

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
(BUSINESS ARCHIVES PROJECT)
NUMBER

68

Interview with
NED ESTES
June 8, 1982

Place of Interview: Mountain Home, Tx.

Interviewer: Floyd Jenkins

Terms of Use: Open

Approved:

Ned B. Estes
(Signature) N.E.

Date:

Oct 26-82

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Business Oral History Collection

Ned Estes

Interviewer: Dr. Floyd Jenkins

Place of Interview: Mountain Home, Texas Date: June 8, 1982

Dr. Jenkins: Recording for the Business Archives Project, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas. Today is June 8, 1982. I am talking to Mr. Ned Estes in his home in Mountain Home, Texas. How many miles outside of Kerrville?

Mr. Estes: One way it is 20, the other way is 17.

Dr. Jenkins: But we are more or less northwest.

Mr. Estes: Northwest of Kerrville, yes.

Dr. Jenkins: Mr. Estes has lived in Mountain Home since when?

Mr. Estes: '23.

Dr. Jenkins: And he has been in business all of that time, primarily in the auto repair, gasoline, grocery and cottage business. Does that kind of cover it?

Mr. Estes: That covers it.

Dr. Jenkins: Let's go back and get whatever recollection you have of your family background.

Mr. Estes: I was born in the foothills of the Ozark Mountains in Arkansas in 1897 on February 23rd.

Dr. Jenkins: What knowledge do you have of your parents and grandparents?

Estes: My father was a mining prospector back in the days there in the Questlar zinc mine. The zinc mine was the principal mining that was later on developed there in that area. There were others, but that was the principal one. Anyway, he was gone from home quite a lot. He was proving up on those mining claims. As the years went on, he struck a vein of zinc, and he sold that claim to some New York interests. He took that money and bought one of the best farms and ranches that there was in Marion County, Arkansas. I never did know my granddaddy Estes. He died before my time. I was the ninth one in the family. I had two sisters and six brothers.

Jenkins: Was your granddaddy a farmer?

Estes: I don't know about my granddaddy. He had come to Arkansas back before the Civil War and located there. My daddy was just a small boy when they moved from Tennessee to Arkansas. They homesteaded a little tract of land. In that day and time what made Arkansas a backward country, more or less, was the fact that they cut the homesteads up from 40 acres on up to 80 or 160, but they didn't go much above that. But they had the privilege of running their stock on the open range. That in turn caused Arkansas to be classed as very backward in lots of ways, due to the fact that when that development started up enough the open range faded out, the people that had the 40's and the 60's and the '80s

had a hard time making an existence. But nevertheless they weathered it through. My grandmother was a Cherokee Indian. That wasn't talked about back in those days. But as the old ranchers in this part of the country, some of them said they were looking for a partner, a wife, that had 'wim, wigor and witality.'

Jenkins: Yes, so you have got a little Indian in you somewhere.

Estes: Oh, yes. My grandmother was a Cherokee Indian from Tennessee. That is where my grandfather moved from, with my father as a boy. Then when my father got up about 16 years old the Civil War came along, and he joined the Southern soldiers. He was a Southern soldier, and was wounded in the Battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas. That was one of the last battles in the struggle between the North and the South. He married Lydia Cantrell. The Cantrell family was a family that settled there before the Civil War. Grandpa Cantrell was circuit rider preacher. And the circuit rider preachers rode horseback from this locality to that one and to some other and some other in their circuit and brought the Lord's message.

Jenkins: Did he serve any particular denomination?

Estes: No, I don't think it was any particular denomination at that time. He was just on fire for the Lord. He died with a heart attack, and he fell back on his horse, and was still on his horse when they found him. He was just laying back on the hips of his horse, just back over his saddle and all.

Jenkins: Do you have a notion when that was?

Estes: No, I couldn't give you any date as to about that time. But anyway, my grandmother was a herbist. She gathered her own herbs, had a little black bag like the doctors used to carry a long time ago. And she had all those labelled and put in that black bag. She went wherever they wanted her, wherever they called her. They had a large family. I don't remember just how many. But anyway, the children, when she was practicing with her herbs, some of them were old enough to run the home and take care of everything. She would go wherever she was called. When I was a youngster, about six years old I guess it was, I came down with typhoid fever. I had two doctors, and both doctors told my parents that there wasn't any hope for me, they had done all that they could, and that I was just gradually getting weaker and weaker. So my mother told one of the family, "You hurry up and go bring Grandmother and let's let Grandmother see what she thinks about Ned." Well, when Grandmother come, she took over. She instructed how she wanted one of those big chairs that they used back in those days, put a couple of pieces of stovewood under the rockers and then put the quilts and stuff on that, where she didn't go to bed. She put that right by the side of my bed. She would give instructions, "Now I don't want any of the family to come any closer than to just look in at the door. I don't want you coming in this room. I am going to tend him day and night, but I don't want you to come in."

And I found out later years why. A person with typhoid fever gets to craving something to eat or something solid, and if they give you one bit of any solid food that just settles everything, there is no hope hardly. If they give you one bite of something that is solid to eat while you have that typhoid fever, that is fatal. They turned the case over to Grandmother, and she pulled me through.

Jenkins: Do you remember that?

Estes: Oh, yes, I remember all this. That is firsthand. I remember that. Well, I couldn't walk. I had to learn how to walk all over again, and it took me, of course, a long time to recuperate. But nevertheless I owe my life to my grandmother.

Jenkins: You were about six at that time?

Estes: About six years old at that time.

Jenkins: Living on the farm, I suppose.

Estes: We lived there on the farm. My daddy bought this farm in about 1900. He built a two-story house on this farm. There wasn't anything but a log cabin on the farm when he bought it. He was a carpenter and a craftsman of various types. He could do practically anything that he set his head that he wanted to do, very gifted in the use of tools. Of course, there weren't any power tools back in those days. He was a cabinet maker and on all the way around. He built furniture out of solid walnut material that was

grown there in the Ozarks.

Jenkins: Did he farm, though, also?

Estes: Oh, yes, he had a farm. This farm had bottom land on it and up land. There was still some open range in that country. They ran their hogs, principally, on the open range, or their cattle. They didn't have very many cattle because they wouldn't run very many, but hogs did better than anything else.

Jenkins: What kind of farm equipment did you have?

Estes: The double shovel on up. He had as much modern stuff or more as most farmers did in that country at that time. But I well remember when I got a little bit large enough to work, why, I used what they called a double shovel and plowed out the middles and all with one horse and this double shovel. A lot of it had brush growth come up there, sassafras principally. And those sassafras sprout roots would break and was very much like spring steel that whenever your plow would hook into one of those and pull it over and break, it would come back and hit you on the shins. You stood as far back as you could and held the handles of the plow. And if you saw one coming you did like the girls did jumping a rope, if it came too far back, you jumped it. Anyway, there are tricks in all trades, and you learned to watch out for those roots. But that land was productive, and even if it was up land it grew crops, corn and

what-have-you. Of course in that day and time we had to raise our own feed for the winter. In the fall of the year we had to take time out to go cut the timber, split it up into cookstove wood and firewood. We used those potbellied type heating stoves. We didn't have fireplaces in this new home. He didn't put a fireplace in that. But all the old log cabins had fireplaces. Where I was born was in a log house chinked with mud, kind of a clay stuff that was suitable for that, and they just filled up the cracks between the logs. Then, of course, they put some sheathing or something on that, some kind of material, calico material or what-have-you, and then kind of white-washed it or plastered it on the inside. Very nice looking, very comfortable. But it wasn't comfortable if you didn't fill those cracks. Just down below was a spring that run all the year around. They located these homesteads where there was water, where there were springs or where they could get water from another spring whether it was on their property or not. Anyway water was one of the main problems. They had this spring down there, and they put their milk, butter and eggs and anything they wanted to keep cool down there. And anything they wanted to keep from freezing in the wintertime, they put that there, too. This spring ran quite a volume of water all the year round. I visited that homestead place after, oh, I guess I was 40 years old

or older. I went back when my brother and his wife lived there in that area, and they took us back, Olive and I, and let us see the old homestead place. However, the old log cabin where I was born was burned down, and they had built another box house there instead.

Jenkins: As you grew up, you grew up doing farm work.

Estes: I was straw boss on the farm and ranch. Daddy was old when I was born.

Jenkins: How old was he?

Estes: He was in his 60's or late 50's when I was born. They didn't expect to have anymore children. I was the ninth one. My brother that was older than I was 11 years older than I.

Jenkins: How much older was the oldest child than you?

Estes: The oldest child was about 40 years old when I was born.

Jenkins: Is that right? Are you the last one . . .

Estes: I was the last one of nine children.

Jenkins: Are you the only one left?

Estes: Yes. I am the only one left.

Jenkins: So you grew up strawbossing and farming.

Estes: My daddy was old, and he couldn't get around too well. So he gave me instructions. He worked several men on this farm and ranch most all the year round. He couldn't work himself. Back in those days there were lots of people that would work for 50¢ a day and their board and the necessary

things that they needed. And they were glad to get it at that time.

Jenkins: Was your dad still doing any carpentering when you were . . .

Estes: No, he didn't do any carpentering for the public to amount to anything after he built his own house.

Jenkins: So you never got involved in that.

Estes: No, but I watched him, and I worked on stuff around the farm and ranch there, and I picked up a whole lot of knowledge.

Jenkins: I see. So you became something of a craftsman yourself.

Estes: Yes, I was a handyman. My father had terrible sinus troubles. In later years he would come to south Texas to spend the winters. Mother didn't want to come to south Texas unless she knew that moving to south Texas would do father a lot of good. She was convinced that it would, so she consented to sell the place. Look out yonder and you will see that well rig going down the road. Just through the window there, it will pass right by.

Jenkins: I see, yes.

Estes: It is going over here to where some people are out of water now.

Jenkins: That is your son-in-law.

Estes: My son-in-law and my daughter run that. Anyway, back where we started, Daddy sold his farm and ranch lock, stock

and barrel. The thing that I hated to give up the most was my individual horse that I had. I and that horse were as close or closer than most human beings. I didn't know it at the time, but they told me later that when I went and told my horse goodbye and hugged him and kissed him and petted him and all and told him I wouldn't see him anymore, that horse never left his stall. I was told that that horse never left his stall. He wouldn't go get water, he wouldn't eat. He just laid down and died right there in that stall from grief.

Jenkins: How old were you when you left?

Estes: I was 12 years old. We moved to Texas in 1908.

Jenkins: Let me stop you there for a minute. Let's get you to go back and remember going to school in Arkansas. What conditions do you remember, what the schoolhouse was like, and anything that you can recall.

Estes: I can give you that. I went to school in a one room schoolhouse about a mile and a half from this Fairview Ranch, my father's farm and ranch, and I had to climb a bluff that was quite steep and cross what was known as Crooked Creek. They had some foot rocks there, and sometimes I wasn't able to stay on those foot rocks, and I would get my feet wet crossing the creek. I climbed this bluff. I could go around, but that was about a mile farther to go around the road to get to the schoolhouse. If I could go up the

bluff, it was about a mile shorter, but still it was a mile and half from the ranch. It was just a one-room schoolhouse. They taught all that the teachers knew from the beginners to the finishers right there in that one-room schoolhouse. And we didn't have desks. We had logs with legs put on them. The logs were made flat on the topside, and our knees were our desk that we laid our tablets on to do our writing. I was so small that I took English with the ones that would finish school that year, as well as being down in the first or second grade otherwise. There was one boy, he would pick me up and set me on a stool or on a bench where I could get up to the blackboard.

Jenkins: What kind of blackboard did you have?

Estes: It was not a modern type, but the chalk would show up on the blackboard. It was on the wall.

Jenkins: Was it wood painted black?

Estes: I think it was wood just painted black. I think it was. I can't say for sure about that. But anyway, that was my first schooling.

Jenkins: What kind of heating did you have?

Estes: We had a stove that we had to keep fired up in the colder weather. Different families would bring the wood. They kept wood there at the schoolhouse. We had to carry our drinking water from a spring that was about a quarter of a mile away. That was an event that was cherished by the

kids, because we could get out long enough to take the water bucket and two of us would carry the bucket, one on one side of the bucket and one on the other. We would go to this spring and fill it up and bring it back to the schoolhouse. They had a dipper there, and we all drank out of the same dipper out of the same bucket. But we did get the fundamentals of reading and writing and arithmetic.

Jenkins: Did you have any artificial light at all?

Estes: Oh, no. We didn't have any lighting at all in there. It was all during the day. They didn't have anything there other than daytime. And it was just one teacher.

Jenkins: Do you remember anything about that teacher?

Estes: No, other than teachers back in that day and time had discipline. This reading and writing and arithmetic was taught to the tune of a hickory stick.

Jenkins: It really was, huh?

Estes: It really was, yes.

Jenkins: Did you ever get wapped any?

Estes: Oh, yes, I had my share. I had my share.

Jenkins: Is there anything else that you can think of about Arkansas before you leave there now?

Estes: Yes. We went to Fort Smith back when I was about 4 years old, something like that, to a fair. They were having a fair at Fort Smith, Arkansas, and Daddy drove the hack and the horses up to Harrison, Arkansas. We took the train,

later known as the Galloping Goose Railroad from Harrison to Fort Smith. It galloped all right over those hills. It was considered one of the roughest rides of the railroad type in that country. Later on the Iron Mountain Railroad come through that area. After that, then, that portion of Arkansas began to develop and all. But on the way back from that fair I saw some short-haired goats, and when I saw them I began to put up a plea that I wanted a pair of those goats. So my daddy had gone by this place. I can remember that just as well as if it were yesterday. And he got just a little way on the other side of it, and all of a sudden he just said, "Whoa," and stopped and said to my mother, "Let's go back and get him two of those goats if those people will sell them." Those people's name was Moody and the lady's name was Sally. So I named my goats Moody and Sally. And they were my goats now. They were privileged characters. You know what a goat will do if you just give him the run of things. He will do just about practically everything that he wants to that you don't want him to do. But anyway, I loved my goats. I got to where I had quite a little bunch of goats, but they were not of the temperament that they liked to be fenced in. So whenever we would leave home, usually those goats would jump the fence and get into the yard. My parents didn't like for those goats to be in the yard. The house was

built with a breezeway between the different portions of the house, through the center. And a stairway went up through this breezeway to the upper story. They would get in there and go into the breezeway and up the stairway. When we came back they would be walking the banisters up on that upper story up there. Papa and Mama didn't like that at all. I heard him telling my mother one time, I remember this well, too, he said, "What are we going to do with Ned's goats? How are we going to keep them from getting in the yard like this and going up there and messing up the porch and all upstairs?" I can remember telling Daddy, "That's simple to keep them from jumping the fence." I wasn't thinking about anything but he had said how are we going to keep them from jumping the fence. I said, "Daddy, that is simple. Just put a board up and they will walk over it." (Laughter) Well, my goats got to be such a nuisance that they ate them and I think we sold some of them, but we got rid of the goats. But I grew up not having any children to play with, only just occasionally. And all of the livestock from the hogs to the horses and mules were my pets and my playpretties. They were the ones that I associated with. I well remember hearing people say, "Aren't you afraid for that boy to go out there among those mules and horses and all?" My daddy said, "No. Those animals will look after him. They won't bother him." Anyway, I grew up that way, and I became a lover of all kinds of

pets. I was never hurt by one of the animals while we were there in Arkansas.

Jenkins: And then you came on down to Texas.

Estes: We left there in the fall of 1908. We landed in Houston, Texas first, went to Galveston. My daddy didn't like either one of those places. He had been down to Matagorda and then over to Palacios, so he decided, "Let's go see what it looks like around Palacios." They had just recently, about five or six years before that, they had built a little railroad down that deadended at Palacios. It ran right up against the bay and deadended there. It was a little railroad out of Wharton to Palacios, and it made a daily run out of Palacios up to Wharton and back each day. Of course the B & M was built earlier through there. That was the railroad from Houston to the Valley country. They raised lots of produce down in the Valley, enough that, back in those days, they shipped produce way north by the carload. Stuff that they could ship like that they shipped it out of the Valley by the carload. What started the development down in there was the big stories about them raising produce down in south Texas and that it would just grow anything so rapidly and all, it was virgin land. And people thought, "We don't have to go all the way down in the Valley, we can stop along the way along this railroad, and we can grow vegetables." And they thought that they could

have a sale for them. But they all found out that there was a sale for them down there where they could load them into these boxcars and ship them out, but locally there wasn't any sale for any of that stuff. Consequently there were lots of people coming in from the north that came there. They could raise anything and all, but after they raised it there was no market for it. And back in those days we didn't have roads that you could take it to a marketplace yourself. And wherever there was a marketplace was too far. It would cost you more to get it there than the produce was worth. Consequently there were hundreds and hundreds of people coming to south Texas that found out that they could raise the stuff, but they couldn't realize anything out of it. They would get discouraged and go back north. They came from everywhere, Michigan and all up through the New England states and everywhere to that country, first and last. So that was what brought us there. But my daddy first bought a little place down at the edge of Palacios. We stayed there awhile. Then he found out that there was a farm up at the head of Tres Palacios Bay that was for sale. So he worked out a deal with the man that had the farm up there and traded his little place that he had bought in on it. We moved out to a little old house that had never been painted. It was built out of, I think, some cyprus lumber. The lumber was still sound and good in it, but it had all

turned dark from the weather there. The dampness and all caused it to turn dark. We lived in that little house until he could build a house there on the farm.

Jenkins: Your dad was getting on along in years by this time.

Estes: Oh, yes. He supervised it and all, but he had the know-how but not the do-how. Anyway, he built this place, and we lived there. They told him that he could raise figs and citrus fruits and all there. He planted something like 1,500 trees, and they were just doing fine and growing. Then it came one of those blue northers and froze, I think, every one of them but three trees one night. So that put the lid on that venture. So in later years, a few, he traded the farm and took some town property in on it, and we moved to town.

Jenkins: Palacios?

Estes: Palacios, yes. We moved into town. I always like to have a little jingling money in my pockets. So I looked around for me a job when we got down there.

Jenkins: You are how old by now?

Estes: By that time I was about 16 years old.

Jenkins: And going to school.

Estes: I went to school in Palacios. I looked for me a job, and I found me a job, right across the street from where we lived was the First Methodist Church. They were wanting a janitor. So I took that job. They call that a custodian

now. That sounds better. Anyway, I was janitor of that church for quite a long while. Whenever the doors were open, I opened them. Whenever they were closed, I closed them. That was every meeting of whatever they had there. I was the one that built the fires or kept the church clean, etc.

Jenkins: Were you Methodist?

Estes: It was a Methodist Church. My folks were of the Methodist background, too. Like so many youngsters, why, I wasn't the type that when I went to church I didn't think that was a place for the young folks to get off in one corner and giggle and carry on and all. So I was a loner. They would make all kinds of fun of me about that, being a goody goody and all that. But that didn't make any difference. I didn't join them in any of their cutting up during church time or in the churchhouse. I didn't think it was right to do that even before or after church, to make a lot of racket in the church. I thought that was a place where you were supposed to be reverent and conduct yourself likewise. While I was janitor there they had a revival meeting. The preacher that they invited in there to have this revival meeting went into the Bible more deeply than the regular preacher did. And the Holy Spirit told me that I had gone long enough, and now was the time for me to walk the aisle and give my life to the Lord and accept Him as my

Savior. So I could go all over that place all during the preaching hour, & anything that those stoves needed; to be refilled or anything needed to be done, a window closed or a window opened, and that was no problem to me at all. But when it came to walking that aisle otherwise, why, that was kind of a hard task to perform. Nevertheless I did, and I was really converted, and it lasted all down through the years. Now I know that the Lord was with me then and has been with me ever since. He has looked after me. He looked after me when I was in the service. I joined the service later on. In 1918 I enlisted into the Air Service.

Jenkins: Let's not get there yet. Let's go back to Palacios. You came to the big city now. Tell us a little bit now about schooling and the facilities there. Was it much different from Arkansas?

Estes: Oh, yes. They had a modern building at that time, and they taught the full course from the beginners to the eleventh grade. They had good teachers. They still had discipline there, too. Some of them were really stricter than the old type one-room country school was.

Jenkins: What kind of facilities, the heating and lighting and all?

Estes: They had stoves. They had gas lights.

Jenkins: Gas stoves, too?

Estes: Oh, no. There wasn't any gas in that country at that time.

Jenkins: So wood stoves still.

Estes: Wood stoves, yes. And the schoolhouse was a two-story structure.

Jenkins: You were born in 1897, and you are about 15 or 16 or so now.

Estes: I was 16 years old when I was converted, but I went to this school from 1908 on. I went to this same school there in Palacios, but I had to either walk or ride my bicycle 5 miles to school. We were 5 miles from Palacios.

Jenkins: I see.

Estes: Up at the head of the Tres Palacios Bay.

Jenkins: And you graduated from high school there, then.

Estes: Yes, I finished my schooling right there at Palacios.

Jenkins: Now the church, wood stoves that you were taking care of?

Estes: Yes. It was a frame structure, very nice old fashioned type church building.

Jenkins: And wood stoves.

Estes: Wood stoves.

Jenkins: How about lights?

Estes: They had some kerosene burning lights.

Jenkins: How about cooling?

Estes: If it was cool it was cool, and if it was hot it was hot.

Jenkins: Did you have the funeral home fans?

Estes: No, no, we did not have electricity.

Jenkins: I said funeral home, hand fans.

Estes: Yes. Once in a while, but they weren't too plentiful either.

Jenkins: What did you do right after high school?

Estes: I started my apprenticeship to learn to be an automobile mechanic.

Jenkins: Take us through that before we get you into the service then.

Estes: I worked one year for the Ford Motor Company in Palacios, Texas, just for what I could learn. This man that was the head man there, he was a real mechanic. He wasn't a part changer like we have nowadays. He was a real mechanic and one of the most hotheaded men I think I have ever had any dealings with. Just over little or nothing he could fly off the handle and just cuss and rear until he would turn blue looking. But to me that whole year he never said a cuss word, he never raised his voice, he never bawled me out about anything. He was always just as kind as some old grandmother. And I never could figure that one out, how he could be so patient with me and so hotheaded with everybody else. But he really knew his mechanical job, and he had the ability to teach others.

Jenkins: Do you remember his name?

Estes: No, I can't call his name right now. But anyway I got all he knew. From that, then, I got a job in a garage. Then I later went to San Antonio, and I got a job right down close to the Alamo in San Antonio. It was kind of hard because they put me in as head man, head mechanic, above

some old gray headed people that they had there, and others. I was the inspector. I inspected every job that went out. Back in that day and time, that was back in 1916, automobiles were more or less a luxury thing, and the people didn't have garages at home like they have now. They stored those luxury cars in the garages and places like that. They were to be kept ready to go at the drop of your hat. So I was the chief mechanic on the luxury cars of those old makes: the Pierce Arrows, the Cadillacs and what-have-you. Back in those days they didn't have starters on them, and I had a problem lots of times cranking those big motors.

Jenkins: How much did you weigh about this time?

Estes: I weighed about 120 pounds. I learned the knack of cranking them, and I could crank them. I have had my arm pretty well bruised, but I never had a broken arm. I have had them to hurt where that crank would come back and hit it. I worked in San Antonio for quite a long while, and I got what they called then the dengue fever. I was pretty sick. One of the fellows there in the garage gave me a formula of what he did when he was sick like that, and I did. But when I got where I could think straight again, I began to think about being away off out there in San Antonio where I didn't know anybody and getting sick and all. I began to think about home, and I went back home. They began to take

principally all the cowboys and the young men into the service, draft them into the service. With my background of knowing how to work with animals and horses, etc., I took a job on one of these ranches when that man had to go into the service. I bought all of his cowboy regalia, and I took his job. His job was to look after a cattle company's herd of about 1,500 head of cattle on a big ranch. They had a bunkhouse on that, and it was 11 miles from there to Palacios to town. It was a job that they required looking after those cattle seven days a week. And to ride the fence and all, just to ride around the fence of this pasture where they had these cattle, it was 20 miles. And that had to be ridden every day, then look through the cattle and what-have-you. And they didn't have any pens on the ranch where you could drive the cattle up and pen them. Whenever you had to doctor or whenever you had to do anything to an animal, why, it was to dab that rope on him and throw him and get off of your horse and tie him down to where he couldn't get up and do it all by yourself.

Jenkins: Just like they do it in the rodeo.

Estes: Oh, yes, just like they do in the rodeo, yes. I and the horse weren't putting on any show, because there weren't any on-lookers. That company had a string of horses, and they were good cowhorses. They knew how to help you. You couldn't do that unless you had a horse that was trained

to know just what to do. When that animal hit the ground they kept that rope tight, and if it took any slack in it the horse took up the slack. That way it would give you time enough to get off your horse and get there and tie it down so it couldn't get up and then to doctor it. The main thing that we had to do was to take bones out of their throat. Cattle in that coastal area needed lime, and they would chew those bones and they would get bones in their throat. So that was the worst thing that I had to contend with was seeing an animal slobbering and all, you knew that it had a bone in its throat. Right there is where you had to put a rope on him, throw him, and sometimes it was a risky as well as a hard job to get that bone out of their throat.

Jenkins: How did you do that?

Estes: We used various methods as well as getting the animal's head pulled around down there and get your boot stuck in his mouth and pull his head up, then run your hand down in his throat and pull her out. They bite sometimes. You have to watch out for that.

Jenkins: Did you lose many?

Estes: Every once in a while we would lose an animal from that cause. Usually they could go long enough that you could find them. If you see one off by himself with slobbers running out of his mouth, you knew what was happening.

Jenkins: You usually got the bone out, then.

Estes: Oh, yes. You would keep working until you did get the bone out.

Jenkins: Now you were on the ranch how long?

Estes: I was on the ranch something like 9 months, I guess. That led up to the point when they had a drouth in that country, and they wanted to split up the herd. They wanted me to go with half of those cattle down into the Caney Bottoms they called it. That is down east of Bay City down on the Caney Creek where the undergrowth was so thick that a rabbit would have to back up in places to get around the brush. Oh, it was the worst brush stuff out there, but it had green grass and it had other things that cattle could eat some. It was good winter pasture. They sent me down there with this bunch of cattle. We did it the old fashioned way. We drove those cattle afoot. We had a chuckwagon. And to cap it all off we had a negro cook that had in his young childhood days belonged to a master. He was a slave negro originally in his childhood. He could whip up the best biscuits, and he used those old fashioned cast iron cookware over an open fire. The chuckwagon has the chuck box in the back of the wagon where the lid of the box came down and made a table. He would start out in the morning after breakfast and drive to where he thought that the cattle would stop and rest, and we could have our noon meal. He would stop and

build his fire and prepare a meal. Well, it took us two or three days to get those cattle to where they were going to put them into this pasture. The night that we got to this pasture we split that bunch of cattle into two bunches, and we put part of them on the north side of this Caney Creek and the others on the south side. We were all pretty well tuckered out, and when night come we began to think about getting our bedrolls out and putting them down. And those cattle were kind of thirsty and they got to looking at that water in a bayou and so on. Along in the night all of a sudden a terrible roar started taking place and those cattle stampeded and came right around on each side of the wagon. And the next morning there were cow tracks on my big old yellow slicker that I covered to keep the dew off where the cows had come so close to me. I just reached down and pulled that slicker up over my head. I was on the other side kind of by the tongue of the wagon, but they came around there, and there were tracks on the edge of that slicker that was spread out there. That didn't suit me one bit. What caused those cattle to stampede that night, they had come down there looking around and exploring, and there were alligators in that Caney Creek. They had never seen alligators before, and maybe some of those alligators were out on the bank, you know, and they got frightened and here they come. Of course, they were inside

of a pasture, and they just run themselves down or whatever and stopped. Nevertheless when cattle get so frightened they can really be dangerous. They just run over everything when they stampede like that.

Jenkins: Didn't ruin the biscuits though.

Estes: Oh, no. That was way in the night. The biscuits had already been taken care of. But anyway, the only way I could see the sun in lots of places was to look right straight up. There were little trails through that where you could ride horseback, but you couldn't see only but just right straight up. I reckon I got what they call claustrophobia because it just began to work on me. I just couldn't stay down there. So I told the man's son that came down to look around, I told him that I couldn't stay. That was just running me nuts down there. Practically the only thing that I could do down there was just keep gasoline and oil in the pump engines. The windmill wouldn't work down there because the timber was so tall and all that. Even if the wind was blowing a windmill wouldn't run down in that timber like that. So they had to use little old gasoline engines and all to pump water for those cattle. That was about all I had to do. It was an easy job, but I couldn't take it. Then I came on back to Palacios. Later on I got a job up at El Campo in a garage. I worked there a while. I figured that I had gotten just about all that

the mechanics knew there, and I was going to change jobs again. So I did. I bought me a ticket, I was going to Rosenberg. On the way to Rosenberg one of the boys that was working in this same garage had got ideas that he wanted to go enlist in the Air Service. We ran into each other on a train, and he said, "Come and go with me." I said, "That don't sound bad." He said, "I am going to go out to Ellington Field and see if I can enlist in the Air Service." So I just got off of the train when the train stopped at Rosenberg. I just got off and bought me a ticket on up to Houston. The next day he and I went out to Ellington Field, took our examination, and they gave us about three days to report, to go home and make preparations and come back. Then we officially signed our life to Uncle Sam in March, 1918.

Jenkins: Sketch your service.

Estes: I knew nothing about military service. I was strictly a rookie and all. Of course, back in those days, I don't know whether they do now or not, they always gave you kitchen duty or KP duty for a certain length of time to kind of break you in. We had a pretty tough inspector, the inspector that inspected our dishwashing and everything. They had these great big old steel pans that they cooked in. And each squadron had 144 men, and they had a separate mess hall for every squadron. They could serve 144 men

satisfactorily, but otherwise that was just too many for a few cooks to cook for. Anyway that is the way they handled that. I worked in the kitchen until at last I saw my name on the bulletin board to report to such and such a building for work. I reported that morning, but in the meantime I am convinced now that it was an angel from the Lord that came. He was in civilian clothes, and I had never seen him before and never saw him after. But he came, and he said, "You are a new recruit here, aren't you?" I said, "I sure am." He said, "I want to give you some advice." I said, "I need it I know. I am ready, just start in right now." And he told me all about what I was to expect, that being in the service was no plaything, and no doubt that I would have my problems and obstacles and all. He went so far as to say, "Now listen, you must learn to take abuse and not retaliate to anybody. You want to keep your hands down at your side and take orders or abuse from your superior officers and keep your mouth shut. Even if they spit in your face, don't you let your temper get away from you. You just keep your hands down at your side. You will profit by it." I never saw him after that anymore. Well, the first job when I reported that morning to this large building, a hangar they called it, but it was for transportation. This hangar was turned over to the transportation department to store their trucks and motorcycles and cars,

then they had one end of it for a shop. When I got there that morning they had an old army sergeant there. He looked like he had been weatherbeaten and everything. He was a horrible looking old guy, and just one of those hard boiled army men. When I reported, he said, "I have been looking for you." I said, "How about that." He said, "You are from Arkansas, aren't you?" I said, "Yes, I was born in Arkansas." "Well, I have got a job for you to do." I said, "Well, what is it?" "Oh," he said, "I have got a still that we want put together." I told him that I didn't know anything about a still, and he called me a liar. It flashed into my mind what that angel had briefed me on, otherwise right there is where I would have got in trouble. You know that I didn't weigh but 120 pounds. I wasn't the type that would not retaliate if a man just looked me right straight in the eye and called me a liar. And he did, but I didn't. I remembered and I took it. Every time I would tell him or try to tell him that I didn't know anything about a still he called me a liar. Finally I said, "Does it have a blueprint?" He said, "Yes, I knew you have been lying all of the time." I said, "Let's see it." He took me back and showed it. And they had stuff scattered over an area there about as big as this room and just box after box after box of stuff. So he took his knife and began to cut those cardboard cartons to get it uncrated.

He said, "Now, there it is. Just as soon as you get it put together we need it." I didn't know what he was wanting that still to do, but I found out later that he wanted that still to make distilled water. They had a contract with a company in Houston to furnish them their distilled water, but they had it analyzed and it wasn't nothing but city water. So the government shipped a still in there to make distilled water. Well, I wasn't given any help to put that together. Ordinarily, you know, in the service they detail a man to do a certain job, and then they furnish him help to do it. They didn't furnish me any help. I had to start out from scratch to build the foundation, let that dry, then put the boiler on that foundation and then all the piping and everything else. It even had the normal one fuel supply and everything to put it into operation. And I know the Lord was with me, because I never had one bobble of any kind, every fitting and every pipe, all of it all the way through when it came time to fire it up was just perfect. It had no trouble. I didn't have to readjust nothing.

Jenkins: And then he really did know you were a liar, didn't he?

(Laughter)

Estes: He was still convinced that I was still a liar. So when I got it together, he had left orders at shop headquarters that when I got it together, he wanted to see it. He came

and inspected it and accepted it and all. He said, "Can you fix trucks like you can put stills together?" I said, "Well, I think I can do a better job of fixing trucks than I could putting stills together." "Well, if you can do a better job of fixing trucks than you can putting stills together, you are the man we are looking for." He said, "You see that bunch of them there?" And there must have been 35 or 40 trucks parked in a parking area. "They need to be worked on." Then there was a parking lot just across the driveway that came into the back of this hangar. He said, "When you fix one park it over on the over side over there. There they are. They have got cards on them. You just take those trucks and fix them." But he wasn't so sure that the cards were of any value, I am sure, because he said, "You put on the back of that card what you had to do to that truck to fix it." I told him, "All right." They didn't give me any help now. That was another time they didn't give me any help. I went to work on those outfits. I had had plenty of experience in my apprenticeship and working in these other places and all. I didn't have any desire to ride in those trucks to find out what was the matter with them. They had a great big old loading platform built out of solid cement, concrete. So I just run the front end of those things up against that big old concrete loading platform there, and I just give her the gun thisaway and

thataway and tested the whole mechanism as to what it would perform or not and never take it out on the road to test drive it or anything. And I could find out in just a little or no time just what was wrong with it. I had had experience with that type of motor in that year of apprenticeship. There wasn't too many things that could go wrong with it because there wasn't too many things on it to go wrong. But anyway, I fixed those trucks for several months. Finally the shop foremen came to me and said, "Listen, we are having lots of trouble with our cars. Can you fix cars like you can fix trucks?" I said, "Why not." He said, "Well, if you can do that we want you to take over the officers' cars. We have got a whole bunch of cars laid up because there is something wrong with them." I said, "All right, I will do that." So I stepped up a little bit there. There got to where there was a little incentive there to get in the car and drive it a little bit to see what was the matter with it. That was a little more fun than those old trucks were. Anyway, I worked at that for quite a number of months. One day this shop foreman came to me again, and said, "Listen, do you know anything about Cadillacs and Dodges?" I said, "Yes, I think that I have had more experience with those in the shops, after I got out of the apprenticeship and all." "Can you fix and tend to those cars?" I said, "Yes, I think I can handle that." "All right. We will give you a

helper, and we want these cars kept in A-1 condition." When they come in they assign them out to this officer or that officer. The captains on up got Dodges and above that the others got Cadillacs. So whenever that car came in it was my duty right then to take that car and examine it to see if there was anything wrong with it. We didn't wait for them to report something wrong. It was for me to check that car out and have it ready to be assigned out, whatever the need would be. And I was given the authority that if that car wasn't suitable for the colonel to drive, I told the colonel I was sorry, but if we didn't have another one, he would just have to take a Dodge or something else until we could get it fixed. I told him what was the story about the automobiles. Just as soon as one rolled in there, why, I and this helper jumped on that and checked it out and see whether it was running right. We would take it out on the roads they had around there, and if it wouldn't make 75 miles an hour there was something wrong with it. So we had lots of experience of driving and so on. But we kept our cars in running order around the clock. I have worked a many a night way into the night to fix a colonel's car or what have you. I only weighed about 120 pounds. This helper that they gave me, he weighed something like 250. He wasn't fat. He was just all big man. He took over to watch after me, to take all the

heavy work off and all. In other words he looked after me like a little banty hen would after one chicken. That didn't go for just while we were in the shop, that went all the way around. The other boys, just for the fun of it, they would pick on me to see what he was going to do. He never failed to handle the situation at all. I have seen him pick up guys and throw them through the window. He would tell them, "Listen, you better not bother him. You will be sorry." Two or three of them would jump on him at one time. We didn't have any screens on the windows or the doors, and he would just take them and throw them outside just like you would a block of wood. He could take a fellow up with one hand, just pick him up by the back of the neck and just shake him like a dog would. I never saw a man so big and so muscular in all my life. But he really was a buddy to me. He saved me a lot of heavy work I would have done if it hadn't been for him. He would just back up to a Dodge automobile and say, "All right, put the horses under it," if we had to change the tires or do this or do that. He wouldn't bother to get a jack and jack it up. He would just back up there and catch that, and they were built out of heavy material, he would just catch that thing and kind of squat down a little bit, catch it, and say, "You stick it under there when it comes up." I would stick the thing under it, and we would have it up

on that and in a minute's time we would go all the way around that thing.

Jenkins: How long were you at this job?

Estes: I finished my army service there attending to the Cadillacs and the Dodges.

Jenkins: I see. This was all where?

Estes: That was at Ellington Field out of Houston.

Jenkins: So you never got very far from home.

Estes: I never had one mile of transportation. I never got one five minutes of any kind of mechanical training.

Jenkins: Is that right? How long were you in the service?

Estes: I was in the service from March, 1918 until May, 1919. I didn't get a discharge when the Armistice was signed. I didn't get a discharge. I asked about it, and they said, "Well, the war is not entirely over yet. We need you. You signed up for the duration of the war." I began to think that the war wasn't going to be over, that I was going to make the army my career. But it finally came over. They told me that I would be discharged in the near future. I got me a furlough, and I went down to where my fiance was teaching school. I told her, "I came down here and you are going to change your name from Miss Olive Graham to Mrs. Ned Estes before I go back."

Jenkins: Where had you met her?

Estes: I first saw her at one of this slight-of-hand performer's

act at the school auditorium there at Palacios.

Jenkins: While you were in school?

Estes: Some two or three years before I enlisted in the Air Service.

Jenkins: You were out of high school, though.

Estes: Yes, I was out of school.

Jenkins: Okay, so this was just a program.

Estes: Yes.. I saw her there. And she looked me over, as I found out later. I didn't have much to do with girls. They were unpredictable. I kind of shyed off. I didn't trust them too far. But anyway, I sized her up. At that time I was still wearing knickerbocker pants. Boys, lots of them, even after they got to be 16 or 17 years old still would wear those pants that fastened around above the knee and bagged down there.

Jenkins: I even wore those.

Estes: You did? How about that. Anyway, I was asked by two of my nieces that they wanted to go to this place, and their folks didn't want to go and would I take them. I said, "Yes, I will take you girls if you behave yourselves." So they said, "We will sure do that. We want to go." So Olive, this girl that I saw, she and her sister were sitting next to one of these nieces of mine. She ventured to ask this niece, "That other girl over there, is that her boyfriend?" She kind of giggled and said, "No, he is our uncle." That relieved her. She was afraid that I

had a girl there. The next night I went to church, but I didn't bother to take any girls or to go with the young folks because they would all want to get together and get off in the balcony or somewhere where they could giggle and carry on. I wasn't about to have any part in that. I was a little late getting to this revival meeting that night, and when I got there the usher said, "We have got one seat left." I said, "That is all, I don't need but one seat." "All right." Believe it or not when he took me to my seat who should I sit down by but this girl that I had seen at this play the night before. We got acquainted right there. The Lord had a hand in all of this because these people that had come to Texas to teach school they had to take Texas history in order to be able to get a diploma to teach in Texas. They knew some of our people in southern Missouri and northern Arkansas. So when they came down there and found out we were there they visited with us. They didn't have any transportation, they walked to town. They lived out just at the edge of the township, etc. In a day or two after I had met her, we had talked a little during that revival meeting that night, she walked to town with this young couple. The young couple told her that they had a dear old friend down here and we want you to meet her. When they introduced her, she said, "Well, come in, you are Ned's girl, You look just like my older son's wife, Betty. Come in, come in, I am glad

to see you." That kind of knocked her for a loop, so to speak, that she didn't know anything about Ned's girl whatever. Anyway, we got acquainted, and we went together for some two years, I guess, before I decided to enlist in the service. Maybe it wasn't quite that long. But anyway, we decided that we were for each other, but we didn't think it was a practical idea to get married before I would go into the service. So we put it off until such a time as I could get out of the service. When I knew I was going to get out of the service that is when I got my furlough and went down there. When I got down there, she was teaching school in what we called the Northern Irrigation, a big rice farming area, and it belonged to a northern interest. They had a headquarters and they farmed rice in a big way. They had just recently sent an automobile motor to the factory to have it overhauled, and when it came back they couldn't start it. This old boy he was playing both ends against the middle. I knew it at the time. He said, "If you can make that car setting out there under that shed run, you can use it while you are down here." I told him, well, that didn't seem like quite a normal procedure, but I would just take him up on that. I, of course, had it running in just a few minutes. I used it to go over to the county seat, Bay City, to get the marriage license. She had another day to teach school. That was on a

Thursday, and she taught on Friday, and we went to Palacios Friday evening. But in the meantime I didn't know the roads, and the roads were not graded too much back in that day and time. When it rained it had mud holes and all. I proceeded to get stuck with this old car. A fellow came along with a great big old red automobile. He knew the situation, too. He was over there from the Northern headquarters, and he knew that I was the teacher's boyfriend and all. He surmised things that were happening by me going to Bay City. So he said, "Leave that thing here in the mud hole. I am going on over to Bay City." He said, "Are you going over to Bay City?" I said, "Yes." "You just get in with me, and we will go over to Bay City." I said, "That will be a good idea. I need to get a little something or other more to make that engine run better." He said, "You get in with me." He told me on the way over there, he said, "Now listen, I can just wring that old guy's neck. He has got brand new automobiles setting around there in those garages. He could have let you have one of those automobiles instead of this old thing that nobody has ever been able to get any service out of. I am going to loan you this one we are driving right here and now. As long as you are going to be down here I am going to loan you this automobile. I don't mean maybe, I want to loan you this automobile. I just want to show him how little he is."

I said, "Now wait a minute." He said, "I don't want no argument. I tell you what I want to do." I said, "All right." He loaned us that automobile, and she and I took the automobile. On that Friday evening we went to Palacios. They were having some kind of a meeting in the church. We had to wait until that meeting was over before we could contact the preacher. We went over to a house adjoining the parsonage and waited. When it was over with the man stepped over to the parsonage and told the preacher that he was wanted over at his house. And she and I were married.

Jenkins: What year was this?

Estes: That was in 1919, May 5th. So she had to go back to her school on Monday. I had a little more of my furlough time, so she just took the car and went back; when it was time for her to go back she just took the car back to the Northern Irrigation headquarters and I stayed on down there with my folks. That is a very unusual situation for a couple to get married and not go on their honeymoon or what-have-you.. But that was the situation. She still had some school to finish before that. So when I got out of the service she already had everything fixed and all. I think she had already come up to Harrisburg where we had decided that we wanted to get an apartment and had that all rearranged. She took over as my legal secretary and handled all of the business affairs and so forth and so on.

Jenkins: She quit teaching.

Estes: She quit teaching school, yes.

Jenkins: Where is Harrisburg?

Estes: Harrisburg is just a few miles east of Houston. It is an older town than Houston.

Jenkins: Is it really?

Estes: It is now out there at the terminal of the ship channel that comes up there from Galveston up to Houston. Harrisburg is the terminal of the ship channel. They dredged out the Buffalo Bayou and made it navigable to ocean-going vessels to come up and dock there at Houston.

Jenkins: You went into the repair business there, did you?

Estes: Yes, I went into a job with my brother there in a shop that he had there at Harrisburg. I stayed there for awhile.

Jenkins: Were you partners with him?

Estes: Yes. In the meantime I wasn't feeling too good. I went to see a doctor and the doctor examined me and his advice was, he said, "Young man, listen." He didn't tell me anything other than just give me advice. He said, "This climate down here isn't good for some people, and I advise you to not stay here but to go out west where there is a higher dryer atmosphere." If I had been the doctor with me as his patient, I would have told me what was wrong, but he didn't. I later found out why. Because we left Harrisburg then and went to El Paso.

Jenkins: This was what year?

Estes: This was in 1919. We went to El Paso. That was supposed to be about as high and dry an area as you could find in west Texas. I got me a job right off with a Dodge dealer in El Paso. We had a little apartment. All of a sudden I broke out with the hives. They were huge. You could hardly cover them with your hand. It was just running me wild. We looked in a telephone book, and there was a doctor listed there that wasn't but a block or two from where we had our apartment. So we went down to see this doctor. He examined me and told me, "Well, you have allergies." I never had heard anything about allergies. He said, "Now that is a hard job for a doctor to do is to find out what is causing your problem. Your wife here can come to my library. I will lay her out the books that are on that subject, and she can read and experiment and she can find out what is causing your problem a lot quicker and a lot more scientific than I can." And she said, "I would sure love to do that." She began to eliminate this and eliminate that and all, and we found out that I was highly allergic to eggs, any form of egg was toxic to me. And we had been eating more eggs and the like after we got the little apartment there. They were cheaper and we were having to watch our pennies, too. And I broke out with these hives like that.

Jenkins: But you had never broken out before?

Estes: I had never broken out before, but I would get deathly sick at my stomach.

Jenkins: So you had had it before?

Estes: Yes, all of my life. I had those spells off and on. We had eggs at the farm, and that was one of our principal foods one way or another. They put it in this or they put it in that or what-have-you. I later on found out that if you cooked an egg or two in some grease, and you used that same grease and cooked something else, it was just as toxic to me as if I had eaten eggs. I was so toxic to those. Well, I straightened up and didn't have any more problems after we found out that eggs was what was causing my problem. But like all soldier boys I couldn't stay at one place too long. We got along there real well. She got her a school. At mid-term I was ready to go. I didn't know why, but I was ready to go. She argued with me that we ought to stay. A man gave us a wonderful opportunity to move down on his farm and take over that farm. He would supervise it for us, and he would set us up in business as it was getting right up to the point they were just getting in their irrigation system. There was a big demand out there for produce. He had talked to me, and I had worked on a farm in Arkansas and down in south Texas and was the strawboss at both places. So he offered us just to go down on his farm and live in the house that they had down there.

She could teach school, and I could attend to the farming, and it would just set us up in business. In the meantime we went up to the Elephant Butte Dam just looking around. And I saw that big dam just across the river, the Rio Grande. I had been down in the valley and I saw just how low down that area was to the river, and I just couldn't make up my mind that I wanted to live down there in the valley with all that lake of water up above. That dam didn't look too stout to me. So we turned that down. We went back to the coast country then. That was the time we went through this country, and we fell in love with this country, but it didn't have any roads.

Jenkins: You just came through.

Estes: It was just a trail.

Jenkins: You actually came through Mountain Home?

Estes: Right out there.

Jenkins: What they called Mountain Home then?

Estes: Yes, it was called Mountain Home then. So when we went back to the Palacios area, I couldn't find a job in the shops there, but I got me a job in the lumberyard. We were getting along, but that was all. My brother wanted to go to San Angelo and look at some oil leases, etc., and on farther west out there and look around. He had an idea that there was oil out in that country, which later developed a big gas field and oil

field out west of San Angelo. I got me a job out there working with the Dodge people in San Angelo, and we moved to San Angelo. We stayed there for quite a long while. And the same old story again: I got the heebie-jeebies. We went back down to Palacios again. I was working at this, that and something else, and I got a telegram. My brother had come down on the Llano River fishing, and he had a little something go wrong with his car, and he went to the shop down there in Junction and asked if he had a mechanic who could do a little work for him. He said, "No, our mechanic is not here. He is gone. He has quit, and we are looking for a mechanic." My brother said, "Well, I am a mechanic myself. If you will just let me use two or three pieces of your tools I can fix what is wrong with my car." They wanted him to take that job. But he said, "No, I have got a job. I don't want to move. What is the nature of your work here?" He said, "Our main work is those freight trucks that run in and out of here hauling wool mohair and everything into this country. There is no railroad here, and it all has to be trucked in." So he said, "Do you know of anybody that could handle that kind of a job here?" "Yes, I know where there is a man that can do all that." He said, "How soon can you get in touch with him?" "Just as soon as I can go over here to the telegraph office and send him a telegram." He said,

"Well, go on. We need a man. We want a man that can take these trucks that they operate out of here, because that is the big end of our business." All right, I got the telegram one afternoon, and the next morning early I had my tools loaded in our little old car, and I headed out in this part of the country. I went to Junction. And right up there about a half a mile I came upon several of these trucks that were stopped there. One of them had got into some mud, and in trying to shift gears he had got it into two gears at the same time. It shifted in there and jerked the shifting lever up too high and put it into another gear which locked the transmission. And I drove up there, and I stopped. I said, "Are you men having some trouble?" They said, "Yes. We have got one over here, and it won't go backwards and it won't go forwards." "Well," I said, "that is interesting. I am the mechanic that they sent a telegram to to come to the Shriner Hodges garage to be their truck mechanic up there." They threw their hats in the air and squalled and yelled and said, "Oh, are we glad to see you." It was just a matter of taking the top off of the transmission and prying those gears back into neutral and putting the top back on. That was all there was to it. That just broke the ice right there. They accepted me as their mechanic. After that they didn't want nobody else to touch their trucks but me.

Jenkins: What year was this?

Estes: And that was back in 1921.

Jenkins: And you were still just 24 or so?

Estes: Yes, that's right. Well, the Lord had moved us there.

Jenkins: Now Junction is how far from here?

Estes: Junction is about 40 miles. So the Lord moved us there.
We were there for quite some time.

Jenkins: Now you were working for the freight company or . . .

Estes: I was working for the Shriner Hodges Company. They were
in the wool business, and they also owned this garage. I
was their chief mechanic there.

Jenkins: How many did you have working with you?

Estes: They had two or three others under me. But whenever the
trucks rolled in there, I was the one that looked the truck
over, then I would tell those others what to do.

Jenkins: Did you ever have any problems because of your age?

Estes: Oh, well, yes. I was persecuted wherever I went by older
mechanics.

Jenkins: But once they found out you knew what you were doing did
it help?

Estes: The management knew that I knew what I was doing, and they
didn't pay any attention to their griping and groaning
about seniority or that they ought to have the job or this
or the other. So that was getting closer. Then the Lord
laid on our hearts that we ought to begin to look farther

ahead. I wasn't doing too well. I worked too many hours and all. I was kind of running down a little instead of improving.

Jenkins: What is your recollection of what they were paying?

Estes: I was getting \$35 a week. And \$35 then in relation to now was something like \$200 now. \$200 now wouldn't buy anymore than \$35 would then. Anyway we got the idea that we wanted to start a little business of our own.

Jenkins: Was she teaching in Junction?

Estes: No, she didn't teach any while we were there. She gave up her school teaching when we left El Paso that time. That was a move that the Lord wanted us to make. He wanted to locate us right here. So one morning there was a family that we got acquainted with that lived on a ranch out there came by, and said, "Did you know that little store down the way is for sale?" And I said, "No," just as casual as you please. But it rang a bell. And when they pulled off here came my wife, and she said, "Now is our opportunity." I said, "Mama listen." We had two little boys then. I said, "We couldn't buy an old setting hen and pay cash for it out of our own pocket. Everything we have got and all, we are either obligated to someone else or what-have-you." She said, "I can't think about that. I know now is our time." I said, "You have got a lot of faith." She said, "Yes, I have got the faith." I said, "I haven't.

I tell you what I will do. I will go with you." She said, "I want to go see the banker at Kerrville." We banked with the Shriner Bank in Kerrville. "I want to go see the banker." I said, "All right, I will go with you; but now listen, I want it understood right now that the monkey is on your back. I don't want to take any part in it. I will go with you." "All right, I will go get the lady that lives right over there to come and stay with the two little boys, and we will go." All right, we went to Kerrville that morning and got there about 11 o'clock. We went into the bank and she talked to the banker. He told us the circumstances the bank was in. He said the bank examiner had been there and told them not to loan any more money. But he said, "You young folks go get yourselves something to eat and be back here at one o'clock sharp." He was one of those men when you wanted to talk with him, he wanted a definite time to start. That was the way he did business all the way through. He wanted you to be right there johnny-on-the-spot at the appointed time. Well, we were. We were right there right at one o'clock. He said, "How much money could you folks pay down on that place?" She was wanting to buy this little five acre piece in here with that little store on it.

Jenkins: Grocery store?

Estes: Yes, grocery store. Right out there where you see that

foundation looking place sticking out there. She told him we didn't have anything we could pay down. He said, "Now that we are under the state law we are not an independent bank. The state requires us to have a down payment. She said, "Well, let us go see a Mr. Smith that was selling us gasoline." So he said, "All right." We went over back up to his office. When we got up there she told him what Mr. Shriner had said. "Well," he said, "my sister told me the other day that she had collected a little money from some source, and she wanted to put it out for interest. I will just call her on the telephone and see if she wants to loan that money." And he called her and talked to her a little bit. We could hear what she had to say, but we couldn't hear what she said. But he told us that his sister said she would like to loan us that money. My wife said, "We would sure like to borrow it." He said, "My sister said she would call the bank and just tell them to transfer the money from her account over to our account to pay the down payment on that deal." We went back down to the bank, and Mr. Shriner said, "They want more money than that is worth, but we will finance that under the circumstances." We didn't know what the situation was, why he had to send us to go get lunch and all this. But a few years later we found out from a man that was a rancher here that he was sitting right next to this Mr. Real that was Mr. Shriner's

information man of all the people in western part of the country here. And he sent the vice president over to this hotel where they were having a meeting to inquire of this man as to the type of people we were, etc. And this man said, "I was sitting right there close to them and they didn't move. They just talked right there, and I heard what this vice president said to this Mr. Real. He said that "I am over here to find out some information about a family by the name of Estes that has a little store out there on top of the hill." And this Mr. Real said, and he always started his conversation 'and yes.' "You go back and tell Mr. Shriner that we need those folks. We have got them, and we must keep them," and for him to finance us. And that is all he had to say. So the vice president just went back and told Mr. Shriner. So the deal was closed that day. And we were in the chain store business in one day's time.

Jenkins: Chain store?

Estes: Yes. We had come out there and leased a little place. They wouldn't sell us anything, but they would lease us a little place to put up a building, and we had put up a little place out here eight miles up Highway 27 prior to this.

Jenkins: Prior to this deal?

Estes: Yes, prior to this we had a little shop and all that we had put up out there on a leased piece of property.

Jenkins: Was someone else running it for you?

Estes: No, we were running it.

Jenkins: In Junction?

Estes: No, we left Junction and come that much closer here.

Jenkins: Okay.

Estes: We come that much closer here. So we were in the chain store business then..

Jenkins: How much down payment did you get?

Estes: This lady lent us \$500.

Jenkins: How much interest, do you remember?

Estes: Oh, yes, we had interest, about 5% interest. But she didn't ask for any collateral. We didn't have any and she didn't ask for any.

Jenkins: So when you got to Mountain Home you had two businesses.

Estes: Yes. That day we bought this one, or she did, and we already had a little business out there and a shop. That was what established us here.

Jenkins: Somehow you missed that.

Estes: I missed that. We left Junction and came out there and leased a little piece of land and put up a little building and had a shop and a little grocery store and a gasoline pump.

Jenkins: Now this is 7 or 8 miles out of where?

Estes: Out of here. Right out of here back up Highway 27.

Jenkins: Okay. You were there for how long?

Estes: We were there about 8 or 9 months.

Jenkins: And then you got onto this.

Estes: That is when this other thing came along. She went in there, and she closed the deal. I never said 5 words in the whole round. She closed the whole deal. That lady had the money, and she loaned it to us for about I think it was 5% interest and she didn't ask for any collateral at all. We didn't have any, so there was no reason to ask for it, I guess. But anyway, that was the situation. It dawned on us then that we had two businesses, and that we were going to have to run both of them, as this old couple here wanted to give possession of it right away. It had a Post Office in it. It had the Mountain Home Post Office in it. It wasn't called Mountain Home at that time. They changed the name, but it had been Mountain Home for many, many years before. But the fellow that put up this little business here when they first started grading the road from here to Junction. They didn't try to grade to Kerrville. It was kind of like this boy was that went into a store and there was a salesman, and he said, "Boy, I will give you 50¢ if you can eat that watermelon." The little boy turned it over and measured it and looked it all over. He said, "Boss, I will be back in just a few minutes." And the fellow said, "All right." And when he came back this salesman said, "Boy, why did you have

to go home to find out whether you could eat this water-melon or not?" He said, "Boss, I had one just like it at home, and I knew that if I could eat that one I could eat this one, too." Well, we were in the chain store business . . .

Jenkins: Let me ask you something about that first store. The first store, was it in any kind of a community at all?

Estes: No, it was just out there on the side of the road. They told us we were crazy to go way out there. Here is where all of the troubles generated out of. There was more trouble happened right out in this area than anywhere else.

Jenkins: What kind of trouble?

Estes: The same trucks and other cars.

Jenkins: So you got them while they were out there.

Estes: Oh, yes. Those trucking outfits, they would stop by and get me to work on their trucks either way they were going. They ran backwards and forwards.

Jenkins: So you stayed busy.

Estes: Yes.

Jenkins: How about your grocery business?

Estes: We sold a whole lot of groceries. We didn't try to make a 100% profit on the groceries.

Jenkins: Who were your customers?

Estes: The ranch people.

Jenkins: It wasn't a community, but they came in from all around.

Estes: Just from off of the ranches.

Jenkins: Before we get to Mountain Home, let's back up there. It is all kind of the same thing, but what kind of grocery business did you do with ranchers? Did they buy in big volumes?

Estes: Yes, they bought potatoes by the 100 pounds, and they bought beans by the 100 pounds. They bought coffee by about 25 or 30 pounds of whole grain coffee.

Jenkins: Do you have any recollection of what some of the prices were at that time?

Estes: Well, coffee was about 15¢ a pound. And those beans, a lot of them were imported from China, and they were selling for about 6 or 7¢ a pound.

Jenkins: What kind of beans?

Estes: It was something similar to a pinto bean, but they were raised in China.

Jenkins: You don't remember what they called them?

Estes: No, I don't know what they called them, but they were certainly a good bean.

Jenkins: Do we have any of them around now?

Estes: No. No, when whatever the situation was, we got those beans by the 100 pound sacks from China in a different type of bag than anything we had here in the United States. And those ranch people would buy 100 pounds of those beans at a time. They would buy a 25 or maybe a 50 pound sack

of sugar. They didn't come to get groceries real often. And they bought their honey and their syrup and all that kind of stuff by the gallon. We just made something, oh, 10% or 15% profit on that stuff. We were underselling the stores at Kerrville.

Jenkins: What year did you start that store?

Estes: We started that in '22, just before Christmas in '22.

Jenkins: This was after you had left the people in Junction?

Estes: After we had left the people in Junction, we came out there and put up this little store and started the business in December of 1922.

Jenkins: Did you have ice or anything to keep anything besides just staples?

Estes: No. I dug a hole in the soft rock underneath the store part of it. That rock was cool, and that was where we kept things reasonably cool.

Jenkins: What kinds of things?

Estes: Just things that needed to be kept cool or whatever.

Jenkins: For instance.

Estes: Potatoes, onions. If we bought a crate of tomatoes or something like that, because that was a tin roofed building and it got kind of hot.

Jenkins: Did you get involved in lettuce or anything like that?

Estes: No, the ranch people didn't use that back in those days.

Jenkins: You couldn't keep it very long, anyway.

Estes: No.

Jenkins: Tomatoes, I guess, were about the most perishable thing you had.

Estes: Yes, tomatoes were about the most perishable thing. But anyway we sold a nice volume of groceries out there in large quantities.

Jenkins: Do you have any recollection at all what kind of sales volume you would have in a week or a month or a year while you were out there?

Estes: I imagine that we sold \$200 or \$300 worth of groceries a week.

Jenkins: That was pretty good volume then.

Estes: Yes, for a little place out like that.

Jenkins: You stayed busy all the time.

Estes: Yes, I had all the work that I could do and more, too.

Jenkins: Did you live above the store?

Estes: No, we lived in a little room just back of the little grocery part.

Jenkins: Did you build that?

Estes: Yes.

Jenkins: You built the whole thing.

Estes: I and another man put the whole thing in there.

Jenkins: Okay, so now you have got two businesses.

Estes: We had two businesses. I ran one and she ran the one down here.

Jenkins: Where did you live?

Estes: She lived here, there was a little living quarters in here, and I stayed out there. Of course, I could come down here after I closed up and visit and see how she was getting along after I could close out there.

Jenkins: You were only 7 or 8 miles.

Estes: 8 miles apart, yes.

Jenkins: Did both of you live here or there, or did you have to. . .

Estes: I stayed out there, other than I could just come down here after hours, after I could close up of an evening.

Jenkins: Then you had to get back. You had two separate houses then.

Estes: We were separated, but we weren't separated.

Jenkins: How long did that last?

Estes: That lasted several months before we could find anybody that we could get to help me to take it down. We had a five year lease. The old man out there got to where he was playing both ends against the middle. He thought if he could make it hard for us to stay out there and all that we would throw it up, and he could collect the whole five years' lease. But it wasn't drawn up that way. We had the privilege of relinquishing that lease at the end of any yearly lease period.

Jenkins: What about the building you put on it?

Estes: It was our building, and we could take that building off.

Jenkins: Did you?

Estes: Yes, we brought it down here and made a garage out of it.

Jenkins: Lead up to closing that.

Estes: My wife saw a little item in the paper. The man that had helped me build that building had been gone for about 9 months, I guess, something like that. He had come back to Junction. Just working the mail she happened to glance at that, just see that. She never did read the papers or post cards or things like that that came through the mail. Someone down in here had subscribed for the Junction paper, a weekly paper, that they published up there. And she saw that ad. She wrote a letter then the next morning and when the mail carrier came through going that way she sent it up to Junction. The next day she got an answer from that man stating that he would be down here day after tomorrow to start helping me take that building down out there. So I worked around the clock to get all of the groceries moved down here, to get what little bit of furniture back in that back room, etc. Some of it I had already moved. Anyway I crated my groceries first and got them down here. Then I had quite a bit of heavy shop equipment, because I took care of any and all. I had a hydraulic press and two press-on gears like you had to have back in those days. I had quite a bit of heavy shop material. So I just hauled it down here and laid it out here in the yard. When he got there I had it all gutted out and ready to go. We

took it down. When we put it up we knew just what we would have to do to take it down. We started on top and just came right on down.

Jenkins: You tore it down, you didn't just move the building.

Estes: Oh, no, we took it apart. We took it apart, and then brought it down here and just put it back together, back up again as our garage.

Jenkins: So now you are in one location?

Estes: Then we are on one location. People thought it all burned down out there. "That is too bad about that little store burning down out there, wasn't it?" We said, "No, it didn't burn down. We moved it down here."

Jenkins: You didn't leave a sign.

Estes: No, we took it back to the ground again. We cleaned up the place and all. The Lord had moved us here and there, but He kept getting us a little closer to right here.

Jenkins: You finally settled in here in what year?

Estes: We moved in here in August of '23.

Jenkins: As a grocery store and filling station and auto repair.

Estes: We moved our pump that we had out there. They had a little one-gallon pump here that they sold some gasoline out of, one gallon at a shot. We moved our five-gallon visible pump down here. Then later on we had to buy that pump. We paid \$500 for that gas pump originally. The oil companies didn't furnish those pumps back in that day and time.

Jenkins: Not many people remember the old visible pump. Tell us how that looked and how that operated.

Estes: It had a gear driven pump, a high pressure type pump. It was gears run together that fitted real close. It pulled the gasoline out of the tank and put it up into a glass bowl up on top.

Jenkins: What operated the pump?

Estes: This was hand operated.

Jenkins: That is what I wanted you to say, hand operated.

Estes: Hand operated, but it was the same type of pump that later was called a high-pressure pump. It would run up to 100 or 150 pounds of pressure at a certain speed. And they still use those gear-type pumps for high-pressure type pumps.

Jenkins: How did you know how much was coming out of that tank?

Estes: It was graduated. It had a mark up there. At the top was one gallon and it went on down to five.

Jenkins: I remember. I just wanted to be sure that you get that in there. So you had the grocery store, the gasoline business and the repair business.

Estes: Yes.

Jenkins: And you settled in to Mountain Home out here in . . . ?

Estes: That was in August of '23.

Jenkins: August of 1923. You and your wife could stay together all the time now.

Estes: Oh, yes. We didn't go into the chain store business anymore.

Jenkins: You didn't have to make that 7 or 8 mile drive to get together.

Estes: No.

Jenkins: Let's pick up then after you have settled in in Mountain Home and watch the business grow and kind of at the same time watch what is happening to the area over the history of this thing.

Estes: We will start in now, we are located here, we will start in now with the history of the country. I will have to inject there a little later on a stay in the government hospital.

Jenkins: Yes. And as the roads developed, as automobiles developed, as equipment in the repair business developed, just kind of graze through that.

Estes: Just graze on down the way.

Jenkins: That's right. You used a name a while ago, the name Real. What does that have to do with the name of this county, Real?

Jenkins: I can't connect that up with the Real County as to how it got that name. But anyway, this Real family was a pioneer family that came into this country about right after the Civil War. They were of German descent. I don't know whether the old folks were from Germany or not, but anyway they were pioneer people here in the early settling up of what is known now as Kerr County and Kendall County and

Real County, etc. All those counties were made and came into being after this Real family had moved in here, just like the Shreiners came here just before the Civil War. When Kerrville was a shingle camp, they made cyprus shingles out of the cyprus trees that were growing up on the Guadalupe River. That was one of the first commercial ventures that took place in Kerr County, was that venture of sawing the cyprus timber into shingles. They hauled them to San Antonio by oxen and wagons and sold them in San Antonio. That was one of the first things that brought in some money into the county.

Jenkins: Now Shreiner, the college is named that and a lot of things, I suppose.

Estes: The hospital here in Kerrville is the Peterson Hospital. Peterson was another family that was a pioneer family in this area. There is just one old lady now that is living of that Peterson family, and she is in the rest home out at Hilltop now.

Jenkins: Shreiner is the school then. That is what I was thinking of.

Estes: Shreiner has the college, the Shreiner College right out there. Old Captain Shreiner is the one that came to Kerr County way back yonder; it was a while before the Civil War. He enlisted in the service, and got the name of Captain from the service. After the service he came back. And they continued their shingle making as long as the

timber held out on the Guadalupe. But he had the vision of seeing that this country could be developed into a ranch country. He was the one that could see ahead so far, and he was an honest man. He would go to no end to help honest people that would work to locate in this area. I will tell you more about that a little on as to how he acquired his holdings here in Kerr County.

Jenkins: Now the Shreiner College is a religious based college, isn't it?

Estes: Yes.

Jenkins: What is the background?

Estes: I think it is Presbyterian background.

Jenkins: All right, we will get back to the growth of the Mountain Home business now and the area.

Estes: The Mountain Home business went right on just like the Lord had been prospering Mama and I in years past and all. But the Lord had a mission for locating us here. The Lord wanted us to be here, me as a mechanic to take care of people's troubles that they had; with not only their automobiles, but on the ranches they had little pump engines and bigger engines that they pumped water with. I could fix those engines and would go night or day when they said, "Oh, we are out of water. We have got to get our pump engine running." I would work on their pump engines or any type, whatever they used an engine for. Or I could fix

their automobiles out on the ranches wherever the automobile went bad so they didn't have to pull it. If they pulled it in those days and time they would have to pull it with a team, and that was a slow process and wasn't any fun in doing so.

Jenkins: Now you had the telephone by then.

Estes: We had a one wire system, partyline telephone system, over this part of the country. If you wanted to get any information all you had to do was just take down the receiver and listen a little while, and you would pretty quick get a rundown just like the radio does nowadays on all the conditions and everybody in the whole area.

Jenkins: So everybody was on one line?

Estes: There would be 15 or 20 families on the same line. It was a partyline for sure.

Jenkins: How much geographical area would you cover going to these ranches? How far away from Mountain Home?

Estes: Usually within a range of 40 miles.

Jenkins: You did pump repair and auto repair and all of that.

Estes: Anything the ranchers needed my assistance for I would try to make myself available for whatever they needed. And the Lord laid it on our hearts that that was our mission here at Mountain Home was to help those that were in need. And that took in everybody regardless of their color and any other situation. We were to help people

that were in need. I took care of the people that had a need for mechanical knowledge. My wife had had a nurse's training, and she took care of the people's needs as far as, like we would call it now, a county nurse.

Jenkins: She actually had an official position then?

Estes: Yes and no. It wasn't connected with the county. We were on our own. The people would come here, the ranch people of Spanish descent or whatever, German, English or whatever the ranch people otherwise were. They would bring their troubles to Mama as far as healthwise or sickness. And if the one who was sick couldn't come, they would send a proxy to tell Mama what seemed to be wrong with the person. Mama would tell them lots of times, "I think that you should go see a doctor." They would say, "No, we have got more confidence in you than we have in all of the doctors around here." Most of those of Spanish descent would say, "If you go to the doctors here in Kerrville, that is a place where you leave there feet first." They just refused to go to the doctors.

Jenkins: Did she accept any payment or anything?

Estes: Oh, no. No payment at all. No payment. That was just our duty. I was consulted, if there was any of them came in that needed my assistance, Mama would call on me. Lots of times I could use Mama, too, and I would call on her. But we just did any and everything where a person was in need.

Jenkins: And some paid you and some didn't.

Estes: And it didn't make any difference whether they had any money or not. That wasn't the object. It was to take care of everybody that was in trouble regardless of what their trouble might be.

Jenkins: So with her it was health, and with you it was mechanical things.

Estes: It was mechanical, yes.

Jenkins: And you would fix it, and if you got paid, fine, and if you didn't, fine.

Estes: Oh, yes. People would come here with car trouble. Maybe walk in here and say, "Oh, we are in just terrible trouble. We have had car trouble all along and spent all of our money. We just have enough money left to buy gasoline to go where we are going. What on earth are we going to do." I would tell them, "Now listen, we have gone far enough about finances. Let's talk about what your trouble is." "Yeah, but we have . . . " I said, "Wait a minute now. Forget about that. I want to know what your problem is. Let's talk about what your problem is." They would look at me so awed. They couldn't understand hardly what I was telling them. And finally it would dawn on them that I was interested in helping them with their troubles. It was the same way when Mama and her health service. She would listen to them. We kept a generous supply of drugs in our

grocery store to help people with normal things. Mama had one of those huge doctor books that went into detail of the symptoms of certain ailments and what you could do to help relieve the symptoms. If she was in doubt she went to her doctor book. She always had time to help any and everyone that came along. So that was our mission, and that is where the Lord came in. He had located us here for that purpose.

Jenkins: Let me ask you a couple of things now. Did she ever have anyone attempt to give her trouble over helping people medically?

Estes: Not one, not anybody. No one ever said the least thing toward causing trouble or whatever. And she never charged anybody a penny for any of that service.

Jenkins: And she did that as long as she was able to, I suppose.

Estes: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: Well, let me ask you something. Of those people who came by and didn't have any way to pay you at the time, did you ever hear from many of those?

Estes: Oh, yes, we would hear from those people maybe years later. They would come back through and they would be in a good looking automobile. They would come in and tell us how much they appreciated what we had done for them and reach over maybe and stick a \$20 or more bill in our pocket and say, "We have thought about you and appreciated what you

did for us back yonder when we were in such deep trouble."

Jenkins: Did you ever get anything through the mail much?

Estes: Oh yes, we would get letters. And people would come from California and say, "We heard about you in California. We were told that when we got here in the Hill Country to be sure and stop at that little wide place in the road called Mountain Home. If you don't need anything just stop anyway and tell them that so-and-so sent you here and wanted you to meet those two people that run that little place there at Mountain Home." And the same thing down in Florida. They were told down there and all in between. We were known from Florida this way and from California back going east. We had just many, many people that would stop in and say, "Well, so-and-so out along the way there told us to be sure and stop here and just say 'hello' and to meet you. It would do you good just to go by there and shake their hands and meet them and tell them that you had been sent by so-and-so."

Jenkins: Did your wife, as a result of her contacts with people, and even though she refused, she did not charge or accept any gifts, did people come by and leave things occasionally?

Estes: Oh, yes, people that didn't have a dime and all. She would let them have drugs out of the store just as free as if she was getting paid for them. Oh, yes, they would come by, or maybe some other members of the family would

come by and take care of those little obligations and all.

But it was all right whether they did or they didn't.

Jenkins: What about the actual on-the-books credit business that you did in the grocery store, the gasoline and the repair? Did you do much of that?

Estes: Oh, yes. We never turned a rancher regardless of his color or anything down if they said . . . if they came in and said, "Our family is out of groceries and we don't have any money." We never refused not one of them in a time of necessity.

Jenkins: What I am asking you though, is, of the things that you did put on the books.

Estes: During the Depression that was the bad time. We let people have stuff, and we put it on a sales pad type of bookkeeping.

Jenkins: How much of that did you get back, do you suppose?

Estes: Through the entire period of the Depression we failed to get back a little over \$50.

Jenkins: Is that right?

Estes: That's all. That is where the Lord comes in. There were ranchers out here and their credit was unlimited. They lost everything they had: stock, ranch and everything.

Jenkins: But they all managed somehow or other to pay you eventually.

Estes: Oh, yes, all told, all the way through the two or three years that that Depression lasted we only lost a little over \$50.

Jenkins: We will concentrate specifically on your impressions of the Depression when we get to that time. So just kind of work us on up as time went by here. You had talked about covering the ranches, repairing, etc. And that your wife did nursing, voluntarily and impromptu. So just kind of move us on along then.

Estes: In 1925, going on up to that period there, my health got worse. Lots of times I would work around the clock because people were out of water. When the wind didn't blow in this country, they didn't have any large water storage like they do now, and their troughs and their tanks all leaked because they were made out of cyprus lumber. When they dried out they would leak a little, and they were small to start with. I would go any time that a rancher found out that he was out of water. I would go day or night to fix their pump engines and all. Lots of times I didn't get enough sleep, and my health got down on the rocks. I went back to some doctors that had examined me earlier and got affidavits from them. I turned them into the government, and they admitted me to the Fort Sam Houston Hospital in the middle of 1925. But they still had the same facilities there at Fort Sam Houston that they had during the Spanish American War. The hospital was scattered in barracks all over the area. It wasn't anything to be bragged about. I was there about a month, and I only saw a doctor two or

three times. And I went AWOL. I found out that I could get a pass to get my clothes. They took my clothes away from me just like they did in the Army, and I didn't have anything but a pajama suit and a bathrobe. But I could get a pass on a Sunday to go to the chapel to service. I could get my clothes for that purpose. I had been transferred from one ward to another. I asked, "What kind of a ward is this?" "Oh, this is a surgical ward." I tried to find out what type of surgery they were going to perform on me, and I couldn't. They wouldn't tell me what they were going to operate on me for. I was headstrong enough that I wasn't ready to be operated on unless I knew what they were going to operate on me for. So I got my pass one Sunday morning, and that is where the Lord was with me again. There wasn't any guard at the north gate, so I just proceeded to saunter around out there unconcerned as you please. There was not a guard at the north gate, and I went through the gate. And, boy, I got in high gear as soon as I got outside of that gate. I went to the bus station and got on the bus to come home. And I recognized our car going towards San Antonio on up about Boerne, Texas. I told the bus driver to let me off right there. He wanted to know, "Do you want a refund on your ticket?" "No," I said, "all I want is off." And the first car that came along picked me up. He said, "I have just had my

car overhauled and they told me not to run it any faster than such and such." I said, "I will ride with you until I can do better." The next car that came along was a speedster type car. It was all cut down and all. It was one of those things back in that day and time. This car didn't have any top on it, so I stood up and waved him down, and he pulled up along the side, and I stepped from one car to the other. And he just floorboarded that outfit, and I know at times he was making 90 miles an hour.

Jenkins: What kind of road?

Estes: Over the roads that we had at that day and time. It was a rough ride. But he caught up with the car, my car, that was going towards San Antonio. Mama had got a boy to chauffeur for her and go with her, and they were going down to see me. Well, we had an argument right there. They thought they were trying to be held up when this car ran up beside the side of them and blowed the horn and motioned for them to stop and all. They didn't recognize me in there. At first they thought we were trying to hold them up. So they were reluctant about stopping. When they did stop Mama recognized me, and that is where the argument started again. I told her that I wasn't going back to the hospital. She said, "Well, you ought to." And finally she said, "All right, get in and we will just go back home." She wrote our congressman, we

knew him personally because he would come by and stop in our store and talk with us. He lived in San Angelo, and this was the way that he went backwards and forwards out in that part of the country down through here and on east and around.

Jenkins: Who was that? Do you remember?

Estes: Hudspeth, his name was Hudspeth. So he took it up with the governmental hospital affairs in Washington. And in due time we received a rescinding order that they said that due to fact that I didn't seem to appreciate Fort Sam Houston they would rescind their order and that I could be admitted to the hospital in Kerrville. You see, they sent me off down to San Antonio when they had a hospital right here in Kerrville. So I spend a year in that hospital.

Jenkins: What seemed to be wrong with you?

Estes: I had TB. I was gassed back there in that shop in Elgin Field with carbon monoxide gas. All those motorcycles and all those trucks and all those cars operating in that building that wasn't ventilated properly. I took the flu, and I just barely did make it out of that. That caused my lungs to go bad, and I developed tuberculosis. And I spent a year out here, it was called Legion Hospital then. I made a complete recovery. So that takes us on up to 1926. Meantime the banker, Mr. Shreiner, sent his vice

president out here and told Mama, "Now I want you to understand this. From now on this is our business. You just go ahead and run this business just like if everything was lovely. It don't make any difference if you overdraw or whether you don't, it is our business, and we are going to see you through. We are going to take care of your business here and all until your husband gets well."

Jenkins: Had you paid off the bank note yet?

Estes: Yes, we had everything in the clear.

Jenkins: So it was simply a matter of . . .

Estes: That was just the banker had that confidence and that interest in us. The Shreiner Bank just took over our business that year that I was in the government hospital.

Jenkins: And she saw it through then.

Estes: Oh, yes. That is some more of the Lord's business.

Jenkins: Was there any garage work done during that time?

Estes: No, the garage was just closed. But she still carried on her work just the same with her health part of it and the groceries and all. She carried that on just the same. During the year once in a while I could get a leave to come out and spend a weekend or something like that at home and check up and see how it was going. But I stayed right there, and I got a complete recovery.

Jenkins: How many children was she looking after?

Estes: At that time she was looking after these two little boys

we had.

Jenkins: And running the business.

Estes: And running the business and the Post Office. She was the postmistress.

Jenkins: Doing her nursing.

Estes: Oh, yes, she continued on just the same as usual. So when I got out of the hospital they told me that I could come home, but I must take it easy. I could work a little, but not to do any heavy or strenuous work, just be sensible and all. As soon as I got back people began to bring me their little problems, and I would take the jobs that I could attend to and all. I gained strength and my health and got back into the jobs. I got out about in the middle of '26, and in '27 we got the idea that it would be beneficial and it would help people that were in trouble and all through here if we had some little cottages, little places where they could spend the night. If their car was out of commission and all, they were just left without any place to get shelter or have a bed or whatever. We built some little, very small, places that had one room that had facilities that they could cook and they could sleep and wait for their car to get fixed. Sometimes you have to have parts. If you couldn't fix it right off you had to have some aid before you could fix it.

Jenkins: How did you finance building those?

Estes: We just took out of the store . . .

Jenkins: But you didn't have to borrow anything.

Estes: No, we didn't borrow any. We just took out of the store account. Back in that day and time it didn't take very many dollars to buy enough material to just put up a shelter, you would call it, and a roof and all with just a minimum amount of facilities. When somebody was in trouble they would be glad to have a place where they could get out of the weather and have a bed to sleep in. They had a little kerosene stove, etc., they could fix them a little something to eat. It made it handy.

Jenkins: Did you do most of the building yourself?

Estes: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: You talked about parts. How did you get your automobile parts?

Estes: They had two or three companies in San Antonio that handled, we had what we called universal parts, parts that would fit in emergency on this automobile or that automobile or what-have-you. Of course some parts had to be specially for that individual car.

Jenkins: How did you get those?

Estes: You would have to sometimes order those from Houston or San Antonio or from Dallas or some place like that.

Jenkins: And they would come in on the bus or what?

Estes: Yes. They began to have a little bus service back in that

time, or it would come by mail.

Jenkins: If you had someone with a problem on the road, could you call Kerrville and the bus would eventually bring it out?

Estes: Yes. We had telephone communication with Kerrville and could order things that they had in Kerrville.

Jenkins: And the bus might bring them.

Estes: Or the mailcarrier.

Jenkins: Okay.

Estes: He was a handy man, too. So that was the way it was carried off. About that time Delco Light Company came in here, a representative came in here, and talked to me. He said, "We think that you have an ideal situation here to take on the Delco Light Agency." So I did, I took on the Delco Light Agency. That was rural electrification for the ranches. The Delco Light sold light plants that would take care of the lighting needs of the ranches.

Jenkins: Was it gasoline generators?

Estes: Gasoline compact engine and generator combined that would charge the batteries and they could have lights in the ranch home.

Jenkins: Now up until that time did you have any kind of electricity here, or was that the beginning of your lighting?

Estes: That was the starting of our having electricity here. We didn't have anything but gasoline lights up until that time.

Jenkins: Gasoline lights?

Estes: Yes. It was gasoline that burned a mantle.

Jenkins: Was it a pressure system?

Estes: Yes, you pumped them up to start with and then heat . . .

Jenkins: Kind of like the gasoline lantern that we have today.

Estes: Yes. We still have a gasoline lantern that burns a mantle and all. That was a big improvement over the old kerosene lantern. But anyway I was successful in selling a large volume of lighting equipment all over this western end of Kerr County.

Jenkins: Again about the same 40 mile radius?

Estes: Yes, that was about the same. Other lighting companies, companies that made generators, etc., then, sold some stuff in here, too. I not only would service what I sold, but I would service what these other fellows had sold and went off and left. They would come in and sell that stuff and then they would go. They would be gone, they would never come back. I was permanent here, and I would take over and fix their problems with their equipment that they had bought from other companies or whatever. So I not only had my Delco Light to look after, but I looked after everybody else's troubles if they had any. That went on clear up until the REA was started. I went to the first meeting of the REA. They said, "Don't tell him anything about this. He will be opposed to this REA coming in." I got wind of it, and I went to the first meeting that they

had at Johnson City.

Jenkins: What year?

Estes: I think that was somewhere around 1940.

Jenkins: We got through the Depression here a little too quick. I want to go back and do the Depression. Go ahead and do that, though.

Estes: I attended this meeting. I wasn't invited, but I attended it by myself. I could have taken others with me over there, but they didn't want to have anything to do with me because I was the Delco Light man, and I would be opposed to that. Anyway, I went over there and LBJ was our representative or something or other at that time. So he had that meeting over there, and he pulled some of his crooked stuff right there. I learned that he was strictly a politician. Any way that he could promote whatever he wanted promoted it didn't make any difference about the means. He would do it any way to accomplish what he wanted to accomplish. He told us to vote proxy for everybody that we knew for this deal.

Jenkins: Is that right?

Estes: Some of them did. I didn't. I wouldn't do that. But it did go over, he put it over, and it was the largest co-op that had ever been put into existence. It took in, well, from way over close to Austin all over this whole area.

Jenkins: You voted for it?

Estes: I voted for it, yes, but . . .

Jenkins: Just one vote.

Estes: Just one vote. But he passed out the cards and told them, "Now just vote everybody. It don't make any difference, just write their name on here and drop it in this box over here." I said, "Oh, oh, that is not right. That is wrong." But anyway it went over. Then when they began to build the lines in here they came to me and said, "We want to employ you to get easements for us to build the lines over these ranches. We want you to work for us to build these lines in here. You know these people, and they know you. They know that you are an honest man and that you are not going to try to put something over on them. We want you to work for us." I accepted that job. I had been trained by the Delco Light Company as a specialist salesman in high pressure salesmanship. I wouldn't use that on my light people. When I would go out to sell a man a light plant I didn't use any of that that I had been taught, that high pressure salesmanship. But working for this other company to get easements if it came to the point where I had to do some high pressure, I didn't fail to use what I had been taught. And, with the exceptions of, I believe it was one or two of this whole area in here, I got an easement to go across their property.

Jenkins: What was the objection of the others?

Estes: Some of them just plain said, "We don't want it." There

were only two or three out of this whole area in here that I didn't get the easement. They called me to go into another man's territory where a man had refused to let them go across his place. "You seem to have such good luck, you go over there and see if you can get that. We have got a whole bunch of people back of him on the other side of his ranch, and we can't get to those people with a minimum amount of line without crossing his ranch. You go see if you can get that." I went over there, and I talked to the old man and kind of got something in common with him. I used some of that high pressure stuff and tactics. And I couldn't get the easement. Every time I would get up there to the point where I would try to get him to sign this easement, why he would back off. Well, I couldn't get it. That made them mad. They said, "We are serving those people in back of him anyway. You go back and check out the best way that you could go around his ranch but get to those people that want it back of him." Well, we just did that. I guess we built a couple of miles of line to get to some 15 or 20 people that lived back on the other side of his ranch up there. But there were only just two or three. One fellow really rubbed me up the wrong way. He was owner of the telephone system in Kerrville, and he wouldn't give us an easement across his property, and he had telephone easements all across ranches and

everywhere. He wouldn't give us our easement across a little piece there. We built around him like we did the other fellow.

Jenkins: What was his objection, did he say?

Estes: No, he never had any reason for it.

Jenkins: Let me go back to your Delco serving. You said you refused to use high pressure tactics on selling it. What percentage of the countryside did you get served by Delco? Were you pretty successful?

Estes: Oh, yes. I sold Delco plants all over this part of the country. I even sometimes would be called into other dealer's areas to sell the ranchers that needed equipment and all, but they just wouldn't buy. I would go into their territory now and use what I had been taught.

Jenkins: That is what I was getting at. So you were more successful than most, using your own tactics.

Estes: Yes. I was more successful or satisfactorily rewarded by just going out to a man's home and sitting down and just talking with him and telling him what I could do with the Delco equipment and what it would mean to their home. I had a demonstrator. I had a plant mounted in a vehicle, and I could just run a wire in here and bring the lights right into his home and demonstrate what it would do, how it would look in his home. And I didn't high pressure any of them, not one bit.

Jenkins: This obviously then started bringing in appliances to these folks, right?

Estes: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: Did you ever get into that business?

Estes: Yes, I sold a complete line of Delco Light products. That included the Delco Light plant, the refrigerators, the washing machines, the irons, and all of the little appliances that we had in that day. We didn't have too many.

Jenkins: So you were moving a lot of merchandise.

Estes: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: Do you have any recollection of sales volume of any of those years?

Estes: Some of those would run as much as \$1,500 at one installation.

Jenkins: Do you have any recollection of any annual sales back then?

Estes: No, I didn't keep a record of the annual sales like that, because I operated that Delco business with the store business here. It was all run through the store.

Jenkins: Did the Delco business get to be bigger than the store business?

Estes: At times, yes.

Jenkins: Was it kind of seasonal?

Estes: Yes, it was kind of seasonal. They would buy more readily when they had sold their wool or mohair or what-have-you.

Jenkins: How long did you retain that Delco business?

Estes: Up until the REA came in.

Jenkins: Now did you get out of the appliance business at that point?

Estes: I gave up the Delco Light business. Oh, there were still some that were remote that they hadn't built to yet, and I still took care of their needs and all.

Jenkins: Did you take on any other appliance lines, however?

Estes: No, I didn't take on any other specialty selling lines, no.

Jenkins: So you got out of the appliance business.

Estes: I got out of the appliance business after the REA came in because there were a large volume of people that did go into the appliance business in the towns or what have you.

Jenkins: So you were back to the basics of grocery store, gasoline and repair business.

Estes: Yes.

Jenkins: And the cottages.

Estes: And the cottages. Then in 1936 I went to town one day, and I met a man that had done a little work for me in years past. He built this two-story building right back of us here. We built that for the boys to have a room upstairs and the bottom part of it for our garage to store our cars in and all. He had worked a little around here for me. I went to town one day and met him on the street. He said, "I am in bad need of a job." I said, "Mr. Howser, I don't have any work right now." He said, "I have got an idea whereby that you could have some work." Well I said, "You

have got an idea that you could finagle around to get me the need for you to work for me?" "Yes." I said, "Well, let's have it." He said, "There is a house over here, that old Dr. Dueze place, that was built back there in 1884. The school has bought that old building and that property, and they want that old building taken off. Now you could take the lumber that is in that old mansion of his and you can build you some cottages out there and dispose of some of those little ones that you have. It will really enhance the value of your property, and it will do what I want, it will give me a job." He said, "Let's go look at it." I looked at my watch and I said, "I really don't have the time, but I will go with you." He took me up there and showed me this old building. I came home that evening, and I told my wife what I had run into. And she said, "We are not in a position to really take on anything like that now, I don't think." "Well," I said, "it sounds pretty good. He says that he just feels sure that if we will bid on that outfit we will get the bid." She said, "I don't believe we ought to attempt that." I said, "Okay." And I dismissed it. But the next morning she was up bright and early, and said, "Let's go look at that place." She had thought about it, and she was anxious to go look. I took her down, and we went over the situation and all and looked at it. She said, "I am in favor now of your

putting a bid in on that." I made out my bid and turned it in, a sealed bid, and I got it. That was for buying that old house, but I had to tear it down and get rid of it and clean the lot of all debris and everything.

Jenkins: Do you remember what you bid?

Estes: I believe it was something like \$500 or \$600 that we paid for that. It was a big house. It must have had 10 or 15 rooms. It was a huge outfit. It was built on to, too, and made apartments out of. It had lots of lumber in it. Anyway, I got the bid, and he got the job. He had a boy that would help him. He was skilled in taking the lumber apart, to take it apart and not damage the lumber. And that old house was built with square nails. It was built back in 1884. And it had four fireplaces in it. It was a two-story house. Then I found something there that was very valuable to me. I found two big cisterns underneath where they had built over them, and that was where I could scrape all of my debris and things that I couldn't use. I would just put it right into that cistern and covered them up.

Jenkins: You didn't have to haul it off.

Estes: I didn't have to pay 50¢ to get anything hauled away. Of course I used some new lumber, but that lumber in that house was long leaf yellow pine.

Jenkins: And it is in a lot of these cottages.

Estes: It is in most of them. Some of it, of course, was lumber

that had been used to make additions that wasn't anything like the quality of lumber that that first was.

Jenkins: But you did that in when?

Estes: That was in '36.

Jenkins: In '36 you built the cottages.

Estes: I hired this old man that had the idea and all and another carpenter and myself. I principally did the plumbing and the wiring and helped with that, etc., along with attending to the other things, too. But those two carpenters built these buildings here. This whole yard out here looked like a lumberyard. One of our boys was going to school, and we had an old Model A truck and he would take that truck in of a morning, drive it in, and then go to school. Then that evening we would have it loaded up, and he would drive it back home.

Jenkins: Where was he going to school?

Estes: At Kerrville.

Jenkins: And driving into Kerrville.

Estes: They didn't have any bus system or anything of that kind back in those days when our children were needing to go to Kerrville to school. The Ingram school wasn't up to par, and we didn't want our children to go there.

Jenkins: Did Mountain Home ever have a school?

Estes: Oh, yes. Way back yonder down the way here they had a school that they taught all grades down there.

Jenkins: After you got here?

Estes: After we got here, yes. The children went to school right down the creek here a ways to a two or three-room school-house and all. They would only teach up to a certain grade, then after that we had to pay a man to come out here and pick up the children. He got some others to throw in, and all of us together made it interesting to him to come out and pick up children just like the buses do now. But we had to do that on our own. Take them into Kerrville to school.

Jenkins: Well now, if they had gone to Ingram how would they have gotten there?

Estes: We would have to have done the same thing, we would have had to pay somebody to take them or take them ourselves. The school system wasn't furnishing any transportation.

Jenkins: You built the cottages. Did they immediately start paying off?

Estes: Oh, yes. They immediately started paying off.

Jenkins: From travelers mostly?

Estes: Yes. Then we took people that wanted to stay, and we took them for overnight or we took them for just whatever way they wanted most.

Jenkins: Has there been much vacationing right here at Mountain Home over the years?

Estes: As it became a place and got known for people. One would

come out, a family would come out here, and they would like it. They would go back and tell somebody else, etc. And they just gradually grew up and all.

Jenkins: So you had people coming back every year..

Estes: Oh, yes. We have got people that are still coming here that have been coming for 20 years or more.

Jenkins: Once they get here to the cottages what do they have available?

Estes: We don't feature anything but just a place that is comfortable and clean. We don't take anyone that drinks. A few years ago our preacher boy that is in Wyoming came down here and I asked him if he had thought about retirement. He built that building that is right across yonder after he came back from the service in World War II and operated a store and filling station there and a Post Office. My wife resigned as postmistress when he came back from the service.

Jenkins: Which was when?

Estes: That was in the latter part of '45. Then the Lord told him and just kept on with him that he must go back to school and finish his college education and go to seminary and become a minister. He fought it for quite a long while. Finally the Lord won out and he did just that. One day he told his Mama, he said, "Mama, I am going to have to go. I can't do otherwise. I want to get somebody that will take over this building of mine and the store and the Post

Office and let me go back to school. Do you have any ideas?" She said, "Yes. I can have you somebody here tomorrow." And our younger daughter and her husband were in Corpus Christi working. She knew that they were qualified, and that they would like to come back to Mountain Home if they had that kind of opportunity. So she called them on the telephone, and they came the next day. It just happened just like that. So he went back to school and finished his college. Then he went to seminary and finished that. In the meantime he met his wife that he has now while he was going to college. She got her teacher's certificate. She taught school and helped him go through seminary. They went on one of these summer vacation evangelistic ventures up in Montana, and they liked it. When he completed his seminary course, they went to Montana and joined the Methodist Conference in the state of Montana.

Jenkins: How about your daughter and the store. How long did she stay with that?

Estes: They stayed with it, but she was killed in a car wreck. There were some drunk boys run into her and it killed both of them and her, too, down the way between here and Ingram. Her husband, G. W. Haney, the same name but not any kin to the other son-in-law, the one that you talked to out here the other day.

Jenkins: Haney?

- Estes: Haney, yes. They don't spell their names alike, but anyway they are both pronounced the same way. The one that was killed was Mrs. G. W. Haney. Mrs. J. W. Haynie is up here. Anyway, he still kept the Post Office and the store over there. He gave up the lease over here with the son, and moved it into another building. Then it went from that building up yonder to a special built building up there where it is now. Private capital built the building and then the government would lease it. That is the deal that the government has now.
- Jenkins: What building are you talking about? What kind of business is it?
- Estes: That one that you see right through there was a filling station, a store and a Post Office and had living quarters in the back there. He built that when he came back from the service in World War II. Later on the government changed from having the Post Office in some other business and put all of the Post Offices into a building only used as a Post Office.
- Jenkins: Is he still in business here?
- Estes: He is not in business here. He is not a Post Master. He went into that building up yonder. A rancher here built a building here and leased it to the government under the government's specifications.
- Jenkins: And then he left eventually?

Estes: He was Post Master up there in a fourth class office. Then the Postal Department made many, many changes. They came and asked him, "Would you like to take the Post Office at Ingram? The postmaster has had to resign on account of his age. Would you be moved from Mountain Home to Ingram?" He said, "Why, sure. I would like to step up another step." That went on for awhile. There was a man out of Friendswood, Texas, by the name of Bergen who had worked a good many years as a city mailcarrier and all down there around Houston. He wanted to come up in this part of the country. They came here to the cottages, and they got acquainted with this Mr. Haney and got to be close friends. So when he went to Ingram as postmaster then there was a clerk that had to retire on account of his age, and so this man that was at Friendswood had much more seniority than any of them that was in the Post Office as clerks down at Ingram. So they moved him down from Friendswood up here to take the clerkship that was vacated here at Ingram. In a few months they came along and said, "Listen, would you like to take another step up? There is a vacancy in the Post Office at Comfort, Texas, and it is a first class Post Office." He said, "Well, yes, I would like to do that." So this clerk that had come from Friendswood up here and was chief clerk here in the Ingram office, he was promoted to postmaster at Ingram. So this G. W. Haney is still postmaster, our former son-in-law is still postmaster in a first class

Post Office down at Comfort, Texas.

Jenkins: Now when your son-in-law quit running the store, what happened to the store?

Estes: When he gave up the lease over here, of that building yonder that belonged to our son, why, the son wouldn't lease it anymore. He said, "It is vacated. Just let it set there." It is still in that status. It has got some stuff stored in it, but it has never been operated anymore.

Jenkins: But at this time were you still in the repair business?

Estes: Yes, I kept that up until, oh, let's see. I was still doing some repair work on automobiles and helping people with their problems and troubles on up until about '78, I guess.

Jenkins: I see. But no more grocery business for you.

Estes: We went out of the grocery business when the son came back in the latter part of 1945 when he came back from overseas. Mama resigned in his favor as postmistress with a disability retirement. The inspector advised her to do that. She turned it over to the son, and he was appointed postmaster. He was still operating right up here while he built that building over yonder. Then he moved the Post Office from here over in his building over there.

Jenkins: Here is what I want to get straight. Your family went out of the grocery business about when?

Estes: That was back in 1946.

Jenkins: Okay. But you continued to be in the repair business.

Estes: Yes.

Jenkins: And the gasoline business?

Estes: No. I turned the gasoline business over to the son. We didn't have any gasoline anymore, but I did do repair work after that.

Jenkins: At what time did he get out of the gasoline business?

Estes: The son?

Jenkins: Yes.

Estes: He turned it all over to his brother-in-law and his sister in the early part of 1947.

Jenkins: And they eventually went out of it.

Estes: And then when she was killed, he stayed on there for awhile. But he decided to make a change, and he moved the Post Office to another building and gave up the filling station and the store.

Jenkins: Okay, and that year was about?

Estes: That was about the latter part of '47.

Jenkins: Okay, so you still were doing repairs.

Estes: Oh, yes, I was still working on the cars. The people would bring their problems here to me. The cottages were like they are now. They have been in operation ever since 1936.

Jenkins: Now let's go back to the grocery business. Did someone bring in a grocery business to replace when you went out?

Estes: No. There were two stores here at Mountain Home.

Jenkins: You were not the only grocery then.

Estes: No, there was another store. We leased our store back in 1929. We leased our store for three years. Then the fellow that leased it he subleased it to another party. They ran it for a year and a half or something like that. My wife said, "We need to go back in the store business again." We just had ours leased here. When we told him we didn't want to lease it anymore, he got the idea that he could buy a little piece of land right across yonder, right over there off of that other ranch over there. And he would just move his groceries out of over here into a little building over there and still stay in the grocery business. And he had some pumps over there, some gasoline pumps. He didn't do any repair work or anything of that kind. He just had the filling station and the grocery business. He ran that awhile. Then he got dissatisfied and he sold it to somebody else, and they sold it to somebody else, and they sold it to somebody else. It wound up that when they moved the highway from over here to over yonder that left this over here setting high and dry. So the people that were in that little store then, they didn't own the land they just had their merchandise. This fellow that owned the land was an oil company agent, so he buys a little piece of land over on the main road over yonder where I met you the other day.

Jenkins: At the Mountain Home Grocery.

Estes: Yes. And this building from here was moved over there, but it burned down in the meantime. And then they had these little portable things brought in there and are continuing on there. But that was from over yonder, originally moved over there.

Jenkins: So Mountain Home today has one grocery store.

Estes: Yes, one little whatnot store. It isn't really a grocery store anymore. The old lady that owns that over there if she would sell her holdings here could be well over a millionaire.

Jenkins: She likes to run that store.

Estes: She just likes to have a little something to do, and she loves to talk with people. That is just her hobby. She doesn't care whether she sells a dimes worth of stuff or not. As the saying is, she is just as independent as a pig on ice.

Jenkins: Does she have gasoline?

Estes: Oh, yes, she has a pump there. If you want to pay her about 15¢ or 20¢ more a gallon for gasoline, there it is.

Jenkins: What is her name?

Estes: Her name is Elebracht. It is a German name.

Jenkins: And she owns ranch land?

Estes: Yes, she has got a big ranch that lays right back north there. Right over there. You can see where the other side of

that building on the other side of the road is all her land. It goes way back yonder and way back over this way and on back the other way.

Jenkins: How long has she personally been running the store?

Estes: After they moved it over there, the person that moved it over there, they sold it to a lady, and then she went in partnership with that lady. Then that lady wanted out so she has had full control of it ever since she bought the other lady out.

Jenkins: Which was about when, do you remember?

Estes: It must have been sometime in the 50's.

Jenkins: Oh, so she has been over there

Estes: She has been there quite a long while, yes.

Jenkins: Is she open 7 days a week?

Estes: Seven days a week around the clock.

Jenkins: She loves it, apparently.

Estes: That is just her life.

Jenkins: You no longer do mechanical work.

Estes: Well, just advisory.

Jenkins: I see. So you are no longer really in the business.

Estes: No, I am no longer active in that line.

Jenkins: And you really gave it up about when?

Estes: Along about the latter part of '79 that I didn't take on anymore, other than they would come by and want me to tell them what was wrong with their car so that they would

know if they were getting a square deal when they took it to someone else.

Jenkins: But you are still in the cottage business.

Estes: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: Do you manage them, or do you have someone manage them?

Estes: Back about '76 our son was down here on vacation from up in Montana where he lived and was a preacher up there. And he came down here, and I said, "Son, are you thinking about in the future what you might do?" "Oh," he said, "yes, I have thought about that. But listen, the way things are going down in this part of the country I could never come back here." I said, "Maybe you don't know all you know." He said, "How is that?" "Well, I will sell you this place a whole lot cheaper than I would sell it to somebody else." And his countenance lit up right away. And I told him to give me a little time to think about it, and I told him what I would deal with him on. He took me up just like that. So he owns the cottages here. I don't own them anymore. He owns them, but I can stay right here and take care of them as long as the Lord is willing.

Jenkins: You are manager of the cottages.

Estes: I manage them, yes. I manage the cottages.

Jenkins: Are you the repair man and all of that?

Estes: Yes, I have to supervise or do things around here. Just like this morning, one of the families down here said,

"We are out of electricity." And I said, "Well, I will be out there just as soon as I get my clothes on." That was before I was even dressed this morning. And so I went and did a little checking and found out that, I don't know why, but the fuse had blown. They bring appliances in here that they shouldn't bring. I tell them that we are not wired for modern day appliances such as big roasters or heavy duty appliances that they use to cook with and all. But they will bring some of those, and they blew a fuse. So I found the trouble and put the fuse in right away. I have to tend to all of that.

Jenkins: Do you have pretty full occupancy during the summer?

Estes: Well, it is short. It starts in after school lets out, and then it runs up until school starts in August. After that, why, it is very quiet.

Jenkins: But during that season do you have pretty good occupancy?

Estes: Oh, yes. We have people that wants to come. We only take people by reservation. And we don't rent the cottages anymore. We just take those that want to come. If they have never been here before they have to be recommended by someone that has been here before.

Jenkins: You don't take stop-in trade then.

Estes: We don't take anybody from off of the highway, just overnight or going through, or somebody that we don't know.

Jenkins: I see. What are your rates?

Estes: We don't rent them. We don't have rates.

Jenkins: Oh, I see.

Estes: It is a peculiar situation. This belongs to that preacher, and he has got peculiar ideas in some ways. Anyway, we just tell them, "Now whatever the cottage is worth to you, whatever you feel like it has been worth to you." We have got overhead. We have got water and lights and gas. And we have got maintenance, and we have got to keep the cottages in occupancy condition. "Just whatever it has been worth to you." And we are getting along as well or better than if we were trying to rent them and pay the tax and be governed by that. And then since Mama is in the resthome under Medicaid, if I had an income above a certain amount without any deductions that would all have to go back to Medicaid.

Jenkins: So what the people are willing to give you keeps the cottages repaired and operating.

Estes: Yes. I deposit the money to the son's account in the bank down here.

Jenkins: So he owns it and may come back some day.

Estes: He is planning on it. They were here last week, went back last week, and they spent two weeks down here. They are planning on coming back to here. This is their home, and they are coming back here to retire.

Jenkins: Let me go back. So we have got you retired.

Estes: No, I am not retired.

Jenkins: We have got you out of the auto repair business.

Estes: Oh, yes, we are out of the automobile business, yes.

Jenkins: Let's go back and pick up a few things I made some notes on. Let's talk about the 1930's Depression and what you saw going on and what you felt going on and to what extent the Depression was felt in Mountain Home.

Estes: Okay. The Depression started overnight. Everything was rocking along just like it is now with the inflation. It didn't seem to be sound, but nevertheless everybody was just carrying on. The next morning it came over the radio that the president had shut down everything. The banks were closed, and there was going to be a readjustment of things. Nobody knew anything about when, where and how or whatever was going to be done. But that next morning it didn't make any difference if you had \$10,000 in the bank, you couldn't get a dime of it. It left people in a terrible state of affairs. And the people that had obligations, it wound up that if they had obligations if they couldn't manage somehow a way to take care of them, they lost everything they had. Ranchers that were doing business, but doing that business on borrowed capital, there were just lots of them that lost not only the ranch, but they even took some of their personal belongings for payment on what they owed. And it left them in a terrible state of affairs.

Jenkins: And you knew a lot of those people.

Estes: Oh, yes. I knew those people, yes. There was one particular fellow, to give you an idea of it, that he was considered the king of the angora goat industry.

Jenkins: That was big around here, was it?

Estes: Oh, yes. Angora goats was one of the main features, the mohair was what brought in the revenue here. It outranked the sheep industry or the cattle industry either.

Jenkins: You never got involved in that in any way.

Estes: No. No, I would like to pick that up somewhere and tell about that, too. We started to try to get into the ranching business after we had gotten well along and got some capital. We began to see that it would be better for us if we didn't have so many activities. We will do that some other time. That Depression is something that if a person wasn't old enough to be here at that time, I can't tell you and you haven't any real vision of just how bad it really was.

Jenkins: What happened to some of those ranchers? Where did they go, what did they do?

Estes: They went to wherever the obligation was the greatest. The one that had the most in it just took it over.

Jenkins: I know, but what did these people personally do? Go to town and try to find work?

Estes: They had to do whatever they could do. And lots of them didn't have the knowhow to do very much other than ranching.

Listen, a rancher couldn't employ anybody. It was horrible.

Jenkins: You saw these people. What were they doing? How were they surviving?

Estes: They were just existing. They weren't surviving hardly at all. They were on the mercy of anyone that had the feeling to try to help them, to give them a little something to eat or just help them to not starve.

Jenkins: Did you get involved in that?

Estes: Yes, we were involved in that totally. We never turned anybody down that came to that store and said, "My family is destitute of something to eat." We never asked any questions about 'do you think that you can pay or what can you pay' or anything about it. We just let them have the necessities just like we operated before in my mechanical business. If a fellow didn't have a dime, I fixed his problems up just like the fellow that was dressed up with diamond rings on his fingers and all that. And we did the same way. We never turned anybody down.

Jenkins: How did you keep stocked? Were you getting enough income to keep stocked?

Estes: I often ask myself, "How did we carry on?" But that was some more of the Lord's business. We were working for the Lord. And like the banker told us. He came out and told Mama when I was in the hospital, that until I got well that this was their business and for her just to go on and tend

to it and operate it as best she could.

Jenkins: The people who supplied you with the groceries that you supplied to the ranchers . . .

Estes: Somehow or other those groceries just kept coming. I really couldn't tell you.

Jenkins: You personally, apparently, didn't go into great debt over this.

Estes: No. That was all taken care of somehow. We didn't, we didn't try to borrow any money, not a dime. But everything seemed to work out like a jigsaw puzzle. It just worked somehow.

Jenkins: During the Depression, did you have any cottages to speak of?

Estes: We only had those little ones.

Jenkins: And were you doing anything with those?

Estes: If somebody came along and got in trouble and needed to spend the night, or if they wanted to spend the night we took them on. But we weren't pushing the cottage deal.

Jenkins: You weren't getting much income off of them.

Estes: No, we weren't getting much income off of the cottages, but we did have a place where somebody, if it was necessary to spend the night, or if they were water bound. You see, back in those days we didn't have the big highway. And if the creek got up you had to wait until the creek ran down.

Jenkins: Mountain Home isn't incorporated, is it?

Estes: No.

Jenkins: Is it about as big today as it has ever been?

Estes: It is the same size now that it was . . .

Jenkins: In the '20's?

Estes: Yes, the same area.

Jenkins: Were there any other businesses, really?

Estes: There never was any business out this way any larger than just a small business, grocery store.

Jenkins: So there were never any gins, never any banks?

Estes: No, nothing in that line. It is strictly a ranch country.

Jenkins: So in terms of the town of Mountain Home there really wasn't . . .

Estes: There wasn't any really town of Mountain Home, but Mountain Home covers an area much larger than New York City.

Jenkins: Tell us about that.

Estes: Well, Mountain Home goes about 35 miles on that route up yonder, that is Route 2 that goes over on the Interstate over there. It goes about 45 miles out on the Highway 41. And then it used to have another sub Post Office out of Mountain Home that was called Prade Ranch off down on the Frio back northwest in Real County in Leakey, Texas, Then it went on past there way on down close to Vance, which is down near Camp Wood, and that is way back over towards Highway 90 going from San Antonio into Del Rio and all. So Mountain Home was called wherever the mail delivery was made.

Jenkins: Your son-in-law was saying the other day somebody sat down here the other day and counted maybe 30 people in what you might call Mountain Home.

Estes: If you just took what was right around within two or three miles of the Post Office here, that would cover it, yes.

Jenkins: And that is about as many as it has ever been.

Estes: Yes. There have been times when there were more people than there is right now.

Jenkins: Do you have any idea how old Mountain Home is?

Estes: Yes, Mountain Home was established in 1878.

Jenkins: And you got here . . .

Estes: We got here, down here right at this particular place, in 1923.

Jenkins: Do you have any knowledge of the history of Mountain Home before you got here?

Estes: Oh, yes. It was a little Post Office. It was run awhile by this postmaster. The first postmaster was a man by the name of Nelson. It was down the creek here a ways. He was the first postmaster. There was a bluff over in front of where his ranchhouse was over there. He got the idea and looked on the register I guess and saw that there wasn't any other place called Mountain Home, so he asked the Post Office to call it Mountain Home. This was on the old Spanish Trail going from coast to coast. He kept the Post Office for quite a long while. Then they turned it over to somebody else, and it was turned over

and turned over and discontinued and reinstated and turned over, etc. Of course, my wife was the postmaster the longest. When she retired she had had 25 years as postmistress.

Jenkins: The longest ever then.

Estes: The longest until then. I expect she still holds that position of being the longest in office. I hold the longest of being assistant postmaster. I had 37 years and I still carry some mail.

Jenkins: Do you really?

Estes: Yes, I carry the mail around here for this group right around in here. I go up and get the mail 5 days a week and deliver it to the houses, or whatever. And over here at the store there are people that live, oh, 15 miles from here. They work, and they go to work before the Post Office opens, they come back after the Post Office is closed, and they have their address as over here at Mrs. Elebrecht's. I pick up that mail and bring it to her, and she takes care of that mail. A very, very unusual situation. But nevertheless they get their mail every day.

Jenkins: You were telling me a story about your acquaintance with H. E. Butt of the grocery chain and how you got to know him as he traveled through here. Relate that for us.

Estes: H. E. Butt, I don't know about his daddy, anyway he was a young boy, and his mother was left a widow. She had a

little grocery store to support their family. I don't know how many children she had, but I think she had one or two more other than H. E. B. I know she had one. Anyway, she ran this little grocery store in Kerrville for a good many years. H. E. B. as a boy delivered groceries in a little red wagon that he pulled himself. He delivered them around to the homes there in Kerrville near their grocery store. Then when he grew up and was grown he took on a vegetable route out of San Antonio. He would go to market in San Antonio and buy a little Model T truckload of vegetables, and he supplied his mother with those, what she could sell, and took the rest of them to Junction. And he would stop in at our little store here. His truck didn't have any heating facilities, and when it was cold he would stop in here. This was the slow part of the road from here to Kerrville back in those days as there were 18 water crossings between here and Kerrville. And that took up considerable length of time. Back in those days if the creek was up a little and it was muddy, it would take two hours and a half to go to Kerrville in your car. We had no graded road, it was just down the creek, in the creek and out on the other side and back and forwards across there. It was just like the old Indian trail or the old Spanish Trail went through this country clear on back. And we have a history of this

trail through here as far back as 1534. But back to our H. E. B. He carried that on for several years, that grocery route, that vegetable route, supplying his mama and going to Junction. Then he took on a venture of joining the Piggly Wiggly and had his first store in Kerrville under the name of Piggly Wiggly. Then he got the inspiration to go in business for himself. He built his first H. E. B. Store in Kerrville.

Jenkins: Were you still having any contact with him at that time?

Estes: No, after he went into the first grocery store affiliated with Piggly Wiggly, he discontinued his activities of hauling produce at that time.

Jenkins: He got off of the road.

Estes: Yes, he got off of the road right there. If he hauled any, he hauled it for his own store. Anyway we knew him very well. He would stop in going and coming. He had to come right through by our store either way, going or coming back, from Junction.

Jenkins: You have lived here since. . .

Estes: Right here at this place since August of 1923. We located at the other store location in '22.

Jenkins: So for 60 years you have been associated with Mountain Home..

Estes: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: Have they ever called you Mayor or anything like that?

Estes: No, they have all kinds of nicknames for me.

Jenkins: There really weren't any organized community activities, then.

Estes: No, not in that light, no.

Jenkins: Is there a church here?

Estes: We didn't have any church here until the Baptist Church that was located over in what they call Reservation, north of here. They agreed over there to disagree among themselves. And that church building was torn down and brought over here, and we rebuilt down on the location that it is now. They called it the Sunset Baptist Church. It was known as the Reservation Church before.

Jenkins: It came here when?

Estes: That was back in, I think, the '40s.

Jenkins: There wasn't a church here until then.

Estes: No, there wasn't any church. To my knowledge the first evangelistic efforts that I know of, or have any knowledge of other people quoting, was right where this house is setting now back in 1924. They built a brush arbor right here where this house is setting. Thereafter for a while they had revival meetings here under this brush arbor.

Jenkins: A circuit rider type.

Estes: Yes, a circuit rider type of meeting.

Jenkins: Now going back to Arkansas. All through your lifetime, but especially out here, you have been pretty much away from the big city all of your life, with a few exceptions.

Estes: I punched the clock for a few years, but after we started our first little venture to shove off for ourselves we have been independent of any other connection.

Jenkins: You have always been . . .

Estes: Self-employed. After I quit punching a clock to work in other establishments, why, Mama and I have been in business for ourselves.

Jenkins: You said occasionally you had employees, but mostly it was you and Mama.

Estes: We handled our own affairs, took care of all of our own problems, practically altogether.

Jenkins: But occasionally you would have someone helping you in the shop.

Estes: No, I didn't have any help in the shop. I didn't employ people to help me in the shop. Mama did employ some help a little now and then in the store.

Jenkins: Just parttime.

Estes: Parttime.

Jenkins: So it was just the two of you running these businesses all these years.

Estes: That's right.

Jenkins: What is your recollection of entertainment over your lifetime, especially when you are out here away from the big cities? What kinds of entertainment have you had during your lifetime?

- Estes: The people in this part of the country, the entertainment that they had was practically nil. It was just visiting with other people. Occasionally you would go to visit this rancher or that rancher or they would come to visit you. But as far as entertainment is concerned, it was practically nil.
- Jenkins: Before the church came where did you have to go to go to church? All the way back . . .
- Estes: You would have to go to Kerrville. But the demand for our activities out here would almost take up seven days a week.
- Jenkins: So you didn't even have a church as a center for activity here.
- Estes: No, there was no church center out here. If you went to church you would have to go to Kerrville. Kerrville had churches, but not out this way.
- Jenkins: Do you recall the coming of television?
- Estes: Oh, yes.
- Jenkins: How long was it before you could receive it here?
- Estes: Right here where we are sitting now, you can't do it now. The hills are located such here that if you try to watch television here, why, you would want to cry and pull your hair a little bit because it will talk Spanish awhile and it will switch from one station to another. It is just an aggravation.
- Jenkins: Back in your childhood days in Arkansas you were closer to

community activities, or not?

Estes: No, not really, because in those days it was all horse and buggy days, and you didn't go very far for any kind of activities.

Jenkins: You didn't live in a community then, even.

Estes: No.

Jenkins: So almost all of your life you have been pretty well isolated from the crowds.

Estes: The biggest portion of my life I have been separated from crowds, yes.

Jenkins: And you have enjoyed it, apparently.

Estes: Oh, yes, I thank the Lord for the privilege of not having to live in the city as city people live and all. It has been a wonderful life.

Jenkins: Now you said you wanted to go back and talk something about goat ranching and trying to get into it.

Estes: Back in the Depression when the Depression hit and all, it put a lid on everything. Even the ranch people, they were handicapped and tied. And those that did have their ranches paid for and their stock paid for, there was no sale for their wool and mohair; consequently, other than they owned that stock and all, there was no sale for it. They did have meat to eat because they could kill a goat whenever they wanted to, and it helped out a whole lot. Well, this man that had the name of being the goat king, his

name was Adolph Stealer. Anyway when the goats got down to 50¢ a head, he got the idea that if he could get ahold of some money, and he tried every source in this part of the country, banks and everything, to borrow just a little bit of money so he could buy goats at 50¢ a head and put them out to other people that did have their ranch paid for but had no stock on it, on the halves. And he wrote a letter to some of his relations that were up in the New England states that were quite wealthy and explained the situation to them. They could see his point and the predicament that he was in, and they loaned him a sizable amount of money, and he bought goats at 50¢ a head and put them out on the halves to these ranchers that didn't have any stock. They had taken their stock all away from them, but the ranch they couldn't take because it wasn't mortgaged. But the stock, maybe, had a mortgage on it, and they lost their stock. That put that man back into the situation that if he was doing it on the halves, he could have meat to eat and what little bit of revenue that you could get out of the wool or mohair he divided that with the man that was taking care of these animals on the halves. And when the goats came back into their own again from a man that couldn't have borrowed \$10 in this part of the country, it wasn't but just a few years until he was back in the millionaire class again.

Jenkins: You said that you toyed with the idea of getting into this?

Estes: Mama and I just a few months before the Depression hit, we had built up quite a nice bank account, and our credit was good. And we knew a ranch that was for sale, and there were enough cedar posts on that ranch that later on when they needed cedar posts the posts that they could have cut off of that ranch would have paid for the ranch and a dividend besides. And we had vision up ahead that we saw that there was a possibility there if we could buy that ranch, why, we could retire from the public business. We were sure of being able to take care of ourselves well. So we went to see this same man that earlier had told the vice president that 'we have got them, we want to keep them, we have got to have them. You tell Mr. Shreiner to finance them.' The same man owned this ranch and he wanted to sell it, and he wanted \$10 an acre for that ranch. We went to him and told him that we were interested and we thought that we could handle it. He always started his conversation or answered you with 'and, yes.' "And, yes, I wouldn't sell you that ranch at this particular time for any amount of money. We are going to have one of the worst things that has ever happened in the history of this country, and it is not going to be too long off. I don't know what you would call it, or what it is going to be, but it is going to be terrible. Things are going to

go real bad. You just set still right where you are. You are a good friend of mine and I wouldn't sell you that ranch under any conditions." And we said, "Well, Mr. Real, we sure do thank you for your advice, but we can't quite conceive the seriousness of what you see." He said, "You will see." Well, it wasn't three months until the Depression hit overnight. And if we had ventured and mortgaged our property we had here and all, we would have like a lot of the rest of them, we would have lost every dime that we had because we couldn't cover up or we couldn't make the payments.

Jenkins: Did you lose any money in the bank during the Depression?

Estes: No, not a penny, not a penny.

Jenkins: Were you banking in Kerrville?

Estes: It was the Shreiner Bank in Kerrville. There were a lot of other people that did. Oh, yes, there were lots of other people that did, but we didn't. The Shreiner Bank didn't have to go that route.

Jenkins: So that bank stayed in good shape.

Estes: In good shape, yes, and we didn't lose a penny.

Jenkins: Could you have lost a great deal?

Estes: Well, if we, like some of the rest of them, had had our money in other places.

Jenkins: I mean that you had enough in there that it would have been disastrous for you.

Estes: It would have meant that we were just out of luck that's all. We couldn't have continued in business.

Jenkins: Have you ever got to playing the stockmarket or bonds or . . .

Estes: Oh, no.

Jenkins: No other businesses.

Estes: No, no gambling at all.

Jenkins: This has been it, then, right here.

Estes: We just tended our own business right here, and we just let all those other things alone, we didn't venture into any get-rich-quick schemes.

Jenkins: How many acres have you owned in Mountain Home?

Estes: We later on in 1939 bought a little additional property here, a little over 300-acre piece of ranch property adjoining our property here. We got possession January 1, 1940.

Jenkins: And how many acres had you had surrounding the cottages?

Estes: We had about 10 acres to start with.

Jenkins: So really 300 plus a few is what you have owned.

Estes: Yes. We bought that 300 or a little better acres, and we paid \$17 an acre for it.

Jenkins: What did you do with it?

Estes: Well, we put some stock on it, and it paid off.

Jenkins: So you played cattle rancher a little bit.

Estes: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: Beef?

Estes: Oh, yes, we had cattle. Mama loved cows. She had the

idea that if we would get some real good blooded Jerseys and raise milk cows, as they increased there and come of age and would become milk cows, we would sell those cows broke to milk.

Jenkins: Did you do that?

Estes: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: How long were you in this business then?

Estes: We were in business there until that drought struck in the '50s. We had good blooded stuff, and we were hard headed. We thought the thing was going to not stay indefinitely like it did, and we held and we held on and we held on and we had to feed, feed, feed. Of course, we lost money there. It didn't paralyze us. It didn't cripple us or whatever.

Jenkins: But you got out of the cattle business.

Estes: We got out of that business, yes.

Jenkins: What did you do with the 300, lease it out?

Estes: No, we just kept it. We put a few goats on it and a few sheep.

Jenkins: Do you still have that?

Estes: No, we sold 200 acres back in the '50s, about '51 or '52 somewhere along there. Then we did some improving with some of that money that we got for that 200 acres.

Jenkins: Improving of what?

Estes: We built on the front part of the house here. Our cottages needed some repairs, etc. A place like this there is always something or other that needs to be taken care of.

Jenkins: Do you still own the 100 acres then?

Estes: No.

Jenkins: You got rid of all of that.

Estes: Later on I sold the approximately 100 acres to our son-in-law. He was an ex-serviceman. He got a government loan and bought that. Then shortly after that the son came along and I asked him if he had thought about making anything for his retirement. He had bought a little piece of land just north of us here between us and the road over there and put up that building over yonder. That was back in the '40s. But he didn't sell that or didn't lease it or do anything. He still owned that. Then I battered him and he bought the remaining that I had left here, with the cottages. So the son-in-law and our daughter bought the land that we had left after selling the 200 in the back. They bought the other 100 acres up here on this end. Then the son bought the cottages with the few acres that went with it.

Jenkins: Do you own any property now?

Estes: I don't own anything. I am a pauper.

Jenkins: So this house is on land that your son bought.

Estes: Oh, yes. This house and the cottages is on the land that my son bought.

Jenkins: I see. And your retirement has been the accumulation and the selling off of the property.

Estes: Yes, that's right.

Jenkins: Did you join Social Security?

Estes: Oh, yes. When that came into being Mama and I were eligible for Social Security and Medicaid. We have both of them.

Jenkins: So you are comfortably retired here in Mountain Home, and your needs are not a great deal. You don't run off to Europe and such.

Estes: We are getting along just as well under the conditions as we ever did. The Lord is still taking care of us.

Jenkins: And you have loved living here in Mountain Home, obviously, or you would have left.

Estes: Yes, it has been a wonderful privilege to have been able to live here such a peaceable, quiet, useful life. Our lives have been of service to others. All of our lives have been in service to others, and we have got a blessing out of every bit of it.

Jenkins: I don't want to get into it right now, but before we finish I want to get into some of these activities that you are now engaged in after your 'more or less' retirement where you are out serving others. But before we get to that I want to get you to give me an idea of what is happening to the use of this land around here in the last few years. Has it changed substantially?

Estes: The land isn't any more productive as per head of stock now. Oh, they have cleaned some of the brush off. It is a little

better ranch if you get rid of a lot of the brush. But it takes just as much land to run a cow now as it did way back yonder in the days of the pioneers.

Jenkins: Is there more or less goat and sheep ranching?

Estes: They are fast going out of the sheep and the goat part of it. It is all now practically cattle.

Jenkins: Has the leisure and resort business changed much around here?

Estes: Oh, yes, that feature has started from practically nothing when Mama and I first came here our cottages were looked down on as not being a legitimate idea in the early parts of it.

Jenkins: You were really one of the first, then.

Estes: We were among the first to have a place where a travelling person could get a bed to stay overnight.

Jenkins: You were one of the first motels then.

Estes: We weren't a motel. We were just emergency cottages.

Jenkins: I know, but that is what they call them now.

Estes: Yes.

Jenkins: Lodges, call them whatever you like.

Estes: Call them whatever you want, but we were among the first.

Jenkins: Yes.

Estes: And people generally looked on people that had those places as it not being a very nice place maybe. But ours never was permitted to be anything but up and above board.

Jenkins: I know if you go to Kerrville there are lots of that going

on, but in the immediate area, have resorts and leisure activities picked up much?

Estes: Not here in Mountain Home, no. This is the only place that you could get a place to spend a vacation or whatever in the Mountain Home area.

Jenkins: Between here and Leahey . . .

Estes: There is nothing between here and Leahey.

Jenkins: The H. E. B. Foundation camp is about the only one.

Estes: His is strictly a personal, more or less like we operate these cottages here now. His is not for the public.

Jenkins: So things really haven't changed a great deal in that time.

Estes: No, this is just as near like God made it as any place that you will find I imagine in the United States.

Jenkins: Do you see much change likely in the next few years? In the immediate vicinity, I am talking about.

Estes: No. No, unless there would be an abrupt change in the people that own this property throughout here, there is no chance for any major development. These ranchers in here won't sell any of their property.

Jenkins: So I am not likely to be able to come down in here and buy a little place on the river and retire on it because they are not going to sell it to me.

Estes: No.

Jenkins: Okay, that is what I was after. So really the land is going to be, as you see it, pretty much the same.

Estes: As long as the people's attitude is like it is today, there is no chance.

Jenkins: The present owners are pretty well going to hold on.

Estes: You couldn't buy a foot of that land over yonder at any price . . .

Jenkins: I bet that is right.

Estes: . . . from that old lady that owns that big tract that lays right north of us here. No. That is what kept this part of the country from developing like other parts of the country was the fact that the ranches were large and that they loved those ranches. Those ranches had been handed down from generation to generation, and they are all the same attitude. So there just hasn't been any change.

Jenkins: And you wouldn't particularly want it to change either?

Estes: Personally, no. I am not looking for that kind of a deal.

Jenkins: As a businessman . . .

Estes: I am satisfied to be able to do for others right here just like I have done for others all of these years, without having the city people crowd in here with the attitude that 'it is all for me and no more.'

Jenkins: You are not interested in doing anything to make yourself three or four million dollars.

Estes: Absolutely not. Absolutely not.

Jenkins: Let me ask you something about hunting in the area, the extent to which it has changed, in terms of what you hunt, the cost of hunting in the area. How has that

changed since you have been here?

Estes: That has taken inflation just like everything else. It used to be a person could go and ask a rancher, if they would like to hunt a day or two or they would like to hunt a week or what-have-you. And it was within the reach of the ordinary person's finances. But now it has changed, and this exotic game has come into the picture. It is just unbelievable what they charge for certain trophies. The sport hunter can get a better trophy here in the United States now where they have these game ranches that they take care of and all than they can go to the foreign countries to get those trophies, and they are not subjected to all of that hazardous conditions, deserts and all that expense of crossing the ocean, etc.

Jenkins: What are some of those animals?

Estes: The animals of the exotic game come from various countries like India and Japan. I think they even have some Russian breeds of exotic animals. Out on this game ranch out here they have everything from a giraffe on down.

Jenkins: Do they really have a giraffe?

Estes: Oh, yes. A lady came here the other day, Mrs. Elebrecht said, and she had a low tire. I have an electric compressor that I can pump up a tire with, and so she came over here and was a very pleasant lady. I was talking to her while I was pumping up her tire. And I asked her,

"Well, do you live in this part of the country?" "Oh, yes. I work out at this YO Ranch. I am working with the youth that they have out there." They have a youth camp out there this time of year, and they have quite a number of young people out there coming to that camp. She said, "They are sending me to town to buy groceries." And she said, "We had an addition to our exotic game the other day." I said, "How was that?" "Oh, that old mama giraffe had a little one, and Papa and Mama sure are proud of that little fellow. He stood up 5 feet tall when he was born." Now isn't that something? But they have got zebras, they have got everything except animals that will prey upon them, like lions and things like that they couldn't turn loose there on account of their stock or their game. But all those that are congenial with one another or let each other alone, they have just about got it out there. They are the largest one. There are several of those right in this area here.

Jenkins: What could you hunt when you first came here?

Estes: All we had when we first came here back in the '20s we had turkeys, wild turkeys, and we had not too many deer. The deer population wasn't anything as like as heavy then as it is now. But it is a whitetail deer, and they are the natives of this part of the country. We don't have any of the mule deer or blacktailed deer in this area. There is a spotted axis deer that has got loose and there is

quite a sprinkle of them running around over the country.

In fact we have, I believe, about 5 that lopes around right around Mountain Home here that are loose.

Jenkins: I see. Plenty of rabbits, I suppose?

Estes: Well, yes. But the sport hunter a few years ago thinned out the rabbits quite well, because the ranchers would let the sports hunters bring their cutdown wagon with big tires on it and all so that they would pull that out to the ranches with their other vehicle and get in that at night and go rabbit hunting just wherever they could run over the ranch and shoot them with a spotlight and 22's with scopes on them. You could shoot just as well at night with a light on something with a scope; maybe a little better than you can in the daytime.

Jenkins: Are there any animals that have just disappeared since you have been here?

Estes: I don't think that there has been any of those that have really disappeared. There are two things. One of them is totally extinct, and the other one is almost. The horned frog you only just see one of those once in a great while. And then we had what they called a barking lizard that made a sound just like an ordinary sized dog in the distance. At night they barked like a small dog practically all night long.

Jenkins: I thought maybe it was just me, but I have noticed that I

don't see horned toads. What has happened to them?

Estes: I have no idea as to why the horned toad has more or less become extinct. We used to have lots of them here when we first came here. I haven't seen a horned toad now in several years.

Jenkins: You were in the grocery business, did you do much gardening through the years?

Estes: Oh, no. I didn't garden any when I was in the grocery business.

Jenkins: I guess there was lots of gardening going on around here.

Estes: No, people generally didn't garden much in the earlier days. If they did have any pet deer around the place, the deer would go in there and eat up the garden.

Jenkins: I see.

Estes: They hadn't gotten to the point where they would put up a high fence around their garden.

Jenkins: I wanted to ask you what kind of preserving that they did, but since they didn't garden they didn't preserve much, did they?

Estes: No. The ranchers back yonder didn't have the time to do a lot of things that they can do now, because the transportation that they had then was so slow that it took up like three or four times as much time to do the same amount of work when they would have to either walk or ride horseback. But since the pickups have taken the place of

the horses and border collie dogs have taken the place of the hired hands, they can get the job done in a third of the time that it used to take or better than that lots of times. A man can get in his pickup and tell his dogs to get in, and he can round up a bunch of stock, in, oh, just a little bit, whereas if he had had to go horseback and bring them in it would take a lot longer time.

Jenkins: They don't use many horses then?

Estes: No. The ranch people don't ride horses. Most of them have a horse or two, unless they feature the horses for some other purpose. Now the YO Ranch has horses, plenty of them. And they have registered horses, horses that are valued at \$5,000 or more apiece. But they are really not a practical ranch horse.

Jenkins: Okay, before we get involved in your activities, what you are doing now, is there anything else that you can think of concerning your life at Mountain Home, your business life or whatnot at Mountain Home that you can think of that you would like to add before we find out what you are doing nowadays?

Estes: All down through the years a person that was in the type of business that we were in that covered all of those fields that I spoke about, they needed to be at home base as much of the time as was possible because you never knew five minutes ahead of time what was going to bob up next.

So you were on hand all of the time that you could. Of course you couldn't be at two places at the same time, but you could try to be back as soon as you could after you had made a service call or went down on the road to fix somebody or whatever you had. It was important that you be back. You might have two or three telephones call when you got back. And you might go out to work on a pump engine or something or other, and the first thing you would know they had found out where you were. Other ranchers in the areas would send somebody over there telling you, "We want you to come to our place before you go back." Sometimes I would go expecting not to be gone maybe over two or three hours, and I might be gone all day and part of the night.

Jenkins: Did you work pretty much seven days a week then?

Estes: Oh, yes. We took care of the needs of people seven days a week.

Jenkins: Grocery store and all?

Estes: Yes. Not only daytime. When some of the people who worked on the ranches had transportation they would come in after they had worked all day. They might get in here at 10 o'clock at night to get their groceries. The only spare time that they would have would be after the work hours on the ranch was over.

Jenkins: So you were available whenever they needed you.

Estes: We were available if they came at 10 o'clock at night and

wanted some postage stamps, or a money order, or wanted a package or something that they had in the Post Office, we tended to that just the same. If we were there it was all in operation.

Jenkins: The Post Office stayed open whenever they needed you?

Estes: Yes, whenever they had a chance to come to the Post Office, oh, it might be 10 or 11 o'clock at night the only time they could get off. They might have to ride horseback in 12 miles or more. And we tried to take care of the situation, whatever arose for the benefit of the people.

Jenkins: Did you ever take a vacation?

Estes: Not for years until we got kind of some phases of it was more or less not so active and all, we never had a vacation. We were just right here taking care of the needs of others.

Jenkins: When did you start feeling like you could take a vacation?

Estes: When we started taking our first little vacation was after the Mrs. had been postmistress for 25 years, and she took a disability retirement. The postal inspector told her that he thought it would be profitable for her to take a disability retirement and retire early than to try to continue on and maybe not make it and all, but if she would retire now the chances were that she would live several years after she retired.

Jenkins: When was this?

Estes: She retired from the Post Office the latter part of 1945.

Jenkins: So y'all took a vacation then, did you?

Estes: Oh, yes. We could take a little vacation then. We couldn't be gone too long.

Jenkins: What kind of vacation would you take?

Estes: Oh, we would get in our car and go visit her mother and step-daddy, or we would go visit some of my relations. But our going on those vacations would usually be after work hours in the daytime, and we would drive all night to go here or there.

Jenkins: So you didn't take off very long at any time.

Estes: No, we didn't take any extended vacations, because we were still active and had lots of responsibilities to look after.

Jenkins: What is the farthest y'all have been from Mountain Home?

Estes: We have been to California. We have been up in Canada. We have been practically all over Texas.

Jenkins: So the time did come when you started doing some real wandering, did you?

Estes: Oh, yes, when we had someone that would look after the cottages for us after we had gotten out of the grocery business and practically could take off otherwise. The automotive part of it wasn't so serious then for people to have trouble. They could get help and all. We bought us a travel trailer, and we would take that travel trailer and we would go like you folks. We would go here or yonder or somewhere else. We pulled that travel trailer

from the Gulf of Mexico to Canada

and all over.

Jenkins: I see. So the time did come when you started.

Estes: Yes.

Jenkins: What about just plain hobbies? Did you have any of those?

Estes: My hobby was hunting and fishing, mostly.

Jenkins: And you did most of that around close here, I suppose?

Estes: No, our fishing usually was down on the Gulf Coast or up on some of the lakes in Texas or in Oklahoma. That was after she had retired and that I could still have a week or ten days off.

Jenkins: I see. Okay, anything else that you can think of before we get into your present activities? Let's move then into the things that you are involved most in right now.

Estes: Now I am involved in a ministry with my tapes. I talked to the Lord, and told Him that I felt like that I had been working for him for many years, but I was getting too old to continue with those activities anymore. So I wanted another job. I said, "Lord, you know I don't want to retire. I want to be like the old cowboy said he was. He wanted to die with his boots on. As long as I could talk I wanted to be able to help anyone in any way that I could." And in just a short time I was told by the Spirit that I could bring a ministry with my tapes. He said, "Listen, you have been working with tapes for over 25 years. You

can bring a ministry with your tapes to the shut-ins wherever you may find them. In the resthomes or anyplace wherever there are shut-ins, you can bring a ministry with your tapes, taking spiritual hymns or music to them."

Jenkins: You said you had been working with tapes for over 25 years. What had you been doing with them?

Estes: It was kind of more or less a hobby for a long time. But I would take down conversations lots of times when we were talking with people more or less as a hobby. Unbeknown to them we could have the tape recorder on, and we would be chatting. And then after it was over with I would turn it on just to see the reaction or the expression on their face when they heard their own voice on a tape. Lots of them had never heard their voice on a tape before.

Jenkins: Did you use some of those tapes in your ministry?

Estes: No, I didn't do that. I started collecting songs especially. I screened those. I would just record the ones that were clear, the ones that the accompaniment wasn't too loud to distort the singing. The old folks or the shut-ins like to hear people singing. They are more or less burned out like everyone else on this modern day jazz music or hippie music that comes over the radios or the TV. They appreciate the songs that they learned maybe when they were children or on down through the years. A lot of the old folks when I turned my recorder on in resthomes will sing right along

with the tape recorder. When they take part in it they get a whole lot more out of it than they do if they don't.

Jenkins: Oh, yes. So it is mostly music.

Estes: It is mostly music, religious songs, but I do have all musical tapes, too. And I have been blessed with people knowing that I do that kind of service for the shut-ins. I have had dozens and dozens and dozens of tapes given me. They loan me their choice phonograph records, flat records, or 8-track tape records either or cassette tape records. But even yet there are not a lot of people that understand just how really to make a real clear tape. Like in church service they will play the piano inside a church building like they were playing it at our cowboy camp meeting. That is something that I haven't told you about yet. They will play the piano just as loud in a little church as they do when they are playing it in a tabernacle, which may seat 1,500 people. All you get out of a tape, the loudest noise, is the one that is predominant. Of course musical instruments record better on tape than human voices do. But if they will leave their accompaniment down so that it is in the background, and if they do have beautiful voices, that is the predominant part of your tape.

Jenkins: What is this cowboy tabernacle that you were talking about?

Estes: Back in about, I guess 1939, somewhere along in there, they had what they called a Cowboy Camp Meeting out at Marfa,

Texas. That is where Texas is strictly a ranch country. There are very few people out in that part of the country other than ranchers, the ranch people themselves. There is just not much attraction out there for people to go to spend vacations or inducement for them to have a little place and summer homes. But there is a place out in the Davis Mountains there at Marfa where they do have some. And this first one that was known was out there, and there was a preacher by the name of Dr. P. B. Hill in San Antonio, a Presbyterian preacher. He liked to go out there

when they had their missions out there. He was an ex-cowboy and an ex-Texas rancher and was real wide awake, on fire for the Lord. And he had a little summer home over on the north fork of the Guadalupe over here. He talked to the ranch people around here and told them what that had meant to him to go out there, and that he thought that this would be a good thing to try to get the ranch people to take part in. He advocated that the Baptists and the Presbyterians and the Methodists all go together, which back in that day and time was one of those questionable things whether they could get those three denominations to take the chips off of their shoulders and cooperate with one another. But he was very successful in starting that, and it has been going on now for about 41 or 42 years. It is right here below Mountain Home about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles, something

like that, up on top of a hill. They have the facilities here. The tabernacle will seat as many as 1,500 people. And they have the convenience houses. And they serve barbecue. They have big barbecue pits, and the ranch ladies bring covered dishes, and the ranchmen will barbecue some meat, and as an old Arkansas boy would say they just have a hog killing time. They start the first Sunday in August each year, and it runs through 8 days, the first Sunday and through the next Sunday.

Jenkins: Is the public invited?

Estes: Oh, yes, everybody. In the evening they will have some barbecue and beans; the ladies will bring covered dishes, and all those that want to stay in the evening, that will come at 6 o'clock in the evening, then after they have their cafeteria style meal they have a prayer service, men's and ladies' prayer service, the ladies have theirs and the men have theirs and the youngsters have theirs, then after, about 8 o'clock usually they have their worship service. And one denomination will bring the message, and the next message coming up will be another denomination and they alternate those three denominations. And believe it or not they get along there just like one big family. It is remarkable that they have done that, because otherwise the churches in the town, they don't cooperate to that extent.

Jenkins: Do you have a regular schedule for your tape program?

Estes: Yes, all of them have given me a definite date. I don't have to bother about asking when I can come back again. I have a definite day.

Jenkins: How often do you do this?

Estes: I make the four resthomes once a month on a permanent day. With one of those resthomes I have been given the authority that whenever there isn't anything on the bulletin board and I go visit my wife, why, just take over. And they don't limit me to any time. Sometimes I turn my equipment on and it will run for an hour and a half or two hours. And they come and they go. Lately they told me that they really enjoyed this program that I bring for the Lord better than anything else that they have. They have all manner of music, from people playing this modern hippie stuff on to religious songs, but I guess I play more hours of spiritual hymns and music than any of the other volunteers.

Jenkins: You say you don't get television here very much. It is just not good reception.

Estes: No, we have got a bad situation right here in this part of the valley here where we are with hills all around, and television is a peculiar thing. If it has got no obstruction it will carry for a long way, but if you are down in a low place and there are hills on all sides you get a rebound off of the hills, and you pick up stations that really should be out of the distance of picking up and your

TV set will switch from one to the other. It will talk Spanish awhile. We have got some Spanish stations over here in Mexico. Maybe it will be showing a Spanish picture and talk in English. It is all fouled up. It is of no value. But by the time you get out on the top of the hills and put up a reasonably length antenna, why, it works very well.

Jenkins: Do you get a daily newspaper delivered here?

Estes: Yes, we can get daily newspapers, but my condition now with the eye condition that I have, I don't read the newspapers very much.

Jenkins: Do you listen to the radio very much?

Estes: I listen to the radio. Not a great deal. I spend most of my time studying my Bible. I have the New Testament on tape. When I am laying down resting these legs that I have that have got the phlebitis I can turn my tape recorder on and listen to any part of the New Testament on tape.

Jenkins: Now here is where I am headed. You have been sitting here for about 60 years relatively away from the big cities, but certainly through newspapers and radio and people passing through you keep up with what is going on.

Estes: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: What are your impressions of the direction of the world in the last 60 years? How do you feel about the changes?

Estes: The whole world has changed and is rapidly changing as time

goes on. What is God's will for us is in print. It is the Bible. If you want to know really what the future might bring or what the past has been, you can pretty well get a foundation to build upon out of God's will for us. The more that you study your Bible in the right way the more that it would be revealed to you. There is a whole lot more to Christianity than just being saved. The Lord has need for anyone that will do His work like He wants it done.

Jenkins: What are your feelings about the major changes in terms, perhaps, of technology and the things that we have available to us to use?

Estes: God never did give man the ability or the go-ahead to create anything. Man has never created anything. Man didn't bring anything into this world when he was born, and he is not going to take these things with him when he passes on. The only thing that man is supposed to do is to tend to his own business and not try to run God's business, but tend to his own business and work for God and Company. God and Company is the heavenly Father, Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. It takes all three of those to make, as the Bible says, the Trinity or the Godhead. And we have got two choices: when we are born we are given a will, and we are given an initial amount of the Holy Spirit as a starter like a starter on an automobile.

And we are given a soul. That is all we possess. That is all we really own. The rest of this is all just loaned to us, and it belongs here in the world. And it can be here today, lots of it, or it can be gone tomorrow.

Jenkins: About 60 years ago you were here, and you had kerosene lights, you had wood stoves, you had Model T Fords. But most of the people around still had horses and buggies, a lot of them.

Estes: Wagons.

Jenkins: You now have a television set. It doesn't work too good because of where you are. You have got electric lights, and you have got appliances and a refrigerator in there, deepfreezes. Do you feel better off now than you did in 1923?

Estes: Oh, yes. We enjoy the advancement in all of these modern appliances and all. Everything that man has invented, or taken what God has created originally and put it together and made something useful out of it. If it is used as God wants you to use it, it is a blessing. But you can take the same things and use it as a terrible curse to humanity.

Jenkins: As you knew people in the '20s here, as you knew the ranchers, as you knew the people who came through, as you had a feeling for what their outlook on life was and how good they felt and how happy they felt, how does that compare,

do you think, with the way people feel and live and look upon life today? Much different?

Estes: Oh, yes. There is a lot of difference in human relationships of many, many years ago before we had all of these modern conveniences such as the automobiles, the motorcycles and trucks, etc. And before we had the roads where people would go at a breakneck speed all over just like a bunch of ants, some going one way some going the other. The oldtime custom of, if you were going down the road and your wagon or your buggy or later on in your automobile, you weren't going at a breakneck speed and if you saw somebody coming and you recognized their vehicle or them, why right there is where you stopped and you would have a friendly chat with them and ask them about how they were getting along, their family, and was interested in them. Now the trend of people is, if you see somebody stopped with the hood of their car up, most people have the feeling, "Well, they are in trouble, but let somebody else help them. I don't have the time." That is the general trend of the way it is now. Now there are some that feel the duty to try to help others if they are in trouble, and do. But the majority of them don't bother to stop and ask if they could be of any assistance of what-have-you. And that is the way it is not only in one sense of the word but all the way around. The ranch people don't visit with one another like they used to. They don't keep up with

one another like they used to. They have got too many things. And for me this television, the way it is being used now, with the exception of when they have a religious program or programs that teach the Bible, and if that is not done in the right way that is a curse. About 90% of the TV time is something that isn't uplifting. The way I see it the TV is one of the worst curses man has ever made in regards to the future generation, the young folks that are spending hours watching the TV when they should be spending that time either in family relationships or in their school work as they go along. But they spend hours and hours, when their principle thoughts are what they are seeing on that TV. Now if that was all good that would be wonderful, but the biggest percentage of that in this day and time is not such.

Jenkins: Well, has it been worth it? I mean is the tradeoff worth it to you?

Estes: The what?

Jenkins: Is the tradeoff, the advances that made it possible for us to go fast . . .

Estes: Oh, yes. Now there is back to that will that we were given. We have been given a will there, an opportunity or permitted to either spend our time with the things that are worldly, or we could spend our time for God and Company or the Heavenly Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy

Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God's will for us. There are just lots and lots of people that call themselves Christians that are afraid of the Holy Spirit. They don't want to accept the Holy Spirit. Well, the Holy Spirit was the power that Jesus used when he was here on earth, and it is the same power that he prayed the Father to send us when He went back to the Father. We have the same power available to us if we will only accept it. So we can either serve God or we can serve Satan. Satan is affiliated with the things of this world, and God is affiliated with the things of the hereafter, or heavenly things.

Jenkins: So there is nothing wrong with the gadgets, it is how we use them.

Estes: There is nothing wrong with any invention if it is used in the right way. The manufacturers and all are even polluting our food to where the foods that we buy out of the supermarkets and places are really not healthy foods for us to eat. They have the preservatives, they have the additives and the coloring and all of those things that are harmful to the human body. But in order for the food to last longer, the milk and everything else, they put all of these additives, these preservatives, in them. They even put embalming fluid in some of our foods.

Jenkins: Did you used to drink out of Johnson Creek?

Estes: Yes, when we first came here we had to carry our water

from a spring that was just across the creek over here.

We didn't have anything but Johnson Creek water for years when we first came here.

Jenkins: Would you drink out of it today?

Estes: Would I?

Jenkins: Yes.

Estes: Yes, where it is filtered through the gravel and all it is as pure water and maybe lots more pure than the city water is.

Jenkins: Is it as pure today as it was when you first came here?

Estes: No. There are certain things and these insecticides they spray their cattle with and all of those things. They have a tendency to pollute not only the water but the air and your vegetables grown where they use these high powered insecticides to keep the bugs and all off. There are just lots of those insecticides that the plant will pick up through the roots and that insecticide is in the vegetables that you buy at the supermarkets.

Jenkins: But the creek itself, if you can find a spring you will drink out of it, but you won't drink right out of the creek?

Estes: No, I wouldn't advise a person now to just go down to the creek unless he was just suffering for water. Now spring water is filtered through the underground water system to the point that if it isn't polluted, if man hasn't polluted it, it is all right for man to use.

Jenkins: The people that you know today, do you feel that they are

as happy as people that you knew back in the '20s and '30s?

Estes: No, generally speaking, no.

Jenkins: You think we have gone downhill there?

Estes: Oh, yes. The Bible says that there is a continual falling away. People are becoming more worldly and think less of the hereafter.

Jenkins: Okay, I have asked all of my questions, but this is your interview. I want to be sure that if there is anything that I have failed to ask you that you can think of that you would like to say before we finish; anything about your business, the community, your present activities, any comments that you still think you might have that I haven't given you.

Estes: There is one that has meant lots to the development of the country, and that is making water available most everywhere in quantities that will take care of their needs. Now Texas especially, a lot of it was a country that didn't have any surface water, any running water. There were miles and miles across Texas where you couldn't come to a stream that had water in it. Back before the Civil War, around Civil War times, when the Indians and the emigrants were having problems and all, the government got the idea that they would import some of those camels from over in India that they could use them here in Texas to go across

these vast areas that didn't have any water. A camel could go for seven days without any water. They had a water supply in their hump up on their shoulder there or back that they could draw on for moisture if need be, just like the human body can draw on the reserve fat that is in the body to supply their energy for long periods of time. But that will all run out eventually and so would the water out of the camel's hump play out. But they could go across vast areas, and they could travel faster than horses, and they could carry more loads than horses, but they didn't stop to think that the camel was an animal that God made to walk on the sands of the desert. In this country we don't have the sand, we have the sharp flint rocks. And the pad of that camel's foot going over with that leavy load on him and walking over these flint rocks and all made the camel of no value because he would get footsore and couldn't go.

Jenkins: Almost all of your life you have worked for yourself.

Estes: Yes, a bigger portion of my life.

Jenkins: I am sure you have had all kinds of opportunities to work for other people, lots of offers and plenty of chances to make possibly more money than you made.

Estes: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: Why have you wanted to work for yourself instead?

Estes: Because I could do for others that were in need and not

have somebody dictate to me just what I would do, tell me, "Now you can do for this one, but don't you have anything to do with those over there. You let them alone." I could do for everyone whether he was white or black according to the dictates of my own conscious or the dictates of the Holy Spirit.

Jenkins: Okay, anything else that you have on your mind that you would like to say before we finish? You had mentioned here something about how your cottage residents of today react to what you have provided for them.

Estes: The setup that my son has, I am just a caretaker here of this. I sold this property to him quite a number of years ago for his retirement home. And his ideas and mine coincide very closely. He is doing his life of service to others. He is a United Methodist minister up in the state of Wyoming. He intends to come back here when he has finished his life as a minister and retire here. But he is of the same opinion I am, he doesn't want to retire from being of service to his fellow man. He wants to continue on as long as life will permit. In other words he wants to die with his boots on. But the people here that come to the cottages when I get a telephone call like I had last night. . . I had a telephone call, a person that said they had been told about this place by some of their church people that had been out here. The

first thing that I told them was that we did not take people that drink. A lot of the church people of the church even drink in this day and time. We don't even take those that drink. We don't furnish linens, and we don't want any carousing or any activities like is going on in the cities in this day and time. We want a place where a man can bring his family and feel free to mix and mingle with the other people that are here, which they do very readily here. The people that are here can be trusted, and they can enjoy their vacation a whole lot more if they are just friendly with everybody. The people that generally come here are just like one big family. They get acquainted with the other families here. Maybe that same two families or three or four families are here at that time will try to come the next year at the same time. They tell me that they enjoy the fellowship with other families and that they enjoy the quiet, peaceful atmosphere that is here at this place. They don't have to worry that someone is going to come roaring in here way in the night awhooping and ahollering and carrying on like they do in ordinary tourist courts or most places or public parks or what-have-you. And we have church groups that come here, not only of church retreat groups of youngsters, but we have church retreat groups of the elderly people that like to come here several families at

a time and enjoy the quietness and the fellowship of others. We have 'whatever is on your heart prayer' meetings here. A lot of times they will say, "Let's come in here and sing." We have a lady that plays the piano. And have prayer. Everyone can pray for others or just whatever is on their heart. And I will say, "If there is any of you that would like to give your testimony as to your relationship with our Lord, we would appreciate that." We get to knowing each other like one big family, better really sometimes, than we know our own kinsmen. And they have an attitude of love and all for one another. If they see that they can help any of the others here, if one of them has a little car trouble or if one of them has a little something or gets sick, there are always more than adequate that will say, "We will take you to the doctor. We will do this for you or we will do this. We will keep the children while you go." It is just like one big family, and it is so rewarding. I was told by the Holy Spirit that I become a spokesman for Jesus, and that I could take the human part of administering any of the heavenly gifts or doing anything the Lord had for me to do. Whatever the Lord sees fit for me to do, I get instructions from the Holy Spirit to carry out their plans, what they want done. A lot of people will raise their eyebrows and wrinkle their nose about that and maybe get up and walk

off when I talk, but nevertheless there is a hereafter and if we don't lay up our treasures in heaven according to the good book, why, we are not going to have very many treasures up there unless we do our part.

Jenkins: You said you wanted to say something about the blessings of modern transportation methods.

Estes: Modern transportation is a blessing, and also it is a curse. People that drive cars, that are intoxicated or on dope, are killing thousands and thousands of people every year in our United States that wouldn't have been killed had it not been for the alcohol or the dope or driving the vehicles at breakneck speed when they were intoxicated either with dope or alcohol. From that angle the modern highway is a curse. But the modern highway is a blessing to those that will use the highways as they should be used. It is a wonderful blessing. And the airways, they are a wonderful blessing, too. But now if the operators of the airplanes are permitted to drink it could get into the same category as the drunken driver here on our highways. I am quite sure that some of these terrible accidents that we have are from those causes. So it can be either used as a blessing or it could be used as a curse.

Jenkins: You also said that you wanted to speak to how a lot of the pioneers obtained their land around here.

Estes: Oh, yes. I know of land tycoons or whatever you want to

call them, people that craved to get more land, more land, more land. I will take first the one of a man that was honest and had other people's welfare at heart and wanted to help other people. That was old Captain Shreiner that was a pioneer here. Some of the stories tell how he came into this country originally back there just awhile before the Civil War as a peddler with a pack on his back. I believe that was an authentic story, but nevertheless history doesn't portray that story very much. But anyway, he was a man that was farsighted, and he had the interest of other people. So when Texas joined the Union they surveyed Texas off into sections of land. That wasn't true in most of the other states. Their homestead state laws would usually run from a 40 acre to a 60 or an 80 acre tract of land, and they thought that was sufficient back in those days because there was lots and lots of land that wasn't suitable for homesteading because it didn't have any water. And where the little homesteads were located was where they had the water, but they could raise their stock on the open country that didn't have the water so long as the stock didn't get too far to where they couldn't come back for water. And here in Texas it was laid out; a section of land as school land, a section of land as railroad land, and a section of land that was homesteadable that all joined. That was the pattern that Texas was surveyed originally. In order for a man that

wanted to take up this land principally where it wasn't too well watered and all, they could buy the railroad land and they could buy the school land, but some individual had to homestead that section of land that was homesteadable. This Mr. Shreiner had a plan where he would tell a young couple, if they wanted to work for him, take care of his sheep and homestead a section of this land that he would supply them with all of their needs and pay them some money to look after his sheep. And at such a time as they had proved up on this section of land and had gotten a title to it that he would buy that land at the market price. And if they wanted to homestead another section of land under the same contract, why, if they had proved themselves satisfactory they could just move onto another section of land and take out homestead rights on that section, and that they would be able to come to his store, get what provisions that they need, he would pay them so much money for looking after his sheep. When we first came here I knew several of those men that homesteaded, no telling how many sections of that land, and it was a better proposition for them back in that day because as they homesteaded that section of land and tried to live on that section of land it wouldn't support them back in those days with the cheap price of wool. Wool was the main commodity that could be sold. In the

early days goats were not a major animal crop here. They came later. The sheep and the cows were first. For a long, long period of time a rancher figured that he could raise a cow and come out with \$5 in the clear, that was a profitable deal. And the sheep, of course, they paid off more because you could shear them either twice a year or once a year and you not only got the wool but you got the increase of the land. And you had meat to eat, if you liked sheep meat you had meat to eat. When the goats came in you had the mohair, plus the increase, plus the goat meat; most people preferred goat meat other than sheep meat. So that was the way that Captain Shreiner acquired the thousands and thousands of sections of land that he had at one time in this hill country here. He never treated anybody dishonestly. But there were other large land owners that acquired the land of Texas that got that land by hook or crook, anyway that was the cheapest way for them to get it. If it was murder, why, some of them even resorted to that to get their lands. Or they just froze them out. They would steal the cattle that they had and brand them. Just any way that they could make it disagreeable for them and eventually they would see that they were just butting their heads against a brick wall, so to speak, and would sell their holdings that they had to this particular outfit. So there were

good men that helped settle Texas and there were men that weren't what we would call the type of citizens that we would like to have in Texas.

Jenkins: Anything else before we close?

Estes: No, I think I've covered it all.

Jenkins: Thanks for an interesting history of you and the Mountain Home area.