the El Paso Electric Company or somebody else to find out the facts, but that was as I said hearsay that I heard later in years, but it was supposed to have happened during the battle of Juarez in 1916.

Mc: And he did bring the people back?

TR: He brought the people back from the racetrack. That's the end of it.

[PAUSE]

Mc: Mr. Rogers has some more things that he would like to add. This is a postscript to our last session. Would you begin?

TR: Sometimes I am able to remember as far back as when I was five years old. One thing that does stick in my mind was our having a horse and buggy. My father would stop and buy a bucket of beer at the Hoffbrau. There was a watering trough there and a hitching post. This was one the corner of Missouri and Stanton, place is still there and known by the same name now. Of course, there was a time during Prohibition when it was just a cafe.

And to add to the Spanish flue epidemic, I failed to mention that all the schools were closed and no one held any group meetings. The epidemic was very serious. Another thing, during World War II, in order to go to Mexico or return from Mexico you had to have two-dollar bills, so on the way over people would stop and buy two-dollar bills. They'd have to change them at a booth there where a man charged them a certain percentage to change them. The reason for this was because of the money that was being spent in spying in the U.S., and they were using American dollars, American paper money, and the two-dollar bills they didn't have.

Mc: So any other money could have been counterfeit?

TR: Silver, it was all right. You could bring silver back.

Mc: But any other paper money might have been counterfeit, so they made them use two-dollar bills.

TR: I also remember the old Sheldon Hotel fire which was in the late '20s. It burned to the ground. It stood where the Hilton Plaza Hotel now stands. These are things that I have remembered and I'm jumping around quite a bit. But the El Paso del Norte Hotel was a meeting place for the revolutionaries in 1916 and before, and even Pancho Villa stayed there at times. During the late twenties there was a number of bank failures in El Paso and other financial institutions. I might also tell about what we knew as the hole in the wall at the foot of Eucalyptus Street where the Chamizal is now. The river had changed its course and that changed the border, and all you had to cross was a small irrigation ditch and be in in Mexico. There was one or two cantinas at that spot.

Another thing that comes to my mind was the auto race known as the El Paso to Phoenix Race, around 1916 or so. People went out in numbers and watched the beginning of the race. My father took my brother and I out to watch the start. Almost every make of car in those days was entered. There was one man killed in the race who said he would win or come back in a box. It was run on a very rough and narrow dirt road, and it crossed at what is known as Borderland bridge.

Mexico prospered during Prohibition. The economy was good in the U.S. The peso was worth 50 cents. There was a great many American dollars spent in Mexico. The U.S. tourist was treated well and had no difficulties. In El Paso on South El Paso Street was a flowing business street. There were a number of businesses in fact that started down there and later moved uptown. Some are still in business. I also went to remind you that we had to independent newspapers, the El Paso Times and the El Paso Post. Then later another started, that was the El Paso Herald, and later another was started called the El Paso Post, and they combined which is now known as the El Paso Herald-Post.

Mc: Would you tell us something concerning Elephant Butte Dam?

TR: Well, I faintly remember when it was built. This was 1916, but I do remember my father was a great fisherman and I remember going up the river with him to fish. And we fished on what they called the Rock Dam, which was built in order to clear the way for the large, the other construction of the dam that they built. We stayed in what was then known as Hot Springs, now it's known as Truth or Consequences. I faintly remember some difficulties with Mexico over the water, but these treaties were made and settled later. That's the reason for building the irrigation ditches on either side. So the water now is pretty well divided. I think they have a good treaty on that, although I'm

not familiar with just what it is. This question was asked of me many times, I'm not going to reach back. The Lower Valley farmers prospered from it because some men brought out here the seed for long staple cotton and planted it, and did well with it. There were the Ivys; they all came from Mississippi. And my father in Mississippi knew the families of most of these people, and I got acquainted with them. This irrigated cotton, as I understand it, is lower production. In other words, some of those farmers were getting as many as two bales to the acre with irrigation, and then long staple cotton come in here, several cotton gins, and then there was one time they had a cotton mill here that made cotton thread. And of course, we know the success of the garment factories here now. I don't know whether this has anything to do with the cotton that is raised here or whether it was the labor.

Later on, in later years, they built what they called Caballo Dam up there, which is a diversion dam for Elephant Butte, and I was also up there one time later as I got older hunting duck. I fished some up there, too. And I do remember one faint recollection of a time that there was a flooding and the river overflowed at Ascarate. And if I am correct, remember right, the water came up as far as Alameda Avenue, what is now known as Alameda Avenue. At that time it was merely a cotton field. It brings also the memories of

something that I don't imagine a lot of people remember is the old inter-urban car that they ran from El Paso to Ysleta. And I've ridden on it many times. It went down the medium on Alameda Avenue now right in the center, went right through this cotton field and on to Ysleta.

Mc: Was it an electric car?

TR: Electric car, trolley. I hadn't thought about that in years. Things are coming to me as I go along and talk. So if I've jumped around quite a bit I hope it is understood.

Mc: Do you remember what it cost to ride the trolley from El Paso to Ysleta?

TR: I don't remember exactly. Probably was 25 or 35 cents. Maybe 50 cents. I did ride it a number of times. There's a big difference now. You see the city limits during the time we are talking about ended there on Alameda by the Del Camino Tourist Camp, right there. Ascarate was an incorporated city at one time--had a mayor, fire department, police chief, and everything else. They didn't do so well so the city annexed them. I say they didn't do so well, people weren't pleased with the service. They needed the local service. I also remember when they annexed this part of the valley we are in now, which is down in what we call Ranchland or Hacienda Heights, which hasn't been too many years ago. When you get my age,

you have to stop and think once in a while to bring out something that you can tell of interest. I'm sure that people understand that anybody that's born in town does have a lot of memories at a time or two that slip their mind and come back.

Mc: Would you tell me about Juarez during the Prohibition era?

TR: During Prohibition era, of course, the Americans, that was the only place they could get a drink of whiskey or beer or whatever they might drink, and those that did drink went over there. Even during the lunch hour they could go over there. Juarez was known at night in parts of it as being wild and rugged. They had a street over there called Calle Diablo that I remember hearing about. I never was on it. There was some pretty nice clubs that Americans frequented close to the bridge. I saw a picture in the morning paper the other morning of the old Castle, which was later turned into what they called the Tivoli, where they had gambling. And there was a bar well-known all over the United States as The Big Kid's, owned by a Mr. Shipley. Harry Mitchell was a Canadian who came down here and went over there and put in a bar called The Mint. He later became an American citizen and established a brewery on this side, made Harry Mitchell Beer, which sold out to Falstaff. Then there was S.T. Gonzales who had the Central Cafe over there who was a well-known

figure, and E.E. Bonaguidi, who if he's still living, I don't know whether he is or not, owned some liquor stores on this side. I'm sure that everything wasn't as bad as people said it was unless they were just so opposed to what was going on that they blacked out of their mind on anything else. I'm speaking for myself, maybe, there.

Mc: I heard that at one time they said that Juarez had more bars on the 16th of September Street than any other town in the world.

TR: This could very well be true. I hadn't heard it just that way, but about every other door was a bar. Outside of curio, either there was a bar or a curio store. Until you got away up in the center of Juarez, you found very few other business. I don't remember seeing a grocery store or a furniture store or a hardware store on that Main Street. Down a little bit further you had the marketplace. What most tourists wanted to visit in those days was the Old Market down by the Old Church, right in the center there.

Mc: Was it this time that they began closing the bridge early at night?

TR: It was an off-and-on thing. They would close the bridge early and then have a conference and start opening it again. I've known of times when it was closed without notice and a good many Americans would be caught over there at midnight, have to arrange for someplace to stay.

Mc: What was the earliest?

TR: I remember once. I don't remember the details. I just remember the time they tell me about. Of course, when this happened I was of an age when I might be the one who was caught over there, but I wasn't. They started Zaragoza, seemed very accessible, and the crossing there was easy. However, I don't think it flourished at all very much. Down near Fabens there was a place that we called another hole in the wall. It also meant you could get there by stepping over a drainage ditch. It was over there on what they call the island. Reason they called it the island was because it was between two river beds. You see this river here has been straightened, worked on, and re-dug and all this kind of stuff, to bring the boundary lines back.

Mc: There were many times when it was wild and would change its banks before they put in the canal ditches.

TR: Right. We hear all the time about the plight of the poor people across the river who have built the adobe shacks and whatever you might call them across from the Globe Mills. A lot of people don't know what Globe Mills is, I guess. But the old Fort Bliss was across from it. Fort Bliss started out right there on the river bank. This is not something that I know because this happened long before I was born, probably before the turn of the

century. All of that was just plain hills and then the people started moving in there and building houses. And right now they are having. . . I read about it in the paper every once in a while, about a discussion of the Juarez people about this land, that the people living there absconded it from somebody else, they claim. I'm making no statement because I don't know who it was. But the fact remains, they are over there and they are living over there and they have streets. They are not getting any services that they want. They do have streets and I wouldn't hazard a guess on the population that is living over there. I would imagine there is a good many people, pretty high population over there. That's a spot also that the illegal aliens cross a great deal. The river is shallow.

Mc: It's called Globe Mills?

TR: It used to be a place where they made flour. You know when you are driving around in a town you have lived in all your life, and you're doing the driving, you don't see very much, something that you'd forgotten or you didn't know about. These things I knew were there at the time that I was riding that somebody else and I'm going to look for them now. Of course, our smelter here is one of our biggest payroll deals. I've had a lot of relatives that worked out there. It's pretty good size, I guess. They smelt copper, various ores

from up in Arizona, but it used to be when Phelps Dodge had a smelter over there in Chihuahua. There was a big mining community over there. And there is another thing that is over in Mexico, you don't hear discussed very often. It used to be a lot of Mormons that was over there and started a settlement of their own.

Mc: Is that close here to the border?

TR: Close, down around Chihuahua. That was when the United States passed the law they could only have one wife that they started moving over there. Now whether Mexico is condoning that or not, I'm not saying. I don't know. That's why the Mormons moved over there, and you see them every once in a while over here buying. I saw two in Sears the other day. They dress a little differently than what we do. They all speak Spanish, the young ones especially speak Spanish very well. I had a good friend over there by the name of Hatch that lived in El Paso, but the rest of his family lived over there.

Mc: He was a Mormon?

TR: He was a Mormon.