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Interview no. 734

Lewis Jones

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Lewis Jones

INTERVIEWER: Oscar J. Martinez and Jim Marchant

PROJECT: _____

DATE OF INTERVIEW: April 13, 1977

TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted

TAPE NO.: 734

TRANSCRIPT NO.: 734

TRANSCRIBER: Irene Ramiriz

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Chief Inspector for U.S. Customs Service, El Paso

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Discussion of his work with the Customs Service at the bridges in the El Paso - Juarez area since 1945, especially export-import control and seizures of contraband.

Length of Interview: 1 hr. 15 min. Length of Transcript 42 pages

Lewis Jones
By Oscar J. Martinez and Jim Marchant
April 13, 1977

JM: Okay. Lewis, I'd like first of all to say, let me ask you the question where you were born and how you came to be in El Paso, and a little bit about your career up to the time that you came into Customs. Could you kind of run that down for me?

LJ: Well, I was born in Tresmont, Tennessee in 1915. And I lived in Tennessee not too far from Tresmont at any one time up till the time that I first came to El Paso which was in 1945. I did have two years of experience in the War Department in a shell loading plant as far as government experience is concerned before I came out here. I started to work in the Customs Service in June. Matter of fact it was on my birthday, June 16, 1945. I remember it rather well. It was on a Saturday and it was a pretty rough day for me. And quite frankly I wondered before the day was over if I hadn't made a hell of a big mistake. [Laughs]

JM: What kind of education did you have before getting into Customs?

LJ: High school and business college only. Had no college work of any sort.

JM: What business college did you go to?

LJ: West Tennessee Business College in Jackson, Tennessee.

JM: When you got into the Customs Service, how did you go about getting your job?

LJ: There's a little bit of a story there. When I first came out

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here, I actually was unemployed for a short time there. I came as a matter of fact because my brother had been stationed here at Fort Bliss and I made a trip out here to see him at one time. And I rather liked El Paso at the time and decided I would come back again and look for something here. I liked it that well to make a special effort.

JM: How old were you at that time?

LJ: Well, that was 32 years ago. So, about, I was 30 years old at the time. So I came out here and the first job I had, I went to work for Borden Milk Company. I was working in their office out on...I believe their office was on Myrtle Street at the time. And I worked there about six weeks. It was in the paper--they were advertising for help--that there was a shortage in Customs Service and that they needed Inspectors. So I went down to the bridge and talked to some of the Inspectors there and find out a little bit more about what it was about, because I wasn't that familiar with the duties of a Custom Inspector at that particular time although it did have an appeal for me.

And after I talked to them I went up one day to make an application to the Civil Service Commission. And as I walked in, as it turned out later, they had just started an examination and they had several people in there taking the examination. I asked the man there about the applications for Custom Inspector and he said, "Well, we're just giving the examination now. It's too bad that you don't have an application," the 171. I'm not sure, I don't believe it was

the 171 at that time. I think the form they used at that time was a 67. And I told him, "I happen to just have one in my pocket." Which I did have, it was the only copy I had. I was filing applications in various places at that time but this was my last copy. But since the examination was already in progress I pulled it out and handed it to him, and I sat down and started taking the examination along with everybody else. And about two weeks later I heard from the assistant Customs Collector. There were no District Directors at that time, they were Collectors and assistant Collectors. The Collector, of course, was a political appointee. The Assistant Collectors were under Civil Service, and today of course they're all under Civil Service. But he offered me a job, and I asked him for a couple of weeks so I give notice to the company out there. And that's the way I came to work for the Customs Service.

At the time the appointment came in, of course, there were no permanent appointments being made. I already had Civil [Service] status because I had Civil Service status at the Wolf Creek Ordnance Plant where I'd been working over in Tennessee before I came out here. But I had to accept an appointment there on a temporary basis. And later there were several different moves made from time to time that the President blanketed in certain groups of people and gave them permanent Civil Service status. But as a result of the fact that I already had Civil Service status, I came in one of the groups where President Truman, it was Truman at that time,

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that my appointment was made permanent. He blanketed in a group there who, everyone I think it was at that particular time that had had Civil Service status before and had accepted temporary appointment when they had made a move from one job to the other.

JM: Lewis, what kind of personnel were there here then?

LJ: If I'm not mistaken there were about 17 Inspectors at that time.

JM: And how many ports did you have?

LJ: Well, we only had two bridges. We had the Santa Fe bridge and the Stanton bridge. Of course, this was way before the Bridge of the Americas was ever built. And the Ysleta was a separate port, it didn't come under El Paso at all. At that particular time Ysleta was not in the city limits of El Paso, it was a municipality of its own. They were incorporated. Ysleta was a city of its own and consequently the port was a separate port. But the people of Ysleta disincorporated, and when they did, El Paso annexed Ysleta. So when they did then Ysleta became a part of the port of El Paso and at that time, why, it came under the jurisdiction of the Chief Inspector here, and has been even since. But they had their own man in charge down there and he reported directly to the Collector of Customs previously.

JM: On the district, would it have been different than it is now? Now we go from the Arizona-New Mexico line down to the Pecos River in this district. Would the district be changed?

LJ: Yes. It has been changed. Of course it includes all of

L. Jones

Colorado now, and at that time it didn't. It did include, it did start at the Pecos and it did go all across to the Arizona boundary. It included all of the state of New Mexico, but it didn't include any of the state of Colorado at that time, to the best of my knowledge.

OM: Could we go back to your first day? You mentioned that when you first started working you had doubts about the wisdom of your decision.

LJ: Well, it was from a physical standpoint only. I'll tell you what happened. I had had a pretty serious illness and I wasn't quite that strong. As I said, when I first started to work out here I was working in the office for Borden Milk Company. So I hadn't had that much physical exercise in quite some time. And I got more physical exercise on that one Saturday than I'd had for quite a long while. And this being in the the middle of June, of course it was terrifically hot. And Saturdays in those days was no different than it is now, to the extent that it's one of their heaviest days. And they had groceries piling through there and they had to all be inspected, and they inspected lots of cars there on the line at that time. And from a physical standpoint it just beat me down so bad that I was wondering if I was gonna be able to take it.

JM: And that was the end of the first day, right?

LJ: That was at, well, before the day was over, believe me! And the thing that actually saved me there was this was the end of the scheduled four-week shift. They worked four weeks and

then they'd rotate their people like they do now. Some of them, at least, might stay on the same shift, but some of 'em would rotate. But I'd work days on that particular day, and then on the following Monday they assigned me to a four to twelve. Well, I survived it because the four to twelve shift was much cooler, I didn't have to work through the heat of the day. Of course it was still hot at four o'clock when I came to work, but a little while after that and particularly when it got late in the afternoon, the sun begins to go down, why it made it bearable for me. So after that why I came along real good, no more problems. But that first day, I'll never forget that one, it was a...it was real hard for me from a physical standpoint.

JM: What kind of training did you get before you came aboard?

LJ: I went out there and worked 30 minutes with somebody on the line, and I worked streetcars with someone for 30 minutes, and I worked pedestrians for 30 minutes, and they walked off and left me, said, "Go ahead, it's yours." (Laughter)

JM: School of hard knocks again. You know that was really a problem in law enforcement circles up until 10 or 15 years ago. And since then things have been instituted and established around El Paso County, like the Sheriff's Academy and different things like that. What was the training that was actually given to inspectors 30 years ago other than that? Anything else?

LJ: There wasn't any.

JM: How about firearms training? Did you ever carry guns?

L. Jones

LJ: We never carried guns. We weren't authorized to carry guns. If anyone carried a gun he was carrying his own private weapon, and it was out of sight somewhere. Someone might have carried one but it wasn't actually authorized insofar as the Customs Service was concerned. You know back in those days, of course, the whole situation was somewhat different than it is now, too. While all Custom Inspectors are acting Immigrant Inspectors, also Agricultural Inspectors, you were a Customs Inspector only at that time, and Immigration officers were stationed at the bridge. They stopped for Immigration inspection before they ever reached Customs. When they got to you, their status had been determined already and they were admissable as far as Immigration was concerned.

JM: Now, that's a set up that is still in some of our airports. In New York City, Oscar, it's the same way. When the people come off the airplane, they report first to the Immigration Inspector right on the front line. And then they come through a series of inspection points after they pass through this initial thing to check their passports and their 10s, and then they're inspected by Customs Inspectors toward the end of the line. That's the same way there now.

LJ: And agriculture inspectors always worked alongside of us. We worked in a, well, it was the garita right on the sidewalk. Well, of course the sidewalk fanned out. It wasn't strictly a sidewalk, there was space involved there that was probably 15 to 18 feet wide completely and had a garita on the streetside there where we worked. The garita was wide enough so that you

could work the foot traffic out of one side and you worked the car traffic out of the other side of it. And at this time, on the old Santa Fe Bridge, there were only two lanes. Of course they came straight across Santa Fe street. The bridge itself wasn't located where it is today. It was actually located on Santa Fe Street, which of course is another block over yet. And they came straight to you on a level street, there was no hump over the river in a bridge like that. So there were two lanes, and one of those was for streetcars. You could run cars in behind the streetcars, so when you did run two lanes but one of 'em was mixed in with the streetcars, that's the only room for inbound traffic there was. Of course we had the Stanton Street bridge, but it was all outbound traffic just like it is today. So the only traffic you had in the port of El Paso was what could come in through those two lanes. Now, we had long lanes of traffic back in those days, too. It wasn't uncommon for someone to stand in line an hour trying to get across the bridge.

JM: To stand in line not even in the...

LJ: No, I mean driving, driving. No, pedestrians didn't have that much trouble 'cause pedestrians could walk in rather freely. And the bridge at that time of course was nearer to Juarez than those one is, because of course later on the location where the bridge was at that particular time of course went back to Mexico and is actually in Mexico now. 'Cause that was part of the Chamizal zone there and it was later on ceded back to Mexico.

L. Jones

JM: What did they pay you, Lewis, when you first came on? What did Inspectors make then?

LJ: I believe that when I started here we were making \$2,040 a year. That was base salary.

JM: Did you get lots of overtime?

LJ: We made overtime, but of course it didn't add up nearly as fast as they do now. As a matter of fact, when I first started we were working seven days a week every week. We didn't have any days off.

JM: For \$2,000 dollars a year.

LJ: Well, no, we were paid overtime for the extra time, that as I said, it didn't add up very fast because the base salary wasn't big enough to make it add up. But all in excess, of course Sundays for inspectors was double time even then, just like it is today. And then Saturdays are, or your day off, whatever your day off would've been had you had one, was time and a half. So it added of course to your income considerably.

JM: Did most of the guys carry a second job then, or work a second job? Or did anybody?

LJ: Nobody.

JM: Nobody did.

LJ: No, I don't think anybody did that. Well, there might have been some exceptions. Frankly, I don't know who it was if there were people doing it. They couldn't really do it very well. And I said, there could've been some exceptions. But we were subject to rotation even then, so you might work days

one shift and evenings another, so you couldn't depend on being able to hold down a job that required you to be there at a given time every day, you know.

JM: When you work the traffic lanes and the checks and what you did as an inspector out there during those years, today I know we have people that run the bridges and to different people that carry different kinds of contraband. What kind of things did you come in contact with in the early day, I mean 30 years ago? Was it different than today, or did you have many of the same things?

LJ: It was different. Most of the seizures that were made in those days was on jewelry, seemed like, when I first started here. You didn't have as many tourists as you do today. In fact, most of the tourists that you did have were from California. And I would assume that the primary reason for that was that a lot of the people from Mexico had migrated to California, and as a result there was a lot of visitation back and forth through there. But we had very few tourists coming through here 30 years ago from other states. And insofar as a secondary operation is concerned, right at the end of the bridge, we were practically at the end of the bridge, like the end of the bridge was from here to the wall there from us. And if we had a car to go to secondary, what we would call secondary delay, he would just pull right around the corner and park right there and put his luggage out on a table that we had there under cover where we were working, and we seldom even had more than one in there at a time. And you might go

for 15 or 20 minutes, or you might go for a half an hour before you got another one that you had to, that had luggage or anything in there.

But people from California, for whatever reason, seemed to forget their jewelry rather frequently, and we made lots of jewelry seizures at that time. There were also lots of liquor seizures, but jewelry and liquor constituted most of the seizures. But even back in those days we still made quite a few marijuana seizures. We didn't get big loads like we get today. Most of the marijuana that was seized was in relatively small lots--a few cigarettes here and there or something like that. Or you might find someone once in a while what would have a pound or a pound and a half maybe in a paper bag, something like that.

I remember very well the first marijuana seizure that I ever made. I was working the graveyard shift and I had a black man in the search room. There three of us that were working graveyard, there was only three Custom Inspectors on graveyard, and we kept a path pretty hot from our point on out the bridge back to the search room three because we were wall new and reasonably young. We wanted to set the world on fire I guess. At that particular time we had somebody either in the search room or on his way out of the search room or on his way into the search room just about all night long. [Chuckles] We made three marijuana seizures for the entire four-week period there, and we worked at it real hard. And the one that I made, you could've put all the marijuana that I

found in one thimble, I'm sure--just a lady's sewing thimble, you know. And this was in his sock. Back in those days we performed just as thorough a personal search as we do today. I had stripped this man already and I can remember going around the seams in his clothing, even there, to be sure there was nothing hidden in there. And he finally asked me as he stood there in his socks, "What are you looking for?" And I told him, "I'm looking for marijuana." And he says, "Well, I'll give you some." And he reached down into one of his socks, which we hadn't gotten to yet. That was the next thing, I was gonna take them off too, but he beat me to it. He says, "Well, I'll give you some." He reached into his sock and he pulled out this paper that had this very very small amount of marijuana in it. And you know they prosecuted that man. He was just out of the Army. They prosecuted him for that small amount of marijuana and he got six months for it. That was my first marijuana seizure.

One of the other men got the other two. He had one small one, I don't remember exactly what it was. And the other one was a paper bag. Somebody walking across just before the shift change, just before eight o'clock, and he had it under his overcoat. This was in the winter, probably December, possibly January. No, I believe it was probably January. But he was wearing a coat, and this paper bag (which was about so high), he had underneath his coat and it was buttoned around him. And this man I was working with just reached out and grabbed him and [said], "Oh, I got you that time, didn't I?" And that was

a good-sized marijuana seizure for those days. Once in a while they would pick up a little heroin back in those days, too. When they did it was small amounts. I never heard of anybody making a big one like they did here several months back, 22 pounds. Or even one like they had at Ysleta which was nine pounds approximately or something like that. But we didn't hear as much about it and we didn't find it in the quantities.

Of course the large seizures that were made in those days were made by Custom Agents because they were fighting the marijuana and the narcotics on the river, you know. And that was before the days of the DEA, and the Custom Agents were still involved in marijuana. And they made cases quite frequently. Some of their agents would make a buy and they would pick up people like that, or they would catch them coming across, as it might be. Of course they had Custom patrol back in those days, that was before it was disbanded, when I first came in. But they disbanded that in about 1948.

JM: What do you know about the Custom Patrol and the old patrol?

LJ: I knew several of them there at the time and I got to know some of them a whole lot better, because at the time they disbanded it they took care of all of the patrolmen there. They were no longer patrolmen but they were still in government service. And about 50 percent of 'em went into the agency service and the other 50 percent came to the bridge as inspectors. I can remember several of 'em that were in the patrol came to the bridge at that time. John Shaffer was one

of 'em. Lip Cook was another one. Marshal Higgins was another one. Marshal Higgins was injured here a few years ago, before he retired, down at Fabens when he was working there and got hung on a pick-up truck. Somebody dragged him off and kind of wrapped him around a telephone post down there and he was in pretty bad shape there for a while. Over a relatively small amount of marijuana. But he was trying to make a search there and he was about half in and about half out of the pick-up truck, and they guy took off with him. He could neither get in nor out. He couldn't turn her loose because he was going too fast and he couldn't get in, he just couldn't pull himself up. So he finally brushed him off against a telephone post there.

JM: When you worked at the bridges 30 years ago, you first started out working the same kind of work that you do now or the inspectors do now out here? Did you progress through the ranks of the inspectors? How did you do that?

LJ: Well, I started to work as a guard. The guards were doing the same thing the inspectors were, but their title was different. And my title was changed two or three times while I was still a guard. They changed our titles from guard to port patrol officer and back to guard, and then I believe back to guard, and then I believe back to patrol officer again probably. And then I was promoted to inspector after that. For several years I was in charge of all export control activity in the port of El Paso at the Stanton Bridge. All the exports went out on the Stanton Bridge.

L. Jones

JM: That's the same function that our guards do today over there?

LJ: The guards don't work anymore export control at all anymore, as a matter of fact. As a matter of fact we don't have any guards any more.

JM: Oh, is that right?

LJ: As of now. You have known some of those people when they were guards and we still have them, but their situation is changed. The ones who are working on Stanton Bridge are now warehouse officers, and their salaries are totally reimbursible by the warehouse themselves. That's the Ayoub and Wardy and the IBM, which is right up the street from IBW and the Rio Bravo Piece Goods store. Those are all bonded warehouses and they sell merchandise for export to Mexico only. IBW and Ayoub and Wardy of course are liquor stores, although they do have some other merchandise as well. But they're known as being in the liquor business but they do have quite a lot of other merchandise.

OM: And they pay the salaries of the inspectors?

LJ: Well of course the government pays the inspector, but it is reimbursible to the government by these warehouse officers. So we're out of the export control business as such. We can't have those fellas that are working there going out and inspecting trucks or working that kind of thing when their salaries are being reimbursed by the warehouses. So they're actually engaged only in checking out merchandise and verifying the fact that the merchandise sold from these bonded warehouses actually is exported. And that's their sole

function. Even merchandise that arrives in El Paso in bond and has to be exported, the documents have to be executed, it has to go through the import lot and be exported across the bridge down there. So they can't even certify the exportation of regular bonded merchandise that might be coming from New Yorksay, or on a T n E or something of that effect. they can't handle it anymore.

OM: When did the system change? You said before there were inspectors there.

LJ: Well, there haven't been inspectors over there for some time. The people that we were talking about just now were guards before. Their salaries was being paid by the government and they were not being reimbursed for it at that particular time.

OM: And they were doing that plus some other things at that time.

LJ: They were still checking shipper's export declarations and [so forth].

OM: What did that entail?

LJ: Well, it depended on the amount of time they had for it, of course, but they would be making a physical check of merchandise that's on trucks, or most of the merchandise goes out by truck. Of course they had a train goes out. A train could take out carloads of merchandise of course. But as far as that that went out across the bridge is concerned, they would be engaged in making checks or spot checks or whatever it took to satisfy them, that merchandise on the trucks against the export declarations that were presented for 'em. In some instances of course they had licenses for a lot of

types of merchandise. Licenses are required for very few types of merchandise anymore. At the time I used to work on export control we had a stack of licenses that we had to keep filed. We had a large file of licenses when I started to work there. But back during the war of course, there was a shortage of many, many types of merchandise. And the shorter it was, why of course the more stringent control was against it. We had licenses against many things, and those that didn't require an actual license were restricted in quantity, in the amount that could be exported.

OM: Could you name some of these things, Mr. Jones?

LJ: Yes. Almost anything that you can think of was restricted in those days, even various types of groceries. Flour was restricted, they used to require a license when I worked there from time to time. It wasn't a continuous thing in every instance. I can recall, like flour required a license for export at times, and then it would be taken off presumably because the supply became greater. Maybe there was a good crop. And later it might go on restriction again, again it might require a license. Sugar was restricted at that time. Practically all kinds of clothing was restricted at that time. But most types of food, tires of course was restricted, and inner tubes. Well, as I said, almost anything you can think of was restricted in those days. We used to make a terrific number of seizures because there was lots of smuggling on export control at that particular time. Because if it was restricted here it seemed to whet their appetite for it in

L. Jones

Mexico. But if a rumor got out, even, that something was going on restriction which wasn't under restriction at that particular time, it seemed like the people over there would start buying all of it that they could get their hands on.

JM: Was this because of the war?

LH: Oh yeah, yeah. Yeah, that was the reason for the shortage in the first place, you know. Because so much of the industry was engaged in making, providing war supplies, whatever, of some sort or another you know. And things were, they were kind of tight there.

JM: You were hired in 1945, is that right?

LJ: [Yes.]

JM: Were the government employees still subject to the draft at that time?

LJ: Oh, yes. Yes, they were. A lot of our people were in the draft. Not after I came in because, you know, of course the war didn't last too much longer after I started to work here. But a lot of people who hadn't been in Custom Service were in service at that time, and a lot of 'em came back Custom Service after the war was over. Stanley Fisher, who was Chief Inspector here before Mr. Easley, was one of 'em. Joe Anderson, who I worked with for quite a while, was another one. Martin M. Oates was one. He came back and he didn't stay too long in the custom service after he came back. In fact, I'm not sure that he came back at all to the Custom Service but he became...I don't know, I'm not sure what his title was but he was affiliated with the veteran's

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organization here in El Paso. I can't recall what his title was, but he was there for quite some time. He is back in the Custom Service now, as a matter of fact. He's stationed in Amarillo I believe as Port Director up there

JM: When you finished your tenure as a guard and as a whatever, the job descriptions varied, then you became an inspector. What year was that, do you remember?

LJ: No, really I don't know. It's been so long I can't remember when I first became an inspector. It would go back to probably...about 1948 I would expect.

JM: 1948?

LJ: Yes, very likely.

JM: When you became an inspector then you went out here on the bridges and began doing the actual inspection procedure again as an inspector, what were some of the more memorable cases that you were involved in? Can you relate some of those to us? Up until even today?

LJ: Well, the biggest marijuana seizure that I ever made was about...190 pounds I guess, which was in the trunk of a vehicle. Now, this one is one that the agents had information on, as a matter of fact. There's no credit due me really for having made the seizure although I did make it, but it was made on the bridge. But this is interesting because of what happened, not the fact that I made it or that any particular individual made. But this individual who brought it over was a runner for a well known marijuana ring in the interior of Mexico. And the Custom Agents were aware of the fact that

these people were in Juarez. And as a matter of fact, they had the place staked out and they almost missed this guy when he left there. It so happens that these people who were bringing it up for the interior, they were some of the big wheels in the organization and reportedly they would bring marijuana, loads of marijuana, up to Juarez, but they would never cross it, they would never bring it over themselves. They would get somebody who they could hire for to take that chance for 'em to bring it across the bridge. But in this particular instance, the gang had a falling out among themselves and this guy just broke loose from the bunch and went out, got in the car, headed for the bridge. He caught the agents by surprise and he almost lost them, I think, there and he almost lost them, I think, there before they realized that he was leaving with a load.

Nevertheless they followed him, and as a matter of fact, one agent passed him. Now this was at the Cordova. This was not when I first started; as a matter of fact this was much later because Cordova was already opened and I was working graveyard down there at the time. And the agent pulled up to the garita there, then handed me a gun under cover there, I wasn't armed. He handed me a pistol and he says, "We want this car behind me here." And he pulled up one car length and stopped so that the one behind couldn't run. He had no place to run to. The man driving the car pulled right up to the garita and without giving me an opportunity to ask him for any type of a declaration, he started talking. He told me that he

was just coming over for the night, that he hadn't been able to find a room in Juarez. And added, real hastily, that he didn't have the key to the trunk, that he couldn't open the trunk. And I hadn't asked him to open or to do anything else. I hadn't spoken yet because he started speaking immediately. So I had to stop him from talking to get a declaration from him. And when I did, why, he declared that he had nothing. By that time the agent was out of the other car, and we got him out then, and the agent held onto him while I got in the car and pulled the back seat out. And I couldn't actually see the marijuana, but I could see boxes and big grass sacks in there, it was full. So I told the agent that it was loaded. So he handcuffed the driver of the vehicle and then we pulled the car over to the side. And later the agent found the key to the trunk in the man's shoe. He had it with him but he had put it in his shoe in case anybody wanted to open it up. But that was about 190 pounds in that particular one.

Another thing that used to happen pretty regular, they used to import snakes. (Laughs) I never got bit because I didn't have that much to do with snakes. But I just mention it because it's one of the oddities there. But there used to be a man who was in charge out here at the zoo at Washington Park and he frequently brought snakes over for the park out there. And we collect a duty on 'em. I don't recall what the rate of duty was, what the going rate was on snakes at that time but he would bring 'em in. We had lady inspectors. They

were inspectresses in those days, today they're inspectors just like men, but in those days they were inspectresses. We only had two, Mrs. Holder and ... I've forgotten the other lady's name momentarily. She had been here longer, as a matter of fact, and was an older lady. But Mrs. Holder used to collect most of the duty on those snakes as I recall it. We never bothered to make too accurate a count on the snakes there. We usually took his word for it. If he opened up his bag we would stand back and take a look at 'em. [Laughs] But we never reached in there to pull 'em out and count 'em one by one and be sure that he had the right number. [Laughter]

JM: I can understand that.

LJ: Another thing I can remember, this didn't happen to me personally but I remember it having happened to an inspector we had by the name of Debruhl. He's a brother of the Debruhl that works for Immigration, as a matter of fact, and he just retired here a couple years or so ago. But he was searching a car one night. This particular model car didn't have a trunk that you lifted the lid from the outside, but inside the back seat folded forward and there was a good sized space behind it which you used for a trunk. It was a trunk as a matter of fact, it was made for a trunk. It wasn't a smuggling compartment or anything, but that particular model and type of car had that space in there, and that's the only trunk there was.

So he pulled the seat forward and we didn't have a great deal of light out there. The government didn't furnish you flashlights in those days, either. If you had one it belonged to you; it didn't belong to the government. But he couldn't see and he just reached down in there with one hand, and he jumped out right fast and

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everybody wondered what he had found. And actually, at the time he wasn't sure what he had found, but he had found something cold and clammy. And when he really found out what it was, it was a corpse. The people in the car were, well, it was a relative of theirs and [he] had just died in Mexico, and they didn't know how to get the body out. So they just put the body back over behind the seat and pushed it up and they were just bringing him back into the United States for burial. But that's one of the oddities that I have seen over a period of time there.

JM: You became a Customs Supervisor in your tenure here. When did that occur?

LJ: It wasn't until the 1960s. You know, I'd have to get out a resume of some sort and look it over to even remember the year on it there, but that would've been about 1967, I think, when I first became supervisor. I've held a lot of different grades, because at the time I first made supervisor we had two different grades of supervisors. We had a 10 and we had an 11. And so of course I made 10, obviously before I made an 11. But then most of 'em have never been 10s because that one was kind of dropped in there for whatever reason, I don't know, but some of 'em that were 11s at that time had never been 10s.

But the journey grade for Inspector before I got my first promotion to supervisor was a 9. But I've been a 9, I've been a 10, I've been a 11, I've been a 12, and now I'm a 13. I've made all one step at a time. But also I have been lower grades than that as an inspector. I've been a seven and an eight, as well as a nine. So I started and just kind of walked up the ladder there. It was kind of a slow process, I guess, but eventually I got there. I wasn't a 10 too long before they flat did away with the 10s. You know, we don't have 10 grade supervisors anymore in

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the Customs Service, so I was made an 11 for that reason. And then of course later on we had three vacancies for Grade 12 supervisors. And Tony Gutierrez and myself were appointed to two of those positions, and the other one wasn't filled immediately.

JM: I'd like to ask you two questions. One, what differences are now in the training that a customs inspector receives, a line inspector, a journeyman?

LJ: Well, the main thing is that now of course for one thing, he's got to be given training in immigration matters and also in agriculture matters there, for one thing. But beyond that, strictly for Customs purposes, we spend a little more time in indoctrinating them than we did in those days. In addition to that, they have a correspondence course that comes out of headquarters that each one of 'em takes when they first come into service, and after they complete the correspondence course they're given an examination. And when they've passed the examination then they go to headquarters for school there, which [lasts] about seven weeks. They were holding it in New York at one time, but it's in headquarters now. But insofar as their formal training is concerned, that's the only formal training that they get now. The rest of it is the training that we give 'em locally.

JM: What about the language part of it?

LJ: Well, some of 'em, we've had lots and lots of people here who have never been to the language school. It's not necessarily required. We would like to have the opportunity to send more of 'em to Spanish school. But we've got lots of people here who haven't been. We don't have anybody who's in school at the present time, the language school.

JM: When did Customs Inspectors start carrying guns?

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LJ: It hasn't been but a few years. When we first started, only the supervisors were authorized to carry guns. Or he would either carry the gun or authorize somebody on his shift to carry one. So on shift there might not be but one gun, possibly there might be two guns. But it wasn't until Mr. Easy came up here that we started really getting into a gun program to any extent, and that was about four years ago. And it gradually developed where almost everybody's carrying a gun these days.

JM: Is it necessary, do you think, Lewis?

LJ: Well, there's certainly more possibility than there ever was before, of course, that you're going to have to defend yourself. And you may, you or someone else, may have to have a gun to defend yourself or to defend one of your fellow officers against people who might pull a gun on you or start firing at you if they have a load in the car here, either marijuana or some other type of narcotic. Of course, it would be more likely to happen, I think, if they had a big load of heroin or cocaine or something to that effect, because the value of course would be much larger there.

JM: Since I've been here, we've had on the bridges several different incidents of people that have run the bridge with large quantities of marijuana, and it seems to me more like it's a danger for that automobile coming back and trying to run somebody down than it is to get actually shot at by someone. However, I imagine, I understand, that shootings have occurred on the bridges. Do you have any knowledge of anything like that in your career?

LJ: Well, shootings have occurred. Nobody's ever been shot here. But of course there were two inspectors killed on the northern border several years ago. I don't recall exactly what the circumstances were, but I believe it was on the border over on the east side, but I don't remember

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the exact location. It was some point in New York that two of our inspectors were killed there. Of course later on, as you remember, here recently, a couple of years or so ago, some of your people were killed in Arizona there.

Now I can remember here quite a few years ago. In this particular instance there were no shots fired, and that could possibly be because we weren't armed, I don't know. But they found some narcotics--two, three different types, as a matter of fact--in a vehicle that was referred into secondary for inspection. After it was found, the man pulled a gun and he backed away from 'em, and then he started back through the primary inspection up here. And one of the inspectors up there started to try to stop him, not realizing he was armed. And he runed around and pulled his, you know, threw his gun on him, so he backed off, too. So actually we never actually came in contact, but it was a situation there where someone could've gotten hurt very badly. And it's a distinct possibility that if we had been armed at that point, somebody might have pulled their own gun, in which case there no doubt would have been some shots exchanged there.

JM: Do you think that the bridges over the years have become more dangerous places to work?

LJ: I don't think there's any question about that, because the primary reason being that there's a lot more narcotics than there ever was before. And there's a lot more people traveling, and I am sure that some of these people are people who deal in narcotics--some of the people from New York, Chicago and various places who are involved in it. There are certain types of individuals obviously who don't really mind killing somebody or having it done for 'em if they don't do it themselves. And I

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think the time that I started to work here that he didn't come in contact with that type of people--very, very seldom if we came in contact with 'em at all. 'Cause most of the narcotics smuggled in those days was probably coming through seaports. If whatever part of it might have been coming from Mexico, the bigger part of it was no doubt entering into areas where they had immediate population there, larger than this general locality here. Because we don't have that population here in El Paso. El Paso back in those days was about 100,000 people or so, and there were no really large cities around.

JM: Over the years that you've been here in El Paso and all your years in Customs have been here, Lewis, how do you feel that the reaction of the public has been? Has it changed any since the time you started to now? Are the people against us more or for the law enforcement effort?

LJ: Well, I think that we had more respect from the general public in those days than we do now. I think that goes for all law enforcement agencies. People have lost respect to some extent, and in some cases to a big extent, I think, for law enforcement people, regardless of what they may be--if they're policemen, Custom officers, border patrol, immigration, whatever they are. They don't respect law and order to the same extent that they did back in those days.

OM: Let me ask you a question. In your career here do you recall any particularly interesting humorous incidents that you were involved in or which you witnessed? With so much traffic coming across the bridge, you must have some that you can recall.

LJ: Well, there's been a number of things over a period of time, and I'm just trying to sit back and try to remember some of 'em there. But I think I'm gonna have to pass on it temporarily and maybe come back to it. I

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can't right on the spur of the moment, it doesn't come up like it should.

[Laughter]

OM: Keep it in mind and maybe we can come back to that one. Let's talk about something that happened here recently, the tug of war that took place here a few weeks ago. Could you tell us what your involvement was in this and how you saw that situation develop?

LJ: Well, as a matter of fact I wasn't involved in it at all. Now, this was a patrol thing. I wasn't up there at all because I don't leave the bridge and become involved in those things. Now Jim was involved in that. He can give you the story on that.

OM: I've got his side already.

LJ: I know it from the reports I got. I reported it to the papers and all that just as a public relations thing, but I didn't actually see the happening itself. But my understanding is that it was first reported by a police unit that was passing up there, and he got on the radio and called in and notified both Border Patrol and the Custom Patrol that there was a vehicle there and it looked like it might be stuck. But the Custom patrol answered the call and I think the Border Patrol probably showed up there also, but I understand that they didn't make any effort to take any part in it. But shortly after the Customs patrol arrived there, there was a wrecker from the Mexican side also showed up. But there were no Mexican officers involved at that time, I understand. Is that right?

JM: That's right, there wasn't.

LJ: It was a wrecker sent out by nobody knows who. Maybe it was the owner of the marijuana. I don't know.

JM: I would surmise that it was.

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LJ: But they were trying to recover a load. And of course it was stuck. They couldn't drive it; they couldn't make it across actually. When they found this out of course they bailed out and went back across the river into Mexico. In the meantime, the patrol called out a wrecker to hook onto it there. And they got a large one, as a matter of fact, that would be able to do the job. And of course they eventually did do the job. In the meantime, however, the little wrecker from the other side also hooked onto it, but they weren't able to pull it out. I understand that they did at one point. Some officers came along and asked to be allowed to look at the load in the vehicle, is that correct?

JM: Well, there were officers on the other side. I don't know any of 'em really talking to any others.

LJ: I understand that somebody had actually wanted to look at it and was told that they were allowed to do that. But anyway, there were two wreckers hooked onto it at one time, but the Mexican wrecker made no headway. And after our big wrecker was hooked on to it there, why, they pulled it right on out to our side and drove it right to the bridge.

OM: Could you tell us about the calls that you got from out-of-town newspapers inquiring about this incident?

LJ: Yes. I had one call from United Press at Fort Worth, which I got at home. To the best of my recollection that was around seven, seven-thirty, around there, at night. And they just made mention of the fact that they had heard it already. They really had the main part of the story, what they wanted to do was to verify it. And I did verify it for 'em and told how it had happened. I don't know who the reporter on the other side was but he was laughing all the time he was talking to me. To him it was a matter of entertainment and nothing more or less. He thought it was real

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funny, and as I said, he continued to laugh through the whole thing. But I don't think that they appreciated the seriousness of the matter at all, because they didn't stop to think what could have happened under those circumstances. They just saw the funny part of [it], the fact that there was two wreckers hooked on to the vehicle--one of 'em trying to pull it one way and one of 'em trying to pull it the other. And that would seem to be their sole interest in the situation at that particular time.

I did get another call with regard to it, and frankly I've forgotten who it was. This was the next day, though, that the other one came in, but it covered essentially the same thing. They covered the fact that they were trying to pull the vehicle back into Mexico. And most of the comments that we got from the news media was that we had won a tug of war in effect. And that we had, in other words, we'd had more horsepower than the Mexicans had and had eventually would up with the load on our side. I did get one letter from a professor. This man was a professor in one of the universities up in Michigan. I've forgotten the name of the university now, but he was inquiring as to the legal aspects of it. He wanted us to write him and tell him just how it happened and what the location of the vehicle had been and what had happened and what authority was under those circumstances. Of course, I naturally referred that to the district office, which is where it should go. But of course the professor there had only my name on it because I had given it to the news people here to begin with. But it was answered.

JM: What's the response you had?

LJ: I saw write-ups from various papers. We did get some from several different localities. But they all took more or less the same view of it.

JM: Did you want to ask something?

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OM: Just one more thing. Your feeling about the write-up of this incident in the local media and the El Paso Times particularly. They put the incident in the context of a football game.

LJ: Well, it may be all right from an entertainment point of view if that's their purpose, and perhaps that was their purpose. And of course I guess they did report the news. But again, I don't think they did justice to the people that were involved in it from an enforcement point of view, because this type of thing is very dangerous. It could very easily wind up in somebody losing his life. And I really can't appreciate the humor involved there where somebody is risking his life to have other people make a joke out of it. It just isn't that funny to me. In fact, it isn't funny at all.

JM: Lewis, over the years that you've worked on the bridges and supervised people working on the bridges, the inspectors I know have a lot of patience and a lot of understanding of people and problems because they deal with thousands of people every day. What kind of things usually will get to a man on the job? If you understand what I mean, what is the biggest frustration that you can find in this kind of work?

LJ: Well now, thinking as far as people losing their patience [is] concerned, it's in dealing with the public itself, because the public can be rather trying. I've worked with the public practically all of my life. And even if you're a waiter in a restaurant, people can give you a terrifically hard time there and you can't talk back to 'em in any way, because if they get mad and walk out, your boss is gonna fire you. These things I know from experience because I was a waiter in a restaurant once when I was a very young man. And you can take abuse from someone when you're working in a place like that just the same as you have to take it

on the bridge. But you've got to be trained to that sort of thing. You have to take a lot of abuse from the public and particularly on, I guess, on an enforcement job of any kind. But you have to take more of it. Inspectors take more of it on a daily basis than any other segment of society that I can think of.

You might say, well, what about a police officer? Well, what about him? And I can tell you what about him. You'll come in contact with more people here on the bridge in the course of a day's time than any police officer you ever saw. He'll go out there and cruise up and down the street and he's gonna stop several cars, no doubt, during the course of a day, and somebody may give him a hard time. But you're gonna talk to thousands of people out here on the bridge every day. I don't care what day it is, you just name it, and you're gonna come in contact with literally thousands of people every day and you're gonna have to talk to every one of 'em.

And people, there are certainly a lot of nice people and thank God there are more of the nice type than there are of any other type. But people can be very rude. And a lot of people, if they're a little teed off about something, they seem to know percisely how far they can go with an inspector or [whoever] might be working on the bridge before he's gonna put 'em in the slammer. And of course you reach the point once in a great while where you have to do exactly that because you reach the limits of your patience or of almost anybody else's patience there, because people can call you only so many names and eventually you will lose your patience and you're gonna do something about it. And the thing that's usually done is you place 'em under arrest, prefer charges against 'em, and of course this is a citizen's arrest and you have to go to court

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probably on your own time and testify against him because it's no federal crime, it isn't a Custom violation of any sort. So when you reach the point when you have to put someone in jail under those circumstances, why, you go up and file charges, go up and appear. And usually it will be on your time. Not in every instance, but usually if you're working nights, why, the trial will be set for the following day. Or if you're working days, it will be set at night, and so on and so forth. But that kind of thing is the one that really, that really gets to you--I mean, insofar as losing your patience is concerned.

Now, as far as actually frustrations for the job itself are concerned, you get the feeling once in a while that possibly, or some people do at least, that their efforts are going for nothing, that they probably haven't accomplished anything after the eight hours they've been on the bridge and this sort of thing. Particularly if they have had something turned loose due to some technicality or something of that sort. It'll make you want to go bite yourself, you know, because you find somebody with something and you know he's smuggling, but due to some technicality that was raised you haven't been able to follow through on it. And the man is released with no prosecution or no fine or no seizure of any sort. And just as an example, and this was of course a mild example, because I'm gonna use a bottle of liquor here just for an example.

[Pause]

LJ: I was gonna use an example with regard to a bottle of liquor here. I've told people many times when we were briefing on this, how to take declarations from people and so on that they have to get an exact declaration from somebody. In other words, if they tell you they've got

mandado, well, mandado covers, as you well know, just about anything that somebody might be bringing over. But if they say they've got mandado, you've got to ask 'em to be more explicit and define the mandado or elaborate and tell you exactly what it is they've got. And a lot of people when they're making a declaration, I found this to be true in many instances in dealing with elderly people, they'll name one item. And you'll say, "And what else?" They'll name another one. And you'll say, "What else?" And they'll name another one. And this could go on and on and on. And when you finally get to the end and you say, "Is that all? Or do you have anything else?" And at that point, if they finally say, "That's all. I haven't got anything else." Why, then you can begin to make a search and whatever you find beyond that, of course, is subject to seizure. But that's still getting away a little bit from the example I intended to use.

The one that I have stressed over a period of time is that if somebody comes up and declares a bottle of liquor or just says liquor, you got to find out how much liquor he's got. If he says he's got a bottle of liquor, you better find out how big the bottle is, 'cause I've had it happen and I know a lot of other people have had it happen, too. A man says, "I've got a bottle of liquor." And he's only entitled to bring over one quart free of duty. And if he brings over any more than that, if he declares it, well, it's subject to duty and internal revenue. If he hasn't declared it, why of course it's subject to seizure. But I've gone back and opened the trunk after the man declares a bottle of liquor, and sure enough, he's got a bottle but it's a full gallon size, you know. Little things like that. Of course, this is small and relatively unimportant, but it just kind of stresses the point that you

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were making there. In a case like that you can't seize it because he said he had a bottle, and sure enough he has. You can't seize it. There's nothing you can do to him except that you can collect duty on the excess three quarts because one quart was all he was entitled to free of duty in any event. So you can collect the duty on the excess three quarts, but there's no way in the world that you can make a seizure on a thing like that.

OM: While we're on the subject, I just want to ask you a question about the way the law is now that a person is entitled to bring across a quart of liquor every 30 days.

LJ: To be real explicit, he has one exemption once each 31 days or each 30 days, as long as there's 30 days between the two dates. So some people will say 30 and some will say 31. Though saying 31, why, they're playing it safe because there's got to be 30 days between the two dates. But at that time he has one free importation, including one quart of liquor, and he can bring up to a hundred dollars' worth of merchandise at that time. But the reason I'm being explicit is that this exemption is not cumulative. In other words, if he brings over merchandise -- we'll assume that he brought one quart of liquor at this time and \$25 worth of other merchandise -- that would be all the merchandise he could bring in free of duty for the full 30 day period. He couldn't go back tomorrow and get another \$25 or the \$75. He's had his one exemption. The thing I'm stressing now is the one exemption once each 31 days. It's not that he has a \$100 exemption; it's that he has one exemption. And he can bring up to \$100 at that time, including one quart of liquor.

OM: Isn't that a law that is very hard to enforce? After all, a person can go to Juarez every day and bring a quart of liquor, and because you face

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so many kpeople, you just never know.

LJ: You can't enforce it to any great extent. There have been lots of instances where the inspectors will recognize the person from the previous trip. There's been times when the inspector could be moving out one day from one bridge to the other, recognize the people as having passed him through one bridge the day before and now he's got them at the other bridge. Or he might have worked days yesterday and today he's working nights, and he picks up the same people that way. We've made seizures like that, but we realize very well that we don't begin to catch everybody that's doing the same thing.

Now, if we go back 30 years again, or 32, when I first came in the Customs Service, we took a declaration, a written declaration on every bottle of liquor that came across the bridge. And in those days, we used to file all these declarations. And we not only filed 'em, but we worked 'em and worked 'em consistently. We had inspectors that they'd go in, send in to the file room there, and set 'em all down around a big desk there and pull out these files and they would check these cards under various names. And from a given date here and check every one that'd come in since then and see if he hadn't got a second, third or fourth importation during the same period. Of course, the old cards, then, were thrown out. But if you found an individual there who had made more than the one importation during the given period, they billed him for it. There's no way in the world we could do a thing like that now because the traffic is go great that there's just no way. We'd have to put on probably hundreds of people to keep up with the liquor cards, you know.

JM: Oscar, did you have any other questions? I just had one more and it was only a wrap-up question.

L. Jones

OM: Well, save your wrap-up question. I want to get a couple of more things.

During the recession of 1974-1975, there were some problems here at bridge regarding the rigid inspection procedures that were instituted. You recall the problems with the streetcars and people coming across and the Immigration Service publicizing the efforts to round up the ever-increasing numbers of illegal aliens, etc. There was some accusation on the part of the business community that some excessive measures were being taken here at the bridge against people from Juarez taking cards across or interrogating them unnecessarily. Do you have any comments about that?

LJ: Not really. We didn't go into anything that deeply. Of course, the Immigration may have worked the people crossing possibly a little more thoroughly than they normally did, but I think, frankly, that that was probably exaggerated to a big extent there. While I was here all the time, I didn't see anything stepped up to that extent. I think that people downtown--and I can't blame 'em at all for that--were probably trying to protect themselves somewhat. They no doubt felt that there was something of that sort. But I have no doubt that they may have worked on it somewhat harder than they did before, but it wasn't of course in an effort to keep people from coming across. Certainly didn't want to do that. The only thing that they were interested in doing was to keep the ones that were actually illegal out, and of course there's no question but what there's thousands and thousands of 'em coming across in large numbers. And there can be no question, I guess, but what they are taking some jobs here maybe, that should be--or could be, at least--given to residents of the United States. Not necessarily citizens, but residents, legal residents.

L. Jones

OM: One other question regarding illegal aliens. Have you ever found any people in trunks of cars or in motors, under hoods, trying to get across?

LJ: I have. The one that was almost disastrous, I think was a young boy that was in the trunk of one of these Chevrolet...is it Corvette? The one that had the little trunk in front there. This happened at the Cordova crossing before the buildings were built.

JM: I think it's a Corvair.

LJ: The Corvair, yeah, not the Corvette. The Corvair, the small car. They buildings weren't even there and we were still working out of trailers down there. And two youngsters--they were in their teens--came across one afternoon rather late. But it was in the summer and it was very, very hot. And they were referred into secondary. I don't know what the particular reason might have been at that time, but I asked 'em to raise the hood on the trunk, which of course, is in the front where the engine is on most cars. The engine of course, in the Corvair was in the back. But they said they couldn't open it and they were allowed to leave, told to go and get a key and come back. Had to leave the car of course, which we always do. We never release the car because somebody can't open the trunk, because obviously that would be a license to smuggle if you permitted it, and that's one thing that people don't always understand. They want to go and get the key and bring the car and let you look at it, which wouldn't serve any purpose if they were smugglers obviously.

But to get back to the subject, these kids lift and they were gone quite a long while, but they did come back. And it was about dark by that time and they opened it, and there was another teenager in there and he was passed out already. And just as soon as the air hit him...I think that the trunks to this Corvair, there's no way of getting air in there.

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They've very tight. And he was almost suffocated to death, that's what almost happened. As soon as the air hit him, as hot as it was, perspiration just jumped out all over him, and they had to kind of shake him to bring him to. And he couldn't walk when he first got up. They had to help him to get out of there. But in the meantime he'd never made a sound in there. But I think in another short time why he probably would've been a goner. That's a very...it would have been a very tragic thing.

I found other people. I found as many as two in the trunk of one vehicle. I remember one night, again at Cordova when I was working there, there was two people. This was an exceedingly big trunk, I don't remember what kind of vehicle it was. But our lighting again was not too good. And they had arranged somehow so that there was a little divider of some kind--cloth, you know. It was dropped down from the top down over them. And all this part of the trunk back here was empty; you couldn't really see. You had to reach way to the front and lift this, and still there was enough room up there yet for two people. They were crossways right together there, but there were two wets in that particular spot.

And I remember further back than that, years and years ago at the old Santa Fe bridge before the other bridge was ever opened. They stopped a car there one night. I don't know at what hour they were stopped, but that car sat there all night. And the next morning somebody came over and opened it up and there were two people in the trunk of that car. It was a man and a woman. There've been many instances and I've seen others. I don't recall having ever found one under the hood of a car on top of the engine, but it has been done. I have seen the individuals there.

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They sometimes lay a cardboard right across the top of it there and get on there. And that can get pretty hot at times. They come across knocking on the thing wanting to get out sometimes, too. 'cause that can get awfully hot in there, you know, in the summer. But the one that I had of my own in that little Corvair came closer to being a real tragedy than any other one that I personally know about.

QM: Could you tell us about that funny incident?

LJ: Cut it off a minute here. (Laughter)

[Pause]

One of the funnier things, or at least it's funny in some respects, but it does emphasize the hazards of the job, was a thing that occurred many years ago on the old Santa Fe bridge when I was inspecting a vehicle that had come up from Casas Grandes. This was just before Christmas, and the people--man and his wife--they had several children with 'em and they were bringing quite a lot of luggage and had a carload, including the family, their luggage and their Christmas presents which were well spread out on the back seat.

I had examined their luggage, and when I started to look inside the car the lady had a small baby in her arms. And the weather was rather inclement and I wanted to be particularly nice and to save her having to get out of the car. I volunteered to get inside and examine the packages there. During the process of examining the packages I was feeling different packages there, and the lady happened to be wearing a plaid skirt that was difficult to distinguish without particularly close observation from one of the packages. And it just happens that she had doubled her foot under. She was sitting on her foot and her skirt was pulled down over her knees so that her leg was not visible. And I quite

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frankly thought that her leg was a part of the Christmas packages there and I made a mistake and grabbed this lady by the leg there. Fortunately she realized and understood that this was not any act on my part of trying to be fresh or anything of the sort. She realized that I had made a mistake and had taken the fact that her leg was covered with a plaid dress there and it matched some of the wrappings from the other papers, that I simply made a mistake and thought that that was another package. But had I been required to make any kind of an explanation it would have been hard indeed to have made one that anyone would have believed. Fortunately for me, she was understanding and so was her husband, for they both laughed. And with that we concluded their inspection, and I got out of the car and let 'em go. (Laughter)

JM: I think you'd had a more difficult time explaining that to your wife. I have just one question now, it's kind of an all-inclusive question and to wrap it all up. Over the years that you've been with the government service and seen so many different changes come into El Paso in the ways of inspecting and all the different areas of experience that you've gained, how do you feel about your job? How do you feel about what you've accomplished?

LJ: Well, I think it's been a very rewarding job. And if I had it to do over again I'm sure I'd do the same thing again. I might do some parts of it in a different manner. I'd try to get a little more education for myself, take the opportunity to go to school more than I have in the past. But if I had the opportunity to work for Customs again, I'd do the same thing. I'm very proud of the Customs Service. I think it's the greatest agency in the government. And I have never considered working for any other government agency since I got into the Customs Service, and

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I can't imagine working for any other government agency at this point, although I did work for the war department before I came into the service. I'm very happy. I have loved my job; I enjoy the people I work with. I think they're the greatest. I wouldn't change it I could. I'm very proud of my job.

OM: Thank you very much.

JM: Thank you Lewis. I appreciate it.

End of Interview