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Interview with
DRUE CALHOUN
March 27, 1979

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Interviewer: Floyd Jenkins

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Approved:

Date:

[Signature]
Drue Calhoun
(Signature)
Margaret Calhoun
9-24-79

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Business Oral History Collection

Drue Calhoun

Interviewer: Dr. Floyd Jenkins

Place of Interview: 704 Magnolia, Denton, Texas Date: March 27, 1979

Dr. Jenkins: This is Floyd Jenkins recording for the Business Archives Project, North Texas State University in Denton, Texas. Today is March 27, 1979. I am interviewing Drue and Margaret Calhoun (Mr. and Mrs.) in their living room at 704 Magnolia in Denton, Texas. This interview is going to deal principally with the business life of Drue Calhoun who became a pioneer distributor in Texas of the automatic gasoline nozzle. Drue, let's start by going back and talking about your parents, unless you have good knowledge even farther back than that. Tell us when and where they came to this part of the country, what kind of work they did, when and where you were born, and kind of growing up and work experiences. Okay?

Drue Calhoun: Well, my mother came from Kentucky, and my dad was born in Texas. His folks came from Alabama, but he was born after they came to Texas.

Dr. Jenkins: Do you know about when they were born?

Drue Calhoun: My dad was born in 1880 or '81, and my mother was born

I am not sure , but about 1886 I think it was, because I was born in 1910. They were married in 1904 .

Jenkins: And where do you remember they were married?

Drue: They were married in Palo Pinto County. Gordon, Texas.

Jenkins: Gordon, Texas.

Drue: And they lived on a farm. They lived on this farm until 1911, because I was a year old when we moved off the farm. And we moved into Gordon, and he went to work for a general mercantile company, my dad. My mother never did anything other than being a housewife. There were three children. I had one sister that was four years older than I was, and I have one brother that is nine years younger than I am. We lived in this little town of Gordon, which was roughly three hundred and fifty people.

Jenkins: Is that still there?

Drue: Still there.

Margaret: Still has the same number of people.

Drue: Still got about three hundred and fifty people.

Jenkins: Is that right?

Drue: And he worked for this place, and one time during World War I he worked for T.P. Coal and Oil Company at Thunder, Texas, which is now a ghost town.

Jenkins: Yes, I know that very well.

Drue: And at that time there were roughly seven thousand people in Thurber, but we still lived in Mingus, Texas, which was about halfway between Thurber and Gordon. After World War I was over we moved back to Gordon, Texas, and he worked for the County on a road building crew. We moved to Denton after my sister finished high school and was going to start to college.

Jenkins: This was about what year?

Drue: 1925. And at the time that we moved to Denton, my sister was in her first year in college, my first year in high school, and my brother's first year to go to school.

Jenkins: Let us go back a little bit and talk about before you moved to Denton. While you were still in Gordon what kind of work, what kinds of things were you doing as a kid growing up?

Drue: I did any kind of work that was available, which sometimes was on a farm. I worked in a grocery store. And I worked for a garage and washed cars. And, incidentally, I drew that water of a well to wash cars with.

Jenkins: I don't suppose you had a paper route, did you?

Drue: No. There was no paper. We had no paper.

Jenkins: Gordon didn't have a paper?

Drue: And I have never understood why, as much as I liked ice cream, that I was never a soda sleet.

Jenkins: Is that right?

Drue: That worries me.

Also, I cleaned up a dentist office for our only dentist there, and we swept it out once a week.

Jenkins: A little different from now, I suppose.

Drue: Yes, the sanitary conditions weren't up to par at that time, but everybody made it. We had lots of fun out there, because you knew everybody, and people weren't hard to please.

Jenkins: What kind of farm work were you doing? What was going on around Gordon?

Drue: Anything that was on a farm. I picked cotton, and I have chopped cotton. I headed maize. I have gathered corn, and just about anything that there was around the farm.

Jenkins: Were you working almost entirely on the family farm, or did you hire out?

Drue: No, I worked on a farm for a family that had a boy that was my age, and I stayed out there and worked on the farm out there.

Margaret: This wasn't during school time. This was on Saturdays and summertime.

Jenkins: You were too young to work on a farm when your dad had a farm.

Drue: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: So by the time you started working on the farm you were a city boy living in the big town of Gordon.

Drue: That's right.

Margaret: Hid dad said that he had made his own living since he was ten. He said a lot of times in the winter he would have to borrow a little money from him to buy his clothes or something. But he said, "He always paid me back when he got a job in the summer." He said, "I never had to worry about him. He was on his own." He didn't have to be, because he had a good father and a good mother and a good home, but he just liked to be independent.

Jenkins: So you then moved to Dentin in '25.

Drue: To Denton in 1925, and my dad came here and went to work for Long and King Grocery Company. And I in turn went to work for them on Saturdays.

Jenkins: Was this a retail grocery?

Drue: Whoesale and retail.

Jenkins: On the northwest corner of the square.

Drue: There was a two-story building there, and they had the wholesale in the back of it, and it was retail right up on the corner, where Thomas Furniture is now. And then Long and King Grocery Company sold out the retail part of their store to Woodson-Harris. And Woodson-Harris closed that store out and moved it and combined it with the grocery store he had at the time. I went to work

for him. I worked for him for a while there, and then I went to work for Self Motor Company that were Chevrolet dealers.

Jenkins: Quinby's daddy?

Drue: Yes.

Jenkins: S. I. Self

Drue: S. I. Self, that's right. And I worked there in the summertime and after school. And I know I was working there in '26, some in '26 and '27 and on up . . . I had connections with Self Motor Company on up until in '32. Not full time.

Jenkins: What were you doing?

Drue: You name it, I did it.

Margaret: Shop foreman, parts manager.

Drue: I hauled cattle. I hauled anything that they traded for.

Jenkins: I understand they did lots of trading for animals and things.

Drue: They traded for lots of animals. And he had a farm out in Palo Pinto County where we came from, and it was my job to take anything that they traded for, which might be some hogs or some heifers or a load of corn, but I never saw the farm in the daylight.

Margaret: It just accidentally had to be at night so that you could be back at work at seven A.M.

Drue: That was night work.

Margaret: That wasn't extra pay.

Jenkins: Do you remember the baby chick incident?

Drue: The what?

Jenkins: I think Quinby tells a story about some guy who traded in a bunch of baby chicks. Do you happen to remember that?

Drue: I don't remember the chickens.

Jenkins: Okay.

Margaret: He must have got them in the daytime.

Drue: I have hauled hogs, cattle and corn and just about anything that people could trade for a down payment on a car, they would take it.

Jenkins: They said you were a shop foreman. You must have learned a lot about auto mechanics while you were there.

Drue: Well, back in those days you had to know a little bit about an automobile in order to drive it, because they weren't as perfected as they are now. But I worked for Mr. Self until 1932, and sometime in 1932, I went in the service station business.

Jenkins: Now you told us what year you were born, didn't you?

Drue: 1910.

Jenkins: Okay, so you were kind of young getting started in the business for yourself, weren't you?

Margaret: That was depression. You couldn't make a living working for somebody else.

Drue: But I bought out a service station from a man by the name of George Fritz, and I will tell you how much I paid for it and you will know that it was not a big operation. I gave Mr. Fritz a hundred and eighty-five dollars for his stock and equipment. And that was when I started into the business.

Jenkins: Where was this located?

Drue: It was where the First State Bank's parking lot is now, the one that is above . . .

Margaret: South Locust.

Drue: They have their drive-in windows under the bottom of it.

Jenkins: Okay.

Drue: Just north of the Methodist Church. And there was a little Sinclair service station there and a little eating place on that block at that time. And Ben Ivey was our wholesale distributor. And I had a hard time selling him the idea that I was old enough to own a service station, but we had very good relations at the time I operated the Sinclair Station.

Margaret: Oh, yes, you had to borrow the money to get that hundred and eighty dollars.

Drue: Yeah, I borrowed a hundred dollars from a cousin, and he still wonders if I paid him back.

Jenkins: He doesn't remember it, huh?

Drue: He doesn't remember it, but I did.

Jenkins: So you borrowed a hundred dollars to get into business for yourself at age twenty-two or thereabout.

Drue: And I had been trying to make enough money to get married on, and that's where Margaret comes in. But I couldn't make enough money working for somebody else to get married.

Margaret: It was a very responsible job, but they couldn't pay. He couldn't make a hundred dollars a month, I mean it was hard to make a hundred dollars a month.

Drue: But then I went into business there, and after I had been in business for about a year, then we did get married.

Jenkins: Were you selling gasoline and repairing cars? What all were you doing there?

Drue: We were in the gasoline business, and wash and lubrication work, and flat tires. You should have come along about that time, because we washed a car for fifty cents and lubricated it for fifty cents. Fixed a flat for thirty-five.

Jenkins: Were you doing mechanical repair?

Drue: No, we only had one bay at this station, and so we didn't do that kind of work. Oh, we would do some little mechanical jobs, fixing lights and all that kind of stuff, but not going in for the mechanical work as you see it in service stations now. After I had been there for a while, Mr. Self came and wanted me to come back over

there.

Margaret: He had cut his salary before he quit. He offered him double if he would come back.

Drue: But anyway, I stayed there for about eighteen months. Then I moved, a little bit later, down to a Magnolia service station, at that time, down on the next corner south. And I operated that service station in all about fifteen years.

Jenkins: Now that station is still there.

Margaret: Across from the Southern Hotel.

Drue: Some of your pretty close kinfolks worked for us for quite a number of years, Jack Williams.

Jenkins: Oh, yes.

Margaret: Jack, I didn't know Jack was kin to you.

Jenkins: Only in a vague sort of way.

Drue: In a way he is pretty close kin to you.

Jenkins: Peggy's sister's husband's brother in law.

Margaret: I've got it. The connection is a left-handed relationship there.

Drue: And we stayed on that, we operated on that corner for about fifteen years.

Jenkins: I take it you didn't go back with Self when he made that offer.

Drue: I did for a couple of months, and then I decided I didn't want to work for anybody else. So that's when I went

into the Mobil service station.

Jenkins: So that was between stations that you spent the two months with Self.

Drue: Yes.

Jenkins: Okay.

Margaret: Drue could never work for anybody else. He has his own way of doing things, and it was usually better than anybody else's.

Drue: Well, I wouldn't say that.

Margaret: Well, they made us a lot more money, let me put it that way.

Drue: But those were depression days, and you did a lot of credit business. And sometimes you collected and sometimes you didn't.

Jenkins: Kept them on the old . . . what did we call them? . . . credit pads that everybody kept.

Margaret: Yes, McCaskey register.

Drue: We kept ours in a grocery store file.

Jenkins: Yeah? But each customer had his own little pad, as I recall.

Margaret: No, we had tickets and you just pulled those tickets out every day.

Drue: It was put out by McCaskey and was fire proof.

Jenkins: It was more advanced than the one I am thinking about then, the old grocery store pads is what I am thinking about.

Drue: Yeah, it's a little different.

Margaret: But may I add that the first month that he went in business for himself, on paper now, he was buying for cash and selling for credit, so toward the end of the month we didn't go to the show and have a coke the same night. And most of the time we didn't go to the show. We were lucky to get the coke, we were dating. But on paper he was showing that he was making twice as much money as he made when he quit over there.

Jenkins: He just didn't have it in his pocket.

Margaret: He just didn't have it in his pocket, but in a year's time he was very solvent.

Drue: Well, it was all going back into the business.

Margaret: He was solvent.

Jenkins: Other than that first hundred dollars that you borrowed to get into that first station, did you have to finance much along to keep those stations going, or did you operate pretty much out of . . .?

Drue: That's the last money I borrowed.

Jenkins: The last you ever borrowed.

Margaret: No, honey, we borrowed, you had a^{government} priority to buy twenty thousand pairs of shoes, and we borrowed twelve thousand dollars just for twenty-seven days. That was after the war was over.

Jenkins: But not for the filling station.

Margaret: Oh, no.

Jenkins: We will get to that later.

Drue: I borrowed that hundred dollars to start in, and as I say we bought a hundred and eighty-five dollars of stock and equipment to open that service station. And then we went into the credit business, and we had twenty-nine dollars in the bank when we started. We made it, but it was close.

Margaret: He would keep a little book in his pocket, and if we saw somebody whose tires were worn out or looking like they needed new tires or new seat covers or something, he would jot their name down and when he wasn't very busy at the station he would call them and say, "I notice that you needed so and so. Would you be interested in letting me use this rainy day to put them on for you." He sold lots of things that way. But he never tried to sell anybody anything that they didn't need. But if they needed it, why, they were glad to let him do it.

Drue: But in this fifteen years that I said we were operating the Mobil station, I was out for about four years during World War II. I sold out and then came back and bought the same station out again after I came back from the Army.

Jenkins: This might be a good time to tell us about your Army career, somewhat anyway. When you went in, what you

did, when you got back, and what happened in between times, at least for historical purposes.

Drue: Well, I went into the Air Force in April of '43 and came out in November of '45. And the time that I was in the Air Force, I was stationed at Love Field for a while, and then went up into Canada and spent the rest of my time up in Canada. And what we were doing in Canada was . . . that was the headquarters for the Alaskan Division. And really, what they were doing was handling all the lendlease that was going to Russia. I was not a good soldier.

Margaret: He was a natural born civilian.

Drue: I was in a hurry to get out.

Margaret: So he went to work early in the morning, before he had to, and worked after he was supposed to in the evening. Hoping to help to get the war over. Wouldn't take his passes.

Drue: I was a ground soldier.

Jenkins: I see. You were in the Air Force, but you weren't a flyer.

Drue: That's right.

Jenkins: Okay.

Drue: I ran maintenance on gasoline service and equipment when I was at Love Field. And then in Canada I was in Air Corps Supply. I had an easy life in the Army.

Margaret: We lived up there. I got to go up there and live.

Drue: To show you how lucky you can be, fifty-six out of our immediate group at Love Field were called up to be shipped out. Fifty-five went to the South Pacific, and I went to Canada. One out of fifty-six. So that's what you call being lucky. Then I came back and I picked up where I left off in the service station.

Jenkins: Now you had sold that station? To whom?

Drue: A fellow by the name of Jack Gray.

Margaret: Not the lawyer.

Drue: Not the lawyer, Jack Gray, but Jack Gray who moved in here from Dumas, Texas, I believe it was. And then when I came back I bought him out, and I operated that station from '46 until '51. Then I sold out the service station and went into the nozzle business.

Jenkins: Now it was while you were running this station, however, that you discovered the nozzle business?

Drue: That's right.

Jenkins: Tell us how that came about.

Drue: I had been on a trip up through Yellowstone and up in through there, and I had serviced my car at a place. And they had a nozzle that I had never seen before. And so when I came back to Denton, I began to try to find some of those. I failed to get the name off of the nozzle there, and I couldn't find the company that

sold that nozzle. And so it rocked along there for a year or so, and I still hadn't been able to find that nozzle

Margaret: No, but he was working on it.

Jenkins: Let me ask you before you go on, how did that nozzle differ from what you were used to?

Drue: Well, it was the nozzle that would be automatic under certain conditions. And not only was it automatic, but it pumped an aerated stream of gasoline instead of a solid stream of gasoline. By having that aerated stream of gasoline it would let the air that was in the tank, because most of the tanks did not have bleeder tubes on them, they bled the air out of that tank through a vent in the gas cap. And when you filled the neck of that tank full of solid gasoline, you began to compress the air that was in that tank.

Jenkins: Are you talking about the tank on the car, or the tank at the station?

Drue: The tank on the car.

Jenkins: Okay.

Drue: And when you had compressed the air down to a certain point where the pressure on the inside of that tank was greater than the atmospheric pressure outside, then it would blow out the gasoline that was in the neck of that tank. And it was no respecter of persons. It would get

on you, it would get on your customer, or it would get on anything.

Margaret: The concrete out in the driveway was always wet with it.

Drue: But by the nozzle having a ventura in it, it was bled in the air into the gasoline making it foamy. So the air that was in the tank would bleed through the foam in the gasoline and would do away with your blowback, and it made such an improvement on that. And that was the main thing that I was looking at, more than anything when I first saw this up in Colorado, was the fact that it would do away with blowback. And I wasn't thinking so much of the standpoint of it being automatic, until after these fellows came down from New Jersey, and they were selling nozzles in this territory down in here.

Margaret: But they were on their way from New York and New Jersey to California. They weren't going to stay in one place.

Drue: They were just one-shot people. You would never see them, I have never seen them again since then. People like to buy equipment of any kind. Anything is just as good as the service. So they would come in and they would sell this nozzle. And they told you, they weren't covering up anything. They just said, "We are going through the country. We are selling nozzles." Incidentally, the day they showed me the nozzle, I bought them. And I was very fond of it, after one day. And that is when I told Margaret. I had told her in years

gone by when we would be operating a service station that someday I would find something that I would just have to sell. And she had asked me what it was, and I had told her I didn't know, I had never seen it. And so then, that night after we had used those nozzles on our station that one Saturday, I said, "This is it." Which it was 'it' all right, but not the brand that I wanted to sell.

Margaret: But the only brand that was available at that time.

Drue: It was the only brand that was available at that time, but it had a lot of flaws in it. And so then I began to be interested in selling that, which I did. I sold automatic nozzles as a rainy day business along with the service station.

Jenkins: You sold them from the service station?

Drue: Well, I would sell them from the service station if they wanted to come in there, but most of the time I went out and sold them.

Margaret: Nobody knew anything about them.

Drue: It was a new item in a way, and in a way it wasn't a new item because it had been on the market for a couple of years, but no one had ever pushed it. No one had ever put a holding device on it that would make it automatic.

Jenkins: Automatic meaning trip-off?

Drue: Yes.

Because any time that we could sell a man four nozzles in a service station, he could save one man's salary. And that was a conservative estimate, because with automatic nozzles one man could be servicing four automobiles at a time if it was necessary. It wasn't recommended, but if he got in a tight he could. And as long as he was putting gasoline in a customer's car, that customer was not going to get impatient because you weren't doing anything for him. You were doing something for him. You were doing just as much as you could have done had you been standing there holding it. And so it had so many possibilities, and service stations if there ever was anybody that needed to save a man's salary, a service station needed to save that salary.

Jenkins: Let me check on a couple of things here with you. Now how did you manage the time to take off from your service station to start making a few rounds to sell these things?

Drue: I told you back there a while ago that it was a rainy day business.

Jenkins: I see.

Margaret: He had several men employed at that time.

Drue: When you hit a week of rainy weather like this past week we had, a fellow with a service station and six or seven employees was in trouble because he couldn't wash cars, he didn't lubricate cars if he wasn't washing them.

And people weren't driving as much. They weren't buying as much gasoline. And if you weren't lubricating their car, they weren't having their oil changed, and so you had six employees there that you couldn't lay off because it was rainy weather. Because just as soon as the sun came out, you needed a dozen men.

Jenkins: Apparently at that time a lot more people worked in service stations than work in service stations today.

Drue: Sure. That's right.

Jenkins: Tell us about that a little bit.

Drue: Because we did so much more stuff in service stations, and we gave stuff away like the fellows that are operating service stations today wouldn't believe, the kind of service that we gave people. And the prices that we charged were in keeping with what people were making, too.

Margaret: It wasn't a filling station. It was a real service station when Drue ran one. And everybody wasn't employing six people at that time. Drue always had the best service station in town.

Jenkins: When I pulled in there, what services did you offer me or give me?

Drue: When you came into that station and you were going to buy, say, a dollar's worth of gasoline or five gallons of gasoline, which there were lots of dollar sales, five

gallon sales at that time. And a ten gallon sale was a pretty big sale.

Jenkins: What's your recollection of gasoline prices at that time?

Drue: Well, I have seen gasoline back in some of the east Texas gas stations when they were running hot gasoline, I have seen lots of nine cent gasoline, but I never sold any of it.

Jenkins: Hot gasoline?

Drue: Well, a lot of it was tax free. They were coming out of east Texas with it. There was, maybe, only two cents a gallon tax on gasoline at that time. We never had price wars back in those days, but gasoline would stay at, say, seventeen cents on regular and nineteen cents on ethyl. And it stayed that way for maybe five years and the price never changed on the pump. We were operating, maybe, on four and a half cents and paying our rent out of that. Which in reality, we were winding up with about three and a half cents profit.

Jenkins: I interrupted you while you were telling us the services that you gave if I pulled in there.

Drue: All right, if you pulled in there and did that, the first thing we would do, before the days of the automatic gasoline pump, we had to have a man hit that tank and stand there and fill that tank and then he would come up and clean your windshield. And at that time

he would say, "May I check under your hood?" All right, when he checked under that hood, he not only checked your oil he gave a visual check of your fan belt, your battery cables, and while he was under there he would pull a battery cap and check your battery water. And, of course, the radiator we checked.

Margaret: Sweep the floors out, both front and back.

Drue: We had a fellow worked for us, and it's the one I said was pretty close to kin to you, that I had a customer tell me one time, he says, "When I come into your station and Jack Williams services my car," he says, "I feel in good shape to go on the road because he gave my car an appraisal while I was in there." And, you know. when you went out on the road if we serviced your car, it had had a visual check on whether he had a bad fan belt, or whether he had a battery cable there, or what-not, or a leaky radiator or anything like that, you got that. And your tires were checked. And then after your windshield was cleared we swept your car out, the front compartment we always swept out.

Margaret: And Drue always told a new boy that went to work, he said, "Now I want you to sell a person all that they need, but if I ever catch you selling them something that they don't need, well, you are fired." We had the same customers all the time, mostly, we had some people who came through of course, but most of it was college

trade from North Texas and TWU, and he had every old maid in town trading there. He said, "Now if you sell them what they need, we will make a good living, and we will have good satisfied customers, but the first one that you sell something they don't need they will find out about it, and then we have lost that person for a customer and you are without a job." And our boys were pretty good about it, too. Drue watched them pretty close.

Jenkins: Now you did all of the lubricating and washing and waxing. Did you get into the mechanical repair business there?

Drue: We did there, yes. We had a tune-up shop.

Margaret: The first motor tune-up shop that a Magnolia station was ever allowed, but he had to sell them the idea of letting him do that.

Drue: In 1940 the Pontiac House here closed up, didn't sell out, closed up. And Pat Hamilton had the dealership there. He was the one that closed up the Pontiac House. And he said, "I have got a mechanic. You know who he is, and I know he is good, and you know he is good." And he said, "He needs a job." He said, "Why don't you open a tune-up shop?" And I said, "Well, I have thought about it a whole lot, but it just never came to the point where at the time I was wanting to do it that there was a good man available." And he said, "Well,

this man is really a good one, and he is available."

It was Joe Normile.

Jenkins: Now was this the Pat Hamilton who is now in the real estate business?

Margaret: Yes.

Jenkins: Okay.

Drue: And so I talked to Joe and he said, yeah, he would like to come to work for me. And Pat had recommended him so very highly, and I had known Joe for years because I worked for the Chevrolet people and he worked for the Ford people at one time. We had played some ball together, against each other. And so I began to try to make arrangements to open up a tune-up shop, which I only had a one car space is all I had. And so I checked with Mobil Oil Company, their sales rep, and he said, "I don't have the authority to let you do that" because we were going to have to build a building on their property.

Margaret: It was their company owned station.

Drue: And so he said, "I will talk to the service station supervisor." So he immediately came up there, and he told me under no circumstances could I operate a tune-up shop. And when he told me that there was no way that he would allow me to operate a tune-up shop on Magnolia's property, I told him, I said, "Well, I have asked Mr. Bovo and now I have asked you." And I said, "You have turned me down flat so I am going to go to the next guy up and talk to

him." I went to a Mr. Tooms who was district manager for Mobil Oil Company. And when I talked to him, he listened, and when I got through he said, "It sounds good. What does Jake Barso," the man that had turned me down "what does he say?" And I said, "Well he told me there was no way that I could do that." So he says, "Well, why don't you go ahead and eat lunch somewhere and come back after one o'clock, and I will have lunch with Jake and we will talk this out." So when I came back he said, "You go ahead with your plans for this." "Now," he said, "there will be one thing that you will have to do." He said, "You go back to Denton and check with your Fire Marshall and let him tell you what kind of building you can put on there that will meet with the fire code." And he said, "Then the only thing that we require is that you run a false front on it to conform with the front of our building so it will look something like that, and not only that it has got to be portable because next year we may not want it in there." And so we did that, and we built this building. We bought all new equipment. We got a tune-up shop there that was a good tune-up shop, and Joe Normile ran that like no tune-up shop had ever been run before. And he had been used to making thirty-five dollars a week, and we never paid him less than a hundred dollars a week. And

back in 1940 that was a pretty good salary for a mechanic.

Jenkins: Yes, it was.

Margaret: He made fifty percent of all the profit, and we took our expenses out of our half and did the collection.

Drue: We split it right down the middle, and it was a good thing for Joe and for us. And here was what Magnolia looked at real close. This fellow Barso had said our gasoline business would fall off when we started doing mechanical work. Our gasoline business increased when we started doing that. And when they did that, they were interested. And they began to bring other station operators down to look at our operation down there.

Jenkins: So you pioneered this thing?

Drue: No, I wouldn't say that I pioneered that. I was the first one that Magnolia ever gave the go-ahead on

Jenkins: You pioneered for Magnolia.

Drue: In the Dallas district here. They might have had it somewhere else. We had the first one in the Dallas district. And, of course, here is the thing. There were a lot of maybe, mechanics that had service stations, and they did mechanical work, but they didn't have just a regular tune-up shop.

Margaret: He didn't have heavy overhauls and things. Just strictly tune-up.

Jenkins: Is that kind of like Insta-Tune is today? Just something like that?

Margaret: No, it was more than that.

Drue: Did you say Insta-Tune?

Jenkins: Something like that.

Drue: Oh, no. No. We went further than that. We would grind valves and we did brake work of all kinds, and we did, oh, quite a bit of mechanical work. Anything Joe wanted to get into, well, we would do, but we didn't do any big truck overhaul or anything like that. That would tie up our space. And so when I sold out in 1943 to go in the Army, then Joe stayed on with this fellow Jack Gray.

The fact of the business is, he named one son after this fellow, Jack Gray. But then Joe went in business for himself while I was away in the Army. So I never had a tune-up shop after I came back out of the Army, except for one time when I got a mechanic and opened up a tune-up shop, and I had so much trouble with him that I

Margaret: He didn't want to do things over if they were not right.

Drue: He wouldn't check his work out so I just got out of the tune-up business.

Jenkins: Did you move the portable building out?

Drue: No, no, it stayed there until I sold out, and then I sold it to Grace Barrow Chevrolet Company, and they moved it

across the street on their used car lot where it still sets today.

Jenkins: Was the reason you got out of the service station business that you got so busy with the nozzle business?

Drue: No.

Margaret: Well, it was just a better deal. We could see that it had a lot more future.

Drue: The profit was short in the service station business.

Margaret: Lots of static.

Drue: And it was hard for you to hire good men. You could do a good volume of business and you were pretty lucky if you netted ten percent. And I am not talking over and above your salary, I am talking about, that was your salary. That ten percent. And so anything that I could get into would have a better margin of profit.

Margaret: You see, he had always wanted to do this other thing, but he hadn't found what it was. When he found that, well, there never was any doubt.

Drue: And then was when I decided that whatever we did, whatever we sold, we wouldn't have a crew of people that would have to make a living before we did.

Jenkins: You got out of the service station before you had a real commitment to the nozzle business?

Drue: Yes.

Jenkins: Okay.

- Margaret: You could know that anything that good, you couldn't keep from selling them. I would sit there in the station, after I quit teaching, and kept the books down there. And those boys would come in, with standard nozzles, they had gas on their britches legs all the time. They would put their foot up on the bumper, you know, to fill the gas and the tank would flow over. Every one of them. And they would come in there to an open flame heater, and I kept them pushed away. I was always pushing them away because I was afraid one of them would burn up one day. And then when we got these, well, there would be, like at the end of the day there would be as much as a teacup full spilled all morning, you know, or all day. Well, that was nothing compared to what it had been. And they weren't standing there, it wasn't on the person
- Drue: It wasn't on the person, it was down on the driveway itself.
- Jenkins: Did you ever actually have a fire?
- Drue: I never did, but there have been some good fires, I tell you.
- Jenkins: In Denton, that you remember?
- Drue: Well, I am sure there have been. Right now I don't recall.
- Margaret: But it wasn't on account of the automatic nozzle. It was gasoline.

- Drue: The longer a person works with it, the more he respects it.
- Jenkins: Well, now you had been selling nozzles while you were in the gasoline station, but . . .
- Drue: As I told you earlier back in there, this nozzle that I saw in Colorado, and the first ones that I bought, was so far ahead of a standard nozzle but still it had a lot of shortcomings because it had to be oiled every day. And if it came in when it rained hard or it froze hard, you would have to have the nozzle down and clean it up, because this nozzle worked on a vacuum. And that vacuum is not strong enough to overcome the grit that might get into it. It had an outside trip on it, and dust would get in it. Now, when you would get out into west Texas, that nozzle would just get you into trouble quick after a sand storm. You were really in trouble with it.
- Margaret: It was still better than a standard.
- Drue: It was still better than a standard nozzle, and I would have gone through and oiled it every day.
- Jenkins: Now what kind of pump was being used? This was after the old gravity feed hand pump.
- Drue: Oh, yes. An automatic nozzle would never work on gravity feed. It would work if you had enough head pressure to maintain over seven pounds of flow pressure. But at the time that you had a tank out here that was operating

on gravity feed, and say that it had five hundred gallons of gasoline in it, the pressure at the end of that hose would be different when it was full than it would be when it had two hundred gallons. And anytime you dropped under seven pounds of flow pressure on an automatic nozzle, it was not strong enough to set up your vacuum. And that was the principle that the nozzle was designed on.

Jenkins: When you started into the service station business, did they still have the old hand pump ten-gallon gravity feed?

Drue: You bet, and that was one thing that you had trouble about, because most of the time the fellow before you didn't pump it back out, and it slowed your service down because you had to stop and pump that up.

Jenkins: Now when did they phase those out? How did that come about, phasing those out?

Drue: Well, they came out with a visible pump, the old tall visible pump. And there was a station right across the street from me that, I used to feel so sorry for myself because their tanks were filled with pressure. They had their gasoline under pressure and all they had to do was raise a lever and it would fill this thing up.

Jenkins: They didn't have to pump it then.

Drue: I had to pump the ones that I had. And that was a great improvement.

Jenkins: Now this is about what year, what time period?

Drue: That would have been '32, '33.

Jenkins: When they came out with the pressure pump?

Drue: Yes, they had this pressure over there. Smith-Hamilton Motor Company had these pumps over there, and I was right across the street from them. And I don't know, it might not have been too successful. I don't know, because that's the only station I ever saw that had that system.

Margaret: When you went down to that Mobil station, Honey, you still had a visible pump down there. That was in '33. That was the year we married.

Drue: I didn't go down there until '34. And we still had visible pumps down there then. Well, we had visible pumps, I believe on through '36 maybe, because they rebuilt that station in '37. Our new pumps were electric, I know. And I can't remember whether we had electric pumps before that or not.

Margaret: I don't know. I was teaching then.

Drue: I know we had it in '37.

Jenkins: Okay, let us get back now to the transition between going out of the service station business and really getting into the nozzle business.

Drue: All right. When I sold out the service station in 1951, I didn't do anything for a couple of months. My dad was sick at the time, and I was pretty busy there.

Margaret: But we knew what we were going to do.

Drue: But I knew what I was going to do. And so I went back and I bought this same type nozzle. I bought a bunch. I bought a hundred of this Buckeye Nozzle that I had used in the station there, when I was in there, and I had sold some of them. And before I had sold out, the hundred nozzles out, OPW, which incidentally I sold OPW nozzles ten years before I knew what OPW meant. OPW is an old company in Cincinnati that is known as Ohio Pattern Works, but I had never known what it meant. And they came down here and, of course, Buckeye had all of the business. They had the only nozzle that was being sold as an automatic nozzle. Then OPW came to Texas, and the first thing that they had to do was clear the Weights and Measures Department in Austin which is another thing that I never did understand, but it is under the Agriculture Department, the Weights and Measures. But they cleared that sometime in July or something like that, 1951. And when they did I went to the manufacturer's representative for OPW in Dallas which was Vogel-Swygard. And they were a manufacturer's rep and warehoused and assigned stock for OPW. And, of course, they had just gotten the nozzle. They really didn't know how strong it was or anything about it, but it was a lighter nozzle. Where the Buckeye nozzle

weighed over seven pounds, the OPW nozzle weighed three and a half pounds. And not only that, it had a field trip-mechanism where it could stand a west Texas sandstorm for three or four days and never affect it in any way. Never had to be any maintenance on it at all. And not only that, the trip mechanism on the OPW nozzle was about two and a half inches lower than it was on a Buckeye. So consequently you could get into the fill pipe through the door on the fender, which most of your fill pipes went through the side of the fender. And that nozzle would go into that where the Buckeye, the trip mechanism was so high it wouldn't go in there. It was much more bundlesome. So everybody that had a Buckeye nozzle at that time wanted to trade for this OPW nozzle.

Margaret: When we started out we bought our nozzles. We would go any direction we wanted to go, and we sold them retail right there on the driveway, because nobody knew anything about them. They were available, but a salesman would come from an automotive house or some place that sold them. They would have a catalog in one of those satchels, you know, and they would be selling, maybe, a thousand items, and that salesman didn't know anything about the nozzle. So he didn't push it. That was something that you had to educate the public how good they were.

Margaret: They didn't know about them. They just didn't buy them that way. They were not bought that way.

Drue: The average salesman did not have that nozzle in a catalog for this reason: it would have been in a pump company. Buckeye Brass and Iron Works was up in Dayton, Ohio, and then OPW was in Cincinnati. It seems funny that they would all wind up in that same area, but that is where the gasoline service and equipment was manufactured up in there. So there would be very few people that would even have it available for sale, because if I wanted to buy it I was trying to buy it through automotive places. When I came back from Colorado that time, I was trying to buy it through automotive places. If I had gone to a pump company, I might could have got some information.

Margaret: But they weren't selling them. They just knew them. They would have had some information, but they were an item that had to be sold as an individual item. And that's what Drue wanted.

Drue: I wanted a specialty line, is what I wanted.

Jenkins: Had you got involved in selling Buckeye?

Drue: Oh, yeah.

Jenkins: So you were selling Buckeye, and OPW came along.

Drue: And OPW came along.

Jenkins: Now were you about the first in the area to sell for Buckeye?

Drue: Well, when these fellows came down from New Jersey that time, I got interested in selling them. And then there was another fellow that worked for a parts house over in Dallas. And so he was their shipping clerk. And he got interested in selling those, and he sold quite a few of them, oh, when he would get off from work and Saturdays and stuff like that when he wasn't working. And so he and I were about the first ones that began pushing anything at all.

Margaret: But you were the first one that did it all together as a full time business.

Drue: You could go anywhere you wanted to, but the first thing you do, well, if this thing goes wrong who is going to service it? And that was what we had to do, was to sell them the idea that we were going to be here tomorrow.

Margaret: But when we first sold them, Drue said, "I have no more idea how long this nozzle will last." You know, there was no precedent, nobody had had them. And he said, "I don't know whether they will wear out and have to replace them completely, or whether they can be repaired, or anything about it." So we sold them knowing that this was true, that we had to learn right along with it. But he said, "I would think that anything mechanical could be repaired." And he told me, "The main thing that worries me, I am going to have to allow

those people something on a trade-in." And he said, "That's what is going to ruin me. What am I going to do with all those nozzles that I take on trade-in. No matter how cheaply I get them, they will just be junk." Well, the funny part is, we are still laughing about that, because all the years we had it, we never got enough trade-ins because every one of those nozzles could be repaired and put right back in service. And we were out buying what a person had thought was a junk nozzle to rebuild, to repair, to use. Charlie Kregel now, whose business is twice what ours was, (he took it at the same age Drue was when he took it,) and was full of enthusiasm. But Drue was, you know, forty years old or something like that when he started doing it. So we never wanted a great big business. We wanted to do it ourselves, you know, and we knew we could make a good living and not have all the static. When we pushed that button and our garage door went down, our overhead stopped. And it was an ideal situation.

Jenkins: So you got into the repair business.

Margaret: You see that nozzle business has changed its facets any number of times. And then there were a lot of people that saw that he was making pretty good money, or they thought he was because, you know, we drove a good car, and it was a good business. And practically no competition.

And then there were a lot of people that said, "Well, how could I start a business?" Drue said, "Come up here, and I will sell you the parts and I will sell you the nozzles." So it became wholesale. It just gradually went from retail to part-retail and part-wholesale. And he would teach them how to do it and sell them the parts.

Drue: I think that it was interesting in that when we went into this, it was a new item. No one knew what it was about. So I would go into a town. I would not know a single operator, and not a single operator would know who I was. I would go in there and I would show them this nozzle. Well, of course, you are going to hit some people that are skeptical about it.

Margaret: "Why, it won't work, it won't work."

Drue: And so I would go into a town, and maybe I would work two days in that town, and I wouldn't sell a nozzle. All I would do would be put nozzles on for trial. And I would say, "Well, I just have something here that I want you to try. I'll put this on here. I'll make the change and everything, and I will put these nozzles on here, and I will go home, and I will be back in ten days. And if you like the nozzles, I'll sell them to you. If you don't like them, that's the only story I've got. If that nozzle doesn't sell you while I am gone, nothing I could do

will sell you that nozzle." And so we would put those on and maybe the guy would say, "Well, just put them on those two pumps over there, because if I was going to buy them I wouldn't buy over two of them." And so we would put those on there, and the next one down here, we would put on all of them. Buy anyway, we would put those on there and this fellow down here he possibly wouldn't let you put any on. But anyway, you put on nozzles until you ran out and then you went home. And when you went back ten days later, (here was one thing that was so gratifying about the business,) you would sell over a hundred percent. Always sell over a hundred percent because the man that let you put on two, he says, "Well, I want those two on the other pumps over there." And this fellow over here, that didn't let you put any on, he had told this man over here, "Now, when that guy comes back, well, send him over here." Because he stood across the street over there and watched that man service a car and give it two-man service on every car, and maybe service and everything like that. And so any time you went back, this fellow here had a friend who wanted you to come and call on him.

Margaret: All you had to do was expose them to it.

Jenkins: How much were they selling for?

Drue: At that time they were selling for \$22.95, and with this

inflation, I imagine they are around \$50.00 a piece now. But here is the thing, as I told you earlier there, any time a man can save a man's salary, and it wasn't the idea of laying a man off, but he was always short on good men anyway. And so the average service station operator will tell you that he had rather have a good set of automatic nozzles than have a green man helping him.

Margaret: A fellow from OPW, I don't know if he was the president or what, came to Dallas from Vogel-Swygard, and they called Drue and asked him to come down there, and this was the first time that anybody had ever done this in the United States full time, and they wanted to talk to him. And they said, "We understand you had a good paying business, and then you quit and are selling these nozzles as your full time occupation. We want to know how you happened to do it." You know, it was an unusual thing, and they couldn't understand him doing it. Well, there are a lot of people doing it now. But I will tell you another thing. It would have been too good if he hadn't had a little static that has to come along, thorns, along with the good. You wouldn't have believed the business was as pleasant, and they just almost take them away from you. But here comes along the oil companies, who are always quick to want to clear their skirts of any damage

that might be done. Like they will send out a communique that, if you put any gasoline in a glass jug, you are responsible for it. You know they are not allowed to do this, but that is just in case a suit comes up so their skirts are clear. Well, they sent out communiques to all these stations, or to most of them and said, "If you put an unattended nozzle, (which is an automatic nozzle,) we are not responsible for any damage that is done." So that was just clearing their skirts. But the first thing you know a fire marshall got hold of that information. Well, he goes down to this station and he says, "That's a dangerous thing you are doing there." He says, "You will have to take those off, or we are going to lock your pumps up." Then those stations call Drue and said, "We are in trouble." So he had to make a run up there and go see that fire marshall, and he had been selling on the fact that it was safer rather than more dangerous. And for a while there, some of the towns would just frighten you over here. We would put nozzles on every station in Wichita Falls and Denison and places. Not every station but most of them, and they would just be paralyzed with threats. Well, we didn't know but what they would hold to the threat.

Drue: Here is the whole situation on this, was that the nozzle and the old Buckeye nozzle that I was talking about that

had so many defects and stuff like that about it, had to be Underwriters approved. All right. They weren't selling any nozzles. So some guy conceived the idea of the holdon clip on there. All right. When he put that hold-open clip on it and it became automatic, boy it went to selling head over heels. All right. The people that made the nozzle were not the people that made the hold-open device. And when you put the hold-open device on there, you killed the Underwriters approval. It was no longer Underwriters approved, and yet it was safer than anything that had ever handled gasoline before. But nevertheless it wasn't Underwriters approved. And so when a fire marshall found out that this is not Underwriters approved, then he was doing his job. But if the nozzle people had been making the hold-open device, then they would have gotten the Underwriters approval with the device on there. This nozzle, before Underwriters approved it, had to be put on an automatic reset machine and go through a hundred thousand trials without a failure before Underwriters would approve the clip. And nobody was going to the expense of doing that, although the nozzle companies knew that they weren't selling any nozzles until somebody broke the law and put the clip on it. And then there was a fellow up in Tullytown, Pennsylvania, that built the first of the hold-open devices, a fellow by the name of

Paul Gravell. And he would sell these clips. I bought them from him by the barrel.

Jenkins: And you put them on?

Margaret: We bought the nozzles and made them automatic.

Drue: We put them on, and that's the only way they would sell because . . . now here's the thing. In Fort Worth the fire marshall paid them no mind whatsoever. We sold them with the clips on them and stuff like that, and we never had a run-in, but over in Dallas they didn't have that.

Margaret: Oh, for years Dallas couldn't use the automatic nozzle.

Drue: So here's the thing, these boys at these stations needed this help so bad that they began to carry blocks of wood or put a cigaret lighter under it or something like that.

Margaret: And that was dangerous.

Drue: And I had one boy over in Dallas, he had some big wood dominoes. And this one here, he had a notch up here and then he had it down here, and he notched them different and he could run that pump at a different speed, you see, with those different notches on there just like those notches on a hold-open device. But they would get that, and I had one customer over there, I had sold him the nozzles. And I told him when I sold them to him that they might make him take off the clips, and they did make him take them off. And so when they got back around

the corner, he put the clips back on. So they were standing there watching him when he put them on, and they got him and that cost him a little money when he did it.

Margaret: But now the clips are on from the factory. You see, the fact that people are scared of new things, anything that's progress they are afraid of.

Drue: But this Paul Gravell, I used to buy those clips from him in five hundred lots. I bought this clip package which had a clip, a clip spring, and an anchor spring, and an extra long pin to hold that in. I got those for twenty-five cents, and I would put them on there. Well, then OPW saw how wonderful this clip was on there, and how it sold their nozzle. And so they immediately . . . I don't remember whether it was OPW or whether it was Paul Gravell. Paul Gravell I believe it was, got the Underwriters approval on the clip. And when he did, well, anybody who bought a clip was going to have to buy that clip from him. So OPW goes out and they buy Paul Gravell out, and they gave him plenty for it. But it didn't make much difference because the day that they bought that clip, they bought that patent right, and the manufacturing deal on that thing, that clip went from twenty-five cents to a dollar twenty-five. Went up five hundred percent on that, so they got their money

back. I never did feel too sorry for them because they got their money back, and then they began to pack the clip with the nozzle. But that is what put the nozzle over. Service station operation is a good business, but it is a short profit business. They have trouble and they have lots of turnover in their operators. And we used to go into a town where we didn't know anybody, and we would put these nozzles on for trial. The fellow said, "Yeah, I would like to have them, but I don't have the money to pay for them." "Okay, we will sell you the nozzle. You pay us for one nozzle a month." He didn't know us, and we didn't know him. We had no way to check credit or anything like that.

Margaret: You wouldn't believe the way we ran our business.

Drue: We would sell those things, and one time I had nozzles strung from Pampa to Galveston north and south, and from Texarkana to Monahans east and west. I don't mean all stations, but I am talking about having them strung out.

Margaret: We would go to places we liked to work.

Drue: You go back into that station, that old boy, you look around there and you don't see the guy that was there when you put that on there. You say, "Well, where is so and so?" "Well, I bought him out." "Well, did he

say anything to you about those nozzles out there on those pumps belonging to me? They are not paid for yet." "Yeah, he told me, and I am supposed to pay you for one nozzle a month." And I am telling you that I can say this because I was in the service station business so long, lots of us old service station boys had pretty hard times and they were pretty good boys, I'll tell you.

Jenkins: You didn't lose much then?

Drue: I lost less than one half of one percent and never checked anybody's credit.

Margaret: And never wrote an ugly note to anybody. The only times we ever really got beat was two pretty good size pump companies that went bankrupt because they were living beyond their means, the owner was living too high, and we got taken for a little bit there.

Drue: But all in all it was the most pleasant business that I have ever had. I have never dreaded to go back to a man's place after you had sold him something, because most of the time he had a message for you to go see somebody else. And he never wanted you to take them back.

Jenkins: Let us go back and see how you got into the repair business now. We didn't clear that up real good.

Drue: The way I got in the repair business, as I said a while ago, any piece of equipment is just as good as the service that you can get on them. A Ford automobile wouldn't be any good if you couldn't get it serviced. And why I said Ford I don't know. I have always driven a General Motors. But anyway, I put this in here, that would be one thing that I would do would be to give service. And at the time that I started in selling OPW, I don't even know how long an automatic nozzle was guaranteed for, because they never put it in there other than defective workmanship material. So when we started out selling nozzles, I put a year's free maintenance on that nozzle.

Margaret: His guarantee, not OPW's.

Drue: Anytime in twelve months that that nozzle failed to operate, I would repair or replace it free of charge. Not on a prorated basis, but a complete replacement or repair. And so, so many of these fellows in service stations and garages, too, had been ripped off so many times by fellows going up and down the road repairing jacks or repairing this or that, or sold them some stuff, and then they never saw them again. And I had to overcome that, that I wasn't just going into it just for an overnight quick profit, that I would be there to service them. And after you sold them the idea that you would be back, they wouldn't hesitate to buy from you. And

most of the time they would wait for you, because they would know that you would be back if you were coming back into that territory all the time. And I had to look at it from a service angle, because if I went out here and sold a service station four automatic nozzles, and he got them paid for and one of them quit, he didn't want to buy a new nozzle if for the fourth of the price of a new nozzle he could have it repaired. At that, your parts were at a minimum and stuff like that, and most of it was a labor deal. And so I wanted that angle of it. I wanted the repair work because you would either make this territory. . . When we used to work retail all the time, I would go in the station, maybe he didn't need anything but a clip spring or something like that, but we took care of it right then. If I hadn't taken care of the service on that, I couldn't have sold that fellow nozzles again. And the twenty-three years I was in this nozzle business, I had customers that I sold not one set of nozzles to, but maybe ten sets of nozzles from one station to the other.

Margaret: We had a customer in Bryan, Texas, that told Drue, he said, "I am satisfied with a guaranteed service. They don't cost that much. When my nozzle has been on a year, come by and sell me some new nozzles." Because we've got a good exchange price. And he said, "I want to keep new nozzles all the time so I don't have to

worry about it."

Drue: I have gone into his place and put nozzles on when he wouldn't even be in town, but his year was up, and he told me, "Any time my year is up I am ready to buy a new set of nozzles."

Margaret: We kept a card catalog, that was part of my work, of when we sold them and when the year had been up.

Jenkins: Now on your year guarantee, do you have any idea what percentage of those you had to service?

Drue: I have no idea. I never tried to keep up with it. This is one reason that I wanted to get into it to get away from detail, because here is the thing. Every time we sold a fellow a set of nozzles, we had a book by the town, that we sold this man here four nozzles on a certain date. All right, if his time was over to what our book said, then we said, "Now you had these nozzles longer than you think you have." And so we would charge him for fixing it, if his request was out of line for service, what I mean, free service.

Margaret: He fixed a lot of them free, too.

Drue: But for knowing the percentage, I don't.

Jenkins: Do you have any idea that you were servicing half of them over the year?

Margaret: No, no.

Jenkins: Or twenty-five percent.

Margaret: No.

Jenkins: Ten.

Drue: I would say that we wouldn't give free service on ten percent of them.

Margaret: Now I will tell you another thing that was hard and Drue never could really make a person believe it, so he didn't say anything to them about it. He just fixed it. But the nozzle has to have seven pounds of pressure to work, because it's on a vacuum. And if your pump is slow or erratic, which a lot of pumps' pressure is not always constant. Anytime you had a slow pump or one that lost its pressure, your nozzle immediately failed. And that's why you didn't put the nozzle in the tank and go home for lunch. You were down there so you could get it if it was going to start running over. But when Drue would go in there and find out that the nozzle was not at fault, it was pretty hard for him to convince that man that it was his pump, although we tried to explain to a person that the pump pressure had to be a certain amount, or the nozzle would automatically fail, wasn't supposed to work. But they didn't remember that. So Drue, instead of trying to . . . If they were doubtful about it, he would just open

the pump. up and fix the pump . He wasn't a pump man, but he knew why it was failing.

Drue: I knew what we had to have on there, and I knew that there was one or two brands of pumps that were hard to keep pressure up on. Also, a lot of times, they would have a loose belt on an electric motor on it. And so I would go in there and adjust the belt which took me, maybe, two or three minutes or something like that. Or set up a by-pass on a pump that took me five minutes or something like that. And I could make this man happy with the nozzles, when if I had said, "No, it's not the nozzle's fault here. You get your pump man out there." Which is really, maybe, what he needed. But I would say that a lot of the calls that we would make, I would say fifty percent of the calls that we would make on a defective nozzle, would wind up being a defective pump. Or they would have a hose out here that had wire wound into it to keep it from collapsing, but that hose had been laid out there and trucks had run over it and flattened it out. And it wasn't letting enough gasoline through there to . . . the pump was doing all right.

Margaret: They knew Drue would fix it, but they would have to pay for a pump man to come out there.

Jenkins: How long did it take you to become a pump repairman?

Drue: I don't know anything about pumps.

Jenkins: You repaired some, apparently.

Drue: Well, I did that from necessity. It kept my nozzles sold by being able to do that.

Margaret: And we went to one east Texas town that we had never been in before, and we picked the nicest looking service station, a good-looking service station that looked like it would be a busy one. It also had two OPW nozzles on it. Well, Drue wondered why they weren't using the other nozzles. He said, "There is something wrong here, and I am going to go in here and find out, because this looks like the best station in town, and if they are not using them the other stations will not use them" So he went up there and introduced himself and said, "I notice you've got a couple of nozzles here." "Well," he said, "the guy that sold them to me, well, they are not working right." And he said, "What did you say your name was?" And Drue said, "Drue Calhoun from Denton, Texas." He said, "You're the one. You sold them to me." And Drue says, "Well, I don't think so." Drue came out to the car and I had my little black book with me. We had never been inside the town before, and he said, "Honey, did we sell this man these nozzles?" I looked at him like I thought he was out of his mind. I said, "You know we have never been in this town before." He said, "I know that, and you know that,

but that man doesn't know that." He said, "Somewhere or other he picked up my name."

We found out later on how he had heard it. They thought Drue invented them. Half the people on the road thought he invented them, which he didn't. But anyway they said, "Yeah, that's the name. I know the name Drue Calhoun from Denton, Texas, and nozzles." So Drue said, "Well, let me have your nozzles. Let me get them up in working shape for you." So he repaired that man's nozzles right there on the driveway and got them all working good, and the man was tickled to death. He still thought we had sold him the nozzles, but we didn't. That made me mad. I said, "What did you charge him for fixing those nozzles?" He said, "Well, nothing. You know I didn't sell them to him, and I do to, but he doesn't know it. And now he will be a satisfied nozzle customer, and then I can go around here in town and sell the rest of these people nozzles."

Jenkins: Well, did you do most of your repair work on the spot or did you bring them to the shop?

Margaret: On the spot at first. And then it got where it was too complicated, as he spent too much time on the road.

Drue: Most of my maintenance work, free maintenance, I did right there on the spot, because it might mean five minutes. Well, let me trade the nozzle out, and stuff

like that. Within a year's time I knew there couldn't be much wrong with it unless the nozzle had been crushed or something. And I would take care of that alright. I didn't have to give the man another nozzle. I didn't have to come home and repair that nozzle. I could do it quicker there. Now this was all when we were working retail. When we first started into this. Now as we went further along in this and got nozzles scattered all over the country, then we couldn't give the type service that that man would want, because he is way off up here in Pampa or Shamrock or somewhere like that.

Jenkins: Now before we do this, give us an idea really of how widely scattered you were retailing.

Margaret: All over Texas, but not every town.

Jenkins: No, but was Texas your territory?

Drue: Well, that's where I worked most of the time, I worked some in Oklahoma, but the big part of it was in Texas.

Margaret: We'd get a call from New Mexico that somebody in Texas had told them about us. We never saw them, but we'd send stuff to them on open account.

Jenkins: So you did some mail order business?

Margaret: Yes.

Drue: Oh, yes, we did mail order business, but most of that was when we began to get into more or less the wholesale end of it. I couldn't get to these people in time, and so we tried to sell them a spare nozzle which meant quite

an increase in your volume of business if every service station had a spare nozzle laying there. Not only that, he could put that on and wait for you to come around. But that really wasn't good enough, so we began to call on pump companies and automotive parts jobbers. They are in that man's station every week, you see. Those automotive pump jobbers, wagon jobbers, would go into these stations every week. All right, if he needed a nozzle, he exchanged it. And that way this guy was getting good service, you see, and wasn't having to wait. There is one thing a service station doesn't like to do. He wouldn't like to have to box up a nozzle and mail it to you. Some will, but a lot of them won't. And so if we had, say, in Wichita Falls, if we had a couple of pump companies up there and an automotive parts jobber that had our nozzles, when a man needed a nozzle we were going to get to do that business anyway. We wouldn't get as much for it, but at the same time it didn't cost us as much to go up there to that place once a month and exchange these nozzles. And then if a fellow wanted to go into the repair business, that was well and good. We would like to sell him his parts, sell him his nozzles and things like that. We had a very good relationship with these people, and at the same time if

we got calls we would go right into stations and sell too. It just sort of did an about face from retail to wholesale.

Jenkins: While you were retailing, did you ever have any other employees? Were you always 'the' salesman?

Drue: Yes. That's what I got a kick out of. We would get a letter once in a while that would say, "The next time one of your salesmen or one of your representatives is in our territory, would you please have him call on us." And I would tell Margaret, "They don't know it, but the president of the company would go out there and call on him."

Margaret: That's the way Drue wanted it.

Jenkins: You were always the sole saleman.

Drue: I was the only one that called on them while I was in the retail business.

Jenkins: But you did then develop some jobbers and got into wholesaling?

Drue: Yeah.

Margaret: We didn't develop them. They were already active in these stations, and they'd found out that that was an item that they could handle.

Jenkins: You started using jobbers.

Margaret: Yes.

Jenkins: How about the repair? Were you always 'the' repairman?

- Drue: Well, I did for a long time. Because, see, when we started this out there, there were no nozzles, and there was no repair work until these nozzles had been out and needed to be reserviced. And so we would do this work. I just went into this thing, really, to work two or three days a week. But it got to the point where I would have to spend a lot more time. And I would, maybe, repair nozzles for three days a week, and go out on the road two days a week or something like that.
- Margaret: Or be out there repairing at five o'clock in the morning and ten o'clock at night, which was no good.
- Drue: But then I began to get me a little help. Don Roberson came to work for us, and Don was a very capable young man when he was in high school. Very dependable. Fritz Roberson's son.
- Jenkins: I know of him.
- Drue: He worked for us. And then it got to the point where we couldn't turn out enough nozzles, and so I got Jim's Radiator Shop to start rebuilding some nozzles.
- Jenkins: He is still around? Jim's Radiator Shop is still around?
- Drue: Yes. Charlie does his repair work for him now, because Jim's brother died so Jim didn't have the time that he did. But then I got Jim to repair for us, but still we were not being able to have as many nozzles as we needed. And that was when we got acquainted with Charlie Kregel.

Jenkins: Where was your repair shop?

Drue: At home.

Jenkins: Your home.

Drue: This business here was a home-made business.

Jenkins: Would Don come to your home and work?

Margaret: Yes.

Drue: We had about the most simplified business there was, because we traveled in the same automobile that we went to church in, or went on a vacation in, well we traveled in that automobile. We used the same telephone that we would have had there anyway. My shop was in the same garage that I have kept my car in anyway.

Margaret: Except that it was a big garage.

Drue: We built it bigger because we were in this business when we built it.

Margaret: And then had a storeroom.

Drue: So in reality we had just about as simple a business as could be.

Margaret: But then Charlie began moonlighting for us. And then he quit his job at Victor Equipment. He was a design engineer out there. He quit his job and he said, "Can you keep me busy full time?" And Drue said, "You bet I can." You see, his business was just growing fast.

Jenkins: Well, let's go back, because we are just about the time that Charlie is going to come into the picture. Let's

go back and get your best recollection of how the business did grow both in terms of geography and in terms of volume of sales. Do you kind of have some figures in mind there?

Drue: Well, of course, when we started out on this it was no volume at all, because there were no nozzles. But operating like we were operating there, we didn't have to sell a lot because we didn't have a payroll to meet. We didn't have to pay rent on a building to operate. And we didn't have a lot of things. We didn't have to carry insurance like we would have to carry if we were working six men or something like that. So it was a lot easier to make a larger margin of profit in this business than it was in service station business where you were operating on a short profit anyway.

Jenkins: In terms of number of nozzles, do you have an idea in mind of how the number of nozzles increased?

Drue: Well, of course, here is the thing. Any business can't stand static. It is either going up or it is going down. It is not going to be on a certain keel there. Because at the time we got out of this business, we would have really been better off, I think, if we had had a third less business than a third more, because we were just up to the point where we were going to have to make a change some way in getting more nozzles repaired and getting more of this in order to maintain our service.

So every year it would grow, and I don't know just exactly how it is. I could go into detail and give you some figures on volume of business by the year, but we finally got up to the point, as I say we started out from nothing, and working out of the back end of an automobile, one salesman. I say one salesman, Margaret likes to come in on that. She was a good salesman on the phone. What I mean, if I wasn't there and somebody called in she would get an order taken, and she would get it taken right, and a lot of times after they described their trouble she could tell them that it could possibly be pump trouble or it could be this or it could be that.

Jenkins: Well, let me try it this way. Let me ask you how much difference there has been between your sales and income while you were in the service station business and your sales and income after you got into the nozzle business, up until you got out of it, about.

Drue: The best that I can do when I was in the service station business was net ten percent of my gross volume. I started out from nothing in the nozzle business from zero on sales or volume of any kind, and it increased through the years. But I was always able to net about thirty percent out of my gross volume as a profit. And the work was a lot more pleasant, the sales were easier,

and you got acquainted with a lot of different people over the state. And it was pleasant in that, any time that you went back into them, it was very seldom that they weren't glad to see you.

Jenkins: I believe you indicated that the last year you were fulltime in the business your gross sales were what?

Drue: About a hundred and eighteen thousand.

Jenkins: Eighteen thousand. And now the two of you traveled in this business together almost all the time, didn't you?

Drue: That's right.

Margaret: Well now, if he went out just for the day, I didn't go along. But we wouldn't average over five nights a month out on the road, would we?

Drue: Well, you could tell by the travel expense I told you, that we didn't stay out a lot, but that's the way we wanted it.

Jenkins: When you did go out on the road and were gone overnight, the two of you were together.

Margaret: Without an exception.

Jenkins: How long were you likely to be gone at any one time?

Drue: As a rule we would be gone three days, three nights would be the most we would ever be gone on any trip. Most of the time possibly two would catch it, because we would only travel in Texas.

Jenkins: When you got a call for repair work say out in Pampa,

would you pack it up and go to Pampa and do repair work?

Drue: Well, we could handle a lot of stuff by mail.

Jenkins: Oh, I see.

Drue: And if we couldn't go to an area before we could give service through a wholesale distributor, we would mail him something to use until we got there.

Jenkins: Oh, I see.

Drue: And that way we could give him service he could depend on.

Jenkins: So when you did make that trip then it would also be a sales trip, when you would go out and do that.

Drue: That's right. And say that in Fort Worth I would get a call, and say it would be in the west part of Fort Worth. I would go make that call, and I would spend my time in that area of Fort Worth that day, and that day I wasn't just making one call and coming home.

Jenkins: In terms of geographical growth, I think you said almost from the very start you really started covering the whole state of Texas in terms of how far from home you got. Is that right?

Drue: When we took over the OPW line and started selling their nozzles, shortly after that we had a convention in San Antonio in which I had a booth. A service station convention. And that way I met a lot of

operators. Maybe I would meet two people from Pampa. Maybe I would meet two people from Pecos, or like that. And that way when they would call me for nozzles or something like that, I would go work in that territory. And I might be in Texarkana this week, and I might be in Galveston next week. And that way we were getting nozzles in a pretty wide area. And so consequently we began to get mail orders and telephone calls from areas like that. People we had sold would give our name and address.

Margaret: But let me add this to that. We really worked where we wanted to go. We didn't have to go any place, any certain place. We could go anywhere. If there was a place we would like to visit or like to see some people or see the country or something, we would go there and work. We went to Colorado just about every summer. Well, we could take care of business in the Panhandle when we would go to Colorado because we could make calls and spend the day up there making calls, and we could go on to Colorado and spend a week or two and come back and check the stations and finish the sales. And that way we made contacts, but we didn't drive per se to Pampa just to sell some nozzles.

Jenkins: I see.

Margaret: And then we finally pulled in our radius just a little

bit. We had a lot of business in San Antonio, but we liked to go to San Antonio.

Drue: This is after we went wholesale.

Margaret: That's after we went wholesale, yes. And Houston and Galveston some. And Texarkana. But we mainly went to places that sort of suited our fancy. So we passed through a lot of towns that we wouldn't work at all because we wanted to go to a certain place. But we just kind of combined it. We were older, you know, and we could sort of be a little more independent.

Jenkins: So you started off almost from the start covering wide expanses of Texas, and you simply filled in from that from then on and covered a higher percentage of the state of Texas.

Drue: Well, you got to know people in different localities, and there were very few people working this nozzle business. And so if you were known in this town here, then you would be recommended by the people you had sold. That's just sort of the way you worked it, where you were getting the calls before you went to them.

Jenkins: So, for all of the twenty-three that you were in this, you worked out of your house, out of your car, it was very much a family, personal business and gave you all kinds of opportunities to travel and to meet folks as well as to make a good living. Let's work now toward

why and when you decided to get out of the business.

Drue: Well, that wasn't hard to do. I was getting older. And so we decided that we wanted to get out and retire. and we began to look for somebody to take it over.

Margaret: The people that wanted it at the time were people we really didn't approve of very much, and we didn't think they would be good for the business. And we loved the business.

Drue: And so when we found Charlie Kregel, or really he found us, we were ready to get out of it. We made a pretty quick transition.

Jenkins: Now Charlie did work for you some though before he bought it?

Drue: That's right.

Margaret: Not on salary. He had a repair business.

Drue: He had a repair business, and Charlie did this repair that he did for us, he did it at his place.

Jenkins: Now when did this start? When was Charlie's first association with you?

Drue: Let's see. Charlie took over the repair business for his own business in November of 1970. And sometime, possibly in very early 1970, he started moonlighting for us some and repairing some nozzles for us. And then he quit the job he had with Victor Equipment Company as a design engineer and took over all of our repair

business, with the agreement between us that he would take that over for his business on January 1, 1971. But he was ready by November 1, 1970, and so we transferred this business to Charlie. The repair business. And we went around to all of our customers that we were doing business with at that time, which were wholesale account, oil jobbers, independent oil companies, and pump companies and automotive parts jobbers were the people we were calling on, and we went around to introduce Charlie to these people. And in making this transition, as far as I can remember, we did not lose a single customer, Charlie was well accepted the customers. Some of these customers we had been doing business with for over twenty years. And so when he took that over, then I retained the new nozzle business and the factory rebuilt nozzle exchange service and the parts business. And Charlie didn't take that over then until June 1, 1973 when we completely phased out the nozzle business. And the reason that we were slow in making that transition was, there was a lot of difference in the repair business and the wholesale nozzle and parts business because of the amount of money that it took to handle these accounts. And Charlie wanted to get his feet on the ground before he took that on. And after he was well established in the repair business then

he was ready to take over this other business.

Jenkins: So at that time he took the whole thing over.

Drue: Which he has been very successful.

Jenkins: Let me go back and get you to repeat what we were talking about off the record a while ago. You said that at the time Charlie started doing your repair business that one certainly would expect for volume to drop off of your own part of the business, but you indicated that it hardly dropped off at all. Could you speak to that a little bit.

Drue: We maintained nearly the same amount in 1971 that we had in 1970 because we had more time to devote to the new nozzle business and the parts business and the factory rebuilt business. We had more time to devote and so consequently our volume increased on that.

Margaret: And Drue kept saying, he was wanting to slack off - but he kept saying, "Well, this will be better for Charlie if I get this built up." And he was still getting out and getting new customers so Charlie would have them when he took over. And that's why he didn't really slow down.

Drue: And we were distributors for OPW. And when we made this transition on the new nozzle, they made Charlie a distributor, which was very important to him. That he be a distributor instead of having to buy through a distributor.

- Margaret: And the funny part was when we began we had to buy through Vogel Swygard, this big established business in Dallas who had salesmen and everything, and they got a cut, of course, of everything that we sold. Okay. Then they removed that distributorship from V.S. and gave it to Drue.
- Drue: Well, they did away with a manufacturers representative.
- Margaret: And when they did Vogel-Swygard had to start buying from us. When he told Drue that, I said, "Now that's not true. That can't be true." Drue said, "Well, that's what I told Mr. Swygard, but he says he declares it is true." And so sure enough they bought from us.
- Drue: And they still do. They buy from Charlie now.
- Jenkins: Now I think as I indicated, I eventually want to get Charlie on this, but if you would briefly give us kind of a thumbnail sketch of how you have seen the business change and grow since Charlie got it, although I will want to interview him later.
- Margaret: That's two personalities, Drue and Charlie. They are both good businessmen, but they approach it in a different way. Now for example, with us, it was more of a slow moving personal thing. We never cared about having a great, big . . . We never wanted a building. We wanted our business to where we had a good living and could take care of it ourselves.

Jenkins: Operate out of your house.

Margaret: Yes. And Charlie wanted it immediately. He is young. He is the same age as Drue was when we started our business. So he had all that enthusiasm of a younger man. And so when we went to San Antonio to work, just for an example, we would go Sunday afternoon. We would go to church on Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon we would maybe leave about two o'clock and go to San Antonio. And we would get there, you know, and have a leisurely dinner and get a motel. And then the next morning Drue would make his calls. We would always be close to a shopping center, and I would fool around there. And then he would come in early and we would go out and have dinner and maybe go to a show. And then we would come back the next day, and he would work on the way home, like in Austin or some other town. Okay. Now when Charlie took it over, he had a different situation. He had a wife and three children, and he wanted to be at home. He needed to be at home. And he was very eager to get going in a big way. So he would get up at three o'clock in the morning and he would drive to Austin and have breakfast, and then he would go on to San Antonio and be there when these people opened their doors. And he would work all day that day, at wholesale at that time. Of course, it was retail when we first went.

Wholesale; he would call on the accounts he had to call on, and then he would eat an early supper or late supper or whatever, and he would drive home that night.

Jenkins: Be home with his family.

Margaret: Yes, and he said he would far rather be driving home than to sit in a motel by himself, and his wife and three children be at home by themselves. But, you see we had different ideas about it completely. Charlie will go in and make a good call, but he won't stay and visit with them as long as Drue would. We had slowed down some when we went into the nozzle business to what he had been before, and he so enjoyed the people he was with that he would take, maybe, twice as long to make a call, Drue would, simply because they were two different personalities. They were at different ages in their life. They had a different goal. And Charlie wanted a big business, he has got a big business. And he has got just what he wanted. We had it just like we wanted it. And we are crazy about Charlie. He is a good businessman, he is a good man, period. Isn't that true?

Drue: Yes, very much. Charlie is the kind of guy I would have liked to have had for a son. What I mean, Charlie will do anything for us.

Margaret: The sweetest fellow you ever saw. And he says in his wildest dreams he never thought about having a business like this.

Drue: He likes the business, and after we had pioneered this thing and built it up we were glad to see somebody get a hold of it that liked it.

Jenkins: I bet you were. Now you had indicated, if you want to speak to it, about how much you think the business had grown since Charlie had taken over.

Drue: Well, Charlie now, at this time, has had that business about five and a half years, that he has had all of the business. And he is doing over three times what we were doing the last full year we were in the business.

Margaret: Of course, inflation prices would take care of part of that.

Drue: Inflation would eat some of that up, but nevertheless he is still doing a tremendous and a wonderful business.

Margaret: And giving good service.

Drue: And I would suggest you buy nozzles from him.

Jenkins: If I ever need one, I will.

Drue: I would like to put that in right on the end.

Jenkins: Let me move then toward the end of this. Over these years then you didn't have much competition?

Drue: Not as what you would call competition. There was some competition, yes. When you would be dealing with major

oil companies and stuff like that, you would run into some competition with other pump companies and oil jobbers and stuff like that. But for the longest time there we had a nice business, and we had a good relationship with what competition we did have, because a lot of times I'd buy stuff from them and they would buy stuff from me.

Jenkins: You didn't really consider them competitors.

Drue: No.

Jenkins: And they probably never cost you a dime as far as sales were concerned.

Drue: One fellow that went into this about the same time as I went into it, he and his wife have become very good friends of ours. They live in St. Louis and we go see them and they come to see us. And we bought a lot of stuff from them, because they went into it in a manufacturing angle.

Jenkins: Oh, I see.

Drue: And we bought a lot of stuff from them.

Jenkins: You, apparently, then, and both of you have already said it, but I would like to repeat it before we move into something else. You got into a business that you really wanted, and you ran it the way that you wanted to run it, and, apparently, you thoroughly enjoyed it.

Drue: It was a very fulfilling business in that you liked to

see the people that you were doing business with, not only from the standpoint of the people you sold, but the people that you bought from.

Jenkins: Let me move then into almost the last area. Now, this was a family business. It took you all over the state of Texas. In terms of right here in Denton, did either or both of you get very much involved in civic organizations and if so, what?

Margaret: Church work, yes.

Jenkins: All right. What are some of the things you got involved in?

Drue: Well, we were always active in church work. And for a long time I was a member of the Rotary Club. But traveling like I was, it was hard for me to keep my attendance up.

Jenkins: I imagine.

Drue: And I was spending more time in other clubs than I was at my own club.

Jenkins: You mean you would visit Rotaries as you went?

Drue: Yes. Which in some cases was a very rewarding thing because you got to know a lot of people. And you would go in one part of the state and go to a Rotary Club and the next week you would be in another part. It was just like being in two different worlds from the standpoint of the friendliness of the club.

Margaret: In west Texas they were very friendly and in east Texas

they were not so friendly. But our main extra time in Denton was spent in church work.

Jenkins: Now you taught for some time.

Margaret: Yes. I taught for seven years after we were married.

Jenkins: Have you been involved in any club work outside the church?

Margaret: No, just church work and circle work in the church.

Jenkins: Other than the church and Rotary, do you think of any other that you ever got involved with in Denton? Well, you may not have even joined the Chamber of Commerce, though, in this kind of business.

Drue: Well, I don't guess really I have ever done much of anything. (laughter)

Jenkins: Did you ever join the Chamber of Commerce, the local Chamber of Commerce?

Drue: Oh, years ago.

Margaret: When we had the service station he did.

Jenkins: Before I ask you how you have been using your retirement and what you have been doing, I would like to say what I always say to folks. This is a history of you and your business, and I have asked most of the questions, plus more, that I had down, but before we finish the involvement with the business is there anything else that either or both of you would like to say or add before we move on to how you have been spending your retirement and close this off?

Margaret: Well, I would like to say this. I think one reason that our business has been good to us is because we have always tithed, and I believe that's the best way to form a business partnership.

Jenkins: Anything, Drue, that you want to observe?

Drue: No. I don't think I have. I have talked too much anyway. But I would like to say that it has been a great life.

Jenkins: It sounds like it. It sounds like one of the best paid vacations that I ever saw in my life. A lifetime of it.

Margaret: We have been having some very nice trips.

Jenkins: Well, tell me what you have been doing since you officially retired. How do you spend your time?

Margaret: Well, Drue keeps our yard, and we did have a combination partnership house up at the lake, but we sold it just this year because we didn't have time anymore to go up there. He keeps his brother's place at the lake and does a lot of his brother's work here, in his yard here in town. And he keeps the cemetery lot, and he does a good many things down at the church. He works just like he was still making a living.

Drue: Don't worry about it. I stay busy.

Jenkins: How about you?

Margaret: I do just as little as I can, and that's a whole lot more than I want to.

Jenkins: You do some traveling, apparently.

Margaret: Yes. We have done a little traveling.

Jenkins: You went recently to Hawaii, I think?

Margaret: Yes.

Drue: Yes, we went there about two weeks ago.

Margaret: We like tours. We like to go and let somebody do the planning for us.

Jenkins: You get up to the morning coffee klatch occasionally, I notice.

Drue: Yes.

Margaret: This is the first time he has ever done anything like this and I am pleased to death.

Drue: That's a very enlightening thing to go to down there.

Jenkins: Yes, it is. I've got a good many oral histories out of that group, as a matter of fact.

Drue: Oh, is that right?

Margaret: Well, Drue has just now found out that you can do something else, that you can have a good time at something else besides working.

Jenkins: Okay. Is there anything else that you want to add before we close down?

Drue: No.

Margaret: No, except that I would like to say that my teaching years were very pleasant, too, and your wife is a good example of that. She was a very pleasant, good student to have.

Jenkins: Well, thank you, and I will leave that in there.

Margaret: You do, because it may be that we wouldn't have been as interested in you as we were since I knew Peggy and loved her for a long time.

Jenkins: Okay, anything else?

Drue: I don't think of anything else.

Jenkins: Thank you very much.

Margaret: You are very welcome.

Drue: You are very welcome.