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Interview no. 860

Tom Leary

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
ORAL HISTORY INSTITUTE

BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, 1994

INTERVIEWEE/ADDRESS: Tom Leary, 701 East Sul Ross (formerly Avenue D), Alpine, Tx., 79830. Phone: 915-837-7284.

INTERVIEW BY: John R. Moore

DATE: Feb. 26, 1994

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW/LANGUAGE: 1 hour, 15 minutes/English

SUMMARY: Leary has been a resident of the Alpine-Marathon area since born there in 1925. His grandfather, Lucius Buttrill, homesteaded in the Rosillos Mountains in what is now Big Bend National Park in 1883. Leary and a son currently operate a ranch 15 miles south of Marathon on Highway 385. Leary's mother and grandmother donated land to the Big Bend National Park project.

Lucius Buttrill detrained at Marathon siding in 1883 with his ill father, a brother and a small herd of cattle. He drove his herd south to the Rosillos, where he ranched and raised a family. He sold his property and moved nearer Marathon soon after the Glenn Springs raid in 1916 because of the danger to his family created by border conflict during the Mexican Revolution.

Leary recalls the arrival of Civilian Conservation Corps workers in the 1930s. He discusses conditions of travel, social life and early tourists to the Big Bend park area. He was acquainted with Ross Maxwell. He recalls life at Marathon and the arrival of electricity and telephones to the area, and he discusses his perspectives on rancher-park service relations, livestock and wildlife issues and water use/availability in the park area. He also offers insight to life at Study Butte and Terlingua and cross-border relations with Mexican citizens.

At the time of the interview, Leary's 94-year-old mother was still living, though hospitalized in Alpine. Her health prevents her from being interviewed. Leary has some memorabilia from his grandfather's time in the Rosillos, including one rifle that was part of a case of Winchesters his grandfather purchased and distributed to ranch hands at the time of the Glenn Springs raid.

Big Bend National Park
Oral History Project

Tom Leary
By John R. Moore

February 26, 1994

M: This is an interview with Tom Leary. The interview, by John Moore, is part of the Big Bend Oral History Project. We are located at his home at 701 Avenue D, now Sul Ross Street, in Alpine, Texas.

Mr. Leary, would you tell me general information about your background, when you were born, and tell me about your family's background in the Big Bend area?

L: Alright. I was born at the family ranch south of Marathon in September of 1925. This was the ranch that belonged to my grandparents Margaret and Lucius Buttrill. They purchased that ranch approximately 1916.

M: Buttrill, that's spelled B-U-T-R-I-L-L?

L: No, it's double t...B-U-double-T-R-I-L-L. That ranch is still in the family. Grandfather Buttrill died in 1933 and Grandmother Buttrill died in 1955. She operated the ranch solely herself from the time he died to the time she died. At which time I moved back out there. My father and mother actually lived in San Antonio, but I was born at the ranch because it was more convenient for some reason. I guess being close to Mama is why Mother went back out there.

M: You say they moved there in 1916?

L: Yes.

M: Had they previously lived on a ranch in the Big Bend area?

L: Yes. My grandfather came from Beeville, Texas to Marathon and then moved south to the Rosillos Mountains. He homesteaded land there in approximately 1883. My grandmother came from Oklahoma and into the Marathon area where they met. She was only sixteen years old when they married and he was thirty.

M: What was her maiden name?

L: Simpson. She was Margaret Simpson. They lived at the Rosillos. It was prior to 1900 because my mother was born in 1900. They lived on that ranch where they had my mother and my Aunt Marian, who is now deceased. Then they moved to the ranch close to Marathon in 1916.

M: Your grandfather would have homesteaded one hundred sixty acres?

L: I don't know exactly what the acreage was, but he did homestead and then others homesteaded and he gradually increased the size of the ranch by buying out the homesteaders. I don't know what the total acreage was that he finally ended up with, but when he sold it he sold it to the Graham family. That's when they moved to Marathon.

M: Does the Graham family still live in this area?

L: Most of the Graham family is dead. Now, Jeff Graham still lives in Alpine. He's available if you'd like to talk to him.

M: Is he of your generation?

- L: He's a little older.
- M: Do you know what prompted your grandfather to leave the Rosillos and move to the Marathon area?
- L: Mostly it had to do with the Glen Springs Raid and Pancho Villa and all of that mess...coming over on this side raiding the ranches, stealing the horses, and things like that. He had two daughters and he didn't feel it was really a safe place to try and raise children. So, in the meantime, he had sent them off to boarding school. They went to boarding school in San Antonio. Then during this transition is when he sold and moved and built the new place up by Marathon.
- M: Do you recall your grandfather telling you about the Glen Springs Raid?
- L: No, I do not because I was real small, but the little that I've picked up, which is very little, I've heard my mother talk about. Little things bring up...you know, that happened during the Glen Springs Raid. Of course, there was an old gentleman by the name of Captain Wood that used to live here in Alpine that is now deceased, who was a good friend of the family. He was down there at the wax factory during the Glen Springs Raid. We've got one of the original 30-40 Craig rifles that my grandfather bought a case of to distribute to the help to defend themselves against the raiders. Whatever happened to rest of them we don't know, but we have one left.
(laughs)
- M: That would have been May of 1916, I believe.

L: I think they had problems from about 1914 to about 1916...somewhere along in there.

M: So your grandfather apparently had a number of ranch hands?

L: Yes, he did, but I don't really know how many. Of course, in those days most of them had families. You hired a man and you had his family. So how many all told I don't really know, but there was quite a number.

M: Do you have a feeling for how many people lived in that general area in 1916 when your grandparents were still there?

L: Only names that I've heard...of course, in my lifetime the Burnam family who owned the majority of the land, which is now the core of the National Park. I knew all of them very well. All of them are deceased now. There was the Green family that lived in what they call Dugout and most all of the Greens are deceased. The Wade family, they're all mostly gone.

M: Can you recall where the Burnams' home site may have been?

L: Oh, yes, I've been to the Burnams' home site many, many times. And then the Burnam's actually had two; the Old Home, which was kind of off the beaten track of what is now the main road, and the Spring that had a big spring they got fresh water out of. Later the Burnams' built a new home over closer to the highway, both of which I understand have been torn down by the Park Service because they were trying to revert to the natural look.

M: The Park Service did demolish some homes. Was this the highway from Marathon to Panther Junction?

L: Yeah, after you leave Panther Junction going up into the basin is where both of these houses were.

M: So they were in the fringe of the mountains there?

L: Yes.

M: The Wade family, where were they located?

L: Well, the Wade family actually...I'm not sure exactly where that ranch was because the Wades' always maintained a residence in Marathon. The family lived there and the kids went to school. Of course, they were all grown by the time I was growing up. I'm not sure just where the ranch itself was, but it was in the park area and I knew both Mr. and Mrs. Wade and their daughters. They're all deceased.

M: Tell me. You mentioned that your grandmother donated land to the Park Service when the Park was developing. Tell me what you know in detail about that.

L: Well, of course, in this old vast country you can't always... when you buy a place there's always checkerboards. There's sections of land that are unknown owners and state-owned sections and a lot of times when you buy places you get these odd-ball sections scattered out. So when they sold the Rosillo Ranch there was some land that was really out of boundary of the main ranch itself that apparently the people that bought the ranch didn't want. So these sections were just kind of left spotted out there and just sat there for years. But they were in the park area, so when the State started acquiring new land to put the Park together, and you

bear in mind that this was in the [19]30s in the Depression, the land didn't have the value that it has today. So, of course, in the old days people were very generous and they just didn't think about what the actual value was. They thought, "Well, here we're putting a park and I've got this land and I'm not using it. Let's help them along." So my grandmother and my mother had some property and just gave it to, I really think it was the State at that time, and deeded it over to help encourage putting this park together.

M: They obviously supported the National Park idea.

L: That's true.

M: Was there resistance from neighbors or other people?

L: Not at that time. I think what resistance there was came along later. Some people resisted, but there's two sides to every story. The land of those that resisted, I think, was probably of better quality than some that was given or some that was purchased. The Burnam family had excellent land up there close to the basin. It was higher altitude and the rainfall was better. They were probably a little bit more reluctant to want to sell their land than those down in the bottom. You know, there's a lot of land in that park that is totally worthless. Then there's some good land.

M: I've seen some that was very hard to raise cattle on.

L: Of course, the rainfall has always been sparse and you had to depend on it a lot. We didn't have the availability of water well drilling that we have today. When you ran out of water

in a place in the area you had to move to another area that had water and hoped that it rained on the other place so you could move back eventually. Well, when you started cutting down on the size of these ranches and the Park started buying it cut the availability of land down. Of course, eventually, those that were left just kind of got squeezed out. In a certain sense it probably wasn't right to just make them sell, but when you start putting something together for the masses somebody always seems to suffer.

M: At that time Texas, the State of Texas, was very adamant about obtaining a national park because it had none. I guess that was a motivation for overriding some personal individual rights in some cases. Would you agree with that?

L: Well, probably you're right. Of course, the majority of people that sold probably sold willingly. I probably, had I owned something nowadays, would have been reluctant. I can understand it.

M: You were born in 1925. Were you in this area when the Park Service assumed control of Big Bend? Did you witness the transition?

L: No. No, I was not there, but I remember the old days when the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] camp was in the Park and they built the first road. Basically, the road they built is the road they have today, except they've widened it and paved it. But it was a real gem to go over in the old days in the old cars because you didn't have electric fuel pumps on cars

and you got up to a certain distance and it just stalled out on you. You'd have to turn around. Some of them could back up, but not all model cars could go up in the basin because of the fuel pump systems they had on them.

M: Roscoe Weaver, a gentleman who lives near San Antonio, was with the CCC in 1940, [19]42, and he related how he met the grocery truck once a week with a Caterpillar to pull it up the hill. So I guess that illustrates your point.

L: (laughs) That road was something else because it wasn't very wide and it was all dirt. If it rained it was slick and it was steep, too. Now we don't think anything about zipping in and out of there. It's slow, but you don't have any problems. But just think of it as unpaved.

M: What do you recall about the CCC, specifically?

L: Well, I think everybody got a kick out of having them. It was progress. We used to go down...seemed like we'd have out-of-town guests or something and going down to the basin was something different and new because we'd never been able to drive in there before, so we always took guests down to show off this road way up in the mountains, which no one thought would ever come about. I remember my grandparents being very proud of the fact that "Look at all the new territory we can see," (laughs) and "It's opened up." Of course, the CCC personnel and people were all friendly. One of the pitfalls was that they used to have to haul everything, of course, from Marathon down by truck. And they still do, of course. I was

going to school and we lived at the ranch. We had to go back and forth about fifteen miles everyday and they bought nails by the keg. One of these trucks, apparently, scattered nails on this dirt road. We averaged about two flats a day. It was always the same identical roofing nail. You know they have a big head and are short. I think we picked up (laughs) every one in a tire over the period of about a year.

M: I can imagine that was trying.

L: That was one of the things we didn't care too much about, but those are just little funny things that happen.

M: Mr. Weaver recalled that there was the Recreation Center at the Chisos Basin painted black and yellow. Do you recall that?

L: I don't recall that. I do not recall that at all.

M: He said he never learned why it was painted such an outrageous color.

L: No, I don't remember that at all.

M: He also recalled that there were maybe as many as one hundred fifty men there at one time.

L: Probably. I, of course, never did hear the count, but there was an awful lot of people...a lot of people.

M: Were there a number of people from Alpine and Marathon that joined the CCC?

L: I don't really believe there was as many as they brought in from the outside because I remember, I say remember, I remember one time that I was in Marathon and a couple of army-

type trucks stopped full of people and the grown people saying they were on their way to the camp, the CCC camp. They had, probably, twelve or fifteen young men in the back of each truck. Where they had come from, I don't know. But they used to bring them in all the time from here, there, and yonder.

M: Of course, we're talking about the Depression era when money and survival was difficult. How did your family fare at that time?

L: We were very fortunate. We were very fortunate. We were like everybody else; we didn't have a lot of cash, but living in the country we had groceries. We always had a garden and we could raise pigs and chickens. We just always had enough to eat. I remember my grandfather was always very concerned about his friends. They were having a worse time than he did. He used to do an awful lot of little things on the side very quietly for people who were having a really hard time. I remember hearing the family talk about it, you know, that so-and-so was having a problem. They would always try to see that their neighbors had groceries if nothing else. We were just very fortunate that we never did go hungry, but, like I say, we didn't have a lot of other things like entertainment. We didn't go a lot, but we definitely didn't have television. We were lucky to have one radio that worked in the mornings, only when it was cool. (chuckles)

M: Where was the nearest radio station?

L: We used to get San Antonio, believe it or not, WOAI, but you

could only get it early when it was cool. When it began to get warm it faded out. Late in the evening, when it began to get cool again, it would come back in.

M: At that time in the 1930s Castolon, I believe, was still a fair-sized community. They were raising cotton and some other farm products there. Is that correct?

L: I'll be very honest with you. I know very little about Castolon because you just didn't get around in those days like you do today. You couldn't zip down and back in a day. Going to Castolon and back was a two or three-day ordeal. Now we did have friends that ran the mines, the Birchams at Terlingua, basically Study Butte. About twice a year we would go down for a long weekend with the Bircham family. He was the mining engineer at Terlingua- at Study Butte, excuse me. But we never did go on any further. Castolon was just an area that was kind of...it was just that much further and there wasn't any reason to go there so we didn't go.

M: Castolon from your ranch would have been less than a hundred miles?

L: Oh, let's see. No, it would have probably been over a hundred miles.

M: Were there any other communities, other than Marathon, that were close by at that time?

L: No. The only other little settlement...of course, you had the Hot Springs, which was operating in the Park, then down at San Vicente which was up from Hot Springs, there was a little

crossing there and there was an old Mexican woman by the name of Chata Sada that used to run a little Mexican restaurant just for people that happened to drift by, which was very few. There were several little fishing camps and the Barker family from Alpine had a little house that they used to go to and take the hot baths. Along the river there were several hot streams that came out.

M: Talking about Hot Springs, what was it like?

L: There was always a crowd at Hot Springs. They had those four or five little old cabins and people camped out. People in the country were firm believers in those hot baths. They would go down once or twice a year and stay three or four days to soak in those old hot tubs. That water would circulate through all the time. They really enjoyed it. It was kind of a social event.

M: What ailments were they attempting to cure?

L: Mostly arthritis. You know, there was just nothing for arthritis then, except aspirin. They'd go down and soak. They used to call it rheumatism and lumbago (laughs) and all sorts of names, but everybody would swear up and down. I had a friend who had a series of boils. He just couldn't get rid of these boils. He went down there and took these baths and all the boils cured up. Now whether that had anything to do with it or not, I don't know, but it seemed to work.

M: You mentioned San Vicente. How did you reach San Vicente? It's now located between Boquillas and Castolon along the

river. Was there a direct route?

L: Well, actually...you know down below the tunnel in the Park? They call it Rio Grande Village.

M: Right.

L: Now what I'm talking about was just below that. Is that the same San Vicente that you're talking about?

M: I may be thinking of the old San Vicente that was back... .

L: Now there was a San Vicente right about a mile east of what is now Rio Grande Village.

M: Okay, it's a different one.

L: It was just a little old winding road. You could get down there in a vehicle.

M: So actually this San Vicente would be between current day Rio Grande Village and Hot Springs?

L: Hot Springs was above and then Rio Grande Village, yes.

M: You mentioned that your grandfather relocated near Marathon in 1916 partly because of the violence and danger that the Mexican Revolution brought about. How about later in your own experience there in the 1930s and [19]40s? Were there cross border problems then?

L: No, nothing that ever came up that close to Marathon. He continued to operate that ranch and he raised registered cattle there. Of course, in the [19]30s he died and shortly thereafter World War II came along and help became hard to get. Grandmother leased the ranch out to a neighbor. She continued to live there, but she leased this out and this was

when we had the big influx of the sheep people that came. This had always been cattle country until World War II. Then there was a big demand for mutton and wool, so the country was more or less flooded with sheep. This, of course, had good aspects and bad. As you know, sheep eat the ground off a lot closer than cattle do, so basically this went on for about ten years before people began to gradually go back to cattle. This country now, except for a few spots here and there, is almost one hundred percent cattle country. Then we had the drought of the early [19]50s and it was real difficult to ever get the ranches back to where they could operate at a half-way decent profit. The rainfall was so small, and you could run so few cattle, that everybody almost starved to death trying to get the transition back. (laughs) Things are back in fairly decent shape now. There haven't been any sheep in this country in a long time and all that country clear to the Park was just flooded with sheep.

M: Did your family switch to sheep?

L: No, when we leased out we sold the cattle. We never have run sheep. When we took the ranch operation back we went back with cattle. We've never had sheep.

M: Did the sheep do any irreparable damage?

L: Well, nothing that probably won't grow out in time. It's taken twelve or fifteen years to get the root system back. Of course, it would have been better if we'd had fifteen or twenty inches of rain a year. We would have made a real fast

recovery. But when you're operating on anywhere from nine to thirteen inches of rain a year, and some of that comes a half inch at a time or less, it takes a long time to just get things back to where you can even see some grass much less even have a root system on it.

M: Did that ever create any problems between residents and...

L: No. The old sheep and cattle...it really never did. I think the patriotism angle of World War II was in there. If the sheep people had tried to move in without a real cause, probably there would have been some problems, but you know everything overrides. The war overrode everything; we need sheep, we need wool, and that's what we're going to do.

M: Was there any fear, particularly in the early days of World War II, about any cross-border problems?

L: I never did hear of any, but I feel sure that there were some because you never really are sure of what is on the other side of the river. (laughs) Even to this day you have a few problems over there. There's a little revolutionary sentiment that goes around over there all the time. People up and down the border, I think, have a few conflicts now and then with cattle and horses that stray back and forth across, but it's nothing they haven't been able to resolve.

M: Was rustling ever a problem in your grandfather's day?

L: Oh, yeah. They had problems back and forth. They've had to cross over and get...I understand from family hearsay that they would miss something and just go over, find it, round it

up, and bring it back. I don't think they ever bothered with the law. If it was missing we'd go look for it, get it, and come back with it.

M: In effect, you stole it back.

L: (hearty laugh)

M: There was no law enforcement then?

L: There was law enforcement, but it was sparse. It was sparse.

M: What was the source of that enforcement?

L: Well, it was mostly the Sheriff's Department. Of course, a county as big as this one, which is, I guess you know, the largest in the State of Texas, if they had one deputy in Marathon and the sheriff and a deputy here- that was it. Of course, in those days there was no telephone system. If you needed them you had to come get them. You just hoped for the best that they weren't some place else. (laughs)

M: Did the Texas Rangers ever...

L: I feel sure there was always Rangers. I don't have any immediate recollection of...now, I've known Rangers here in Alpine since 1950. But, prior to that, and back in those days I feel sure they had them. They weren't riding the river or just out circulating. If you needed them you had to go find them or have them sent in.

M: Do you recall any specifics on relations with the Mexicans living across the river as far as cross-border traffic and social involvement?

L: I think it was friendlier. I think those people that lived

along the border got along real well with them. They used to come across and work on this side. I don't think they ventured as far north as what we would think of today as the wet. You know they talk about the wet Mexican getting into Chicago, [Illinois] and just keep going north. I don't think that they ever ventured that far, but I can remember back when we used to have help, even at this ranch, and below Marathon that came from Mexico. Sometimes they'd go down and get them, but we never thought anything about it and the law never bothered you. But we never turned them loose and sent them someplace. We took them back and they went back home to visit. Then they came back and they stayed at the ranch. They didn't get out and circulate and they didn't bring family and kids and all that over. It was a different way of life than it is today. As far as socializing, I don't know much about that, but I think the families on this side were friendlier with the families over. In other words, they went back and forth across and the Border Patrol was just nonexistent down there. They didn't bother you because there was no reason to bother you.

M: You mentioned earlier that your family had friends in Terlingua at the mine, or at Study Butte. What do you recall as your early recollections of Study Butte and Terlingua?

L: I don't recall too much about Terlingua than just going over and seeing all the mine shafts, but we used to visit with the Bircham family because he was the mining engineer at Study

Butte. His family lived there. You wouldn't know the place today. There were homes all over that place. There were grocery stores and lots of machinery and equipment running all the time. They were actually producing ore. There was a fellow by the name of Spaulding that was a brother-in-law to Mr. Bircham that owned the grocery store. He, of course, supplied groceries for the whole town and the mines. It was a real going place. There was just traffic and people milling. I imagine that at one time there were three or four hundred people in that little area.

M: There was a movie theater there at the time, too.

L: That was up at Terlingua. Now, I don't know about Study Butte, but there was one up at Terlingua.

M: Was there a community at Lajitas?

L: You know, there we go again. (chuckles) Until Lajitas got so famous in the last fifteen or twenty years we just took Lajitas for granted. It was just some place you passed going on up the river road. It was kind of a jumping-off place to get back and forth across the river to San Carlos, but there wasn't any reason to come up there. Everything sort of stopped at the mines at Study Butte and Terlingua and you made the trip back up toward Alpine. Unless you were going to Presidio you just didn't go on up that river road.

M: Mr. Leary, I want to pause for a moment to turn the tape over.

End of Tape One

Side A

Beginning of Tape One

Side B

M: Mr. Leary, in talking about traveling and where you didn't have purposes to go like Lajitas and Castolon, how did your family get around in the 1930s and [19]40s?

L: Well, fortunately we had cars. (laughs) We laugh about the old Essex. You may never even have heard of an Essex. We had a four-door Essex with probably the first...instead of a push starter it had a pull starter. The starter was so hard to pull we had to keep a little rope and you put your left foot upon the dash and pulled (laughs) to turn the starter on this Essex. But once you got it started it ran great.

M: It was sort of like starting a lawn mower?

L: Right. Sort of like starting a lawn mower. Then we had another Model A Coupe, but there was no such thing then as a pick-up. Around the ranch we used a wagons and teams. If we had to haul feed some place you put on the wagon and hauled it to whatever pasture you wanted. Then we had little storage places to keep it. If you wanted wood you got a wagon and team and went out and got a load of wood. You didn't run out there in the pick-up. In other words, it took all day to do what today we probably do in an hour because now you can run all over the ranch in an hour and a half or two hours and check every windmill and watering on the place. But in the old days they had to do it on horseback, so it would be an

all-day deal.

M: How many sections did your grandfather and grandmother own or ranch at its largest?

L: That would have been the Rosillos place and I'm not sure what the size of that place...what it actually encompassed. I would imagine it was in excess of twenty thousand acres down there. The place up by Marathon originally was only twelve sections. It was small because he only wanted to raise registered cattle. He was getting ready to retire, so this was going to be his place where he didn't have quite so much work to do. About the time he got it running like he thought it ought to be, well, of course, the Depression came along and things just went down hill. I guess fortunately for him he died and he didn't have to go through another ten years of all the problems that came along.

M: That your grandmother did go through.

L: Grandmother did. She was a staunch little fat gal that could always see the bright side of things.

M: Her name was Margaret.

L: Margaret. Nothing really daunted her too much. Her big passion was playing bridge, believe it or not. When things just got so tough she could hardly stand them, why, she'd go someplace and play bridge for an afternoon. That'd sort of cure her ails and she'd come back and start over again.

M: With transportation and the road system being antique at the time, where did your grandmother go to play bridge?

- L: In Marathon. Marathon, at one time, was a thriving little community. It had three or four grocery stores and a barber shop. It had a little theater at one time, a movie house. It had a good hardware store, a post office, and a wholesale beer distributing business, believe it or not. There was lots of couples her age and bridge was the thing at the time. They used to night bridge couple parties. They could always get up a bridge game. So she'd drive the fifteen miles into Marathon and play bridge. (chuckles)
- M: The people who lived further south in what is now the Park, would they also come to Marathon for this type of social activity?
- L: They used to have a bridge club. I don't know how many people belonged, but one week they played in Marathon and the next week they played in the Park. Part of the people that played were Park personnel. Now, this was back in the [19]40s and the early [19]50s. They used to have one heck of a good time. But the women from the Park would travel up and play bridge in Marathon. The next week the Marathon ladies would travel south and play in the Park. It was an all day thing. If you were going to play bridge in the Park you had to get up early and get going because the road wasn't paved.
- M: And they'd return that night?
- L: Yes, they'd return that night. So it was a long day when they went to play bridge.
- M: You had to be serious bridge players.

L: (laughing) Right.

M: Do you recall the first Park Service personnel that you met, that you became acquainted with?

L: Probably Ross Maxwell. In fact, I knew him over the years. I guess I've known him better than anybody and longer.

M: Of course, Mr. Maxwell was the first superintendent of Big Bend and, I believe, he came here before the federal government took it over.

L: He was a very friendly guy and, being the first, everybody got to know him. Then later on over the years until three or four years ago he would come back and spend some time in the Park nearly every year.

M: Tell me what you remember about your early acquaintance with him and your impressions of what he did that you may recall.

L: Well, I don't remember anything that really was a real asset to the Park. He was just always a real friendly outgoing type person that seemed to be always interested in the country. He was always interested in what the people were doing and what you were doing or if you had any ideas that would help the Park. He made a great effort to get along with people. Then we sort of lost him right after he left. Then, I guess, it was ten or twelve years ago, maybe fifteen, that he started coming back. I don't where he went. He went to Austin or someplace else and then we sort of lost track of him. Then he started coming back, but he was just a big old friendly fellow. His wife was a very nice person, too.

M: I believe Mrs. Maxwell started the school at...

L: Now that I don't really know, but it wouldn't really surprise me.

M: Were there many Park Service personnel right after the World War that you recall?

L: No, I really don't because, see, I was gone to World War II and then went to school after the war was over. I didn't really get back out here until 1955. You could say that from 1943 to 1955 was kind of a blank, except that I'd be back from time to time. I knew the hometown people, but the Park people would come and go. Then the next time you come back they were gone. There's a tremendous turnover down there.

M: Just a little personal data. Did you serve overseas in the war?

L: Yes, I was at Bastogne, [Belgium] and everyone remembers Bastogne. (laughs)

M: Were you with the 101st Airborne Division?

L: No, I was the 6th Armored. We were on the ground. We were trying to get in to get the airborne people out, but we were all around there firing and hitting at each other. That was in 1943 and [19]44.

M: Then you returned from the service and went to school?

L: Yes, I went to the University of Texas. Then I came back and went to San Angelo University for a while and fiddled around and fiddled around. Then I finally went to work for the Veteran's Administration. I worked for them until 1955. That

was the year Grandmother died and it was either sell the ranch or somebody come back and run it in the middle of the drought. It was a big mess, but, anyway, I was married and had three children and we moved back out there. I had to figure some way to make a living because we couldn't make a living ranching. So I got a contract with the geology department of TCU, [Texas Christian University], and the University of Texas to house and feed their geology students in the summer. They were all coming out here studying geology because this is supposed to be one of three places in the entire United States where all known geological formations are on the surface. So we just had schools running out our ears coming out here to study. A lot of them stayed up here at Sul Ross [University] in the summer. We did this to supplement income. This made for good long days because they like to get up and be gone from the ranch by 7:00 a.m. We would have twenty-five or thirty kids to feed and make a sack lunch for and get out. We did this for...I don't know how many years. Finally, we got the ranch back on a paying basis.

M: Were the students studying geology on your property or in the area?

L: No, they were studying on us, but we had negotiated rights for them to get on to the Gage estate property and the Combs Cattle Company. It was within about a ten mile radius. Of course they'd go down for a day or two and study in the Park...the geology down there. Then the new...back before

anybody really got familiar with it, what they called the Solitario, which down in this new area that the State has got the wildlife natural area in.

M: The Black Gap area?

L: No, it's north. They just bought it three or four years ago. Of course, Black Gap was purchased and started along about that same time. I've forgotten, but they bought that in the [19]50s, in the early [19]50s. And that was just really getting developed.

M: The State bought Black Gap in the early [19]50s?

L: I don't really know if it was the late [19]40s, 1948 or 1948, or early in 1950 or [19]51. It really had not taken off. It was just sort of in a dormant stage. They were trying to decide what they were going to do with it.

M: Could you explain what Black Gap is?

L: Well, Black Gap is...they call it a State Natural Area. They've been running tests down there trying to determine reproduction on different types of wildlife, how fast deer will come back after they are killed down to a certain point. They've done a lot of work with bighorn sheep to see if they can adapt to this country. They've done a lot with birds, particularly quail and dove. They had, in my opinion- I'll put my opinion in- they nearly had disaster down there in the [19]60s. That was long during about that time when we had this tremendous D02 (?), a new poison control system that came out. You know, we nearly annihilated the coyotes. So the

deer really came back into their own and the country was just absolutely flooded with deer. Of course, Black Gap was doing this big reproduction test and so they were taking hundreds of hunters down there free, which is all right. You could shoot any kind of deer whether it was a doe, or a fawn, or anything trying to see how fast they would reproduce. Well, they almost shot themselves out of business. For the last twelve or fifteen years they've had to really slow down to try and bring deer back into area down there.

M: Wildlife management, and particularly predator control, apparently, has been an issue in the broader Big Bend area for some time. What, as a rancher, is your perspective on this, especially with the Park protecting all wildlife?

L: Well, I am not against animal control. In a country as vast as this is, I don't think you're ever going to kill everything out. I don't think you ought to just slaughter them, but I think that anybody that's in business ought to be able to maintain a certain equal situation. We have had problems with lions and coyotes. With a certain amount of killing you can control the situation, but you're not wiping out. You're controlling the situation. Of course the Park people have an entirely different attitude. They are now trying to bring back in the wolf. And I don't know what this bear situation is going to do, but it will be years before they get enough. I think they're going to bother the tourists more than the neighboring ranch people. But those things you just have to

face as they come along. I don't think you will find a ranch in the country that wants to annihilate everything. They just want to keep it under control.

M: Were mountain lions a problem in your grandfather's time?

L: You know, I never heard them talk about mountain lions. As a kid I know we had lots of coyotes because I'd lay in bed at that ranch and listen to them howl. But I don't remember hearing them talk about killing calves. In the [19]40s, in the transition from cattle to sheep, what a mess it must have been (laughs) because a coyote can kill fifteen or twenty a night. They don't eat them, they just kill them.

M: If wildlife preservation versus control has been a traditional issue between ranchers and neighbors of the Park, what other issues have been traditional in that sense, if any, since the Park came into being?

L: I don't really know if there's been anything that has been simply insurmountable. The Park people get a little ticky every now and then about their boundary lines, but I don't know that it really bothers anybody. If they accidentally find you over there they get a little perturbed about it. Of course, if you're hunting I can understand that. I get perturbed if somebody gets on me hunting.

M: But you're talking about a rancher who crosses the boundary on horseback?

L: Yes, and maybe he hunting for his cattle, or something. They want you to get prior clearance for all this. Of course, with

the rancher, he's in a hurry and sees his cattle over the way about half mile. He hasn't got time to go back and call. Besides they'd say something like, "Okay, we'll meet you over there at three o'clock tomorrow afternoon." (laughs) So he just takes a chance to get them and get back. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. I don't think it's caused real hassle.

M: So there is not a fence that marks the boundary of the Park?

L: There hasn't been, but I think they're gradually trying to do something about this. Actually, there was a lot of those places where the land just came up and... .

M: So there was nothing to prevent livestock from grazing over onto the Park?

L: That's right. It's kind of Black Gap. For a long time there wasn't a fence around Black Gap. People on those ranches drifted over in there, but it didn't seem to bother the State as much as the federal people.

M: Do you have an opinion, Mr. Leary, on the long term impact of the National Park on the entire area of Alpine, Marathon, Marfa, and the communities that surround it and the economic impact?

L: I think, definitely, it helps. There are so many people, tourists, that come through. It's hurt school systems from lack and, particularly, the State acquisition of this land down here as far as taxes go. Of course, the federal government pays a bulk, in lieu, of school taxes, but the

State doesn't. And so the Marfa schools, I think, took quite a hit when the State took in this section as far as their taxes go on their schools. But I think that from the standpoint of the local business and the motels that the business that the Park brings in probably helps all of them, but I think that sometimes I get the feeling from some of the Park people that they feel like they're kind of the savior of the area. I heard a superintendent make the remark, "If we were not here you'd be starving to death." It wasn't those exact words, let me clarify that. It's true that tourism is a great help, but this country survived and there were lots of families and ranches down where the Park is. Study Butte and Terlingua were booming communities. Marathon was a booming community. There was lots of business here before the Park came. So some of these towns, Marathon, for example, used to be a thriving little town believe it or not. There were three nice big grocery stores there. There was a bank and a movie theater, also. Also, there was a good hardware store and the schools. The old Gage Hotel, which is still there, and a barber shop were there, too. There were two or three restaurants and everybody was busy. I really don't know what really happened to make it come to a screeching halt.

M: Was there any industry there other than ranching at that time?

L: Only years ago, and it didn't seem to affect it, but there was a wax factory. Remember the old candelia wax? They used to bring it in and there was a wax factory there. I don't really

know the history of the wax factory, but it kind of got started during World War I. After the war, I guess, the demand for wax faded and they just gradually shut it down and dismantled it. That was the only industrial thing they had.

M: Did you personally ever have any experience with wax making?

L: No. No. But the Stillwell family, if you talk to any of them, made wax and sold it. The Casners'- of course, all the Casners are dead- but the son-in-law, J. D. Holman, lives here in Alpine and is still involved in the wax business. The Collins'...there's only one son left, D. W. Collins, he's about my age and happens to be in the hospital at this time, lives here in Alpine and his family was in the wax business during World War II. He could probably tell you the exact process, but I just never had anything to do with wax. Apparently, though, it was a going thing at one time.

M: You mentioned the Stillwells'. I would presume that your grandfather, at least, knew Mr. Stillwell?

L: Well, my grandmother and Hallie were the closest of friends. My mother and Mrs. Stillwell were the closest of friends. Unfortunately, my mother, who would be a great source of information, is completely mentally gone. She's been in the hospital out here for three years. She's ninety-four, but they were the closest of friends for many, many years. I was raised with all the Stillwell kids. Have you met Hallie, Mrs. Stillwell?

M: Yes.

L: Well, they're quite a clan. They're an institution of their own. (laughs) They thoroughly enjoy their history and they like to talk about it. We laugh about Hallie because if she's ever heard a good story she'll tell you about it.

M: We were talking earlier about the first Park Service personnel and Ross Maxwell. Do you have any stories that you remember about the early tourists that you may have come across?

L: Well, only one that I can think of off-hand. This was in the days when the Park was new and there wasn't any pavement from Marathon to the Park. It was just a State bladed road and dirt *caliche* all the way. I was with my neighbor and we were going down the road to his ranch which was about three or four miles from ours. We were going down this road and met this car coming from the Park. The man stopped and got out and waved his hands. It was obvious to us he was trying to stop us. We thought he was having trouble and in the old days you stopped and talked to these people. We stopped and he said, "Don't go. Don't go." My neighbor said, "Don't go? What do you mean?" He said, "It's pretty, but that road just isn't worth it. I'm going to save you the trip. Just don't go." Of course, he had been down seventy-five or eighty miles of dirt road. He was worn out and the family was dusty and dirty, but he thought we were tourists and he was trying to save us the trip. (laughs)

M: He was trying to do you a favor?

L: Yes. (laughing) Don't go. Don't go.

M: What would you consider the biggest change in the Park area today as compared to today when you took the dirt road down there?

L: I guess all the modern buildings. They've just built houses all over the place now particularly at the Park Headquarters. You know all the modern facilities that they have.

M: Were there any environmental changes that you can remember?

L: Not that I can remember off-hand. Basically, the Basin looks just like it did except they've built the motel and restaurant. But the scenery, basically, and the road, which is identical to the first road, except it's been widened and paved, are all the same. You can still look out through the window and see for a hundred miles they say. I don't know. I've never calculated it, but it's a good long way. You just weren't used to all those people. When you went down there before it was just you and the land. Now you go and there's just people running all over the place. Of course, Rio Grande Village, that's a big change because that was the old Daniels' farm. There were just one or two adobe buildings there and now they have a trailer park and all those trees they planted.

M: At one time there was a cotton field there.

L: Yes. And that was the end of the mail route. It used to start at Marathon and wind down and ended up there. He would spend the night. Then he'd gather up all the mail and go back out the next day. It was too far to go down and come out all in one day, so he went down one day and came out the next.

M: Do you remember who the mailman was?

L: Mr. Hancock. For years and years and years Ed Hancock was the mailman. We used to use him for everything. We had the old crank telephones and we knew what time he left Marathon, so if we wanted something we'd call the grocery store, which was next door to the post office, and tell Mr. Schumaker to be sure to put on an extra loaf of bread and send it on the mail truck. (chuckles) So Mr. Hancock not only had your mail, he had your groceries, too.

M: Did he charge you extra?

L: No. No, he never charged a dime for anything. The only thing is he never veered off his route. If you weren't there to meet him he'd just dump your mail and your groceries right there by the side of the road. But in those days you never worried. When you went up there it was there. Nobody ever took it.

M: We mentioned earlier Hot Springs and you said that was always a livelier place. What more do you recall about Hot Springs?

L: My grandparents used to go down there once or twice a year to take the baths, as they referred to it. The Langfords' ran Hot Springs. They had this one son, Joe, and the daughter was Lovie. Lovie lived around here until about seven years ago. Then she got sick and, I think, she's in the hospital somewhere. I don't know what ever happened to Joe. He and I were friends. He was older than I but we were friends back in our ten, eleven, twelve year old days. The Langfords' lived

at Hot Springs and that was the first time in my life that I had ever seen a fish roast. In the old days they used to catch catfish out of the Rio Grande that weighed seventy and eighty pounds. Today this sounds like I don't know what I'm talking about. But the Langfords' would invite me over for lunch or supper when ever we were down there taking the baths. Mrs. Langford had this hunk of fish baking in her oven. I'd never seen a piece of fish that big; it was a hunk of catfish the size of a rump roast. As a kid I was fascinated because all I'd ever seen were these little bitty old perch and this sort of thing. But this was a catfish roast. I've always remembered that.

M: The Langfords' at that time would have lived in the house...

L: They were living right there at what used to be the post office. It's a rock building right as you get into Hot Springs. They lived in the back of it.

M: What was the building up above the Post Office?

L: I don't remember. Right above as you come into Hot Springs on the right there was a house kind of up and that was Mr. Hancock's. When he went down he used to stay in that house overnight. That was his house. I don't really remember above the Post Office. All that I remember is the Post Office and the main building right there next to the cabins up from them a little bit.

M: What I'm thinking of as above is probably where you're saying Mr. Hancock stayed. It's to the right as you drive in.

- L: Right. I understand that he built that to stay in when he went down.
- M: Did the Mexicans also get mail there?
- L: You know, I really don't know. There were always Mexicans coming back and forth across.
- M: What did the Langfords' have in their store? What did they offer?
- L: (laughs) You know, I was a kid and I honestly don't remember, although I'm sure they had things like candy, chewing gum, and probably only canned goods that Mr. Hancock could haul down for them because back in those days we didn't have much fresh produce. Even in Marathon there wasn't any place to get it. We didn't have the truck system that we have today.
- M: You mentioned crank telephones. At what period would this have been and do you remember the first telephone your family may have had?
- L: Actually, the first telephone was left over from World War I. During World War I the army put a telephone line from Marathon to the river. Then when they abandoned that line people bought it and made it a private telephone line. You owned your section of it. For example, we owned from Marathon to the ranch. Then the people below us owned theirs and it went on down. Over a period of time, gradually, people just let their end go. It finally ended up with our family and the Combs' family and, I guess, that was about it. About twenty miles of that phone line was all that existed until 1955. It

was a one-wire crank and they had an operator in town. She still had the little plug-in deals, too. We used it. Then Southwestern Bell finally put in dial and it never worked right because we didn't have the proper line. With the old crank system we could talk anywhere, but when they put in the dial we couldn't hear. People could hear us, but we couldn't hear them. I don't know what the problem was. We put up with this until I guess it's been about ten or twelve years ago when Big Ben Telephone came in and put in the rural telephone system. Now we have excellent service.

M: What about electricity?

L: Electricity came in in the early [19]50s. Now there is one of the things that the Park did for us. If it hadn't been for the Park we probably wouldn't have rural electricity to this day. They came, in really, to get to the Park because the Park operated on generators. That whole thing down there ran on generators. They apparently had some influence with REA, [Rural Electric Administration]. REA didn't come any further west than Del Rio, [Texas] or Comstock or somewhere out in there. So when they went in to the Park the rest of us benefitted from it, but this was in the early [19]50s. My grandmother was absolutely ecstatic because she never had anything like this. We had the old thirty-two volt generator before that. You had to go out at night to turn it on and when you were through with the lights you had to go turn it off. (chuckles) Even if it was fourteen below you still had

to go out and turn the generator off.

M: Describe what a thirty-two volt generator is.

L: It was just a little old kind of a putt-putt thing. You had everything running at thirty-two volts instead of one hundred ten volts. Now don't ask me how they arrived at thirty-two volts. I don't know. But we had those special lights and everything electric had to be a thirty-two volt system, so consequently you didn't have any appliances to speak of. It wouldn't even run a refrigerator. We had to have servels or gas refrigerators. Before that it would have been the icebox.

End of Tape One

Side B

Beginning of Tape Two

Side A

M: Mr. Leary, we were talking about the ice plant in Marathon.

L: Okay, Marathon, in fact, it had its own generating plant. They generated all the electricity in Marathon for that little old town. They had the ice plant right there and manufactured ice. I don't know what demand they had other than the people there, but you could always buy block ice up until along about in the mid [19]40s. Somewhere in there they shut it down. I don't know whether when they built the new West Texas

Utilities generating plant over around, Macamee, I think, they cut all these towns in on the one big unit and disassembled all these little generating plants.

M: Did your family regularly go to Marathon to pick up ice?

L: Probably. I don't remember us ever just going for ice, but every time we went, I think, we went by and picked up a fifty or hundred-pound block of ice, which probably cost twenty-five or thirty cents. (laughs)

M: Do you recall how long that might last?

L: Well, I remember that when we'd run out they'd say, "Well, whoever goes to town next has got to get ice." We had the old icebox that had a jug of water up on top that went under the coils and we always had cold water, but in those days we didn't keep as much in the refrigerator as we do today.

M: You mentioned raising vegetables and chickens and hogs. I guess you butchered your own beef as well. How did you keep you meat?

L: Actually, we didn't butcher as much beef as we did pork and chickens. Now, pork, we'd cure. They used to cure the pork, bacon, and hams and store it. Of course, chickens we'd just kill them as we needed them. Most of the time there was a little butcher shop in Marathon. Believe it or not, he had a little vault, so we used to sell him beef because we didn't have any place to keep the beef. I don't know if we took the cost of the beef out in meat or whether we actually got cash for it, but I remember the butcher used to come down to the

ranch and buy calves from my grandfather. They'd butcher them while he was there and he'd wrap them in big tarpaulins and put them in the back of this Model T pick-up to bring them back to town. They'd clean them, gut them, and everything right there. I guess he just bought the beef as he needed it.

M: Particularly in your grandfather's day, what was the market for his cattle? Did he have to ship them by railroad?

L: Everything went out by railroad. You had to drive them to town. There weren't any trucks to pick them up. You had to figure out what you had and order your railcars in advance. Then you drove them to town. A lot of the time you'd get with your neighbors. Probably they had a contract buyer in the old days who would come and visit. He'd visit all the neighbors and make a deal to buy so many head. Then you'd meet your neighbor out and you'd drive them all in to Marathon at the same time because the railroad at that time owned all the pens close to the track. They all had scales, so you'd just drive yours in. The railroad supplied that because you were using their facility to get your cattle shipped.

M: You said earlier your grandfather moved to a smaller ranch near Marathon with the purpose of raising registered cattle. What was the difference between that operation and the larger ranch?

L: Well, it was a lot less country to keep up with in the first place. By raising register animals...say a registered bull would bring five hundred dollars whereas just an ordinary calf

would bring, in those days, about twenty-five dollars. So, in other words, he didn't have to raise the same amount of stock to make the same amount of money. So if he sold a hundred bulls a year it would be the equivalent of, maybe, selling eight or nine hundred head of cattle or calves.

M: Was he raising rougher stock?

L: Yeah, that was all commercial stuff down there. It was all just commercial grade cattle- just crossbred stuff.

M: Did he ever acquire his calves from Mexico?

L: I honestly do not know.

M: That's a common practice today in some cases.

L: Yeah, they ship lots of cattle from Mexico across, but I don't know if he ever did or not or if he raised his own replacement heifers or how came about. You know, I was born after they had actually made the move. So I'm going back and sort of repeating what I've heard, which is about all I can do.

M: What do you recall about your Grandfather and his appearance? His name was Lucius, right?

L: Yes, Lucius. Lucius Featherstone, can you imagine? On the other side I had a grandfather named James Aloysius (?) (laughs) but, be that as it may, he was probably about my size, not as heavy, and was going all the time. He was a ball of fire. He couldn't stand to sit idle. He always had tremendous gardens in the summer and tremendous orchards. He liked to produce things. There was just something about growing something that was in his blood.

M: Where did he obtain the water? Did he drill for it?

L: Believe it or not, he was probably an early engineer in his own right. Above the ranch there on the Gage Cattle Company was a spring called Garden Springs that had just produced there for years and just run off. He made a deal with the Gage people to ditch this water approximately two and a half miles to the ranch house. He went up there and engineered this ditch which was about (indicates dimensions) this wide and so deep.

M: That's about twelve by twelve inches?

L: And he ran that water. It was enough water that by the time it got to the ranch house it was still running seven or eight gallons a minute. In the route down from this spring to the house he built two huge dirt tanks in his pasture. So these springs would run into the dirt tank and then run around. He kept these two full. On the second dirt tank he put in a big valve at the bottom and cleared off about three acres out here by it and planted this grove of fruit trees and put in this huge garden. The only thing he ever sold commercially was watermelons. He had a reputation for raising these beautiful-I remember as a kid we used to take truckloads of watermelons (indicates size) like this...

M: You're indicating two and a half to three feet long.

L: ...into the grocery stores in Marathon. They were just huge watermelons. We used to take hay from the haystack and lay it in there so we could lay these watermelons in there. But we

had tubs of water from the spring and this spring ran until they built the new highway. The Gage people gave the contractor water rights to go in there to use the water. They got in there with a bulldozer. They were going to open the spring up wide and ruined it.

M: In effect they closed it off?

L: That's right. So that ended the spring after twenty-five or thirty years. Of course, in the meantime it's cost us money because we've had to drill more wells to offset the loss. I mean, if you have a spring that runs through two or three sections of land the cattle drink out of it. These two tanks dried up because there was nothing to keep them full but, be that as it may, that's where he got all the water. Now, believe it or not, we had sufficient water at a fairly reasonable depth, but we just had to drill for it. We still have a lot of water, but we just don't have the free water that we had with that spring.

M: You have to drill for it. Would you think that your grandfather in designing this ditch system was a little unusual for the time...conservation wise?

L: Well, that didn't end his...that was just the beginning. He went above the house where there was a big creek, which is still there, Reynolds Creek, and he cut a big opening in that- by the way, all this was done with teams and *fresnos*- and spread this water out over a lot of the ranch land. It worked until it stopped up about fifteen or twenty years ago. He

irrigated out of this old big creek. He got a kick out of spreading the water around. He was a frustrated engineer, I think.

M: That's very interesting. I guess they had to improvise on their own without the assistance of a lot of scientific help that a modern day rancher might have available.

L: And the drilling...we just didn't have the drilling rigs. You didn't have the mobility. You didn't have a way to clear the land to get the rig to where you needed the water. Nowadays if you want a well over here you take the bulldozer and go over there, clear the path, and you take it in. You didn't do that in those days.

M: Do you have children who will succeed you in managing the ranch?

L: My number three son, Tim, lives down there now. He basically runs the operation. I try to stay out of his hair because I frustrate him. (laughs)

M: Are you retired from ranching?

L: Well, I just sort of stay in the background. I like to keep my thumb on the financial end, but Tim really does a real good job. He runs that and he's got another ranch leased below us which kind of expands things for him. He and his wife, they have three kids, live down there. Basically, the ranch buildings and everything are just like we found them. We've maintained them and kept them up with the exception of one barn that burned down. We replaced it, but it doesn't look

like the barn that was there. The buildings are just like they were when my grandparents were there.

M: Did your grandfather build those buildings or were they there when he bought it?

L: Two of the buildings were there when he bought. One he built and then the main house he built for them to live in. It hasn't got a lot of rooms, but it's a huge old house. He and a carpenter...he didn't have a set of plans, I don't think, but the story is that he bought a carload of lumber. It was taken down to Marathon by teams and wagons and he built this house. It's two-story. The upstairs was never finished except one end. One end of it is an attic and the other end is one big bedroom. It's got three bedrooms, two baths, a huge living room/dining room, a big kitchen, and a big screened porch on the front and one on the back. There's lots of living space, but all the rooms are huge. The bedrooms are sixteen by eighteen and twenty by twenty. (laughs) He believed in room! It's a comfortable old house. It's basically just like it was.

M: You said he came from Beeville, Texas. Do you know about his background prior to Beeville?

L: No. No, except that his mother and father died and he was left to raise his younger brother, Clyde. Excuse me, let me retract that. His mother died and his father was ill with tuberculosis- let me get the story straight- and he had his little brother, Clyde. The doctor told him that his father

had to get to a drier climate. So he had a few head of cattle and he and Clyde started out bringing Grandfather, coming this way. They got as far as Del Rio. The cattle got real sore footed and worn out and tired. He knew he had to do something, so he had enough money to put them on a rail car and come to a siding called Marathon. So he bought that. When they got here he just unloaded them and started south because that was all open land down there and he could homestead.

M: This was about 1883?

L: 1883. That's when the brand was recorded at the court house was in 1883.

M: What was his brand?

L: Y-cross-F. So they just headed south. They made two or three stops in route and finally ended up at the Rosillos, mainly because of the water. You see there was a spring down there and they had a lot of water.

M: Would you explain the brand, Y-cross-F?

L: Well, I'm not sure, but the story that comes to me was that Y was his father's brand, just a plain Y. His middle name was Featherstone, so down here he put the F on at the bottom of the Y and called it a Y-cross-F. Some people call it a Y-lazy-F, but the family has always called it a Y-cross-F. We've just continued to use it. We reregistered it every ten years and just continue to use the brand.

M: Mr. Leary, we've talked about a lot of things. Is there

anything that comes to mind in your recollections that you'd like to mention that I haven't asked you about?

L: No, I've been a very fortunate person having the grandparents that I did. They were great people. I feel fortunate to have had the background and the family that we've had because they left us a tremendous legacy. The family was always well respected in the country. I just feel like we've been very fortunate to live here and to have the advantages that we've had.

M: We haven't mentioned your father much. We talked about your grandfather, Lucius Buttrill.

L: My father was Francis Leary and he was born in Missouri. He came with his parents to San Antonio, [Texas], but I don't know what year. He was with an oil field supply company in Tampico, Mexico back in the late 1920s when my mother, who had graduated from Lady of the Lake College in San Antonio, went down to Tampico to tutor for a family that was down there. She was graduated from college and she went down there to tutor these children because there was no English teachers. So they met down in Tampico and then came out and married in Marathon. So they stayed down there until I was probably two and then they came back out to San Antonio. My dad went to work for a company down there called Alamo Iron Works. They made heavy machinery, iron, and tools. He worked for them till the day he died. He worked for them from 1928 to, well...excuse me, he retired the year before and he died in

1962. He worked for them for thirty or forty years. He was in charge of the branch office in San Angelo when he died. He was never involved in the ranch. He didn't really care for it. (laughs) He didn't like the country.

M: Well, Mr. Leary, I've taken a lot of your time and you've provided some good information. I'm going to shut the tape off now.

End of Interview