NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

(BUSINESS ARCHIVES PROJECT)

NUMBER

91

Interview with

Stanley Edward & Elsie

Adams

Place of Interview: Robert Lee, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Floyd Jenkins

Terms of Use: Open

Approved: Stanley Edward Adams
(Signature)

Date: May 23, 1985

Business Oral History Collection

Edward and Elsie Adams

Interviewer: Dr. Floyd Jenkins Date: March 30, 1984

Place of Interview: Robert Lee, Texas

Dr. Jenkins: This is Floyd Jenkins recording for the Business Archives Project, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas. Today is March 30, 1984. I am talking with Stanley Edward Adams; a rancher, which includes sheep, goats, cattle; co-owner of the Adams Abstract Company of Robert Lee, Texas, Coke County; chairman of the board of City Savings of San Angelo. Anything else that you are? The ranching, abstract company, oil leasing.

Mr. Adams: I produce a little oil.

Dr. Jenkins: Oil leasing and production. The realty business, and savings and loan. That's the major things you are involved in.

Mr. Adams: I am not in the realty business. I am the worst customer that they have.

Dr. Jenkins: But your wife is.

Mr. Adams: My wife is the realty.

Dr. Jenkins: One other thing we have got to try to establish: We are sitting here out in the middle of your ranch, which is

approximately how far from Robert Lee, in what direction?

Adams: We are 15 miles north of Robert Lee.

Jenkins: And down 7 miles of private road out here in the middle of the ranch. Okay, let's get you going by getting you to tell us what you know about your family background, how far back your folks go that you know of, and how they got into this part of the country.

Adams: On my father's side they are mostly English. They came to America in North Carolina. My grandfather rode a mule from North Carolina over to northern Mississippi and bought 3 sections of land. He had a money belt of gold. My father started to California to get gold again, and he didn't get any farther than Texas. He met my mother down in south Texas.

Jenkins: What was her name?

Adams: Her name was Martha Edward Swann.

Jenkins: Where did Grandpa get that gold to come down and buy those sections?

Adams: I don't know. My dad's name was John Noel Killingsworth Adams.

Jenkins: Yes, and your grandfather?

Adams: Nathan Adams. On my mother's side, she was a Swan, and her grandfather was named Morris. I don't know too much about the family. My father's parents died when he was pretty young.

Jankins: And your mother and dad, where did they meet?

Adams: They met in Leesville, Texas.

Jenkins: Where is that?

Adams: That is in western Gonzales County, down below San Antonio.

Jenkins: Was he farming at the time?

Adams: No. He came in on the hack, that was a stagecoach, I guess.

Jenkins: Oh, he had just got there.

Adams: He had just got from Mississippi to there. He had some relatives there, Barns, I believe. The Barns ran a store down at old Nixon, which I believe was at one time maybe called Albuquerque.

Jenkins: Nixon, Texas?

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: I have been there.

Adams: Old Nixon moved it there. There was a Rancho Nixon. Lots of Nixons in this country. Pretty wild, rough country down there. My grandfather was named William Edwards Swan. He served in the Civil War when he was 15. He came back and lived in that country.

Jenkins: Was he a farmer?

Adams: Yes, I guess he farmed some. He was at one time, I guess, a lawman of some kind.

Jenkins: And your dad, what kind of work was he doing, or had he done?

Adams: My dad, as far as I know, came to south Texas and ran a saddle shop, was a saddlemaker.

Jenkins: I have met some of those.

Adams: He had a saddle shop up in Floresville at one time. He stayed down in that south Texas country about 9 or 10 years. My mother was a music teacher. She came to this country out here to teach music. She had a sister living out here at that time.

Jenkins: Out here meaning around Robert Lee?

Adams: Around Hayrick and Rock country. My dad came out here, and they got married and lived in Robert Lee. He went to work for McCallom-Reed Mercantile Company.

Jenkins: Do you know about when your parents got married?

Adams: It was about 1900. He went to work for McCallom-Reed Company. They were general mercantile and groceries, hardware, drygoods there in Robert Lee. He went to work for $25 a month. He wound up being president of that company from about 1908 to about 1920.

Jenkins: Was he in partnership with somebody?

Adams: It was a corporation, and a very good one in those days.

Jenkins: What all did they handle? Do you remember that store yourself?

Adams: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: Tell us what you recall about what they carried.

Adams: They carried a full line of groceries, full line of dry-goods. They handled everything in the drygood line: shoes, hats, bolt goods--in those days they used lots of that--shirts, suits.

Jenkins: Were these in separate stores?

Adams: Yes. What I can remember the buildings were separated. It was in the location where the bank is now in Robert Lee. One building had drygoods and one of them groceries. They had a door connection between them, a hole cut in the wall. They also had a hardware. I remember they used to get flour in carloads, stack it clear to the ceiling.

Jenkins: In how big of sacks.

Adams: 50-pound was the popular size. Most of them were 50-pound sacks.

Jenkins: Did you work in those stores?

Adams: No, I was too young for that.

Jenkins: They must have been the major merchants in town, then, were they?

Adams: At that time, I expect. We moved to the farm when I was 3 years old. My father came back to the store in the delivery wagon.

Jenkins: Let's find out when and where you were born, and then we will pick up again.

Adams: I was born in Robert Lee, Texas, on 7th Street, about the 200 block, on February 14, 1910.

Jenkins: Valentine's child.

Adams: Yes, my mother's little valentine.

Jenkins: Which child were you?

Adams: I was the 4th child in the family. I had an older brother

named Noel Weston Adams, and my sister Naomi Lee, and my sister Dannie.

Jenkins: Were you the last?

Adams: I was the last. I was 4 1/2 years younger than my sister Dannie.

Jenkins: You moved out to the farm at a very early age, then.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: Where was that farm?

Adams: It was south of Robert Lee about 3 miles.

Jenkins: You moved out there when you were about 3?

Adams: Yes. I can remember that move very vividly.

Jenkins: Tell us about it.

Adams: I remember moving in wagons, and what a job they had loading the piano on the wagon. And moving the wagon out there in the country and seeing the wagon in front of us and the children running along hanging on the back of the wagon, putting their feet up on the running gear of the wagon. I remember when we arrived out at this place in the country where we moved, the house had been built by William Childress, Billy Childress, they called him. It was rather a large house. The porch went all the way across the east side and most of the way across the north side of the house. The porch had been built high enough where you could just back the wagon back up to it to where the wagon bed was just level to the porch.

Jenkins: Just like a loading dock.

Adams: So to unload that piano there was no problem. They just rolled it off the wagon right onto the porch and rolled it in the house. The house had a long hall, and I remember running through the house, like youngsters do, and looking out the back door on the south side of the house. It was quite a spacious house to what we had been living in. I guess that impressed me. The country atmosphere had something to do with that.

Jenkins: Was your dad giving up the store business?

Adams: No. He stayed on for 7 years, I guess, in the store.

Jenkins: He hadn't been farming when he first got here and started the store.

Adams: No.

Jenkins: But he added farming after this move?

Adams: Yes. Of course, we had someone to help with the farming for a while. The drought in 1916, 1917, and 1918 came along, which put quite a crimp in the farming business. We planted 200 acres of cotton each year. The first year, in 1916, we got 300 pounds of lint cotton, in 1917 we got enough cotton to make a mattress, in 1918 we didn't get a boll. Didn't gather a boll.

Jenkins: Your major crop was cotton?

Adams: Yes. It started raining in the fall of 1918, and in 1919 we only got in 14 acres of cotton and made 14 bales.

Jenkins: That was all you could plant then?

Adams: That was all we got planted that year. It was kind of a wet year.

Jenkins: At that time a bale to the acre was pretty good?

Adams: Yes, it was good. It would be today on dry land cotton, too.

Jenkins: You must have had some good rains?

Adams: Yes, we had a good rain in the fall of 1918.

Jenkins: When do you remember starting to work as a kid?

Adams: Oh, I worked around the farm some. I helped drive the cattle during dry fall in 1916 and 1917. We would have to gather up the cattle and take them around through various places to get them to water over to about what is now the old Johnson place over there. We had three farms, and we would take them around through there over to another place and back into what we called the Dean Willis place.

Jenkins: How many acres was your dad farming then?

Adams: Well, actually he owned three farms there of about 480 acres.

Jenkins: Each?

Adams: No, each of them was a quarter section.

Jenkins: Now your cash crop was cotton, although there wasn't any of it. Were you growing your grain and stuff?

Adams: Yes, my father always insisted on planting as much grain as he did cotton; consequently I used to think he wasn't very smart. All the other fellows were planting cotton and getting rich, and we had that maize in the barn and had to move it around every year to make room for the next crop. But when

I got older and got to studying the county records, I saw those other fellows were having to borrow money to buy grain with to make the next year's crop on.

Jenkins: To feed the animals?

Adams: Yes. They farmed with horses and mules in those days. And he always had his own feed, and thereby got along a lot better.

Jenkins: So he wasn't borrowing.

Adams: He didn't have to borrow to make his next crop on.

Jenkins: But all this time he was still running the store up until...

Adams: 1920. He retired in 1920 from the store. He thought he would live longer, staying on the farm. I guess he did.

Jenkins: Did he sell out the store?

Adams: No, he kept his stock in the store, and other people took over the management of it.

Jenkins: So he continued to have ownership, but he quit working down there?

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: And went fulltime farming, then?

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: You were still a kid.

Adams: I was 10 years old.

Jenkins: But you were starting to do farm work by now, I bet.

Adams: A little bit. I wasn't the best farmer.

Jenkins: You had entered school in Robert Lee by then. Give us some

of your recollections of schooling in Robert Lee at that time.

Adams: I started school when I was 7 years old, I guess. After the first year my mother kept me out of school for one year.

Jenkins: Why was that?

Adams: I don't know, she thought the weather was bad, or the trip was a little hard on me.

Jenkins: Were you poorly?

Adams: Maybe I was a little poorly. She had me stay home and take 3S Bitters.

Jenkins: Ah, I remember that.

Adams: I think I got a quarter a bottle, the incentive for taking it.

Jenkins: How big was the school in Robert Lee at that time?

Adams: It was a pretty sizeable school. Of course, they had 11 grades at that time, which was as many grades as they had in school.

Jenkins: How many teachers do you remember?

Adams: The teachers weren't too many. They would have 2 or 3 classes in each room.

Jenkins: How big, physically, was the schoolhouse?

Adams: It was about 6 rooms, I guess.

Jenkins: It wasn't a country schoolhouse, then.

Adams: No.

Jenkins: The county seat schoolhouse.

Adams: The school was built in sort of a T shape. It was two story. The north end of it was braced by guy wires. The children climbed those guy wires and kept them pretty flexible. When a sand storm would come, the building would rock, and they would turn out school. I guess I started in the primer, and stayed home that year. And the next year I went in the 3rd grade.

Jenkins: So they didn't hold you back.

Adams: My mother taught me at home, and did a pretty good job of it, I guess. So I skipped a grade there in school. The next year I was in the 3rd grade. We had the 3rd, 4th and 5th grade in the same room.

Jenkins: And you went all, what, 11 grades?

Adams: Yes. By the time I finished school, they had cut it down to 10 grades.

Jenkins: All there in one schoolhouse.

Adams: Yes. They had built a new schoolhouse by that time.

Jenkins: Did the school have any kind of organized sports at that time?

Adams: They played baseball. The main games we had were coming through and playing marbles and tops.

Jenkins: Recess games.

Adams: Yes, recess games. Of course, they had the Interscholastic League that started, I think, about 1914. They always had the county meets, etc, and went to district meets.

Jenkins: In sports?

Adams: In sports. It was running games, mostly.

Jenkins: Did you get involved in any of those?

Adams: A little bit. I played a little basketball, had basketball games.

Jenkins: Was this just among your own students, or did you play other schools in basketball?

Adams: We played other schools in basketball. Up toward my senior year. At that time, I guess, we had 32 schools in the county.

Jenkins: That was in the heyday of the number of schools, I guess.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: Other than sports and games, did they have any kind of clubs or drama things at all, that you recall?

Adams: Not really. Of course, every year they put on a senior play or things like that.

Jenkins: Did you get in any of those?

Adams: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: Do you remember any roles that you had.

Adams: Yes, I remember our senior play. We took it over to the city of Wingate. We exchanged plays on that.

Jenkins: What play was it, do you remember?

Adams: Right now it skips me on the title of it.

Jenkins: Do you remember what part you had?

Adams: Yes, I played the father in that situation.

Jenkins: I see. You were a pretty good sized fellow, weren't you?

Adams: Yes, I was rather tall and spindly. I got the nickname Skinny when I was 12 years old. I was 6 feet tall and weighed 125 pounds. Which was long enough, but it wasn't distributed very good.

Jenkins: Was your daddy big?

Adams: Yes, my father was 6 feet and weighed, I guess, 240.

Jenkins: Did you know your granddad?

Adams: No. I never knew any of my grandfathers. My mother's father died before I was born, about 4 years before I was born. My father's father died probably 45 years before that, 40 years before that.

Jenkins: Now you went through the 10 grades at Robert Lee.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: And got out in what year, about?

Adams: 1926.

Jenkins: Then what did you do fresh out of school? Had you been working, besides on the farm?

Adams: When I was a youngster a friend of mine and I had a popcorn popper. We ran this popcorn popper and sold popcorn and peanuts for a nickel a sack.

Jenkins: On the square of Robert Lee?

Adams: The side of various stores where we could get locations for a popper. This was a steam popper powered by a steam motor which was generated by gasoline. Had a little monkey

that turned the peanut deal.

Jenkins: Where did you find this?

Adams: The steam engine, my friend Bud Maxwell and his father located the thing. When we ran this thing we would blow the whistle. Whenever we started it up, we would blow that whistle. People would smell that popcorn popping and the peanuts roasting, and they would really flock around. In those days people came to town, especially on Saturdays, and you could hardly get up and down the sidewalks for people on the sidewalks.

Jenkins: What was going on on Saturdays, back in those days in the county seat?

Adams: Most people came to town to buy their groceries, to do their shopping for the next week or maybe the next month.

Jenkins: What kind of entertainment was in town for them? Anything?

Adams: They had no entertainment, especially. Later on they had a picture show. They generated their electricity for it by running a tractor out back.

Jenkins: I haven't heard that one. Silent movie, of course.

Adams: Of course.

Jenkins: Now the movie was silent, but was there any kind of sound effects inside at all?

Adams: No, no sound effects.

Jenkins: Not even a piano?

Adams: Sometimes they had a piano player there. The children

would entertain themselves pretty well. Chidren especially got up on the front row. We made a deal with the picture show. Sam Russel ran the picture show at that time. And we made a deal with him to let us sell popcorn and peanuts in the building during showtime, and we would clean up the building afterwards.

Jenkins: For your rent, huh?

Adams: For the rent.

Jenkins: What kind of money were you making on popcorn?

Adams: The profit was good. We bought popcorn by the 100 pound sack.

Jenkins: Do you remember what you paid for it?

Adams: Yes, I think we paid $2 a hundred to $2.50.

Jenkins: That would make a carload of popcorn.

Adams: It sure would.

Jenkins: You were getting, what, a nickel?

Adams: Yes, we got a nickel.

Jenkins: Do you remember counting your money any at all?

Adams: Yes, sir. I had more cash money then than any other time in my life.

Jenkins: Do you remember any of the amounts that you were taking in?

Adams: Some days when we would have a good day, we would get as much as $14 or $15 each. We would split it after the day. That was real money.

Jenkins: That was big money. That was probably as much as Daddy

was making on the average, wasn't it?

Adams: Probably was.

Jenkins: Did you do any other part-time kid jobs before you got serious about...

Adams: Yes. At one time I went to school down in Harlingen down in the Rio Grande Valley.

Jenkins: After you got out of high school.

Adams: No, that was before. I was about in my sophomore year in high school, I guess. I had an extra job down there. Another boy and I, named Jesse Yure, were janitors of a church. He had the job and got me in on it. Then he decided he didn't want to do it, and they gave me the job, but they didn't increase my pay. They gave me the same pay, but I had to do both his job and mine, too. I had to clean the church, mow the lawn, fill the baptistry. That was quite an experience; that was an extra job. I made $20 a month out of that, which wasn't bad money.

Jenkins: How much time were you spending?

Adams: Oh, just part-time, you know. And then there was one other time, I was a Boy Scout, and I got to be patrol leader. We mowed lawns for a contest to win a canoe. My patrol won it.

Jenkins: What were you doing down in Harlingen? How did you come to go down there?

Adams: My sister Naomi was teaching there. I went down there

with her to go to school.

Jenkins: But you came back here to finish up?

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: And after you got out of the 10th grade what did you do?

Adams: I went down to Howard Payne for a little while, to the Academy, so I would get enough credits to go to college.

Jenkins: Okay, you had to get that 11th year, or something.

Adams: Yes, so I could go to college. By the time I got enough credits I was broke and went to work in an abstract office in San Angelo for Bill Strohman of the Tom Green County Abstract Company.

Jenkins: This was what year? You got out of school in...

Adams: This was in 1927.

Jenkins: You got out of the 10th grade in about what year?

Adams: 1926.

Jenkins: And went to Howard Payne for...

Adams: For a half a term, early part of 1927...

Jenkins: When you went to work for the abstract office. So this was your first fulltime, real life, on your own job, was it?

Adams: Yes. In the Howard Payne Academy, I studied typing. I took typing and commercial work under Mr. Bashom,who was quite an instructor, I guess. He could do arithmetic in his head pretty well, and I guess I have a knack for that, too. I learned my early day arithmetic before I started

to school. I would help my dad when he would sell cotton seed, and I would mark it down on the barn wall. I kept count of the cotton seed sales that way.

Jenkins: You discovered some mathmatics early, then.

Adams: Pretty early, before I went to school, really, I guess.

Jenkins: How did you come across this job at the abstract company?

Adams: Bill Strohman at that time had been in San Angelo about 3 or 4 years. He was also county attorney. They were having a boom in San Angelo at that time, and I went down there to go to work for him. He was my mother's cousin.

Jenkins: What was the boom based on?

Adams: They had discovered oil out west of San Angelo. San Angelo was the headquarters for a lot of the oil operations. They had discovered oil at Texon in 1923, down at Iraan in 1926, Yates Field. It was named for Ira and Ann Yates. Then the McCamey Field came in along about that time. Humble moved their headquarters to west Texas at McCamey. Most of that was operated out of San Angelo at that time. That was before Midland got into the picture on the oil business.

Jenkins: Was this abstract stuff entirely new to you?

Adams: No, I had done a little bit of work around the courthouse. But it was fairly new to me.

Jenkins: What kind of work had you been doing at the courthouse?

Adams: I had worked for an abstract office, the E. G. Weldon Abstract Company in Robert Lee.

Jenkins: Before you got out of school?

Adams: No, it was before I went to San Angelo.

Jenkins: So you got your first taste of the abstract business before you...

Adams: Went to San Angelo.

Jenkins: Let me see. I am trying to figure out at what point...you are out of the 10th grade?

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: But you hadn't gone to...

Adams: It was when I first got out.

Jenkins: So right out of high school. You got an early taste of the abstract business.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: What were you doing, going over and copying or what?

Adams: I would type on the typewriter.

Jenkins: Okay, making the cards or something.

Adams: No, making abstracts. In those days you typed all of the instruments on the records.

Jenkins: Right over there in the courthouse.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: That is why you said you started off in the courthouse.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: Okay.

Adams: Then I went to Angelo. I was sort of the office boy and did typewriter repair as well as a little typing.

Jenkins: A lot of flunkying.

Adams: Our office was about approximately 3 blocks from the courthouse. It took a lot of running, it took a good leg man to do that.

Jenkins: In San Angelo.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: Okay. When did you really get into doing abstract work? While you were with him?

Adams: Yes, while I was with him. While I was with him we built the Strohman Abstract Company from the records of the Tom Green Abstract Company. In November of 1928 we opened a new office in the Holcomb-Blanton Building, which was a little closer to the courthouse. The Holcomb-Blanton printer is still there. I didn't work too long, because I had an opportunity to come to Robert Lee and build an abstract plant with Mr. Maxwell, who was the county clerk at that time in Robert Lee. I thought there was going to be an oil boom in Coke County. And there was, but I didn't get my plant built quite in time to make that first boom, which came along in the spring of 1929. It took about a year to build the plant, almost.

Jenkins: Give us some idea of that first oil boom in Coke County. Who was involved, and when it was and where it was, etc.

Adams: Well, the first boom they had in Coke County was in the late teens. I was just a youngster then,about 7. The first

well that was drilled out in this country was in about 1917-1918. Principally, there were three larger operations. There was the Robert Lee Oil Company, which was principally owned by a fellow by the name of L. A. Stemmons of Dallas, for which the Stemmons Freeway, I think, is probably named.

Jenkins: Yes, I think so.

Adams: The other one was over at Bronte, Bronte Oil and Gas Company. And there was a Blackwell Oil and Gas Company, which was formed by a bunch of local men out of Blackwell. Bronte Oil and Gas was a bunch of local men out of Robert Lee and out of Bronte. Then they had the Smith Oil and Gas Company, which came out of Sherman, Texas, principally. They had a fellow there by the name of Toker, who was a seeologist, they called him.

Jenkins: What is that?

Adams: He could see oil under the ground. He had clairvoyant powers.

Jenkins: Which is even better than peach trees.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: That is a new one on me. I haven't heard of the seeologist.

Adams: The fellows tell about they would have a party or something, and he would have someone to open sheet music or something, you know; they would have him blindfolded, and he could tell them what it was and all.

Jenkins: Was he pretty successful in finding oil?

Adams: None of the early day operations were successful. Talking about that seeology, when I was a Boy Scout I got to join

the Boy Scouts when I was 11 years old, which was a year earlier than I was supposed to join in those days. The scoutmaster was a Methodist preacher in Robert Lee by the name of Paul F. Bumbelow. He practiced hypnotism on the side, and he was going to make me a clairvoyant. We were going to find gold and treasures. I guess the treasure that I found was liquid gold in later on years.

Jenkins: Let's go back and relive a little bit of that. Of course, if he did hypnotize you, you didn't know what you were doing, I suppose, under hypnosis, but what did he say you did?

Adams: I don't really think he was ever able to put me under, too much. I might have been a little strong willed or something. But anyway it was a good practice. I guess I developed some powers.

Jenkins: You were down at Blackwell.

Adams: These companies were at Blackwell. The way the wells were drilled in the county, they drilled them with old rotary rigs with fishtailed bits. And they powered the boilers with mesquite wood. It took a long time to drill them. The first one only got down to 1,200 feet, of the Robert Lee Oil Company. Then they moved over to another location, and went to the unheard of depth of 3,200 feet. They capped the well. It made some gas, probably, and some water. The well by the Tucker Oil and Gas, which was south of

our place about a mile, had drilled two years on it and got it down to a depth of 1,800 feet. The wells at Bronte maybe got down around 2,000 feet, none of which produced. The one at Blackwell is about the same depth. It was drilled on the Hamilton place. The one at Bronte was drilled out west of the present day Bronte Field. They weren't too far off structure. If they had gone deep enough it might have produced something. Then they drilled a well up the river on the Saul Ranch. The Transcontinental took a farm out from the Robert Lee Oil Company and drilled a well up there, which they had a contract depth of 4,000 feet, but they didn't get to make it. They only got to 3,800. They struck cave and never could get it down.

Jenkins: Struck a cave?

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: A hollow...

Adams: A hollow place. They hauled rocks out of the river up there and put in that thing. They had lots of people hauling rocks and tried to fill up that cave to where they could drill through it, but they never could. They had to forfeit. As well as I can remember they had to pay a $10,000 forfeit for not getting down to the 4,000 feet.

Jenkins: You just don't drill through a cave, then. You haven't got support or what?

Adams: They have improved quite a bit, the mudpumps are better.

They have the gels and the things that they can seal it off with. They used to use cottonseed hulls, and still do some, but they make, out of cedar nowadays, they make a lot of material that they can seal off those cavities with.

Jenkins: I am trying to figure: why can't you just get right on through a cavity?

Adams: Well, rotor rig you pump mud down.

Jenkins: As you go?

Adams: Through your drill pipe. Then it comes back up and brings the cuttings with it. If you strike one of those caves, you don't get any return.

Jenkins: I am new at the oil business, so I am trying to find out all I can. Okay, let's go back and pick you up then.

Adams: In 1928 or early 1929 they drilled a well in Edith, which is west of Robert Lee there, which was only a fraction of a mile east of the Milligan Field, which was discovered in 1947, I guess. It was drilled by the Louisiana Oil and Refining Comapny. The Dixie Oil Company, which later on turned out to be Stanolind; it went from Stanolind to PanAm, and now Amco, I guess. They got it down to about 3,500 feet, which wasn't deep enough, at least for formations nowadays. Then about April, 1929, they had a good show in the Mid-Kansas Oil and Gas Company No. I in Lackey, which is located in the southwest corner of section 272, Block 1-A, H. & T.C. Railway Company. All those up overnight and

the hole 1,700 feet caused quite a stir and a flurry of leasing. But the well never produced. They let it set there and then came back and deepened it in the fall, I guess, in 1929. And then in 1930 they came back and renewed their leases at '32. Then in 1932 they drilled a well over on the Henry place, which was in section 271, Block 1-A, which was about 3/4 of a mile northwest of the first well they had a show-in there. They set pipe on it and swabbed some oil out of it. But at that time oil was 10¢ a barrel, and the Mid-Kansas had those powerful wells up in the Yates Field, which some of them made as much as 208,000 barrels. So a small pumping well or producer didn't interest them when oil was 10¢ a barrel. It wouldn't have been profitable. So that operation quit and had no more on it. They had various other shows, or wells were drilled, but none successful until 1942. The Stewart-Hagan Oil Company, which was composed of Jack Hagan and...Stewart's name escapes me right now. They got together a block of leases around the old Mid-Kansas block there. They drilled a well in 1942, which was a fellow by the name of Morgan out of Houston, William F. Morgan. I think maybe he was also connected with Morgan Steamship Line.

Jenkins: Oh, really?

Adams: They drilled this well there in the northeast corner, 660 feet out of the north and east line of section 276, Block 1-A,

which is diagonally southwest of the first well on the Lackey. At about 3,820 feet they hit a formation in the Cisco there that they ran pipe on and completed it for 176 barrels a day pumping, which produced up until the early '50s. Then the next oil production after that was No. 1 Alan Jamison, which was drilled in section 253, Block 1-A, H.&T.C. This well was drilled in probably the north-east quarter of the southwest quarter of section 253. It was drilled by the Sun Oil Company. They discovered oil in the Strahm formation there, Strahm Reef, which was a prolific producer. The Jamison Field had as many as 250-300 wells in it, which has been one of the sizeable producers in this area, in this country.

Jenkins: What time period are we talking about?

Adams: This was November, 1946, when the discovery wells were drilled. They didn't complete it until the first part of December of 1946.

Jenkins: All of these wells were being drilled in a short period of time, that you have been talking about?

Adams: They would come in and drill, and then they would die down; then they would come back and lease again.

Jenkins: But the ones that you were talking about were being drilled during what years, kind of span there? All during that one year?

Adams: 1946?

Jenkins: Yes.

Adams: They only drilled one there, and then they moved two rigs in and started drilling three wells at a time there in that Jamison Field.

Jenkins: Okay, so we are talking about the mid-'40s, then.

Adams: Yes. After this well at Blackwell they drilled an off-set to it, but it was a dry hole. They drilled it for the Ellenberger.

Jenkins: What are you doing in all this? You are still with the abstract company?

Adams: Yes, I was running an abstract plant.

Jenkins: In...

Adams: Robert Lee. By the time I built my plant, we had two other plants there.

Jenkins: Oh, so you were just one of three.

Adams: One of three. The competition was pretty rough.

Jenkins: Who were the competition?

Adams: John S. Gardner, who ran the Coke County Abstract Company. He was a former county clerk. E. G. Walton, who I had worked with a short time. He was the county surveyor. Then in 1941 as we consolidated the three plants, we got the biggest interest in the consolidation.

Jenkins: You were partners, the three of you?

Adams: The three of us.

Jenkins: But you were the biggest partner.

Adams: Then we bought out Walton. Later on Mr. Gardner died, and we bought out his interest.

Jenkins: So it became Adams...

Adams: Adams Abstract Company.

Jenkins: In what year?

Adams: We ran it as the Coke County Abstract Company up until, oh, '44. We did mostly Adams Abstract Company from about '45 on.

Jenkins: But you became the sole owner in '45?

Adams: Elsie and I did. She bought out Walton; he wouldn't sell to me, but he would sell to her.

Jenkins: Then you consolidated.

Adams: I bought out the Gardner interest.

Jenkins: Now when did you and Elsie get together?

Adams: She came over here to teach school in 1932. At that time they didn't start school until six weeks later than normal, so the children could pick cotton. They they had to teach school six days a week.

Jenkins: Oh, really?

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: To catch up, I guess.

Adams: Yes, to make up for that extra time they lost. We met, I guess, there at Sunday School. She was teaching Sunday School, and I was in the class. We had a short courtship, and we were married the 10th of December in 1932 up in Colorado City.

Jenkins: How come you to go up to Colorado City?

Adams: We were going to be married secretly. In those days they wouldn't let a married woman teach. If a teacher got married when she was teaching school, she had to quit. There was quite a competition for school jobs, too. We stayed secret three days, I think. She found out they wouldn't fire her if she got married.

Jenkins: When did she get into abstract work?

Adams: Right away she started helping me.

Jenkins: As soon as she got married.

Adams: Yes. I would help her grade papers, and she would help me with the abstract work.

Jenkins: I see. So she got into the abstract business immediately, just about.

Adams: Within several months, I guess.

Jenkins: So it became Adams Abstract, yours and Elsie's, in '45.

Adams: I first opened my business up as Security Abstract and Title Company.

Jenkins: All by yourself.

Adams: I had a silent partner.

Jenkins: Okay, but you were it.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: Until all of this consolidation. Now after the two of you got to running it, were just the two of you working in it, or did you have help?

Adams: We had hired help once in a while when we had extra work, you know. She taught school spasmodically up until '44. We bought our first farm in March 2, 1933, which is about a little less than 3 months after we married. I guess, my farming and ranching operation got it's start there.

Jenkins: Up until this time you were pretty strictly in the abstract business. You hadn't got involved in anything else?

Adams: Not much.

Jenkins: Kind of at what point do you start branching out from the abstract business?

Adams: On Texas Independence Day of 1933 I bought the first farm. Before that I worked in the tax collector's office. I started in January of 1933 helping out in the tax collector's office. I was getting $50 a month.

Jenkins: While you were still running your abstract company?

Adams: My abstract plant. I drew $30 of my first month's salary about the 23rd of January and bought 24 head of sheep from Bob White over between Fort Chadburne and Blackwell. He raised some good sheep, and I bought 24 head of yearling ewes for $1.25 a head and started in the sheep business. Then I bought this farm. Along the last of January I bought 103 head of sheep off of Fred Roe, who was the president of the bank. Someone had come in and turned his sheep over to him, and he was keeping them in his corrals, and he had to get rid of them. I used my first purchase of sheep as

extra security to be able to buy those sheep.

Jenkins: Were you concentrating on any particular kind of sheep?

Adams: They were Rambouillet sheep, mostly. The second ones had some Delaine in them.

Jenkins: So your first venture out was in farming. You hadn't got into oil leasing yet?

Adams: No.

Jenkins: Okay, let's just kind of take it as we go.

Adams: Not to amount to anything. I had done a little bit of work. In '29 I helped them buy a few leases and some royalties. I bought them for someone else. I helped to put together a block of leases in 1936 around Blackwell. Then in '38 I did some work around the Edith area, Green Mountain area, which is now around the Milliken Field area. I put together, on order from a man in Abilene, 10,000 acres in this block and got the thing ready. He came to me real embarrassed. He said, "I was buying this for someone else, and he hasn't come up with the money." He sent the fellow down to see me, and I wound up getting $100 for my work on that. But fortunately Plymouth Oil Company was interested in it, and they sent along, Ossie Green, to buy the leases. He found out I had been working on them, so he got me to help him. I put together the block back for them, and I got pretty good money out of that. I got 25¢ an acre, approximately.

Jenkins: Now when you say you "put it together," what does that involve?

Adams: I acquired the leases for them.

Jenkins: And you have to go around to all of these...

Adams: Landowners. Probably 15 to 20 landowners in a block. Had to trade with them and get their abstracts together and titles cleaned up, etc.

Jenkins: Was there much problem clearing titles, or were things relatively clean?

Adams: Oh, relatively clean. You'd always find some problems. Some minerals had been sold out earlier, and they were hard to get in sometimes.

Jenkins: Had the land turned much from the earliest settlers?

Adams: Well, yes. The farms began to get larger.

Jenkins: Consolidated more.

Adams: In earlier days in this country, 80 acres and 160 acre farms were the going thing. A man could make a living on 80 or 100 acres or 160 acres, which later on they couldn't.

Jenkins: I have read all kinds of stories about how some of the big sections of land out west were put together and how they managed to get hold of a lot of the small pieces, how they managed to get settlers to come in and do their homesteading and devices for buying them out. Were you aware of much of that going on?

Adams: Some of that went on here, too.

Jenkins: What were some of the cases?

Adams: A fellow would homestead a place and work for a big ranch.

Then he would deed his land to them. That was particularly true. Some of the early day ranchmen here hired gunmen to run the settlers off when they would come in. Fence cutting went on in this country; there was quite a bit of that back in the late '80s and early '90s, I guess.

Jenkins: But all of that was done by the time you came along.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: By the time you got into the abstract business, there were large ranches already around, I suppose?

Adams: Oh, yes. Principally there were two very large ranches. There were a number of ranches that ranged anywhere from 80 sections, 42 sections, 22 sections.

Jenkins: You are talking about around Robert Lee, now.

Adams: Coke County. The big ranches were the Marsh Ranch, the Harris Ranch. Of course, the Saul Ranch was a large ranch. One time they had over 60 sections. The McCabe's had more than 20 sections. The Fosters had more than 20 sections in the county.

Jenkins: Are a lot of those ranches still in the family?

Adams: Yes. The Marsh Ranch is still all in the family. The Harris Ranch is still all in the family. The Saul Ranch is not still in the family. Ralph Harris acquired it in 1936, what was left of it. It had dwindled down to about 25 sections by that time. The Foster Ranch is still in the family, some of the grandsons, grandchildren. The McCabe Ranch belongs

to the grandchildren, too, now. Then the Rawlins have sizeable ranches over in the Bronte area. Joe McCutchins has a pretty good spread of 10 or 12 sections. Of course, Rufe Whiteside had a sizeable ranch up here. At one time I guess, he operated probably 15 to 20 sections.

Jenkins: You are out now putting leases together principally for other folks.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: When did you kind of get involved in trying to do something with these yourself?

Adams: Well, in 1943 a geologist by the name of Earl Hummel and I put together the south end of the Jamison Field. We thought we could sell it to Northern Ordinance Company. Tidewater had the block before and their lease ran out. We put it together and thought we could sell it to the Northern Ordinance Company, but they didn't take it. That was toward the end of the war. In 1944 I helped Ossie Green and C.C. Polk put together the Jamison Field block for the Sun Oil Company. They appropriated $1 an acre to buy the leases with, and we bought the leases for 75¢ an acre. We split the quarter among the 3 ways. The company paid what they were supposed to for the leases and we got 25¢ an acre, which amounted to 8 1/3¢ an acre for my part. But we bought more leases than the Sun Company appropriated money for. I talked some of the folks into taking some of their

leases back. The ones that didn't want to take them back I rustled around and borrowed the money and took them myself, kept them myself, which proved to be very beneficial. After Sun drilled their well, I sold 2 of the leases. Sun, after they shot the area with the seismograph on one of the leases, I let them have it for $1.25 an acre. Then Dr. Leon Hutchins bought one 160-acre lease off of me. He paid $2 an acre for it. Then I had all the rest of them when the well came in. The Sun geologist, Henry Conklin, said, "If you you get $3 an acre you will be doing awful good, you had better take it." But I never did sell any that cheap. I did pretty good on them. Later on the sand ploy came in, and I drilled 7 wells on my own.

Jenkins: This was your first drilling experience?

Adams: Yes. They were all productive.

Jenkins: This was in what year?

Adams: This was in '52, '53, '54.

Jenkins: So you had 7 in a row, did you?

Adams: Yes. I had 1/2 interest in 2 more wells that produced, too. In the meantime I bought royalty under the Jamison Field before they drilled the well and invested $1,930 in royalties up there for my part in that thing. Then when the thing came in I did quite a bit more trading. Through my association with Lloyd Davidson of Dallas and L.L. Garrison of Corpus Christi we bought lots of royalties and turned it to

other people. We bought and sold royalties and made pretty good money out of it. I always try to sell enough to where if the well was dry it didn't hurt too bad, you know.

Jenkins: I see. But if it came in you were still doing pretty good.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: There are so many parts to this we are going to have to kind of take it one at a time, kind of work us on up through your production experience on up to now and the highlights of the production period.

Adams: The highlights of the production came in 1954 when I drilled these wells. My income from them was quite substantial. Oil prices were pretty cheap: $2.95 to $3.95 a barrel. I had interest in several other wells. I bought minerals over about a 7 or 8 county area.

Jenkins: So you got out of Coke County.

Adams: Oh, yes. I have got minerals in Nolan, Irion, Mitchell, Runnels, Schleicher, Tom Green, Sutton counties as well as Ward County, Culberson.

Jenkins: Do you still hold leases in some of those?

Adams: Yes, I hold minerals and royalties in all of them.

Jenkins: I guess that is what we need to do. Kind of give us some kind of picture of what has been happening in those leases that you do have.

Adams: I sort of phased out of the production business, mostly into royalty business. I still do a little leasing and retain

a little interest in them.

Jenkins: But you are not out there drilling?

Adams: No.

Jenkins: Your last drilling was when?

Adams: In the '50s.

Jenkins: Oh, so you really haven't been out there drilling. You are just leasing.

Adams: I put some together and keep an interest and let somebody else drill.

Jenkins: I see. So that pretty well hits the highlights of your oil interests, your own involvement in the oil wells.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: Okay. Before we shift to ranching or anything else, is there anything else about the oil business that you think you want to highlight?

Adams: I have watched it since 1917, maybe.

Jenkins: What are some of the major changes from what we will call the old days that you see until now in terms of how you have been involved and how you view the situation?

Adams: In the early days when they took tracts, they would sell people interest out in them. Small tracts, small-acre tracts out of larger tracts, sometimes as small as five or ten acres. Now they don't do that anymore; however, they do sell interest. I have got a division order today on a tract that I own some royalty under, and I noticed this

particular operator had 40 people with a working interest in his well.

Jenkins: How active do you have to stay,or do you stay, in keeping track of all this. I notice you stay on the phone an awful lot. Is this part of it?

Adams: It is always part of it. You have to keep up on what is going on, keep your ear to the ground.

Jenkins: Where do you get your information and leads? How do you keep you ear to the ground?

Adams: I have been fortunate. I really have never seen anyone's geology, to amount to anything. I have been real fortunate. Tracts I have bought interest in royaltywise or leasewise have had a pretty good history of turning out to be productive.

Jenkins: To what extent is this luck and to what extent did you have a feeling for the country?

Adams: I guess it is some of both.

Jenkins: Why might you buy a lease on this section and not on a section next to it? What do you see or feel that helps you to decide?

Adams: Of course, knowing about wells that had been drilled in the area, maybe, used some geological information. Pick trends. Some people are easier to trade with, I guess it has been fortunate that way, you know.

Jenkins: So this guy may have just been easier to deal with than the one next-door. Okay. I have got a note here on your

being a rural mail carrier at one time.

Adams: In 1939 my wife didn't get a job teaching school. The secretary of the school board was carrying a mail route to Silver, and Elsie decided she would like to have that job. So we bid it in for the big sum of $873.73 a year. We carried it. It wasn't too profitable, except it was good relations with the people. We carried packages from the stores to the country for 10¢ a package. During that time they got an ice war on, and we carried 100 pounds of ice for a dime. Ice got down to 10¢ a hundred. People out in the country had no refrigerators, had no electricity. It was a bonanza to them to get ice for 10¢ a 100 pounds, and delivered to them for 20¢ a hundred.

Jenkins: And the rural mailcarrier brought it to them.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: That wasn't illegal or anything, was it?

Adams: No.

Jenkins: Well, did this in any way help you come across any leases?

Adams: Well, we circled the Jamison Field every day. Elsie always said there ought to be an oil field over in that sand hills over there. And sure enough it turned out to be later on. But we had good relations with the people up there, and we were able to trade with them on the leases and the royalties better by having operated the mail route there.

Jenkins: Now you were still doing the abstract business and everything

else while you were in the rural mail delivery?

Adams: Yes, I had to do several things to try to make a living.

Jenkins: Yes, because this was Depression time. We will cover the Depression specifically a little bit later. Okay, anything else now about the oil business? Kind of bringing us up to today before we switch to how you expanded into ranching.

Adams: I bought royalties on most of the recent fields before the production was available. It has been interesting. I bought leases all the way from the south plains to Val Verde County.

Jenkins: Now is this the 8 counties you are talking about?

Adams: It is more than that.

Jenkins: So you expanded even farther than the 8 counties?

Adams: Yes. I did whatever I had to do.

Jenkins: Let's kind of get some kind of fix on it. South you might have gone as far as...

Adams: Val Verde County. Del Rio.

Jenkins: And west you might have gone...

Adams: As far west as Hudspeth County.

Jenkins: And north?

Adams: At east of Lubbock.

Jenkins: And east?

Adams: I didn't go too far east. Brown County is about as far east as I went.

Jenkins: You are still swapping and trading today on all of that, are you?

Adams: Most of it is a little closer to home.

Jenkins: But you are not just clipping your coupons, you are still swapping and buying leases?

Adams: Some.

Jenkins: Up until right today.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: How did you expand out into ranching and when?

Adams: Like I say I bought the first bunch of sheep there the 23rd of January of 1933, and the second bunch the 30th day of January, 1933. I bought the first farm March 2, 1933. Then I bought the second farm the last of 1933 and the first of 1934. I bought other places, but I thought I had more than I could maybe handle easily. I let my brother have one of them.

Jenkins: Which brother?

Adams: Noel, he is the only brother I have. Incidentally, it turned out to be pretty fortunate. He kept an interest in the royalty under that thing, and it started producing in about 1955. It is still producing. So it paid for itself many times with the royalty. We bought that farm, incidentally, for $6.25 an acre. It took $1,500 to buy 240 acres. I borrowed all of the money. I got him a loan for the $1,500.

Jenkins: When was this?

Adams: 1934.

Jenkins: What kind of interest rate were you paying then?

Adams: Oh, 6% or 8%. After Roosevelt came in money got plentiful and the interest got cheaper. You could borrow money for 4% if anybody had it, generally.

Jenkins: Was there any difference in what you had to pay in interest borrowed on oil speculation than on anything else?

Adams: Well, it was about generally 6%. I paid anywhere from 4% to 6% on most of my oil operations.

Jenkins: And that was about the same as you would have had to pay if you were going to buy farm equipment or going to buy a house or anything else, or did you have to pay a premium on oil speculation?

Adams: I guess you paid a little premium.

Jenkins: You went in first for sheep.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: You are still in sheep?

Adams: Yes. I have been breeding on them for 51 years.

Jenkins: Yes, but I mean at the point that you are in your story here. Had you got into cattle or goats yet at all?

Adams: I bought some cattle, a few cattle, in 1934. I had a few head before that. I bought a pretty little bunch in 1934. I paid $25 a head for them. They were pure bred cattle. A drouth came along in 1937, one of those dry years, and I sold them for $25 a head. The fellow paid me for them and said, "You can call me tonight if you don't want to sell them." I tried to call him that night to tell him I

didn't want to sell them because there was a cloud in the west. It came up a rain, but I couldn't get him, and the next morning at daylight he had already come down and gotten the cattle and had them back to the river.

Jenkins: You got a good rain then, too.

Adams: Yes, we got a pretty good rain there.

Jenkins: Now, you are accumulating farms through here. Are you putting them together, or are they scattered?

Adams: They are scattered. I didn't buy any more farms until 1950. I bought a place north of Robert Lee in 1950. I bought several other farms in '53, '54, '55, '57.

Jenkins: Are you being able to consolidate any of these, or are they still pretty scattered?

Adams: Pretty well scattered. Some of them were close to our old home place. In fact the first place I bought was about 1/2 mile from the old home place.

Jenkins: How are you keeping track of these? Did you, as you went along, have someone living on each farm and looking after it?

Adams: Yes, I usually did. They usually farmed and I ran sheep on them. They farmed the cultivated land, and on the pasture land I ran sheep. I gradually built my herd up. I had as many as 4,000 head of sheep.

Jenkins: When did you get into the goat business?

Adams: I first got in the goat business back in 1933 and 1934. I took in goats on abstract work. But I didn't have a

goat country, and I couldn't keep them in very well. Down on that flat land they would look up and see the green mountains, brush on those mountains, and they would climb any kind of fence to get out to go and get that brush. So I wasn't successful in the goat business until I acquired this ranch here, and then I gradually got in the goat business.

Jenkins: When did you acquire what we are sitting on here now?

Adams: I started leasing it in 1954. I acquired some interest in it, but I didn't buy it until 1972.

Jenkins: Is it essentially today what you were leasing from the start, then?

Adams: Yes. Of course, I had bought a place on the west side of it and then I bought a place on the south side. Incidentally, I now own that place that the first oil discovery was made in Coke County.

Jenkins: Did you buy that for sentimental reasons, or it just happened to be that way?

Adams: No, it was one of Elsie's real estate trade deals. She had a listing on it, and she couldn't sell it, and I bought it.

Jenkins: Now somewhere I read, and Naomi said we should ask you, somewhere in a newspaper article you are given some kind of title in terms of oil leasing in Coke County. Tell us about that.

Adams: Some of them said I was the father of the oil business in Coke County. Then one article came out in the local paper

said I had trained to be the local oil operator of note. I just operated in a small way. I started out without any financing, and had to help them with money as they went along. It was kind of rough.

Jenkins: You were a kid when the first boom came.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: But it kind of faded.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: And then you really were, though, early on the second boom.

Adams: Oh, the third or fourth boom, I guess. These things would come every 4 or 5 years.

Jenkins: In terms of the people still around, you probably have been in it as long as anyone now, haven't you?

Adams: Probably so. In this country there may be one fellow in San Angelo that is still alive that was earlier than I.

Jenkins: In Robert Lee or...

Adams: No, he didn't operate in this country much. Nobody around here operated much from here.

Jenkins: So in Robert Lee you have been at it probably longer than anyone else still around.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: Give us some idea how in acreage you have grown from that first 340 acre farm in what year?

Adams: 1933.

Jenkins: Okay, until today.

Adams: Oh, I guess, we have put together about 17 1/2 sections.

Jenkins: That is total.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: Now under this one fence we are sitting on here, you have got what?

Adams: Of course, it is divided in different places. We have 12 1/2 sections here in this particular place.

Jenkins: And scattered around in how many other different pieces then you have...

Adams: Probably 12 other pieces.

Jenkins: On this biggest one you have some people living in this area that we are sitting on right now. How many people do you have watching after this?

Adams: I only have one man here. I have one down at Robert Lee. I have Thomas Orellano down there. He has been with me for 25 years.

Jenkins: Now he looks after the part that he is on.

Adams: Well, and this, too. He is a good worker. He is really in charge of this one, too.

Jenkins: You do have a family living on this one?

Adams: Yes, I have a family.

Jenkins: Is Thomas kind of your foreman of all of them? Is he pretty close to that?

Adams: Pretty close to that. This man here tends to this mostly, but he had to rely on Thomas some. Thomas has a sizeable

family. We will have our own crew one of these days.

Jenkins: So you have how many families living on all of your...

Adams: Actually, as far as living, we only have 3 families on them.

Jenkins: Okay, I mean the ones living on this, and then Thomas's family, and you have another family?

Adams: Of course families live on places down in San Angelo there.

Jenkins: That is what I am after, the other places.

Adams: The other places, I guess, we have 5 families altogether.

Jenkins: And on some of those, or all of them, those people are doing some of their own farming on those places, you say?

Adams: Yes, some of them. We farm most of them. We farm around 800 acres, I guess, out of 11,000. We rent out part of one place.

Jenkins: What do you raise on the farms?

Adams: We raise mostly grain sorghums, small grains.

Jenkins: For feed.

Adams: Yes. We have farmed cotton sometimes, but haven't in several years.

Jenkins: But mostly you are growing your own feed.

Adams: Yes, hopefully. We haven't for the last few years; it hasn't rained enough.

Jenkins: Let's get you to focus on some of the problems of farming. Kind of go from cattle to sheep to goats. What are some of the major problems of raising cattle, sheep and goats in this part of the country?

Adams: The weather is the biggest factor, I guess. If you don't get the moisture you have a problem. Of course, various things bother you. Now we have coyotes bother sheep and goats; eagles have given us lots of trouble in the past; there is always the problem of bitterweed, which affects the sheep industry.

Jenkins: How badly, is it a killing thing or what?

Adams: Oh, yes. It kills sheep if you don't feed them heavily.

Jenkins: Oh, they are going to get that, so what you need to do is feed enough to overcome it, or what?

Adams: Yes, if they get enough protein and molasses products and sort of counteract the bitterweed.

Jenkins: That is on sheep.

Adams: On sheep.

Jenkins: Do you have any problems like that with goats?

Adams: No. Goats will sometimes slink their kids. Bitterweed won't kill goats.

Jenkins: Now you say the bitterweed may cause them to, what, abort?

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: In goats. Do you have much of any of that trouble with cattle?

Adams: No.

Jenkins: What are your major problems with cattle, other than weather, water?

Adams: Weather and water and the high cost of feed and the ups and

down in the price.

Jenkins: Diseases, do you have any problems much?

Adams: Very little disease. Of course, you always have problems with stomach worms in sheep. We have less trouble up in the mountains than we do down in the flat lands.

Jenkins: Is there less disease out here where it is dry than it is in, say, east Texas?

Adams: Oh, yes. Yes, we get along a lot better, I think.

Jenkins: Give us some idea of how you go about marketing, from your place out in Robert Lee, sheep, cattle and goats.

Adams: We generally lamb now in March and April and try to market the lambs in September. Goats we don't market very many of them.

Jenkins: What do you do with them?

Adams: It is hard to keep your numbers up in goats. They rove, predators work on them quite a bit.

Jenkins: Well, are they profitable?

Adams: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: How do you get your money out of goats?

Adams: By the sale of mohair.

Jenkins: Ah, okay.

Adams: It has been pretty profitable in the last few years.

Jenkins: So sheep, you shear them and you sell them for meat, but goats you just shear them.

Adams: Yes. You sell off your old ones.

Jenkins: When is shearing time, how long does it last and give us a picture of shearing time.

Adams: We shear goats twice a year in this country up here; generally in March and September. We shear sheep once a year; we generally shear the first week in May.

Jenkins: How do you get them together, and how does the crew go about shearing?

Adams: We have to get a bunch of cowboys or sheepherders and get them into the shearing crew. We have a shearing crew that comes out of Sonora. I have had several different shearers during my span in the sheep business, but in the last 35 years I have only had three shearing crews, capitans.

Jenkins: Your own people here don't actually shear?

Adams: No, just some of the strays maybe that we don't get. We have our own shearing machine, but we shear very few.

Jenkins: How long a period of time will shearing season go on?

Adams: Well, it generally takes 4 or 5 days to shear out here.

Jenkins: Is goat shearing and sheep shearing very different?

Adams: Yes, they have to have a different type combs for goats. They have a goat comb and goat cutters and a sheep comb with a different number of teeth in them.

Jenkins: We were talking the other day, I had asked you while we were driving around, some questions dealing with return per sheep, return per goat: the price of wool, the price of mohair and the weight of it. Give us some idea of the

difference between raising sheep and goats and what kind of return I can expect out of them.

Adams: Of course, that all depends on the weather situation, the price of hair. Right now hair is around $5 a pound. Goats generally shear around on average 8 pounds. Which means you get about $20 a head off of the hair off a goat. Sheep probably shear 8 pounds. You get maybe $1.25 which means you will get $10 off of the wool off of a sheep. Lambs have been selling anywhere...last year they sold anywhere from 40¢ to 62¢ a pound. Lambs generally average around 70 pounds, which maybe makes up for the profit in raising sheep. Sheep lambs bring around $42. A goat kid will bring around $35, if you sold any. I never sell any. I have to keep the kids to keep the numbers up.

Jenkins: We were also wondering about the difference between the attitude in the old days about whether to have cattle and sheep and goats on the same land and the attitude today where you run all three of those on the same land.

Adams: Yes, I think it is probably better, really. Goats principally eat a different kind of browse. They are more of a brush eater. Sheep are weed eaters and short grass eaters. Cattle, of course, like principally grass. They eat weeds also and brush, too. Shinnery makes good grazing for all of them.

Jenkins: Really? They all eat shinnery?

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: And we were also talking about how many of each of those you might run on, say, a section, all depending, I know, on what kind of land; but down in this area on a section of land, cattle, sheep and goats.

Adams: We run around 75 to 100 head of sheep; about 10 or 12 head of cattle, say 10 to 20; we would probably run maybe 50 to 75 goats to the section.

Jenkins: All on the same section?

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: We noticed out here that the cactus especially seems to be taking over. How much of a factor has this become in what you can do with the land out here?

Adams: It is getting pretty serious now in some parts. The cactus is all what we call prickly pear, is especially taking over farther to the south. We used to keep it down by burning it in the wintertime a lot. Then, lately the labor situation and the cost of fuel has kind of slowed us down on that. We have tried various methods of eradicating it from grubbing it to spraying it with a chemical spray. It is all temporary; it bounces right back and comes back. I think the deer have some thing to do with it. They carry the seeds across from one place to another.

Jenkins: Do you think that it is actually already cutting down on the number of animals that people can run? Has it got that bad?

Adams: Certainly it has. I can show you some places that I don't believe they can run half as many stock as they used to could.

Jenkins: And how do they apply what sprays they are trying or what poisons they are using?

Adams: Generally they use airplanes. They use different chemicals.

Jenkins: Liquids, usually?

Adams: Liquids, yes. They come out with a different name every year or two. About the time you get used to one, they come out with a new name on it: maybe the same chemical with very little difference.

Jenkins: You hope it is different.

Adams: The environmental and other people have prohibited them from using certain chemicals. Then I really feel like they just change the name and come out with something else. It takes them a year or two to catch up on that.

Jenkins: How about in, say, coyotes and eagles, predators on things. Has EPA, or any other agency that controls this kind of thing, have those controls significantly hurt your ability to cut down on predator damage?

Adams: Oh, yes. We had the wolves killed out of this country at one time. Even up until 12 or 15 years ago, I guess, they used methods of harvesting wolves and kept them down pretty well. It almost got away from them again a few years ago when they wouldn't let them use the pellet guns and things on them. Eagles, of course, government people have made

speeches and say eagles only eat rats and rabbits and snakes; but I guarantee in a pasture when the eagles are working it, you come up with 25% or 30% less lambs than you would in a pasture where they weren't working it.

Jenkins: How about coyotes?

Adams: Coyotes haven't been as bad with me. Of course, a lot of people complain about it. Eagles have given me a lot more trouble than coyotes. Of course, some places they try to herd those eagles back to Mexico, but they beat them back.

Jenkins: How do you try to herd them?

Adams: In airplanes and helicopters.

Jenkins: They chase them, huh?

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: I hadn't heard of that one.

Adams: Yes, down in that Sanderson country and Crockett County country, down in there in Sutton County they tried that. It wasn't very successful.

Jenkins: If they want to be here, they will come here, I guess. You gave us an idea of how your land holdings have grown, about how many animals, cattle, sheep and goats, are you running today on all of your land?

Adams: Some land I lease, and some land I own. We run around 3,000 sheep, 1,000 goats, 4,500 head of cattle.

Jenkins: That is animals that you control.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: Is there anything else that you want to say about ranching before we move into your other interests?

Adams: A rancher or a farmer has got to be the biggest optimist in the world, because he is fighting more odds than anyone else that I know of. He has to love the stock and the country.

Jenkins: To what extent could you be,ranching the way you are today if it weren't for your oil interests?

Adams: I doubt if I could be because ranching and farming has been a money losing proposition for quite a few years.

Jenkins: You live on hope, then? Is that why you..,

Adams: Yes, live in hopes that the rain and things get better and prices will get up.

Jenkins: We were talking about the extent to which you would be farming and ranching today if it weren't for your oil interests. Is that pretty typical of the ranchers and farmers that you see around here?

Adams: Yes, it is.

Jenkins: They are just not surviving if they don't have other income. Is oil the main thing that is keeping a lot of them going?

Adams: That is true, I think so.

Jenkins: Is there any other kind of thing that is keeping some of them going, besides oil?

Adams: Of course, government programs help some.

Jenkins: What are some of those programs that may actually be helping?

Adams: They had the PIC program last year that has helped some.

Jenkins: Did you get involved in that?

Adams: Yes, I was last year. I got a little grain.

Jenkins: And you felt like it was helping?

Adams: Yes, but not near enough to take up the slack on what we lose otherwise.

Jenkins: What about pest control, brush control, do you get any help there?

Admas: The government helps on that some. I have done most of mine on my own. I had some government help on some in the years past. But none of it has been very successful. One year not as consistently, but one year it will work, and the next year it won't.

Jenkins: Like the poisoning of cactus?

Adams: Yes, and mesquite and things.

Jenkins: What might that amount to per acre, or per section, or what?

Adams: I think the highest price they have paid in this country, that I know of, is for root plowing the mesquite and things like that, up to $38 an acre with the government paying half of that amount. I would say from the spraying of mesquite and cactus probably $18 or $20 an acre, maybe, with the government paying half of it.

Jenkins: Any kind of maximum on that?

Adams: Yes. I think most times the maximum you can get is $2,500 for a year.

Jenkins: For farmers, I guess.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: Regardless of how big it is.

Adams: Yes. You can get a good rainy year and grow good crops.

Jenkins: Well, there was something that I wanted to follow up on there. Are many of the farmers and ranchers giving up around here?

Adams: Not around here. They are sticking with it pretty good. We have about as many as we have had. A very small percent have given up.

Jenkins: Most of them have enough resources to keep hanging in.

Adams: To keep trying.

Jenkins: And a lot of that is because oil has been discovered.

Adams: And those that don't have oil, that are getting by, are working somewhere in the oil industry or some related industry.

Jenkins: Okay, let's talk about that a little bit, then. So to a considerable extent the farmers and ranchers, you can't say they are part-time, but they are doing other things besides farming and ranching.

Adams: Yes, they have to to make a living.

Jenkins: They are either working in town, working on oil rigs, they have oil interests.

Adams: Yes, or they are working for a gravel plant.

Jenkins: Or wives are working.

Adams: Most of them are working.

Jenkins: So they can afford to farm.

Adams: Yes. That's true.

Jenkins: Okay, anything else on ranching before we see how you got into the banking business?

Adams: No, I am not much of a banker.

Jenkins: But you got into it. How did that come about?

Adams: I have been on the other end of it most of my life. I have been on the borrowing end.

Jenkins: You are presently chairman of the board of City Savings?

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: Of...

Adams: San Angelo.

Jenkins: Tell us how you got into this business.

Adams: Principally, I guess, my son was interested in the savings business.

Jenkins: Before we follow that on through, tell us who your son is, and give us a little sketch of his life; and tell us how he got into it and how you got into it.

Adams: Well, my son is Stanley Edward Adams, Jr. Mostly known as Stanley Adams. He got into the savings business in 1968.

Jenkins: Let's go back and kind of do briefly with him what we did with you. Tell us when and where he was born, because he is a prominent financier nowadays.

Adams: He was born September 26, 1934 in the Shannon Hospital in San Angelo. Of course, we lived at that time in Robert Lee.

He grew up in Robert Lee. On Christmas, 1948, I bought Elsie a house in San Angelo. I thought if we sent him to school there he might be better off. Had a peculiar situation. The president of the leading bank in town, I mentioned I ought to send the boy to school over there. He said, "I was just talking to old So-and-So the other day. We never did figure out whether it was better to send a boy to school in Angelo or just to shoot him." I thought that was pretty good coming from the president of the bank. That was Ray Johnson, the president of the San Angelo National Bank. He died, incidentally, about a month ago.

Jenkins: Sketch Stanley's life and how he got in this thing.

Adams: He grew up in Robert Lee. He started to school in San Angelo there the fall of '49. Between his sophomore and junior year he was stricken with polio, and it somewhat handicapped him. The doctors told him he never would be able to walk again. He said, "I will be glad to prove them wrong." He went to school one term down at Gonzales Warm Springs Foundation on a stretcher, one semester. He was president of the Student Council and president of the West Texas Forum, his senior year in high school. He attended the University of Texas. He was vice-president of the Student Council, freshman council there, I believe. He was chairman of the interfraternity council there his sophomore year. He helped us some in the abstract office one time. One time in the abstract plant

in San Angelo and Ballinger, beside the Robert Lee Plant. In 1968 he bought into the stock of Lamar Savings in Austin. At the time he bought in, they had total assets of $28,000,000. He has upgraded that considerably, and he is now the chairman of the board of Lamar Financial with assets of more than 2 billion dollars. So he has had a pretty good growth from 28 million to 2 billion.

Jenkins: To what extent does he have ownership in that corporation?

Adams: I guess he is the major stockholder.

Jenkins: Okay, now that...the corporation that he is chairman of the board, that is scattered geographically how wide?

Adams: Oh, from Houston to Dallas to Midland, San Angelo.

Jenkins: How many individual, I guess you would say, business or locations maybe?

Adams: I think he has around 50 offices.

Jenkins: And there will be some things in the Archives concerning him and concerning you and your businesses for those who will be reading this. Okay, develop how you got into this thing.

Adams: I imagine in order to help him out a litte bit Lamar acquired the City Savings in San Angelo. We got on the board there to help protect his interest.

Jenkins: And they acquired that in about what year?

Adams: It has been about 4 years ago.

Jenkins: And you are chairman of that board?

Adams: Yes, I am chairman. Elsie is also on the board.

Jenkins: Oh, you are both on that board.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: And do they have regular board meetings?

Adams: Oh, yes, we meet every month and review the past month's operations, and year to then operations.

Jenkins: Are there other things that you would like to say about the savings and loan.

Adams: Savings and loans have had a rough time for the last several years as a whole; however our organization has been successful and has grown steadily during that period of time.

Jenkins: So in terms of growth, yours is growing, probably, faster than the others.

Adams: Yes. City Savings, when it was acquired, had about $58,000,000. We now have over $700,000,000 in assets. The assets of savings are mostly the deposits of the people that are savers.

Jenkins: And apparently they are still looking for expansion.

Adams: Yes, we hope to get over the $800,000,000 mark this year.

Jenkins: You are looking for places to expand, also?

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: Other towns?

Adams: If they are good deals,we are.

Jenkins: You were saying something about savings and loans.

Adams: They are vital. Most homeowners, especially, have to borrow the money from one place of the other, and savings and loans have been the principal source of that for the past 100 years,

I guess.

Jenkins: Is it still principally that? Haven't there been some major changes in banking since?

Adams: Yes, banks have now gone into that part of the business.

Jenkins: And you have gone, savings and loans have gone into...

Adams: The banking business.

Jenkins: In actuality, then, how much difference is there between something that calls itself a bank in what it does and something that calls itself a savings and loan in what it does today?

Adams: The difference has narrowed quite a bit because the banks have gotten into the home mortagage business, and the savings have gone into the banking business.

Jenkins: They are doing checking accounts.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: So they are pretty much doing the same things only they are emphasizing different things? Is that kind of what it is?

Adams: Yes. That is true, I think.

Jenkins: The real estate business has primarily been Elsie's, your wife, so we will probably leave that to her, but to what extent have you been involved in the realty business?

Adams: The abstract business and the real estate business is pretty closely associated. I had a real estate license back in the '30s. I never worked at it very much. Most of our ventures in business have been successful from the popcorn business

on up,except for one thing. I was in the baseball business in the early '50s.

Jenkins: I have got a note on that. I am glad you mentioned that.

Adams: I acquired an interest in the San Angelo Colts, which was a Class C baseball team league. I eventually acquired 52% of the stock. I had 95% of the expenses and about 2% of the say. That venture wasn't too successful. Of course I attribute one thing to that. The fact that the bonus rule came along about that time,where the major leagues paid bonuses to students when they were still in college, which really never proved out successful in the major leagues. Also, television came along about that time, and people stayed home and watched major leagues on television instead of coming to the local ballgame.

Jenkins: I know you hoped to make money, but did you really expect to, or was this really kind of a civic thing that you did?

Adams: Well, it was more of a civic thing, I guess, really. But I didn't expect to lose money on it, I never expected to do that on anything. I didn't lose in a way, because the experience was very valuable and made lots of friends and associates. I still see people that remind me about it every time that I see them. I mostly enjoyed it.

Jenkins: I am going to say something and then let you respond to it to the extent that you will. I have heard various people say that you have aided a good many people in getting some

things, their businesses, started. I would like for you to respond to that in any way that you are willing to.

Adams: I have helped a few. Even though we only had one boy, at one time I helped as many as 9 boys go to college. It has all been very rewarding, beneficial. Most of them have done very well.

Jenkins: You have actually helped some people get into business, I have been told.

Adams: Probably so.

Jenkins: Okay, that's all you want to say?

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: Before I get into civic involvement, let me kind of summarize some things dealing with the land in this area of the country. Have there been many changes in the use of the land in your lifetime out here?

Adams: Oh, yes. Farm land has gone to stock farming or ranching mostly. In the early days they all planted, most of the farms, mostly cotton. Now it is pretty well diversified to cotton to grain sorghums to small grain, and oil. Oil and run some stock with it.

Jenkins: Is a lot of the land that's today pasture land with mesquite and cactus on it, was a lot of that land in cultivation at one time?

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: Do you suppose that had much to do with the increase in

cactus and mesquite?

Adams: Mesquite always come up on the old terraces and things like that: They grow real well. You just turn an old field out, especially if it had some terraces on it, you will get a pretty thick mesquite growth on those terraces before many years.

Jenkins: Has the ownership of the land in this area changed very much in the last 40 years?

Adams: There really has not been a whole lot of change. The Farmers Home Administration, which was started back in the Resettlement Administration days which was a forerunner to the Farmers Home, has helped young fellows buy farms, and by and large they have all been successful in this country. Without that help they couldn't have owned land.

Jenkins: But there is not a great deal of turnover in...

Adams: No, not in this country; there is very little turnover.

Jenkins: It stays even in the same family for a long time, apparently.

Adams: It generally does.

Jenkins: What about the future of this area? Do you have any hopes or visions or predictions for what is ahead for this area of the country for the next 50 to 100 years?

Adams: My crystal ball may not work that good. The problem would be, or has been, they have made some changes in that of late, would be the inheritance tax on the land: disposing of the land to pay the inheritance tax was necessary and prevented it from being held by the family.

It was down to where you only had a $60,000 exemption, but now I understand that is going to be up to more like $300,000. But, of course, the value of the land is inflated, it was forcing people to have to get out of the business, up until now.

Jenkins: We were talking in the car about rainfall. It was your observation that in the last good many years the average annual rainfall seems to be dropping.

Adams: Dropping, yes. Our average rainfall in this country used to be 21 inches. I think now maybe 17 or 18 inches is more like it.

Jenkins: What about the water table, has it changed significantly?

Adams: I am sure it has. Some wells won't produce. Our country around here, as a whole, water is hard to come by anyway. We don't have any large wells in this country; however, I think someday in certain areas that may increase with the lakes they have on the rivers now. I think it may make some country around those lakes to where you can irrigate on them.

Jenkins: You were saying there is not much well irrigation around here.

Adams: No.

Jenkins: So you depend on rainfall.

Adams: Entirely.

Jenkins: And the land is more and more going back towards pasture rather than cultivation.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: Which means that the land itself is more likely to be here even if it is covered with cactus.

Adams: Well, that is true. Of course, maybe they will find some way to eliminate it. I think some of the reasons maybe it has gotten worse, back when the Indians were here they burned areas, and that way kept the mesquite down, I am sure, and other brush. Grass, after a burn, in a year or two generally comes back better than it was.

Jenkins: Are there many range fires out here?

Adams: We don't have too many. Of course, any dry spell we have it is always a hazard. I notice they have been having some bad range fires down in the Kerrville area in the last few days. They had some in Tom Green County a year or two ago. We had some in Coke County.

Jenkins: What happens when a range fire gets out? How does the community react?

Adams: Oh, everybody goes out to try to help stop it, and the fire departments from all the towns go out. In the olden days you went out with a barrel of water on a wagon and grass sacks and tried to beat it out. Maybe hook up some teams and plow some furrows to help hold it. It was pretty hard to control in those days.

Jenkins: Before we get into the last section on civic involvement, let's take one last look at the Depression. Now were you...

Adams: I went into business for myself on December, 1928. The Depression came along in 1929, and there wasn't any business much. If there was any business people couldn't pay you. The first abstract I made in 1929 I collected for it in 1942. I got a few chickens in on it.

Jenkins: I was going to ask how much bartering you did.

Adams: I took anything: chickens, goats, sheep, anything.

Jenkins: A good swap. Did you just out and out write off much?

Adams: Losses have been very few.

Jenkins: Even during the Depression.

Adams: Even during the Depression. Some people couldn't pay you, but very few.

Jenkins: Now you were a full fledged grown man trying to make a living. How did you see the Depression affecting the people that you were involved with in this county, and I guess San Angelo?

Adams: People who had been well off, you would say, financially had a pretty rough time. You had to live on what you made. It didn't take much to live. I can remember sometimes you could go in a grocery store, and with $5 you couldn't carry all the groceries off that you could buy.

Jenkins: In Robert Lee and Coke County, was there much unemployment that you saw?

Adams: There was some. Mostly people farmed. We were blessed in this county because one of my neighbors over in Runnels County

said we were especially blessed because we couldn't put all of the land in cultivation. Coke County wasn't affected as bad as some of the counties. But, of course, when Roosevelt came in and put on the CWA and the other work projects a lot of the people left the farms and moved into town to work on those.

Jenkins: So the people that stayed, they were existing; a lot of them raising their own food and that sort of thing.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: Was San Angelo looking much different? Did you see more unemployment there because it was a bigger city?

Adams: I guess it was, yes.

Jenkins: Did any banks close in San Angelo?

Adams: Yes. The San Angelo National Bank, one of the leading banks there, closed in 1930, I guess. It might have been '31. And the Guaranty State Bank merged with them so they could reopen. The Guaranty State Bank was a smaller bank but a strong bank. It enabled the San Angelo National Bank to reopen. That was the only bank in San Angelo to close.

Jenkins: As far as you know, did any depositors ever lose any money because of bank failure?

Adams: Yes, they lost some money there. The people who had any deposits of any size, they required them to take stock in the bank for a certain part of their deposits. That way they acquired lots of stockholders.

Jenkins: So on paper they didn't lose any money. Did you lose any?

Adams: No. I didn't have any money. I didn't have any to lose. In Coke County we didn't have any banks close. Now Coleman County, every bank in the county closed except one, I think.

Jenkins: Was it a different economy, different people, how do you account for that?

Adams: Well, different people. All the banks in the town of Coleman closed.

Jenkins: I just wondered what was the difference between them and San Angelo and Robert Lee.

Adams: Maybe a little more farming country down there. They had had an oil operation down there which had kind of played out. When oil got down to 10¢ a barrel the oil business wasn't very good.

Jenkins: Anything else about the Depression before we kind of get closer to the...

Adams: A lot of people had to live pretty close to the chest, you know.

Jenkins: Did your business drop off, or did you actually grow during the Depression?

Adams: I would say in 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, especially '31 and '32, I made about $300 a year.

Jenkins: In the abstract business.

Adams: In the abstract business.

Jenkins: Adn that was really about all that you were doing.

Adams: That was all I was doing.

Jenkins: $300 a year. Were you going into debt?

Adams: No. I couldn't. One time I wanted to borrow some money to buy out one of my competitors. He was willing to sell to me, and I needed to borrow $500. I offered to put up some cattle and the plant to borrow $500, and got turned down.

Jenkins: Okay, we will pull out of the Depression then.

Adams: That was in the '30s, I guess. 1930.

Jenkins: Now you lived a lifetime almost entirely right here,either in San Angelo or at Robert Lee and between them. To what extent have you got involved in civic affairs?

Adams: Oh, I have had somewhat, I guess.

Jenkins: I know you belong to Rotary because you fed me today.

Adams: I guess I was the chairman of the county school board in the late '30s and the early '40s.

Jenkins: Robert Lee.

Adams: Yes, Coke County School Board. I belonged to the Lion's Club in the late '30s.

Jenkins: Coke County?

Adams: Robert Lee. When it disbanded in the '40s. I have been a member of the Masonic Lodge since 1939. I was Master, I guess, in 1941 after the heavy drouth year. I have been a Shriner, and a Mason.

Jenkins: Mayor?

Adams: I have been mayor of the city of Robert Lee for 6 years.

Jenkins: When was that?

Adams: About 1972 through 1978. '73 until '79.

Jenkins: Any other civic or political things that you can remember?

Adams: No, not to amount to anything, I don't think. I was president of the San Angelo Colts, Incorporated over there in Angelo.

Jenkins: San Angelo what?

Adams: The San Angelo Colts, the baseball team.

Jenkins: Now you have mentioned, people have told me, and I have got you to mention that you have helped individuals in their education. Have you got involved in institutions specifically?

Adams: Oh, not too much. Back there during the Depression days I held other jobs and loaned some fellows money to farm on, and I shouldn't have been doing it. Some of them couldn't pay me back. It was good for everybody, I guess.

Jenkins: You said you were on the school board here. Have you ever got involved with Angelo University in any way?

Adams: No, I never have.

Jenkins: Somewhere in here we need to fit your basketball career, your semi-pro basketball career.

Adams: We played lots of sandlot basketball, I guess you would call it, or whatnot. It really was sandlot because in those days we had very few gyms in the country. Most of the games we played were on dirt courts. Some of them were pretty good games. I played in games, I guess the highest scoring game I was ever in we scored 109 points; the lowest scoring game

I remember we won it with 10 points, 10 to 9.

Jenkins: You were representing the town of Robert Lee?

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: And how far would you travel to play these games?

Adams: Oh, travel was a little difficult in those days. The roads weren't good, and the vehicles weren't too good, and the cost for going was....We traveled as far east as Coleman, as far north as Sweetwater, as far south as San Angelo, and west in this area mostly.

Jenkins: This was not school ball.

Adams: No, they were all out of school.

Jenkins: You were how old when you were playing?

Adams: Anywhere from 18 to 37.

Jenkins: And why did you quit?

Adams: I was involved in an automobile accident and got my leg broken and my hip broken and stayed in the hospital for a year, approximately.

Jenkins: It took you out of basketball, then.

Adams: It took me out of basketball, yes. I played a few games maybe after that.

Jenkins: Have you had many hobbies over the years besides basketball?

Adams: No, not really. Basketball and baseball.

Jenkins: Do you hunt?

Adams: Yes, I have done some hunting.

Jenkins: Around here?

Adams: Not too much around here. I went hunting up in Wyoming and Colorado some.

Jenkins: What kind of wild game is on your place here?

Adams: We have deer and turkey here. I understand from some, javalina. I hope I never see them, but I have heard there are some here on the ranch, but I never did see them.

Jenkins: Are there any bobcats?

Adams: Oh, yes, we have lots of bobcats, some wolves, lots of coons and fox.

Jenkins: Skunks and possums.

Adams: Yes, armadillos. We have an abundance of armadillos.

Jenkins: Are armadillos any problem?

Adams: Oh, they come and get in your yard sometimes. They play havoc with your yard.

Jenkins: Yes, but as a rancher and a farmer.

Adams: No, they don't give you any problems.

Jenkins: They dig little holes is about all.

Adams: They dig up the roots. One thing, they eat pear roots. That is one thing that will work on the pear.

Jenkins: They are a help then. Maybe they ought to get a herd of armadillos.

Adams: They tear up the ground just like a sows bed, you know.

Jenkins: So you do some hunting. Fishing, have you ever been much of a fisherman?

Adams: Oh, I used to like to go fishing. I used to go with a bunch

fishing down on the Pecos River. We had an enjoyable place. That was a wild country then. There wasn't too much civilization, and the roads weren't good, and you couldn't get to it very well. We went to a place down there, and if we didn't come back with a thousand pounds of fish we thought we had a bad fishing trip.

Jenkins: I have watched you now for parts of several days. I have got some kind of picture of how you spend a day, but if there is such a thing as a typical day for Skinny Adams, what is it? How do you spend your time?

Adams: I am busy at something most of the time.

Jenkins: You are on the phone an awful lot, I have noticed.

Adams: Yes, I stay on the phone some. I get lots of calls.

Jenkins: Typically, let's get you up in the morning and just kind of...

Adams: I used to get up about 5 o'clock every morning or before. The newspaper came by my house at 5 o'clock when I was leaving for San Angelo. I generally didn't wait for the paper to get there. I got out and got with them. I traveled to Midland and Dallas one day a week when I was active in the oil business. Nowadays I've slowed a little bit. I don't get up before 6 o'clock.

Jenkins: Sleep in then, do you?

Adams: Yes. I get up and try to get to the office by around 8 and generally maybe tend to something outside of the office.

Jenkins: Like?

Adams: Like going to the farm and seeing about things. Then I spend the day there, mostly. I generally stay there until 5:30 or 6:00. Then I go home and watch television or go to the farm and see about things.

Jenkins: How about your weekends? What do you do on weekends?

Adams: Generally I come to the ranch and see about things.

Jenkins: The abstract and realty business, especially in a small town where everyone knows you and you know everyone, do you sometimes feel like you have to just escape?

Adams: It really never bothered me that much. It does Elsie some and it does other people, but I like people.

Jenkins: You don't mind being called on Saturday and Sunday?

Adams: No, I don't mind. I am just happy any time I can be of service to anybody, do good for anybody or myself either.

Jenkins: You spend a lot of time on the road between here and San Angelo,apparently.

Adams: Yes. I go to Rotary over there most every Friday, sometimes on Monday. I go to the office over there and spend some time.

Jenkins: Are there trade associations in the work that you do? For instance, the abstract business, are there trade associations?

Adams: Oh, yes. It started out way back there. The first meeting I attended of that kind was in Abilene in 1928. They had the annual meeting of the abstracters there then. It is now the Title Association. We have belonged to it for more than

40 years, I guess, close to 50.

Jenkins: Did you ever get involved in it?

Adams: No, I really never held an office in it.

Jenkins: How about, oh, say the sheep, goat and cattle business, are there trade associations?

Adams: Yes. Texas and Southwestern Cattleman Association. There is a Sheep Raisers Association. Mohair Producers Association.

Jenkins: Have you got involved with those?

Adams: I belong to all of them. I haven't been involved, I have been too busy.

Jenkins: But you belong to all of them.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: Take their publications, I guess.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: What do they do for you?

Adams: I get a little input from them. I have never been much on attendance to them because I have always had something else that was more pressing, I thought. I have raised registered sheep. I started Stanley out in the registered sheep business back there. And I bought registered rams for a number of years, which helped upgrade my sheep flock. I bought registered bulls,which upgrades my cattle.

Jenkins: You have been at this business for a long time now and combinations of it. At least to me and lots of others, you have obviously been successful. Do you have any way of

explaining to yourself how you have managed to do what you have done?

Adams: Just stayed busy and tried to do something all the time and stayed with it. I wasn't a quitter. If things got bad I didn't go off and quit; I just stayed with it.

Jenkins: Have you ever seriously considered giving it up and going to work with a nice safe job for somebody else?

Adams: Oh, I considered it, but I never did. One time I was going to go to work for the Soil Conservation Service, and I could have gotten the job if I had moved to Temple. I didn't go because the oil business came along, and I got in the oil business. If I had been down there I wouldn't have. I would have traveled over the state and would have had a good job out of it.

Jenkins: My observation and guess is that you could retire and could have retired any time you wanted to in the past, but you don't seemed to. How do you feel about retirement?

Adams: That is the last thing I want to do. I want to have something to do the day I die and they take me to the boneyard. I want to get a job done just before they grab me and haul me off.

Jenkins: Yes, and you like what you are doing?

Adams: Sure, I have loved every minute of it. I have liked everything I have ever done.

Jenkins: You like getting up in the morning and getting out.

Adams: Getting after it.

Jenkins: And you have got lots of territory to cover to do it.

Adams: I observed back in the '20s, the middle '20s, that a farmer when he sold out his farm and came to town and retired, he generally didn't live very long. I feel like if a man stays active, the longer he can stay active, the better off he is.

Jenkins: Do you have any particular vision or hopes for the future of the things that you have accumulated around you?

Adams: I hope that the son and the grandchildren take over and keep them going. I would like for them to stay with the land because I think that that is the basis for really all wealth.

Jenkins: Let's mention your descendents, get them on record. Who are they?

Adams: I have a wonderful daughter-in-law named Christie; my son Stanley; and granddaughter Naomi, who is a senior in the University of Texas; a grandson Stanley III, he doesn't like to be called anything but Stan, he is a junior in the University of Texas; I have a granddaughter Hazel Ann who is a junior in Westlake High School in Austin. That is the crop. They are all wonderful children, and we have been really blessed because they seem sensible and haven't gone off the deep end on things too much. Don't any of them smoke or drink that I know of.

Jenkins: We have got some reminiscences about the Depression here.

Adams: Yes. The first farm I bought in 1933 I gave a man $2 an

acre for his equity in the place, but I gave him notes for it. I only had to pay him $10 cash so he could buy 3 loads of wood. I had a partner. The county clerk, Willard Smith, was going to go partners with me on this thing, and he backed out, afraid we couldn't make the payments. The payments would have amounted to probably $400 a year, taxes and interest and all. It was a good thing for him because later on he bought a larger place and a better place. He was very successful. He got to be president of the bank, principal stockholder in the bank. Unfortunately, he died at an early date. It shows how tough times were back in those days. He bought this good farm for about $11 or $12 an acre. It was about 1,050 acres; whereas our deal was only 340. It was probably better for both of us. That little farm that I bought to start out with was really the basis for any financial success I have had, because when I got in the oil business buying royalties there, by showing my farm on my financial statement I could borrow a little money to operate with.

Jenkins: That is where you got your cushion then.

Adams: Yes. So it has been really the basis for the whole thing.

Jenkins: That started when?

Adams: 1933.

Jenkins: So, actually you got your real start during the heart of the Depression.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: You grew during the Depression. You really got your start during the Depression.

Adams: Yes.

Jenkins: It leads me to another question. Now we really are just grazing around, and you stop me any time you want to. You took us to supper down here the other day at the local cafe, and we met various ranchers that came in. Some of them you have mentioned here as being some of the bigger ranchers in the county. Obviously you fellows don't have to worry about where your breakfast is coming from, but on the other hand from what I have observed y'all don't live a very fast life, at least from what we can observe, pretty frugal. You don't seem to have a great desire to move to the big city and hit the cocktail circuit.

Adams: No.

Jenkins: Why do you stay out here in Robert Lee and raise goats and cows and sheep?

Adams: It is good country and good people. I used to travel quite a bit to the east coast and the west coast, north to Kansas and Wyoming and Chicago. I was always glad to get back to this country.

Jenkins: Robert Lee is a pretty good place to live, then.

Adams: Yes, it is an excellent place.

Jenkins: Coke County is pretty good.

Adams: You can do anything you are big enough to do here, I guess. You don't have to be too big to do things.

Jenkins: Anything else you would like to say before we finish.

Adams: Like I say, life has been good to me. I have been real fortunate. I hope to be here for quite a while more.

Jenkins: You bet. It is great sitting out here in the middle of this quiet ranch. You can actually see the stars out here.

Adams: Oh, yes, and you can look at these hills and they are beautiful--when we have rain. They are really pretty now, but not like it would be if we had rain. We have had a pretty rough drought here for the last two years. Speaking of the ranch, I have thought quite often if they ever discover that rocks and cedar are valuable, maybe the banker will speak to me.

Jenkins: You have got an ample supply of all of that.

Adams: An ample supply of that, and I guess maybe there might be a chance sometime or the other. A few years ago there was a man hunting here on the ranch, and I noticed him going by and squeezing the cedar trees, smelling the branches. So I picked him up one day he was walking in, and I came along in my pickup and picked him up. He said, "My, that is the sweetest smelling cedar I ever saw. There ought to be something you could do with that." And come to find out that he was in the cedar business, owned a cedar mill and

built these cedar cabins and things. He knew something about what he was talking about.

Jenkins: So he may come out and want to...

Adams: Someday he might. I don't want to get rid of all of the cedar anyway, because it is very good protection for the stock, and goats eat it at certain stages. It is very, very good protection from the cold weather or from the rain. They can get under those cedar and have lots of protection.

Jenkins: Dust and wind, I guess.

Adams: Yes, dust and wind, and also they get under there to get away from the predators.

Jenkins: Oh, I see. So cedar does have some good things about it.

Adams: It has it's benefits, yes.

Jenkins: If there's nothing else,we'll close here and move on to talk with Elsie, your wife, about her background and business life.

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

(BUSINESS ARCHIVES PROJECT)

NUMBER
91

Interview with

Stanley Edward & Elsie

Adams

Place of Interview: Robert Lee, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Floyd Jenkins

Terms of Use: Open

Approved: Elsie Adams (Signature)

Date: May 23, 1985

Business Oral History Collection

Edward and Elsie Adams

Interviewer: Dr. Floyd Jenkins Date of Interview: March 30, 1984

Place of Interview: Robert Lee, Texas

Jenkins: Continuing the Adams interview, I am talking to Elsie Adams, Mrs. Stanley, who has been running the abstract company and the realty part of the business for, we will say, a number of years until you can fill in. Elsie, let's get some background here by getting you to tell us what you know of your family background. If you know kind of how Mama and Daddy or even Grandma and Grandpa got into this part of the country, and kind of what kind of life they lived and bring us up to when and where you were born, just kind of give us an idea who we are talking to. So family background.

Elsie: On my father's side, the Pruitt's. I was a Pruitt before I married. They came from Alabama to Moody, Bell county, Texas. And my grandfather was M.B. Pruitt.

Jenkins: Did they tell you anything about the trip down, how they traveled?

Elsie: No, it has been too many years ago. It was back in probably the '80s. It was further back than that, because there were six children born to them. First let me tell you about my grandmother. She was a Naylor. I do not remember where

the Naylors came from, but my grandfather married Minerva Naylor. (Tom Conally's mother was a Naylor). And to that union were born six children, 3 boys and 3 girls. They lived on a farm near Moody. They were very active, I guess you would say, in civic affairs at that particular time. Especially on Saturday nights when there wasn't any entertainment as we have today, the boys would ride their horses into town with their guns and shoot the town up. So they were very popular to do things like that, together with the other boys of their age that lived in the community there in Moody. My mother was Alice Wakefield. The Wakefields came from Kentucky. So my father, W. B. Pruitt, married Alice Wakefield, and they came to West Texas in a wagon, and they settled on a little farm near Miles, Texas. I have five sisters and one brother. There are four of us at this time, living. We lived on a 120 acre farm, 4 1/2 miles southeast of Miles between the little town of Lowakey and Miles. We lived there until, I believe, 1926, my family moved to San Angelo.

Jenkins: You were born when and where?

Elsie: I was born in a little 3 bedroom house, L shaped, which does not stand today, but that is where we children were reared on the 120 acre farm mentioned above.

Jenkins: And you were born when?

Elsie: I was born on March 15, 1906.

Jenkins: In Miles or near Miles?

Elsie: Near Miles, on this 120 acre farm which we children worked. In that day and time, children had to work. We worked in the field. We did everything in the field that was to be done. My people were just like everyone else in that day and time, we were not people of means. So everyone had to work to help make a living.

Jenkins: What were you growing on the family farm?

Elsie: On the family farm we raised cotton, feed. All kinds of feed; maize, oats.

Jenkins: You picked cotton, chopped cotton and all that.

Elsie: Picked cotton and chopped cotton and plowed, headed maize, shocked feed. We did everything there was to be done.

Jenkins: How do you head maize?

Elsie: You just take a knife, a sharp knife, and cut the heads off and throw them in the wagon. And picking cotton, we didn't pick cotton as they do today, because they do it with machinery. In that day and time we had sacks. We had to pick the cotton by hand, and it had to be clean because the gins did not have cleaners as they do today. It was just not acceptable if it had leaves and dirt in the cotton.

Jenkins: How much cotton could you pick a day?

Elsie: Oh, I don't remember. About 100 pounds or a little more.

Jenkins: That is the best I ever did. I never was a great cotton picker. Now you headed the maize to get grain. How about

the stalk? What would you do with the rest of the stalk?

Elsie: They cut the stalks and fed them to the stock.

Jenkins: Did y'all garden?

Elsie: Yes, we had a garden. We did not raise sheep, but we had horses, mules. The first car we bought was a Dodge car, I believe, in 1915. Do you remember, Edward? And we had a white topped hack that the family rode in, and it was pulled by two horses or mules. We commuted in wagons, covered wagons. A lot of fun. We had a little, old white mare whose name was Dolly. We went to school in a buggy.

Jenkins: How far?

Elsie: 4 1/4 miles. In the beginning when I was a little girl, we walked to school. There was a one teacher school at what was known as Concho School. We walked to that. That was about 3 miles, I would say. So we walked to that school. I might say that the interesting part that I remember going to Concho School, we would all eat our lunch. Of course, it was a German neighborhood. They were wonderful people. We would all eat our lunch quickly, and we would move all of the furniture out, The teacher and all of us. We had a dance. They would play the harp and we would dance in the schoolroom until one o'clock.

Jenkins: Boys and girls?

Elsie: Boys and girls.

Jenkins: A very free thinking neighborhood, then.

Elsie: Oh, yes. They were interesting.

Jenkins: Germans were a little bit easier on dancing, maybe.

Elsie: They were excellent dancers. But the teacher would ring the bell, and the boys would run and get the desks and put them back in place for the pupils and teacher, and then we would have school. We had double desks, a double seat and a double desk. You didn't talk. If you did you had to stay in or stand in a corner and you didn't get to attend the dance.

Jenkins: Did you have pigtails at all?

Elsie: Yes, I had a pigtail.

Jenkins: Did you get it dunked in the inkwell?

Elsie: Yes, I guess I did many times.

Jenkins: That apparently was a universal thing.

Elsie: Oh, yes, it certainly was. And long dresses and high topped shoes.

Jenkins: Was this a one room school?

Elsie: That was a one room school. Just one teacher.

Jenkins: How many grades in that one room?

Elsie: I don't remember. I guess as many as she could handle. I don't know, they didn't have 12 grades then.

Jenkins: That was the only school, though.

Elsie: That was the only school there.

Jenkins: Everybody was in the same room.

Elsie: Everyone was in the same room. I don't remember, I think I was probably in about the 3rd or 4th grade. We decided,

my parents did, to send us to Home Sweet Home, which was about 4 or 5 miles. We rode horseback to go to school there, because it was a little far to walk; however, we did sometimes. And that was a 2-teacher school. At first it was a one-teacher. Later, I understand, that it had 2 teachers, but mostly it was a one-teacher school. It was very interesting. It was located near a family that was very prominent. They usually had things their way. He wanted the school on a 2 1/2 acre land where his children would not have too far to walk. So he won a decision and the school was put there, Home Sweet Home. That is where I attended school until I went to Miles School. We rode horses going to school. Sometimes we would go in the buggy. It was fun to cross the creeks when it was rainy because we would make the horses swim when the creeks were swollen. One particular thing that I remember. One evening we were coming home, and it was a very cold afternoon. The horse I was riding decided that he would lay down in the creek. So he layed down and I had to walk out, and I froze from there until I got home. When I got home my parents asked me, "Why are you so wet?" And I didn't want to tell them because I knew they would scold us for riding into a swollen creek horseback. But anyway, the truth finally came out, and I received my punishment. I tried to be obedient after that, but I am not saying that I always was.

Jenkins: In gardening, how did y'all preserve food for winter?

Elsie: Food for winter? Well, in that day and time we did not do

too much canning, because there were no cookers back in the earlier days. We had our own hogs, which we would kill. We would dry the sausage. We tried to cure our pork as the Germans did. A blood sausage was very popular, and we liked blood sausage. As the old saying would go, the Germans saved every bit of the hog except the squeal when they killed it. They would take the blood, they cleaned intestines, and they stuffed intestines with the pork that they would grind.

Jenkins: The sausage?

Elsie: The sausage, yes. And then they would soak that in the blood of the hog. That was known as blood sausage. They would hang this on a line. We had smokehouses in that day and time. And you would hang the pork on a line, and you would have a fire going, a little fire underneath. Put a lot of wood or something on it where it would smoke, and you smoked your meat. Even the hams and bacon and things. Delicious.

Jenkins: Now lots of people preserve pork in different ways, how about beef? Did anybody attempt to preserve beef?

Elsie: Not at that particular time. I don't remember my parents ever killing a beef.

Jenkins: Did you eat beef?

Elsie: Yes, I am sure we did.

Jenkins: But you say they didn't kill one.

Elsie: I don't remember my parents ever killing beef.

Jenkins: You bought from other people then.

Elsie: Well, we probably bought in the markets.

Jenkins: You said you didn't do much canning. Did you put up any kinds of fruits or vegetables?

Elsie: It was interesting. If you raised cabbage, you would slice the cabbage, and you would make kraut by soaking it in brine water for so many days. That was delicious sauerkraut, and it was very good with sausage.

Jenkins: Ah, sausage, we will go back to fruits and vegetables in a minute. Did you ever fry sausage and put it in a crock and cover it with grease, or anything like that?

Elsie: Yes, we have done that. Now the cracklings, that was the part of the hog that we made lard of. And we would make our lard. We had a big, old wash pot that we washed the clothes and everything in. Of course, we cleaned it real well to make our grease. That was the lard that we used to cook with. We had the old wood stoves, because it was quite a novelty to have an oil stove,which later we did have. But we used mostly wood stoves. We would cook the lard; maybe it would take all day. The cracklings, that was the residue of the pork. I guess you would say the fat part. We would take that, and it made delicious crackling bread.

Jenkins: Did you make soap?

Elsie: Yes, we made soap. Now you could take the crackling and you made very good soap, lye soap. That is what we washed our clothes with.

Jenkins: Do you remember how you made soap?

Elsie: Not too well. I think we put lye in with the cracklings and maybe some water. I don't remember just exactly how my mother made it.

Jenkins: But you did make soap.

Elsie: Yes, we made soap.

Jenkins: What did you wash with the soap?

Elsie: We washed our clothes with the soap.

Jenkins: How about your body?

Elsie: I don't remember washing our body with lye soap.

Jenkins: I have talked to some who said, "We washed everything with lye soap."

Elsie: We probably did, but that has been some time ago.

Jenkins: You say you didn't do any canning.

Elsie: No, not in the early days, but we did later.

Jenkins: Did you do any drying of food?

Elsie: Yes, we dried our food.

Jenkins: How?

Elsie: Hang it on the clothes line. One person had to stay out there to keep the flies away.

Jenkins: What are you drying on the clothes line?

Elsie: We had peach trees and things. We did not buy fruit from the store as we do today. If we raised it, we ate it ourselves. And I can say this: we got our first apples when we got our first bale of cotton out. We certainly worked

hard in the fall to get the first bale of cotton out, where we could get maybe a bushel or two of not first class apples, but apples. They were first class to us because we certainly did enjoy and looked forward to getting the first bale out to get our apples.

Jenkins: Was it vegetables you were drying on the line?

Elsie: I don't remember drying too many vegetables on the line.

Jenkins: What was it you were drying on the line?

Elsie: Mostly meat.

Jenkins: Did you dry any vegetables, like beans or anything?

Elsie: No.

Jenkins: When winter came you bought beans at the store.

Elsie: Yes, pinto beans or something like that. Dried beans.

Jenkins: You never did dry fruit on the roof or anything like that?

Elsie: Not that I remember.

Jenkins: So you went from Miles...

Elsie: To San Angelo.

Jenkins: You finished school at Miles.

Elsie: No, I finished grade school at Miles. But I did finish high school at Howard Payne Academy, Brownwood, Texas.

Jenkins: So you probably went through how many grades at Miles?

Elsie: I don't remember. Probably through the 11th. Then I went to the Howard Payne Academy and finished there in the summer. It was a college in that day and not university, and that is where I received my Bachelor of Arts Degree.

Jenkins: While you were in high school were there any clubs or sports or anything like that that you got involved in?

Elsie: Yes. There was basketball and volleyball.

Jenkins: And you played all of those?

Elsie: Yes, I did.

Jenkins: Were these team sports, did you play other schools or just among yourselves?

Elsie: It would be the rural schools that would be near Miles.

Jenkins: Was it a conference, or y'all just kind of got together and played?

Elsie: We just had a get together.

Jenkins: I see. Were there any clubs, was there drama?

Elsie: Not that I remember.

Jenkins: While you were at Howard Payne, did you get involved in any kind of clubs or sports or anything?

Elsie: Yes, I played basketball for the Howard Payne team. That was in the days when you wore middy blouses and bloomers. I certainly felt dressed up the first time I came out with black bloomers on and a white middy blouse.

Jenkins: How far would y'all travel to play ball?

Elsie: I don't remember us traveling very far. We competed mostly with schools that would be near Howard Payne, because we did not have school buses or other means of transportation.

Jenkins: Was this any kind of conference play like we have today?

Elsie: Not that I remember.

Jenkins: Just getting together and playing ball.

Elsie: That's right.

Jenkins: Were there any other kinds of clubs or sports that you got involved in?

Elsie: Yes. There was the drama club. That is where you studied one act plays, and that you were in plays. That is where I learned to coach plays, which was a great help to me in teaching school.

Jenkins: Any other activities? Were you working while you were going to school?

Elsie: Yes. The first year I went to school, to college, was in 1926 and '27. I went to school one year, and then I taught school the next year because the drought was coming on about that time. And my father was a farmer, and as many people remember in that day, the drought which lasted a number of years, was critical to a lot of people. So my parents were not able to send me to college. But after teaching one year and going back to school, that helped me. Then when I received word that I would have to quit school, the Dean of Women gave me a job in her office. I was assistant office girl. And the head office girl graduated at the end of that semester, and I became the head office girl and also assistant Dean of Women. I graduated, I finished college in three years.

Jenkins: Where was the first place that you taught?

Elsie: Klattenhoff. I taught the first five grades my first year

that I taught there.

Jenkins: Is that still...

Elsie: Yes, that is near Miles.

Jenkins: And it is still an organized community?

Elsie: Yes. I think they still use the building, probably, as a community center. I am not for sure about that. But that was a 2-teacher school, and I was the assistant teacher, the lower grade teacher. Then after I graduated from college in 1930, they gave me the job as being the principal.

Jenkins: At the same school.

Elsie: At the same school. I taught there two years. And we had 3-act plays, which was very popular. And that study in college of one-act plays, how to conduct them and coach them and all, it was a great help to me. Sometimes on our 3-act plays we would have to stage them twice to accommodate all of the people that would come to them.

Jenkins: A big turnout then.

Elsie: Oh, yes. We had a large turnout. We had to go through the play and put it on twice.

Jenkins: How big a school was this?

Elsie: Klattenhoff, I don't remember just the enrollment.

Jenkins: One room?

Elsie: It was two teachers, two rooms.

Jenkins: A big school, then.

Elsie: My first year as a teacher I taught the first 5 grades, and the

next year I taught 6th through the 12th. We would have maybe 5 minutes for spelling, 10 minutes, or you had to work your time to get all of your classes in. You did not have long periods.

Jenkins: Would you take it by subject or by grade or kind of mix it all in.

Elsie: You had to mix it all in.

Jenkins: Let's kind of follow your teaching career through.

Elsie: Well, may I say this, while I was teaching at Klattenhoff, we had a baseball team, and also a basketball team. We played the little town of Harriette. That was our main competitor. I was the coach at those events.

Jenkins: Are those girls teams, boys teams?

Elsie: Mixed. Our baseball team was girls and boys; the same way with the basketball. We had a very good baseball team and basketball team.

Jenkins: Did you do that because you needed enough people to make up a team?

Elsie: Well, yes, you had to. And I learned very quickly after I started teaching it was better to coach than try to solve the discipline problems that would arise on the football field or basketball or baseball.

Jenkins: Were all of these teams mixed boys and girls?

Elsie: Mixed boys and girls.

Jenkins: Football, too?

Elsie: No, we didn't have a football team in Klattenhoff. But you could keep down many discipline problems if you were out there with your children leading them.

Jenkins: In the classroom and out on the field.

Elsie: That's right. And in that day and time you did not spare the rod; if you did you spoiled the child. By the trustees you were instructed to use your strap. If you caught a boy on the school ground smoking, and to my regret I did have some boys that smoked on the school ground, and those boys today are men. They always remember when they smoked on the school ground. They shouldn't have.

Jenkins: And you stopped them, did you?

Elsie: Those are memories which they say they treasure, and they say, "We love you."

Jenkins: What did you use to strap them with, whip them with?

Elsie: I used a little strap. I didn't hurt them because we were just like one big family. The first thing I tried to teach my pupils was to love their teacher and at the same time respect you. But I demanded respect, but still I wanted their love and affection as a teacher.

Jenkins: How many different places did you teach?

Elsie: When I left Klattenhoff, I applied in different places. But fortunately the trustees in Robert Lee School hired me as their teacher.

Jenkins: When?

Elsie: That was in 1932.

Jenkins: The depth of the Depression.

Elsie: That's right. And the school did not start there until, I believe, it was October because the parents had to use the children at home to gather their cotton crops. And we had to teach school 6 days a week, and we had to teach Sunday School on Sunday. That was a demand then, for teachers. If you got married, why, you had to resign and give a single person your job. So I would say that I was fortunate in that they hired me as one of their teachers because that was the beginning of my marriage career.

Jenkins: How long had you taught before you got married?

Elsie: Three years.

Jenkins: How did you meet?

Elsie: I met Mr. Adams in Robert Lee 6 weeks before we married. The first Sunday I went to church and Sunday School, after the services were over with, I shall never forget, this handsome young man that needed a shave, I will never forget that he did need a shave. I was introduced to him by the principal of the school, George Taylor. And I always had great regards for George because he introduced me to the man I married. He said that he felt that he was the gentleman that was due the credit because he did start the romance by introducing me to him. Skinny was a very fast worker because after we met he said, "What are you going to do this afternoon? Let's

go for a ride." I had a little, old 1930 Chevrolet coupe that I had bought when I was teaching school at Klattenhoff. The last year I taught there I commuted from San Angelo to Klattenhoff.

Jenkins: How far was that?

Elsie: Twelve miles. Back to our courtship. We went together 6 weeks, and we got married. We were secretly married 3 days, because I remembered if the trustees found it out I might take a chance of losing my job. When we married we pooled our money to get married on.

Jenkins: Do you remember how big the pool was?

Elsie: Fifteen dollars. That was everything we had.

Jenkins: Where did you get married?

Elsie: In Colorado City.

Jenkins: How come you to run off?

Elsie: Well, that was about the closest way to go, wasn't it, Edward? In that day and time you had...

Jenkins: Why didn't you get married here?

Elsie: In Robert Lee? It was supposed to be secretly. Anyway we went to Colorado City. And in that day you had to apply for your license 3 days before you married, which reminds me of the law today. To give you a chance to change your mind, I guess. But that wasn't it, it was some other procedures that you had to go through. But anyway, we got married there. After 3 days I decided that I would go down and see what the

president of the school board thought about one of their teachers getting married, Bruce Clift. I shall always remember the conversation with him. He was operating the service station. So I asked Mr. Clift what would he do if one of his teachers got married. He said, "Well, I would fire her if she had a chance and she didn't get married." My name was Miss Pruitt. He said, "Miss Pruitt, why are you asking me these questions?" "Because I married last Saturday night." He said, "Who was the gentleman?" And I said, "Skinny Adams." There was a banquet, after that, at the Methodist Church; and a very close friend of ours, Mildred Rawlings at that time, she is Mrs. Marvin Simpson today, and she announced our marriage.

Jenkins: Y'all came back and set up house keeping here in...

Elsie: Robert Lee. And I might say at the time they hired me as a teacher in Robert Lee Schools I started with the 5th and 6th grade. A large room, I believe there were 56. I don't know why, but I still carried the weapon that I used at Klattenhoff, so we got along just fine in school. I was promoted each year with my pupils.

Jenkins: Oh, so you lived with them then for their school life.

Elsie: That's right. And today I play golf with those boys. I play golf with their children. Most of the time they have to embrace me because they think of me just as a mother.

Jenkins: How long did you teach then?

Elsie: At Robert Lee, I taught 9 years, I believe, there.

Jenkins: And then you quit teaching?

Elsie: I had to quit teaching because we were fortunate in that we had a son, so I had to quit teaching for a while. Then I went back to teaching again.

Jenkins: For how long?

Elsie: I quit teaching school, and I was a substitute teacher for a number of years after I quit teaching. I quit teaching in 1945 and took over the abstract office.

Jenkins: When you got married, Skinny was in the abstract business.

Elsie: Yes.

Jenkins: How long did it take before you got into the abstract business?

Elsie: When I told the preacher, "I do," I went into the abstract business. I would teach school until 4 o'clock and go down to the office, and we worked to the wee hours. And I learned the abstract business, 1932, December 10th.

Jenkins: Let's get a picture of your career in the abstract business. Give us an idea of what it is like and what you do in an abstract business. What are a lot of the daily routine of the abstract business?

Elsie: One of the main things is keeping your files, keeping the daily files in your office. I always speak of it as the heart of the plant.

Jenkins: Where was your workplace when you first started in the abstract business?

Elsie: It was a little room in the southwest corner of the old courthouse.

Jenkins: So that is where you operated the abstract business.

Elsie: That is where we operated the abstract business.

Jenkins: Actually out of the courthouse.

Elsie: We had to carry our books upstairs. When they had court, why, we still went through the courtroom to get to our office. Our competitor was on the opposite side in a little room. That is where my son, as a little boy,grew up, mostly. He spent more time in the abstract office around the courthouse than he did at home.

Jenkins: You have a whole bunch of these great, big, old ledgers setting on your table there. How do those come about?

Elsie: Those were started back in the early days by an abstractor that built the plant. That is the book system. We have two plants in our office now: one is the card system, and the other is the book system. The card system was built by Edward when he was just a boy and had to have his disabilities removed. He started in the abstract business in San Angelo, I believe, 2 years. Then he came back to Robert Lee and built his own plant.

Jenkins: What does having your disabilities removed mean?

Elsie: He was a minor, and he had to have his disabilities removed as a minor to be responsible for his actions in the business.

Jenkins: So these old ledgers that you were showing me the other day,

with the handwriting in them, go back how far?

Elsie: To the beginning of the county, was as far back as the records would go.

Jenkins: Now your present daily routine of keeping those records up-to-date consists of what?

Elsie: The first thing, every instrument that is filed in the clerk's office we have a takeoff on it, or we have a picture of the instrument, because we use Xerox machines. And that copy of that original instrument is brought to our office, and the land that it affects, we make a card on each tract. We keep that in our files, in what we call emergency file, until we have time to put that on the books and then it goes back to the permanent files in the card files. So we keep two plants up: the card file and the book system. Many people speak of them as tract books because we have a history of every tract of land in Coke County.

Jenkins: And if I come in, and I have bought a piece of land, what do you do? How do you present me with what I need?

Elsie: You will have to make a decision. Title insurance has become very popular. Do you want an owner's title policy, or are you going to go abstract route. The person that is selling that property to you has an obligation to give you title if you want him to do that, you demand that, in your sale. He is supposed to give you a warranty deed, that is an instrument of conveyance from the seller to the buyer.

And if you want an abstract that is history, just like a history book. You can start what we call from the sovereignty of the soil down to date.

Jenkins: What does sovereignty of the soil mean?

Elsie: That is, how would you explain it, from the Indians or back from the very beginning. That is from the very beginning, the first instrument, your patent on down to the present time or the time you are buying it.

Jenkins: When people talk about patent, is that kind of homesteading and that kind of thing?

Elsie: We do not homestead. They may have many, many years ago, but I don't think so. I have no record of homesteading.

Jenkins: The first record of any ownership, is that it?

Elsie: Usually the State of Texas owned the land in the very beginning. So that is an instrument where it is being granted from the State of Texas to the first owner, to the person that has applied for that patent.

Stanley: It was the Republic of Texas before it was the State of Texas. Some of the certificates were issued by the Republic of Texas to people for their services in the Mexican War and other things there. They issued a certificate, and then they would have to locate this land for this certificate. In our county Samuel A. Maverick was the surveyor. He surveyed most of the land along the river. He was awarded an 80-acre tract for surveying so many tracts. Then he wound up being

a good land man. He wound up buying most of the tracts that he surveyed. In those days in this country if you didn't have a river front or a running stream front, you were pretty well up the creek. They didn't have windmills and things like that.

Jenkins: No access to water, then.

Stanley: No access to the water. The tracts had to be four times as long back from the water as they were fronted on the water.

Jenkins: Now in the history of the west and of Texas, there were a lot of tales of fusses and wars about gaining access. Do you know tales of that around here?

Elsie: Edward, you tell them about the Indians. We have old Fort Chadburne, and that still stands today. I don't know if it has been preserved or not, but that is where the settlers would go there and stay there for protection from the Indians. And we have different trails, because people had traveled in covered wagons. That was the only way they had to go. There is the old Chisholm Trail, the Butterfield Trail. Here on our ranch in the middle pasture, there are rocks, this old road that they used to go down this hill. We call it a mountain, but it is just more or less a hill today. There is where they would travel, and there are the prints where the wagons...

Stanley: Wagon wheels, outside of the wooden wheel.

Elsie: The wagon wheels, there are prints of those in the rocks today.

Jenkins: So those trails came right through this ranch.

Elsie: Yes, they certainly did.

Jenkins: Do you remember tales in this county of the conflicts over water, of access?

Elsie: Edward is a native of Coke County, I am not. I am a native of Concho County. Edward,do you remember any fights over the water? Most of the people tried to camp where they could get water.

Jenkins: The ownership rights to water.

Stanley: Oh, yes. The early-day ranchers, the people with large ranches, would drive their cattle off over across some other country, some other creek, off over on Gray Creek, etc., and discourage the settlers from staying around.

Jenkins: They would drive the settler's cattle off. I see. Let's follow your abstract career. Are there any other technical points of the day-to-day operation of tracing an abstract?

Elsie: There are different types or different kinds of abstracts. An abstract of title, that is from sovereignty of the soil until a given date. You have a supplemental abstract, which you pick up from a given date to a given date. And you have a complemental abstract. That is an abstract when, that you are asked to supplement an abstract, and you have existing abstracts and there are instruments common to what you are going to put into your supplement. Usually the owners will ask you to complement. That saves them money. So therefore

in your certificate you will state that this abstract,when examined and taken into connection with a certain abstract, we usually describe the abstract, today we give all of our abstracts numbers. That has happened since the latter '40s, I would say, we started numbering our abstracts. When it is pertaining to examining with that number, describe it, tell who it was compiled by, and give the date that it was closed, how many pages. We make a complete abstract from a given date to a given date of the supplement that you are closing. We call those complemental supplementals.

Jenkins: And the physical search for this thing involves what, going back to these old books and things?

Elsie: Yes. You want to, because today it is very important. When building an abstract, the first thing you want to do is locate your land. What land are you covering? Check your map or plat and see what land you are covering. Mr. Adams is very good on those things, because I think he used to help a surveyor. Isn't that true? On surveying land. As I have told many surveyors today or many people, I would let him challenge any surveyor I have ever met. I have that kind of an opinion of him in field notes. Now another thing you want to do in making your abstract, it is very important, because people have learned to do in selling land, which in earlier days they did not know, to reserve minerals or royalties. And today if there is a perpetual royalty under

that tract, you want to know what instruments could be of record that would affect him, or even a mineral owner. Because a mineral owner does have the right, if he has executory rights, he has the right to make oil and gas leases. But still they own under the ground. Just as the landowner owns probably under the ground as well as on top of the ground, surface, search mineral or royalty. And if those people have anything that pertains to them, say for instance, if one of the mineral or royalty owners dies, we are responsible to put in that abstract if there are probate proceedings; we have to put that in our abstract. Unfortunately, if there are judgements, those judgements have to go in the abstracts, just as it would against the record owner of it. And any instrument that affects one of those royalty or mineral owners must be shown in our abstract. So you have got to know your title. Go back and examine your title back in the early days to see if there was any reservations in those deeds, or if there were any mineral or royalty owners conveyed out. If there is, you are responsible to put any instrument pertaining to them. If there is oil and gas leases assignments, you must show any instrument that would affect the lessee, the lessor. Of course, the lessor would be the person making the lease. But the lessee is the person taking the lease. And the assignment, the assignor or the assignee. You must check those people.

Jenkins: What protection do I have when I come to you for this thing, against your making an error and fouling up my title to this thing?

Elsie: We try to check very closely that we don't do that. I have a motto in my office that no one trusts anyone. Everyone checks everyone else. You must keep your plant up to date. If you don't you could miss something that would be very harmful to you. May I tell you this? Not too long ago I made an abstract where it had oil wells on it. All right, the operator of those wells had a million dollar judgement against him. We checked that abstract two or three times to be sure that judgement was in there. And you must watch for those things, especially today. Bankruptcy seems to be a very popular way of trying to beat your debts or to get an extension on your debts, Chapter Eleven.

Jenkins: What is the purpose of title insurance?

Elsie: Title insurance, you mean title policies?

Jenkins: Yes.

Elsie: Let's go back to the abstract first. If you buy a tract of land, and you, of course, don't know how to check your own title, you go to an attorney. He examines your abstract, and he gives you an attorney's opinion on it. You have one man's opinion. Then if something happens to that person, that attorney, who is going to back his opinion up; or maybe he is not able financially to back it up. Well, so many people,

when they get abstracts instead of going to an attorney to have an attorney examine them, they will say, "Now you give me an owner's title policy on this." That puts it to where we have got to examine that title, and we issue them a title policy we warrant that if there are any defects that shows up in that title, for instance like a missing heir that comes in that the records do not show, your title people, company, has to defend that title. In other words it warrants that you have bought property with a merchantable title.

Jenkins: If there has been an error made and it does cloud it, then this policy gives me some financial...

Elsie: It gives you protection,because the title company is supposed to defend that title up to the amount of your policy.

Jenkins: Now in the absence of a title policy, what do I have to hold against you?

Elsie: You have an attorney's opinion if you have gotten an attorney's opinion.

Jenkins: But if I haven't?

Elsie: If you don't, why, I just must be for sure that every instrument is in there.

Jenkins: I am going to take this to the end. Somebody, somewhere in some title company, they do make mistakes.

Elsie: That is true, we are all human.

Jenkins: What protection do I have? Through you?

Elsie: In my certificate I state that this abstract contains all

instruments of record. I certify that it contains all instruments of record.

Jenkins: And if you have erred and it costs any money, then I sue you.

Elsie: Well, yes.

Jenkins: Okay, that is what I am after.

lsie: Isn't that true, Edward?

Stanley: That's true.

Elsie: That is why I trust no one.

Jenkins: But if I have an attorney's opinion, then I sue him.

Elsie: That's right.

Jenkins: Okay, he has let me off your back, and I am now on his back.

Elsie: If it doesn't come back on the abstract.

Stanley: The attorney bases his opinion on the abstract.

Elsie: So it all falls back on the abstract. That is why it is very important that you keep your files up every day.

Jenkins: Have y'all ever had any problems with this?

Elsie: No.

Jenkins: Okay, so you have got a clean record.

Elsie: I hope we never do because it is very difficult to get insurance, liability insurance.

Jenkins: Before we get you into the real estate part of this thing, are there any other things about the abstract part of the business, your life with the abstract business, that you have to say before we move into real estate?

Elsie: I might mention this. You mentioned about title insurance.

Of course, now, in the state of Texas we do not insure titles to oil people, which in some states they do, a number of states. They give title certificates, which in my mind would be...I just hope I am not in the abstract business when that comes to Texas, because to say who all that you guarantee, who all is supposed to sign that oil and gas lease, and who all has an interest in the well. I hope we never come to that.

Jenkins: That falls on their shoulders?

Elsie: We give them an abstract, and they can get their attorney to examine that, examine their title, to who takes an oil and gas lease. We try to be very careful that we show every instrument in those abstracts. That is why I trust no one. I check the girls, and the girls check me, Mr. Adams checks us, and we check him. He has been in the abstract business, what, more than 60 years? How many years?

Stanley: Fifty-seven years.

Elsie: Fifty-seven, and I am going on fifty-two.

Jenkins: Where does the income come from in the abstract?

Elsie: In the abstract business? Well, at this particular time you charge by the page and so much for the certificate.

Jenkins: By the page?

Elsie: Yes.

Jenkins: What page?

Elsie: The number of pages in your abstract.

Jenkins: But not by how much searching you have to do?

Elsie: That comes in your certificate. See, your certificate comes extra. Now, I don't know, abstracting is like everything else. Our expenses are great. Our supplies, our expenses for those are great. We don't type anymore, unless we just have to. We have Xerox machines which we use today, and we rent those machines. Personally, I don't want to buy one because they are like automobiles, they change models. I have bought one. I have an old Standard which I own, which is an antique. But you have to pay rent on those, you have to pay so much a copy, you have to buy your supplies to operate that, which is expensive. So therefore, abstracting, you can't buy an abstract today for what you could many years back.

Jenkins: Let's look at that.

Elsie: I think the popular price today...I understand some have gone up much higher than we are. I still operate at an old rate.

Jenkins: Give us some idea of the range of prices that I might have to pay if I came to you.

Elsie: It all depends on how many instruments have to go in your abstract. Everything that you have done to that, to that title, every instrument that you have filed has to go in your abstract, and that all depends.

Jenkins: Is there a minimum charge? What is the least I might have to pay for an abstract?

Elsie: It would still depend on how many pages went in it.

Stanley: Your cerfificate charge is the minimum, I guess.

Elsie: Well, $50. That is for a cerfificate.

Jenkins: That is bare minimum probably.

Elsie: Yes. But now we have a caption, we have an index that has to go in that with your certificate. Your cerfificate is charged extra. And if you have a lot of checking to do on these people that I told you, on the different interests that I explained to you about: your surface owner, your mineral interest, your royalty interest, all of those, if you have to spend a great length of time, you have got to be charged to pay that girl some way for the time that she spent in checking those. You put on your certificate. The basic today is $50, I think some has gone higher than that. I understand they have even gone up to $65.

Jenkins: Do you remember the most you have ever charged fcr an abstract?

Elsie: The most I have ever charged? Well, yes, I guess the largest abstract I turned out was on a ghost town here in Coke County. I call it my masterpiece. I divided it into, I believe, seven or eight parts. I had to slit the abstracts. They were books, thick books. I charged $7,500 for my work, and it took me about, what, four or five months to make it. $7,500 is what I charged them. It was for an oil company.

Jenkins: But, typically, what would they run from? $100, $200?

Elsie: It all depends on your pages.

Jenkins: Okay, there is no typical thing, then.

Elsie: No.

Jenkins: Or average, even.

Elsie: No.

Jenkins: So minimum, $50 and the most you have ever done is $7,500.

Elsie: $7,500, and that was for a title that had to be split into seven or eight abstracts.

Jenkins: Has most of the business that y'all have done over the years dealt with the oil business?

Elsie: Yes, it has been.

Jenkins: It has really been based on oil.

Elsie: That's right.

Jenkins: Okay, anything else about the abstract business before we move into real estate?

Elsei: Can you think of anything else, Edward?

Stanley: I think we've pretty well covered it.

Jenkins: Before we get into real estate we are going to go back and recount at least a couple of things. I have made notes here so we would remember. You have remembered that y'all did do some drying of meat.

Elsie: Yes. Instead of beef it was venison, which was from the deer that my daddy had killed.

Jenkins: Did you do some of this?

Elsie: Yes.

Jenkins: Tell us how you dried venison.

Elsie: You hang it on the clothesline.

Jenkins: Ah, that is part of the clothesline thing.

Elsie: Yes. We would dry it in the sun. Someone had to stay there to keep the flies away, where the flies would not ruin the meat, so it would be edible.

Jenkins: How big a strip would you cut to dry?

Elsie: Oh, about two or three inches.

Stanley: A couple of inches wide.

Jenkins: Wide, how about thick?

Elsie: The thickness of it...

Jenkins: Just whatever it was.

Elsie: Yes, just whatever it was. And you just wrap it around the clothesline.

Jenkins: Oh, wrap it around the clothesline.

Elsie: Yes, you would just wrap it once or maybe twice around the clothesline where it wouldn't fall off. You had to take a broomweed and stay there to keep the flies away. If the flies started swarming you had to take your broomweed and keep the flies away.

Jenkins: How many days would that have to stay up there?

Elsie: Usually one day was sufficient. You didn't leave it out overnight. If you did it might not be there the next morning.

Jenkins: The animals would have gotten it.

Elsie: It could be, dogs.

Jenkins: So one day for drying venison.

Elsie: That is the way I remember it.

Stanley: They probably had to put it back the next day. It took more days than one. But it was sort of an endless procedure. You would bring it in at night and put it back out the next day.

Jenkins: How did you store that after it was dried?

Elsie: The way I remember we stored it probably in large containers, because it was dried and it would not spoil.

Jenkins: So you didn't have to put grease or anything over it.

Elsie: Sometimes we would.

Stanley: Put it on sausage, and things like that.

Elsie: Sausage, we put sausage in the lard that we fixed, mostly.

Jenkins: You also had a story about biscuits.

Elsie: My father's biscuits. My father was W. B. Pruitt. He was better known as Uncle Bill or Bill Pruitt. And I might say this about him: my daddy had one belief, that a man was just as good as his word. And if a man ever told him a story, he had no more use for him, because he was just an old... I am not saying what my daddy called him, but he had no more use for him because he was not an honest person. He always said, and I have always been taught, your word should be your bond. And when my daddy died, at his funeral the minister mentioned about my daddy's policy that he had always lived by. And as a hunter, I will let Edward tell you about some of his marksmanship.

Jenkins: What about the biscuit making, though, we didn't do that.

Stanley: Talking about this biscuit making, one time he was hunting down in the Mason-Llano country area. The day before the hunting season he went down and set up camp. The doctors went out to find a place to hunt the next morning, and he was making biscuits. He heard a racket and looked up, and there were some deer. He wiped his hands on his apron. He happened to have his .30-30 leaning on the chuck box. And he grabbed up his rifle and a box of shells and ran out there and killed nine deer.

Jenkins: Before they could get away.

Stanley: So the doctors came back, and he had already killed their limit plus one for the camp. So it suited them all right, they didn't have to go out the next day hunting; they could stay in camp and play poker and take on a little refreshment.

Jenkins: You still haven't got the biscuits made, though.

Stanley: Oh, well, he made these biscuits from scratch. He went back and made biscuits after he killed the deer.

Elsie: He probably had dough all over his hands when he grabbed his .30-30. That was his favorite rifle, and he was very fast with it.

Stanley: On one trip he came out from Bell County out to Crockett County area, I guess, and killed 23 deer on that trip. He had a picture of him with the horns hanging over the edge of the wagon. He was quite a hunter.

Elsie: I would like to say this about his marksmanship: I have seen my daddy living on a farm, he wanted a plow, a breaking plow. That is one of these big old plow points. If he wanted it raised or lowered, he did not take it into the blacksmith shop. He took a piece of chalk where he wanted the hole put in that plow point, and he would set it, oh, just so many feet in front of him. He would get his .30-30, which I told you was his favorite rifle, and he would step back so far and he would aim at that cross, exactly where the marks crossed, and that is where he would put the hole with that .30-30. I have seen him do that a million times.

Jenkins: Did you ever watch him make those biscuits?

Elsie: Yes, I have seen him make biscuits.

Jenkins: Was there anything unusual about his approach?

Elsie: He had an old apron on...

Stanley: A wooden bowl that he made them in.

Elsie: He would get his flour and probably take some water and milk, soda and baking powder, I don't know what all he would put in them.

Stanley: Lard, of course.

Elsie: But everyone bragged on my daddy's biscuits.

Jenkins: Did it look like he measured anything?

Elsie: No, he didn't measure a thing. It was all guess work. But he was the cook for the camp as well as the marksman.

Jenkins: Anything else now,before we move into the real estate business?

Okay, let's do that, and we will come back again and see if there is anything else that we want to do. Okay, let's move into your experience in the real estate business in Robert Lee and anywhere else you have been in business.

Elsie: The thing that caused me or that gave me the ambition of becoming a realtor or a broker, salesman...I have never been a salesman because with my college education, the subjects that I took qualified me for a broker, which I did take my license, and I did become a broker. But the thing that gave me the desire in the abstract business, people in San Angelo that had houses in Robert Lee to sell would leave their key in the office. And they would say, "Mrs. Adams, it is a long way from Robert Lee to San Angelo. If someone wants to see that house, would you just go show it to them?" Which I did. And when they sold it, they bought it, the only thing I got out of my service was, "I sure do thank you." Of course, they could not pay me a commission. They would say, "Well, you are going to get the abstract on it." I would have gotten it anyway. But I thought, well, for protection I will just go in the real estate business. Real estate is very interesting. You are selling the property that you are making abstracts on.

Jenkins: Give us about the date that you actually went into the real estate business.

Elsie: I don't remember the exact date. I would say it was somewhere

in the middle '60s or maybe the early '60s.

Jenkins: Started getting paid.

Elsie: Started getting paid for my services. I might say this: the last time that I was requested to show a house or to go and open up the house, which I could not act as a salesman or a realtor because I did not have a license, I just opened up the house and let them go in and look. So the last time I performed that service, they called or they asked me to go do that, I said, "How much are you going...what kind of basis are you working on commission-wise?" They said, "Oh, well, you are just going to go up and open up the house." I said, "Well, I want to say this: since the last time I did this for you, I have gotten my license as a broker." I became a realtor right after because I had joined the Board of Realtors in San Angelo. I had an office in Tom Green County, which I was eligible to be a member of the board. And I asked them what basis they were working on, and that I had my license. They said, "Well, let me check and see. We will be back in touch with you." I have not heard from those people today. That stopped all of that free service. So I have enjoyed real estate, selling the properties that you would build abstracts to. Of course, you disqualify yourself as an abstractor when you are selling the property. You are not supposed to give any advice in regards to the title.

Jenkins: It doesn't keep you from doing it, but you can't expose what you have.

Elsie: You cannot act in two capacities. They will ask me, they will say, "What is the title like on this?" "Go to your attorney and let your attorney tell you?" They will say, "Well, aren't you going to make my abstract?" "Yes, I will make your abstract as an abstractor. I have to. But as a realtor I am acting in the capacity of a realtor. I am selling you this property. If you want to know about your title, you have your abstract examined. That is your prerogative."

Jenkins: Does the law require that you separate yourself?

Elsie: Yes, the real estate law certainly does. You have quite a list of no-noes that you must abide by, and that is one thing: a broker does not act in the capacity of an attorney. They are not supposed to prepare your legal instruments. Let the lawyers do that.

Jenkins: Now you operate in both Tom Green and Coke County?

Elsie: As a realtor you can operate anywhere in the state of Texas, because I do have a state license.

Jenkins: But you do operate mostly in...

Elsie: Coke County.

Jenkins: Some in Tom Green?

Elsie: Yes. In fact I have sold a ranch or land near Sanderson. I sold a ranch there, 15 sections. As I say, you can operate anywhere in the state of Texas, because you are a state realtor.

But you cannot go out of your state and sell unless you sell under a broker or a realtor of that state.

Jenkins: Most of what you have dealt with over the years, has it been...

Elsie: In Coke County.

Jenkins: And ranch land?

Elsie: I have sold some ranch land and farm land, but mostly houses.

Jenkins: Mostly then, just residential.

Elsie: Residential, yes, but I can sell any type of real estate that I have an opportunity to sell.

Jenkins: In terms of the abstract and a realty company, what kind of advertising have y'all done over the years?

Elsie: I advertise as Adam's Land and Realty. That is my trade name.

Jenkins: Where do you do your advertising? Newspapers, magazines?

Elsie: Yes, newspapers and...

Jenkins: What newspapers?

Elsie: Robert Lee and San Angelo Standard. I have a list of houses now in the Robert Lee paper, that I run weekly. Occasionally, I will advertise in the Standard-Times. I advertise in just different advertising agencies. For instance, I give you maps of the state of Texas, which the company puts those out, and they have my ad in it, Adam's Land and Realty. I have two different types of maps: one of Tom Green County and one of the state of Texas. That is sponsored by advertising agencies. They also advertise over the radio for you. There

is always someone calling you for some kind of an ad. Sweetwater, Ballinger, or just different places call you.

Jenkins: The newspapers?

Stanley: Trade journals.

Elsie: Yes, like the Sheriff's Posse in Sweetwater called me the other day and wanted me to take an ad in their magazine, which I did. It is good advertising, good policy.

Jenkins: Football programs?

Elsie: Oh, yes. Bronte and Robert Lee. My customers are all over Coke County. I feel obligated to advertise in the Bronte paper just as I do in the Robert Lee. Of course, in the athletic part you do help to sponsor their football games, or any kind of an athletic program they have, why, the merchants usually sponsor those things.

Jenkins: The school annual is the same thing, all kinds of local things.

Elsie: Yes, that is right, all type of local advertising.

Jenkins: Who prepares your ads?

Elsie: I usually do. Of course, you give it to them, and they will help you with it, help you in the wording of it.

Jenkins: Anything else on the realty business before I do some more personal stuff here?

Elsie: That is just about all that I could say.

Jenkins: You are still active in that.

Elsie: Oh, yes. I plan to continue, too. Of course, we work on a commission basis.

Jenkins: Now let's get into other things that you do in addition to working. To what extent have you been involved in the civic and community affairs over these years?

Elsie: I would say my main hobby is golf. I have been playing golf since the early '50s.

Jenkins: I have been told that you enter a lot of tournaments and have won a lot of trophies.

Elsie: I have been lucky. Let's say that Lady Luck has been with me, or my competitors just felt sorry for the old woman.

Jenkins: Hit a few highlights. Where are some of the places that you have entered tournaments, etc. The ones that you have won, etc.

Elsie: The Texas Allstate Tournament, I have been fortunate in that. I have silver trays I have won in Allstate. Texas Senior Ladies, and All West Texas. Then all local tournaments. I have not won in all, but I have won something, and I had a good time. I met a lot of nice people. Probably one of the largest in all the southwest, I played in that. I played in the Broadmoor Invitation.

Jenkins: In Colorado?

Elsie: Yes, in Colorado Springs. In that tournament, amateurs are invited to that all over the United States. I guess as an older person, if you don't tell what you have done, no one else will ever tell it. I don't mean to say it boastingly, I did go to the semi-finals. And a lady from Boulder,

Colorado...not the Broadmoor, but she was from a club in Colorado, she lucked out over me. Good luck to her. She was a very nice person to play with.

Jenkins: And that was a national tournament, you say?

Elsie: Yes, but they paid one place, and that was a little silver toothpick holder. That was fine, that was a nice trophy, very nice, all silver, and congratulations to the lady for beating me. Very good sport. Nice to remember.

Jenkins: Any other highlights of your golfing career?

Elsie: Yes. For a number of years there were four of us. We would go to Arizona and stay a week. We played a different course every day. It was very interesting to play on different courses in another state.

Jenkins: Have you ever run for office?

Elsie: No, I haven't. Now, of course, I didn't run for it, I was elected. My husband is a Shriner, and I am a member of the Daughters of the Nile. I am past Queen of San Angelo of Ziphron Temple #100. Of course, he is a member of Suez Temple, a charter member of it. And I was their second Queen. I did receive a national appointment to Supreme Temple from Canada, Canadian Bearer. The Queen is to ladies what the Potentate is to the men. It is a large organization. I felt quite an honor to be, and I still do, to have the honor of being past

Queen. Of course, Eastern Star, Past Worthy Matron, Mr. Adams,Patron. That is more or less a local thing.

Jenkins: A lot of the local things are what I am interested in.

Elsie: Church, I am a Baptist.

Jenkins: Here in Robert Lee.

Elsie: Yes. I belong to the First Baptist Church in Robert Lee.

Jenkins: Chamber of Commerce, women's clubs, anything like that?

Elsie: I used to belong to the bridge club in Robert Lee, but I don't have time for all the things. We have been very busy in the abstract business.

Jenkins: The company belongs to the Chamber of Commerce.

Elsie: We don't have a Chamber of Commerce in Robert Lee.

Stanley: We have a Board of Community Development. It doesn't function now, but it was active for a number of years. I was president of it. Speaking of churches, I am a Presbyterian. I have been a member of the same church for 55 years. During that time we have only had two pastors. That is a pretty good record.

Jenkins: So you go to one church, and he goes to the other.

Elsie: We don't have a Presbyterian Church in Robert Lee. He is also past president of the Business Men's Bible Class in San Angelo. He is a former mayor for many, many years.

Jenkins: He told me about that. I want to get this church thing straight in my mind, though. You don't have a Presbyterian

Church here. Which church had only two pastors all those years?

Stanley: The First Presbyterian Church of San Angelo.

Jenkins: San Angelo, okay.

Stanley: Bill Woods and Harold Odom. Bill was pastor from 1920 until he retired as pastor emeritus. Harold Odom has been pastor ever since.

Jenkins: So when you teach you go all the way to San Angelo to teach Bible Class?

Elsie: No, we used to live in San Angelo.

Jenkins: I keep forgetting that. So all those years you were teaching...

Stanley: We might go tomorrow and visit that Bible Class. They have director's meeting tomorrow at about 7:00 or 7:30.

Jenkins: So your main hobby...you have a putting green out here on the ranch.

Elsie: There is one thing I failed to tell you about golf, is the little nine hole course we have in Robert Lee. My son landscaped that and laid the course out.

Jenkins: When was this?

Elsie: That was in 1966. The Adams' feel that they are a great part of that Mountain Creek Golf Course, because that course was built by civic-minded people. The county loaned us their equipment and Stanley gave the trees, large deadora trees. Some of them still stand. I think of Mountain Creek Golf Course as my golf course because the Adams' have been a

great part of it. And some day we hope to have an 18-hole course, for my son owns the land across Mountain Creek, and we hope to enlarge it someday. It is a very popular course today. We have over 100 members there now.

Jenkins: In a community and county this small that is a big membership.

Elsie: We have members that live in San Angelo who belong to our course, our club. We own our own pro shop. Financially we are doing very well.

Jenkins: Give us some idea about Lake Spence and what it may mean to the town, to the county, and to your business.

Elsie: Lake Spence is a private-owned lake. It is owned by a group of men that went together, and they also own Lake Thomas. They built Lake Spence, I was the Title lady on Lake Spence. I had to get all of the titles. Lake Spence has never been full. It might have been half full. But Lake Spence is supposed to be the largest lake this side of Possum Kingdom, with the exception of Amistad. Amistad is an international-owned lake, as you know, Mexico and the United States. But Lake Spence is supposed to have a shore-line of 135 miles, which will put us into Mitchell County. It is supposed to be 4 1/2 miles in width. It is a very popular lake. In the beginning, when the lake began to fill, it was stocked with stripers and different other types of fish or species. But it has been known for it's stripers. They have caught some very large ones there. We have people

who come there, from especially west Texas and the eastern part of New Mexico fishing. In the construction of the lake, Clement Brothers were the main contractors to build the lake. They built a landing strip, which is owned by Rochester and Murphy. They were the first developers that came in and bought large tracts of land. They bought that for Lakeside Estates, which will be a beautiful addition. They have put on Bayview, different sections of Bayview addition. Lakeside Estates does have its restrictions. Back to Lake Spence: the Municipal Water District is the one that owns Lake Spence. They bought it and built it with the contractors, the Clement Brothers. They hired them to build it. The county leased, from Rochester and Murphy, the landing strip. They have a 50 year lease on it. That is where the Clement Brothers would land their planes to get their workers here. It is today, and it has always been, a very popular lake. It has brought tourists to Robert Lee. It is a common thing on the weekend to see many boats, trailers pulling boats, especially in the summertime. They have marinas. I don't know how many marinas they have on Lake Spence. But one good thing about it, if I remember correctly, when Lake Spence is full, you cannot build a lakeside house or anything right on the banks because of sanitary purposes. And they have a flood easement so far back, so many feet back, from their property line. And then all of the creeks that come into, that feed

Lake Spence, they own the lakebeds or the creek beds, and they have flood easements for their protection so far back on each side of the banks of these creeks. Of course, they do have control, will have, as to where you can build on Spence. That has helped the title business because when they sell lots out there, maybe we get to issue an owners title policy on it. We have a number of additions that is put on: B and J, Edith Estates, M and J. In other words,it has just been a lot of people from Midland, Odessa that have come and built houses out there. Some of them very nice houses. They moved in trailer houses. And in Robert Lee, when Lake Spence first started, people tried to buy all the old houses that were available, or lots to move in trailer houses. For our protection, the citizens of Robert Lee, the property owners, we owned the vacant lots that join us for our own protection, to keep a trailer house from being beside your house. We call them weekenders, because they are there just on weekends. But let's say this, in the southwest part of Robert Lee, there a realtor and I have tried to keep the trailer houses in that part of town, and it is certainly being filled up. Many, many trailer houses. Some very nice trailer houses. All types: old ones, new ones and all. We get that in the tourist business. But they are, where they can, we have trailer parks out on the lake. People have trailer parks out there, the marinas. That is where the people can rent a

place to put their trailer. It has all of the sewer connections. Usually they are septic tanks out there. They will have hookups, where they can park their trailers and things.

Jenkins: So the lake means a lot to you in the real estate business.

Elsie: Well, yes. Now I do not sell too many lots on Lake Spence.

Jenkins: But it means a lot to the abstract business.

Elsie: Yes, because you are going to get some title insurance. However, the vast amount of the business that we have had has been from the oil people for the last number of years.

Jenkins: The lake also brings some tourist business.

Elsie: It brings tourists. Yes, it helps the merchants.

Jenkins: I need to get something clear in my mind. The lake was built by private people.

Elsie: A municipal water district owns the lake.

Jenkins: Okay, so it belongs to...

Elsie: A group of people that have formed that district, the Municipal Water District, and their headquarters is in Big Springs. Now we,also out of Lake Spence, furnish water to Big Springs and to the towns west of us. I believe Odessa. I believe I am not mistaken in saying we do furnish water to Odessa; however, I think the Municipal Water District might own some wells there. I couldn't say for sure, but I think they do. We furnish water to Big Springs, Stanton, the towns to the west of us that do not have adequate water supplies. San Angelo has a waterline from Spence, because at one time their

lakes were very low. And they did build a waterline from San Angelo to Lake Spence. We call it the intake. They do have an intake on Lake Spence. And the dam that goes across the Colorado River, is named the Morning Glory Spillway. That is the name of our spillway.

Jenkins: This ownership, you keep saying 'we.' Do you own part of that Municipal Water?

Elsie: No, I do not own anything in the Municipal Water District.

Jenkins: So the town of Robert Lee has no ownership.

Elsie: No, we do not. It is owned by the people that belong to the Municipal Water District.

Jenkins: And they are making their money...

Elsie: Now we do get water, we can get water. Robert Lee has its own private lake, but we do have a line from Spence to Robert Lee.

Jenkins Those people who built the lake, they are making their money out of the business that is done around the lake.

Elsie: I would say so. I do not have any connection with those people other than as their title lady. That is the only connection I ever had, helping them to get their permits and their right of ways and their acreage they had to have.

Jenkins: Now you are involved, you and Skinny are involved in ranching, the abstract business, real estate business, and the savings and loan business. What is your role in the savings and loan?

Elsie: Really, the only way we are involved in savings and loan,

our son is with Lamar Financial Corporation, which is a parent of City Savings and Lamar Savings in Austin. Stanley has 50 offices. He is our son. His daddy is chairman of the board of City Savings, and I am on the board of City Savings. And that is our connection, and of course, we do support it as much as we can financially.

Jenkins: What do you see and feel and want for this abstract and the real estate part of the thing? Do you envision a retirement at all?

Elsie: Yes, I do, but I have no plan to retire from the real estate because I have always been active in public. I like public life. I like to mingle with people. And I think when you shut yourself off from the public that way, you are going to grow old. I am not as young as I used to be.

Jenkins: You plan to stay in the real estate business as long as you can.

Elsie: Yes, as long as I can. That gives me, as I say, excuse the expression, something to piddle with.

Jenkins: We are kind of to that point now where we have covered the outline, but this is your story, and we want to be sure that we get into it whatever you want. So are there things that I should have asked you and didn't, things that you might want to say that you haven't said yet?

Elsie: I can't think of anything. Of course, grandparents are always happy to mention about the grandchildren. Now we can just

talk from now on about grandchildren. I do have three grandchildren. My youngest grandchild is Hazel. I have two granddaughters and one grandson. My oldest granddaughter is a senior at the University of Texas, Naomi. Grandson, Stan, I believe, is a junior at the University of Texas. He is 20. And the youngest granddaughter is still in high school at Westlake. She will be 17 next week. So, of course, we are very proud of our daughter-in-law, Christie. She is everything in a daughter-in-law that we would have ever wanted in a daughter. We are very proud of our son and are proud of our daughter-in-law and especially of our grandchildren they have given to us. We are very fortunate. That makes our future very bright.

Jenkins: You bet. Okay, anything else?

Elsie: That's all.

Jenkins: Thanks a lot. I have enjoyed it.