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Interview no. 1619

Ray Williams

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Ray Williams

Interviewer: James "Jimmy" Farah

Project: Farah Oral History Project

Location: El Paso, TX

Date of Interview: September 22, 2007

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Transcript No.: 1619

Transcriber / Summary: Patrick Driscoll

Ray Williams was once a President of Farah in El Paso, TX; He describes being the Vice President of HD Lee Mercantile Company that produced Lee Jeans; He visited Farah to negotiate a potential buy out of Farah and account for the state of the company and value; He mentions that for whatever reason the company did not purchase Farah; He recalls Willie Farah offering him a job to run Farah, felt it would create problems but took the job; Mr. Williams started for Farah in 1978 and left in 1984; He describes as the business became more profitable Willie Farah tried to regain control of the company through amassing the most stock shares; He mentions that he left the company as Mr. Farah was implementing changes; He states that Willie Farah justifiably took more credit for the recovery of the company at the time, but mentions the way he went about it made others resent him. Mr. Williams recounts bringing Willie Farah's children into business management, led to concerns from Willie Farah; He recalls Willie Farah wanting to go into more women's apparel against the advice of Mr. Williams, but Mr. Williams stated it was a small investment and wouldn't hurt the company too bad if it failed; He describes Willie Farah's relationship with the company and its effects on his family life; He attributes Willie Farah's lack of diversification in product lines and the divisive relationship he had with his children over the proxy fight for shares in affecting the cohesiveness of the company; He recounts Willie Farah wanting Mr. Williams to prepare his son Jimmy Farah for immediate leadership of the company, he didn't disagree with the decision just the timing of it; He explains that he wanted Jimmy Farah as an Executive Vice President to build his experience; He describes Willie Farah as brilliant, but sometimes suffering from tunnel vision and not seeing the big picture due to focusing on the details. In closing Mr. Williams reminisces over the social ostracizing of Willie Farah by prominent local businessmen in the textile industry and other sectors that did business with Mr. Farah.

Length of interview 33 minutes

Length of Transcript n/a