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Interview with
Ada Reed Brewer
R. E. (Bob) Brewer

Place of Interview: Bertram, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Floyd Jenkins

Terms of Use:

Approved:

Ada Reed Brewer
R. E. Brewer
(Signature)

Date:

March 29, 1985

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Business Oral History Collection

McGill's General Mercantile
Ada Reed Brewer
R.E. (Bob) Brewer

Interviewer: Dr. Floyd Jenkins

Place of Interview: Bertram, Texas

Date: March 14, 1984

Dr. Jenkins: This is Floyd Jenkins recording for the Business Archives Project, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas. Today is March 14, 1984. I am talking with Ada Reed McGill Brewer and her husband, R. E. (Bob) Brewer, who are the present owners and operators of A. B. McGill and Company General Merchants of Bertram, Texas, and we are doing the recording here in their home in Bertram, Texas.

Dr. Jenkins: Let's get going by getting you, Ada Reed McGill Brewer, as you said one of the longest names that there is, to give us some background of your family: where they came from, how they got here, the kind of life that they led, and kind of lead us up toward when you were born, and we will follow on from there. The family background.

Mrs. Brewer: My mother was born and reared in Burnet, Texas. Her name was Clara Starr Moses. From another family. This was a family of very good friends of theirs.

Mr. Brewer: Of Marshall, Texas.

Mrs. Brewer: She, as I say, was born and reared there. And graduated from

T.C.U. when it was in Waco. My father came from Arkansas to Burnet and went to work as a bookkeeper for a general mercantile store up there. His name was Badger Johnson.

Jenkins: Did they tell you much about those days? How they traveled to get here, and establishing themselves?

Ada Reed: No, not really. I really don't know. My Grandmother McGill lived in Arizona, and I really don't even know what took my father from Arizona to Arkansas, but apparently he was looking for work, or something of the sort, and came to Burnet. And why I don't know what brought him there. But they met and married. My mother went on to teach school after she got out of T.C.U. for two years, and then they married. Public school down here at Liberty Hill.

Jenkins: Oh, I have been there.

Ada Reed: Oh, you bet. And the nice thing about it, or peculiar thing maybe you would say, that I know some of her pupils today, two of them, anyway. Then this Mr. D. C. Reed, who built the building we are in, his wife and my mother were sisters. So my father bought in partnership with D. C. Reed in 1912, I believe, and then bought him out in 1913 or 1914.

Bob: Mr. Reed moved to Austin.

Ada Reed: Yes, when he bought him out he moved on to Austin, and my father bought the store and took over.

Jenkins: Do you have much knowledge of that store before your father . . . You have a letter here. Does that shed much light on it? Why don't you just read that into the transcript?

Ada Reed: All right.

Jenkins: Now the date of that letter is . . .

Ada Reed: December 15, 1950 from Georgetown, Texas. This is from a Mrs. Kate Lockett Vadin, and it explains the history of our business. It says:

I take the Austin American, and in looking through it this morning I see an article written by Dave Shanks, Farm and Ranch editor from Bertram. He is writing up the continuous business of a firm supposedly established in 1888 by T. S. Reed. All that happened after this year of 1888 is correct as far as I know. But I thought you would like to have the correct history of this business before that time. My father, M. B. Lockett, established this business in a little community called Cedar Mills where I was born, south of Gabriel Mills where my father later moved his business when I was 2 years old. I have a picture of his business building there with my father in the picture, which also shows the home which was later put on wheels and moved with all its contents to the new town of Bertram. I remember this event, although very young. The coming of the railroad was the cause of the move. A stone schoolhouse is spoken of as being taken to Bertram by T. S. Reed and the store building being made of it. That was after my father had sold his business and home to T. S. Reed in 1888, and we had moved to Georgetown and established his mercantile business anew. Going back to the little rock schoolhouse, I remember it as where my first school-days were spent. Also going back to the Reed family, I will say I went to school with him in Bertram. I knew his 2 older boys, Malcolm and Dave, also a daughter whose name I have forgotten. The younger children were by a second wife. Some of them are still living, I suppose. T. S. Reed was best man at the marriage of my mother and father. He bought my father's store building and home. The latter is standing now pretty much as it looked in 1888. I saw it about 1 year ago. I always go by to look at it whenever I pass through Bertram. It has been kept in repair. It's age goes back before 1872; how much more I do not know. A Mrs. Landrum did live there. I do not know who does now. I doubt if any are living there now who would remember my family. It is a long way back to 1888. If you are ever in Georgetown, you will see across the front of the First National Bank my father's store building. It has his name, M. B. Lockett, high on the front. My father died one day after he was 90 in 1936.

Jenkins: And that was signed by . . . ?

Ada Reed: By Mrs. Kate Lockett Vadin. Lockett, of course, is her maiden name. Of Georgetown.

Jenkins: There is some more history we were talking about awhile ago that I would like for you to get in here before we take up even with your parents getting into the store, and that is some of the history of Bertram itself: how the town of Bertram got started and why it got started.

Ada Reed: This lady spoke of the railroad being the cause of the town being moved.

Jenkins: Some of the history of the Texas capitol building.

Bob: The railroad was built to haul the granite . . .

Ada Reed: From Marble Falls to build the capitol with.

Bob: Originally the capitol was to be built with limestone from Oak Hill. And limestone is not weather resistant and stand up well, so they decided that they would go to granite. So the railroad was authorized for the purpose of going to Burnet and then on over to Marble Falls for the granite. The reason for Bertram was that the town of Lewiston or South Gabriel could not exist with the railroad two miles from it. So they moved the town from the river, because the railroad refused to go along the banks due to the possible flooding. The town had offered them \$2,000 if they would come down by the town there. Instead, the railroad wanted to stay up here on this ridge. And when they did that, the town would die. So Captain Vaughan, who owned this property in this area here gave

the railroad a townsite, and the railroad established the townsite and marked off lots and everything. In 1882 they had an auction and sold the lots that could be sold at that time to different people that would move up here. And that is how the town became founded. The name Bertram came from Mister Rudolph Bertram, who was a businessman in Austin that was one of the directors of the railroad.

Jenkins: Bertram is how far from Marble Falls?

Bob: Bertram is about 25 miles.

Jenkins: And that is where the rock was quarried?

Bob: Yes.

Jenkins: And the railroad came through here, and they moved the towns to the railroad.

Ada Reed: That's right, they did. I was just going to say . . . This house that this Mrs. Vadin spoke of is still here in Bertram and occupied and in very good repair. She said 1872.

Jenkins: And this house that we are in you said was built in . . .

Bob: Approximately 1914.

Jenkins: By your family?

Ada Reed: Yes, it was built for my grandmother, my mother's mother. Only it was a little later than that, because I was about five years old, four or five years old.

Bob: The house was built by her uncle and her father. They built it for her grandmother to move from Burnet down to Bertram.

Jenkins: Okay, and they all lived in the big house.

Bob: No, her mother and father lived up the street up here.

Ada Reed: My grandmother lived here with one of the sons. This is Grandmother's house.

Jenkins: Okay, we had gotten your father just bought into the business. Were you around at this time? This was before you.

Ada Reed: Well, when he bought in, you see, I was born in 1914.

Jenkins: And he bought in in . . .

Ada Reed: In '13, wasn't it?

Bob: Earlier than that. He bought it in full.

Ada Reed: That's right. Well, when did Uncle Dave move to Austin?

Bob: He moved to Austin about 1912.

Ada Reed: They were married in 1913, and my father bought into the D. C. Reed and Company business in 1913. About that time.

Jenkins: Did they talk much about those early days before you ever had any knowledge of it?

Ada Reed: Not really. I started to say, we have pictures of the early part, but that would be 1920's when Mr. Webb and Alfred were there.

Jenkins: Did they talk about the kind of store it was, and what kinds of merchandise that it carried in that earliest date?

Ada Reed: Well, yes, because it came right on down to more or less the same thing. It was, as they called it, drygoods and groceries and feed and seeds. And they bought the products that the farmer had to sell: eggs, of course, and then they bought the cotton and the wool and the mohair and this sort of thing. The grain, yes. Back in those days they did what they called, they "ran" the farmer either yearly or semi-annually,

crop-to-crop. When they sold a crop then they paid their account, you see.

Jenkins: Do you remember any tales that he told about individual farmers or things that they did?

Ada Reed: They don't stay with me very well.

Bob: This farmer came in and settled up with Mr. McGill. And a short time later her daddy saw him down the street down there coming out of another store with merchandise and all. He said, "Why are you trading elsewhere? Did I do something wrong?" He said, "What do you mean?" "I have been running you, and here you are down here trading with him." He said, "I didn't know you sold for cash."

Ada Reed: I remember that now, that catch line anyway, but I had forgotten that.

Bob: Another one that I will get her to tell is about a family here that came in with a little boy to try on sizes.

Ada Reed: Well, the mother brought the child in to outfit him apparently for school or whatever. When they got through she started to walk out, and they said, "Would you like for us to wrap this for you?" She said, "Oh, no. I just wanted the sizes so I could order from Sears and Roebuck." And this actually happened. I am sure this did about the other, too.

Jenkins: Was that your experience or a story that was told?

Ada Reed: No, this was a story. Well, it happened after I was born. I was pretty young. But I remember my mother and father telling this.

Jenkins: Do you yourself remember the coming of the mailorder things and how it might have affected it?

Ada Reed: Of course this is something that we always would rather do without.

Jenkins: Let's see if we can glean anymore memories of what was happening in the store before you got involved in it. You say they didn't really talk a great deal about it, perhaps, or you don't remember.

Ada Reed: You want just things that happened, maybe funny things?

Jenkins: Yes, funny things that they told you about, and to give us an idea of what running a store was like in those days.

Ada Reed: Now that I don't know. This was during Alfred Hill's days at the store, wasn't it, when he and Bryan let that roll of paper . . .

Bob: That was Budge.

Ada Reed: Yes, that was Budge, this uncle of mine. This is a big, old two story building, you know. It has a stairway over there. And they apparently, like us, kept the upstairs for storage, what part they didn't use for buggies. So they sent this boy up to get a roll of brown wrapping paper, and you know what they are, they weigh a pound or two. And they claim that it got away from them, but I think . . .

Bob: He said they turned it loose.

Ada Reed: Bryan did? Anyway they turned it loose. And listen, the stairway goes this way and then down, you know. Of course it took out all of the posts here at the end of the stair. Bob teases

this fellow still today about it.

Jenkins: You said they had buggies upstairs?

Ada Reed: Yes, even when Mr. Reed started this building, I mean built this building in 1905, he carried buggies, and he carried them upstairs.

Jenkins: How did he get them up there?

Ada Reed: There is a big old freight elevator in the back, which is still operable.

Jenkins: Manually or do you have a motor?

Ada Reed: You can do it either way. After we married Bob put a motor on it.

Bob: I made it. I pulled many a many carload of feed upstairs.

Ada Reed: Yes, that's right. And then when my father came into the business, bought it, I guess it was the end of the buggy deal, and he had a funeral home upstairs.

Jenkins: And that was part of the business?

Ada Reed: Yes, part of the business. Mr. Thurlow Weed in Austin did the embalming, and we carried the caskets and did all of the services and everything. We had a hearse.

Jenkins: This was after you had got involved in it?

Ada Reed: Yes, and you probably don't remember this, we used to cover the boards they lined the grave with. I helped cover these with a little tack hammer and these little carpet tacks. They covered one side, padded it with cotton, and covered it with bleached muslin. Then, of course, the back side was covered too, but not padded, and that was put into the grave.

Bob: That kept the dirt from falling.

Ada Reed: Yes, from falling into the grave.

Jenkins: That was kind of a vault.

Ada Reed: Well, it was.

Jenkins: That is a new one on me. I have interviewed some undertakers, but apparently they didn't go back that far.

Ada Reed: They are not as old as I am to have had that experience.

Jenkins: Well, it may have had to do with the part of the country or something.

Ada Reed: That's right, because this is caliche and it is . . .

Jenkins: And they did that up until when, do you suppose?

Ada Reed: As long as we had the funeral home I guess they did it, and that was in . . . Well, my mother sold that after my father died in 1934. And I don't know whether they continued it after that; I mean any of the other funeral homes, after that or not.

Jenkins: They had buggies. Did they ever get involved in farm equipment?

Ada Reed: Did he carry farm equipment?

Bob: He had farm equipment out beside the building there in front of the old picture show.

Ada Reed: That's right. I had forgotten that.

Jenkins: Okay, what kinds of farm equipment?

Bob: I can't answer that.

Jenkins: Okay. Do you know if they ever got involved in tractors?

Bob: No, I don't.

Ada Reed: This had to be plows and that sort of thing.

Bob: Reapers and things like that. Rakes, hay rakes.

Ada Reed: Yes. I don't think it was anything very big, though. It wasn't anything like we have today.

Bob: No, they didn't have anything but horses to pull with, mules.

Jenkins: Was that during your father's time, or even before that?

Ada Reed: It had to be when they still had the business.

Bob: I imagine it was.

Ada Reed: Well, I am pretty sure it was, because the buggies were gone by then. This is in 1913.

Jenkins: Was it a general store to the extent that they had hardware and things like that?

Ada Reed: Oh, yes.

Bob: We have got some pictures of the porcelain washbasins, etc.

Ada Reed: When they carried tinware up on the top shelves where the groceries were. And then they had these, you have seen these ladders that they climbed? You see the shelves went nearly to the ceiling, and they had to have the ladders to roll along the rails. In fact we have one of the ladders over there.

Jenkins: Did you use the ladders only for the hardware?

Ada Reed: Yes, it was in the back.

Bob: Groceries.

Ada Reed: The grocery section, yes, was in the back part of the building. The shelves didn't go that high in the front where there were drygoods and patterns and materials.

Jenkins: Now tell us about drygoods. Folks nowadays may not know about drygoods. What are drygoods?

Ada Reed: Piece goods.

Jenkins: What are piece goods?

Ada Reed: It is fabrics by the yard, and of course the notions and things that go with it, the sewing notions.

Jenkins: That is another term. What is a notion?

Ada Reed: It is a snap or a pin or a spool of thread or this sort of thing.

Jenkins: Do you have any idea when the term "notion" came from?

Ada Reed: I do not. I really don't. That would be interesting to track down, wouldn't it?

Jenkins: No one has been able to come with anything, that I have asked. Was this the major store in Bertram then?

Ada Reed: Well, yes, there were two like this. There was one called Potts & Ater Brothers, and it was the same type of business.

Bob: It probably didn't have the undertaking service.

Ada Reed: No. It was groceries and drygoods and that sort of thing is what they carried. They carried groceries etc., like we did.

Jenkins: As far as you know was it as old as your store?

Ada Reed: I really don't know when it was founded.

Bob: About 1918 or somewhere through there.

Jenkins: Was this probably the first store? The McGill Store.

Ada Reed: I would think so. I would guess so.

Jenkins: Probably the first one.

Bob: I would say that it was one of the first. The building next door is the oldest permanent building in Bertram, and it was the first permanent building built in Bertram. Now Captain Vaughan,

who donated the townsite here, also had a store. It was across the street from these buildings. It was the first building built here. It has an automobile company. There were several stores that were down at South Gabriel that moved up here all at the same time.

Jenkins: Did they move the buildings?

Bob: In the wooden ones, yes, they moved the buildings. They used oxen to move the buildings. This home that Mrs. Vadin refers to here was moved up in three sections by six oxen yoked together. There are pictures of it.

Ada Reed: I wonder who has those?

Bob: Ms. Bell Gray did have them. It was Mr. Gray's father that moved them.

Ada Reed: I have no idea where they are, though.

Jenkins: If there is any chance that we could even make copies of some of those old pictures, we would like to do it and put them in the Archives and they could go along with this.

Bob: Capt. Vaughan had the store, as I say there. It was moved up from South Gabriel. So there were several different stores. When the town moved, everything that was there moved with it. This was not the only store.

Jenkins: Let's glean some more from your memory of what they talked about, about other things that the store handled. Everything the farmer needed, probably.

Ada Reed: This is true, because they naturally didn't have transportation like they do now.

Jenkins: So it was hardware, farm implements, groceries, drygoods.

Bob: Funeral services.

Ada Reed: And they had ladies wear. I know they carried some clothing. I don't know just exactly what, but I know they had hats. Some pictures showed hats, and they were bound to have had dresses and skirts maybe, and shoes. We have one pair of shoes there that are original with the store.

Jenkins: Oh, really?

Ada Reed: One of these high-topped foot killers with sharp pointed toes.

Jenkins: You said feeds and seeds.

Ada Reed: Yes.

Jenkins: It was the old general store. They carried just about everything for the community.

Ada Reed: That's right.

Bob: Fertilizer, poison for the crops. Arsenic for the bollweevils. We carried that up until the late '30s.

Ada Reed: That's about it.

Bob: Tell about the millinery shop upstairs there.

Ada Reed: I really don't know much about it. But a Mrs. Ross, sometime along there before the funeral home, had a millinery shop upstairs. And I don't know just how long she was there or anything.

Jenkins: I wonder where they got their goods? Were they shipped in by rail?

Bob: Her father made trips to St. Louis, buying.

Ada Reed: And then the, what you called drummers then, salesmen came. There is still the old hotel here, a two-story building, where

they would come and stay. And Mr. Reed would play . . . now what is the story about his playing baseball with them?

Bob: A company over in San Antonio by the name of Palmer and Sayers that handled National Cash Registers, and a gentleman by the name of Palmer came up here until about 15 years ago about once a year. What he would do would be to come in and want to see one of the old cash registers that we had there. And he would like to tell the story about how he sold that cash register to Mr. Reed. The drummers would all come up on the train, and they would stop at Cedar Park, then they would stop at Liberty Hill. The next day they would stop at Bertram, and the next day they would go to Burnet, the next day they would go to Marble Falls, and then they would come on back. After they set up over at the hotel and tended to all of their business during the day, along in the afternoon they had no diversion or entertainment, etc., so they played baseball out in front of the store there.

Jenkins: Just streets, I guess.

Ada Reed: It was just a street, not a highway then.

Bob: And the story that Mr. Palmer told me was that the town team played the outsiders. Unfortunately the town team needed one member. So he was drafted to be on the town team. And Mr. Reed was pretty much of a baseball fan and pretty much of a gambler, too. And lo and behold towards the 9th inning there, why, he said that the score was nothing to nothing. And one man from the town team got on base. Mr. Reed told Mr. Palmer,

he said, "If you will bring that man in, I will buy that cash register you have tried to sell me." And Mr. Palmer told me, "For the first and last time, I hit a home run." And he said, "Mr. Reed gave me the contract for the cash register. The next morning when we packed up, instead of stopping in Burnet, I went over to Marble Falls where Malcolm Reed was . . ."

Ada Reed: A brother to Dave.

Bob: And said, "I went in to see Malcolm and told him I wanted to sell him a cash register." He said, "You know things are too rough for us to be able to buy cash registers. You are just wasting your time." He said, "Well, I thought you were as successful a merchant as Dave was." He said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, Dave bought one." He said, "Show me the contract." So he showed him the contract, and he sold him one. Now what is ironical about that is Mr. Malcolm Reed sold out to a nephew. The nephew committed suicide, so another person from Bertram here by the name of Taylor bought the business and moved it over to Florence. After her father died he moved it down there in what is now the Potts and Ater building that had been vacant. And the cash register stayed in there. In 1946 or 1947 we bought the stock and merchandise and everything that was in there and operated it for a short while, which was under the name of Bertram Mercantile. Now we have both cash registers.

Jenkins: So the store was not here for a while, is that right?

Bob: No, no.

Jenkins: It was the cash register that was moved.

Bob: The store in Marble Falls was a separate business entirely.
It moved from Marble Falls to Florence.

Ada Reed: Florence, Texas. That is a little community over here.

Bob: That is the one that bought the second cash register. Mr. Palmer used one cash register to sell the other one to the other brother.

Ada Reed: See, this Mr. Malcolm Reed and Mr. D. C. Reed were brothers, sons of T. S. Reed, the founder. Malcolm went on to Marble Falls and opened a business. It is a little confusing, it really is.

Jenkins: In terms of what the company carried back before you had knowledge of it, it was a general store.

Ada Reed: It always has been.

Jenkins: There is another term that was used in there that people may not know about now, and that is drummer. What is a drummer?

Ada Reed: That is a salesman.

Jenkins: Do you know why they were called drummers?

Ada Reed: I have no idea. Do you, Bob? Maybe you know, sir. I really don't know.

Jenkins: I have heard tales, but I am not sure, where they came, and they used the drums to attract folks. I am not sure that is true.

Ada Reed: That is quite possible.

Bob: You might tell them something about the picture we have. There was a man from Bertram that was a midget. And his name was Johnny Clifton. And Johnny Clifton was Buster Brown.

Jenkins: Oh!

Bob: The Buster Brown Shoe Company.

Ada Reed: Do you remember Buster Brown?

Jenkins: Yes.

Bob: And his dog Tige and Buster Brown made the country. We have a picture of him in front of the store there with a big crowd taken about 1914-1915, somewhere in through there, when they were drumming the Buster Brown shoe.

Ada Reed: They would go through the country kind of like the drummers did, you know, he of course advertising the Buster Brown shoe.

Jenkins: Hopefully we can at least get copies of some of those things and identify the people on them.

Ada Reed: Yes, that's right.

Jenkins: Great. Now let's go back for just a moment for a very brief summary and hit some approximate dates so we can get some chronology here a little bit. There was a business started approximately.

Bob: In 1865 or thereabouts, more or less, and it was at Cedar Mills and Mr. Lockett was the owner of the business at that time.

Jenkins: As far as you know that is the earliest root of this store.

Bob: Yes, right. And then after Cedar Mills started declining they moved from Cedar Mills about six or seven miles east to Lewiston, which later became known as South Gabriel. And that was in the neighborhood of about 1870 or thereabouts. Then in 1882, due to the railroad being up here and the declining business that was facing South Gabriel there, why

they moved the town of South Gabriel up to the railroad in the township of Bertram in 1882.

Jenkins: That is where the store took up again, and that is where it is today.

Bob: Right.

Jenkins: Okay, that is what we wanted. Do you have recollections of going down to the store as a child?

Ada Reed: Oh, yes, I surely do. Although, even though we lived here in Bertram, my parents decided that Austin would give us a better education. So we moved to Austin. We would spend the week there in Austin and come home on weekends.

Jenkins: On the train?

Ada Reed: No, we first started out going, my sister and I, would go down on Friday on the train and take music, dancing and expression, as they called it then. And we stayed with the D. C. Reed's, my uncle and aunt. Then we would come back on Sunday on the train. This led to moving to Austin during the week to go to school. My mother and my sister and I would stay down there, and my father stayed here and ran the business. Then we came home on weekends.

Jenkins: But you would go down to the store?

Ada Reed: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: And what are your recollections as a child of what went on at the store?

Ada Reed: Not many.

Jenkins: You just don't really remember.

Ada Reed: I really don't, just to be perfectly honest.

Jenkins: When did you start kind of working there, having little kinds of duties, or just taking on some duties.

Ada Reed: We all, of course, worked in the store somewhat, but not actually having duties or anything.

Jenkins: What were some of your childhood involvements?

Ada Reed: You are asking me something that I don't know. I really don't know. I just feel like I was born in the store, and I have been there ever since.

Jenkins: What are your first recollections of working, getting involved in, the store?

Bob: Going to market with your mother and father.

Ada Reed: Yes, we would go to St. Louis. Then after that we have been going to Dallas. But we did go to St. Louis to market.

Jenkins: Did you get involved in that?

Ada Reed: No, I was just along, because the family just went.

Jenkins: So you don't remember what went on.

Ada Reed: No, I really don't.

Jenkins: When did you start working in the store, get involved in it?

Ada Reed: Really after 1935 after I graduated from the University. I came back and worked. I went to T.C.U. for two years and finished at the University of Texas.

Jenkins: What were you majoring in?

Ada Reed: Journalism. And I came home and worked at the store. Then I got a job with the Austin Dispatch. I worked one year there, and then Bob and I married, and we came back.

Jenkins: What were you doing at the Dispatch?

Ada Reed: I was society editor.

Jenkins: Society of Austin?

Ada Reed: Of Austin. This was Austin, yes. I was there just a year.

Jenkins: Do you have any highlights of that that we ought to know?

Ada Reed: Not really. It was such a short time, and I was so green.

Bob: The highlight was that she got invitations to everything, and I was included.

Ada Reed: That's true, too.

Jenkins: You saw some of the social life and events and all.

Ada Reed: I enjoyed it very much, but I was, as I say, so immature and so green at the job.

Jenkins: You said you did work at the store for a while before you went up there.

Ada Reed: Yes.

Jenkins: What kinds of things?

Ada Reed: I just did everything. I just helped my mother, really. I was clerking.

Jenkins: What is everything to be done at a store at that time. You are talking about what year?

Ada Reed: This was '35 and '36. I was here about a year before I went to Austin.

Jenkins: What went on, what were the things that you recall. You were in the Depression at that time.

Ada Reed: Yes, that's right, when I was in school it was. That part of it doesn't register with me, actually. What I was doing was just

kind of second guessing my mother, trying to help her and take some of the burden off of her.

Jenkins: Do you remember much about the Depression as a Depression, as a kid in Bertram?

Ada Reed: No, not really.

Jenkins: A lot of people don't.

Ada Reed: I wonder now how my father and mother sent two girls to college during the Depression.

Jenkins: Were you conscious of the Depression?

Ada Reed: Not really.

Jenkins: Did they talk about the Depression?

Ada Reed: No, not really. They took the worry and tried to keep us out of it, I suppose.

Jenkins: If they were having problems they didn't let you know.

Ada Reed: No, that's right. They surely didn't.

Jenkins: You got fully involved in the store in what year? After you got back from Austin in what year?

Ada Reed: In '39, when we married.

Jenkins: How did y'all meet?

Bob: I was working for the Firestone Rubber Company, and I was going with a girl friend of hers. And I changed girl friends, and that is it.

Jenkins: Why don't you give us a sketch of your background up until you got involved in Bertram.

Bob: I was born in Scottsboro, Alabama. My parents were with different types of government jobs, etc., up in the north there.

It seemed like every six months we changed locations, etc., so I was constantly moving around.

Jenkins: Different kinds of jobs with the government? What kinds.

Bob: Truthfully I just can't say exactly what it was. I don't know that. I was a little bit too young to know.

Jenkins: What department did you work for, for instance.

Ada Reed: It was his mother and father.

Bob: Mother and father, not me.

Jenkins: You were moving around because your father was.

Bob: I have lived in New York, I have lived in Massachusetts, I have lived in Maine, I have lived in Washington, D. C., etc. So that was the sum and substance of it. And in 1932 I went to live with an uncle in Mobile, Alabama. While I was down there at the Firestone Store I met a Mr. Harvey Firestone, who was the owner of Firestone Tire and Rubber Company. He invited me over to the store at Silver Springs, Florida. I went over there and visited a little bit. He took a liking to me and asked me if I would like to go to work for him. I said, "Yes."

Jenkins: You were how old at this time?

Bob: I was about 18. So I went to work for the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company. In '35 they transferred me to Akron, Ohio, for training. Then from Akron, Ohio, they sent me to San Antonio. From San Antonio they sent me to Austin, and that is where we met.

Jenkins: That is where you met.

Bob: She was attending the University down there at that time.

Jenkins: Okay, and you met there and married and came to Bertram.

Ada Reed: That's right.

Jenkins: And both of you entered the store.

Ada Reed: Yes.

Jenkins: What was the ownership of the store at that time?

Ada Reed: Oh, you mean when we went into the business?

Jenkins: Yes. Just before you went into the business.

Bob: Ada Reed owned a fourth of it, and her sister owned a fourth of it, and her mother owned half of it.

Ada Reed: Yes, and of course on her death it became ours, and then we bought my sister out.

Jenkins: In what year?

Ada Reed: At my mother's death in '49.

Jenkins: Let's explore a little bit the investment involved here in that store.

Bob: I was the executor of Mrs. McGill's estate. Ada Reed's sister didn't want anything at all in the way of real estate, property, the store or anything. She just wanted the cash. So I sold some property to go ahead to get the cash that was necessary and borrowed some money and all. It was in the neighborhood of about \$35,000 that we had to come up with to pay the sister off.

Jenkins: For what proportion?

Bob: Her half.

Ada Reed: Half of it.

Bob: She inherited a fourth of it from her father and a fourth of

it from her mother.

Jenkins: So about \$35,000 for half of it.

Bob: We kept the properties that we wanted and sold the properties we didn't want and borrowed the money that we needed to go ahead to pay her off in full.

Jenkins: Now what was the condition of the store when you got involved in it? What was it handling, etc.

Ada Reed: Well, the same thing that we have now, plus the groceries. The only thing we have done away with is the grocery. No, I take it back, we have added appliances since then. We didn't have appliances.

Bob: We got appliances in '39.

Ada Reed: Did we?

Bob: When I came in the business we put in appliances.

Ada Reed: Yes, that's right.

Jenkins: The funeral home was gone before you got involved in it?

Ada Reed: Yes. It was sold in '34 or '35, as the case may be.

Jenkins: Did you have any involvement in the funeral home?

Ada Reed: Nothing but this I was telling you about in padding the boards, etc. No, that is the only thing I had to do with it.

Jenkins: You don't know much about the funeral business of it.

Ada Reed: This is peculiar. Your wife was telling me awhile ago that. . . Oh, what was the girl's name, she was in the wedding? Jaimie, yes, and I told you this Alfred Hill was her uncle. And he worked for my father. You can say he was the best undertaker. You can't say they enjoyed the business, but when my mother

sold the funeral home part of it, he was real upset. He really didn't want her to do it. He was with the business at that time, working for them.

Jenkins: Did they talk about caskets? Did they sell caskets?

Ada Reed: Oh, yes. That is what we had upstairs, what they called a display room, the different kinds of caskets.

Jenkins: Do you remember anything about their source of caskets?

Ada Reed: You mean where they came from?

Jenkins: Yes.

Ada Reed: The National Casket Company, and I do not know where their office was, and then the San Antonio Casket Company, of course in San Antonio.

Jenkins: So that is about your knowledge of the casket business.

Ada Reed: Yes, it really is.

Jenkins: Let's pick you up there, then, as you two get involved in the business. And when you did get involved in the business it was still considerably a general store.

Ada Reed: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: Handling . . .

Ada Reed: Everything.

Jenkins: Pretty much everything that you had mentioned, except the funeral home was gone, the buggies were gone, farm implements were gone.

Ada Reed: Right.

Jenkins: But otherwise, still feed and seed.

Ada Reed: Yes.

Bob: I bought cotton and wool and mohair.

- Jenkins: Now let's look into that a little bit. Was it largely a convenience for the farmers, or were you very much involved in brokering that stuff?
- Bob: It was more convenience than anything else, because that was one way we could get our money. When I came into the business they had a terrific amount of back debts that over the Depression years had not been collectable, and it was my job to go ahead and collect those notes and debts to the best of my ability. People wouldn't come in to buy due to the fact they didn't want to face their debt. So it was my job to go ahead and attempt to make it possible for those people to come in by settling those debts somehow, somehow. And I would go out, if they had a mule or a horse or wagon or anything else, I would settle the debt to the best of my ability with them to where they could come back with their pride and all and trade. I got into a couple of fights, etc. But that is just one of those things that went with it.
- Jenkins: But your best recollection, did you lose much on Depression charge accounts?
- Bob: Terrifically.
- Ada Reed: The charges then had to have been an awful amount.
- Bob: In today's figures it is not very much, but back there it was astronomical.
- Jenkins: To a large extent, though, you just inherited that.
- Bob: Oh, yes.
- Jenkins: Did you have a feeling that the Depression was about over by

the time you got involved in things?

Bob: No, I didn't.

Jenkins: You still felt Depression as a store owner.

Ada Reed: That is true.

Bob: The economy was depressed when we could buy cotton for 3¢ a pound.

Jenkins: You were still buying it at 3¢ a pound, and selling it for how much?

Bob: If I could get 3¼¢ or make \$10 a bale or whatever it was on cotton, less my handling of the thing, I was real lucky.

Jenkins: So you were really just hoping to get your . . .

Bob: The only reason we were in it was the collection of our debts.

Jenkins: You got into this thing in what year?

Bob: '39.

Jenkins: Cotton was still dirt cheap in '39.

Bob: I bought many a many a many a pound of wool at 25¢ a pound.

Jenkins: And sold it for . . .

Bob: Sometimes it would be 26¢, sometimes it would be 24¢. It was just according to what the market was.

Jenkins: Did you feel that you were losing any money on this at all by the time you paid shipping and all this?

Bob: Not in reality, because we were collecting.

Jenkins: Yes, but I mean on the actual transaction of the cotton and the wool.

Bob: That was one of the gambles that you took when you bought commodities. If you were lucky you made money. If you weren't

lucky you lost money. You were mentioning about making money or how we came out on the purchasing commodities, and so forth and so on, one of the recollections that I have is on December 7, 1941. Ada Reed and I were up at San Saba to pick up some pecans, and the bombing of Pearl Harbor was announced over the radio. Immediately I knew we were in trouble, and we set out for home. When we got home, which was in the nature of 6:30 or 7:00, I got on the telephone and called all of the buyers in Boston that I knew trying to go ahead and move my wool because I knew that it would just be a short time before if we were at war I would be in service. The buyers up there said their hands were tied, they couldn't do anything. They were as scared as we were, that they had theirs, and they didn't know what they could do with theirs, they durn sure couldn't do anything with mine.

Jenkins: Why were they so restricted?

Bob: The government had put freeze orders out on all commodities so that there wouldn't be speculation and all.

Jenkins: The price was frozen.

Bob: That's right. And so I kept trying. I talked to the bank, explained my situation to them because I was working on what they called Bills of Exchange, which is where I had the commodity, the bank had the check, and I was guaranteeing the check as a loan to be, but at the same time I could write checks on the bank for any amount that was necessary to go ahead and purchase these commodities until they told me that

they wouldn't finance me anymore. So I went to them and explained to them what the circumstances were and all. They said, "Don't worry about it. Everything will take care of itself. It will come out. Don't worry, don't worry." But being that I knew I was going to be going into service, I kept trying and trying to move that wool. Finally, if I remember correctly, in about August of 1942, Mr. Stephens up at Lometa, who had a warehouse and was a wool buyer up there, had an order for wool, and he was kind enough to go ahead and to purchase my wool at the price that I had paid for it. I lost insurance, warehousing and interest, but I was glad to get out from under it.

Jenkins: And this was one way of collecting some of the Depression debt. You got a percentage. Did you have a similar problem with cotton at that time?

Bob: No, because cotton hadn't come in yet. You see, the crops on cotton started somewhere in the neighborhood of about the latter part of July or early August. And I didn't get involved in cotton.

Jenkins: How big were you into pecans?

Bob: Oh, we were not in them. We were buying those for our own use.

Ada Reed: Yes, we just went to San Saba to pick up a few.

Bob: That was for our own use.

Jenkins: At that early time in your experience, were you still getting a lot of local things kind of in payment for groceries that you sold through the store?

- Bob: The farmer and rancher all had chickens. And chickens was one of the commodities, they could bring chickens to town and sell, or they could bring eggs to town and sell them. We would buy the eggs at a premium to give them that in trade.
- Jenkins: Oh, I see. Keep them coming in.
- Bob: Keep them coming in. They might bring in a case of 30 dozen eggs, and the price of eggs may be 7¢ or 8¢ or 10¢ a dozen. And when they took that all out in trade, if there was a balance we gave them what we call "trade checks" so they would go ahead and use that on the next purchase. In turn we would sell the eggs to Lampasas Produce Company over at Lampasas, who had a truck who would come through here every Saturday and every Wednesday and pick up eggs.
- Jenkins: Was this kind of wholesaling a large part of your business?
- Bob: No. We would get maybe as many as 30 cases of eggs on Saturday.
- Jenkins: What were some of the other things? Chickens, eggs, wool.
- Bob: We never did buy the chickens. Chickens would be bought down by the feed store.
- Jenkins: I see. Was there other local produce, anything like that, that people would bring to the store?
- Ada Reed: No, eggs were the only thing we bought, really.
- Jenkins: So all of your produce and things you bought from wholesalers.
- Bob: No, we bought from the producer.
- Jenkins: How far away were the producers?
- Bob: Right here in Bertram, the eggs, was that what you were speaking of?

Jenkins: The eggs, the carrots, beans . . .

Ada Reed: No, he meant other things, Bob.

Bob: That would be bought from a wholesaler in Austin, and at that time there was only one that was making the country territory and that was Guggenheim-Goldsmith. They would deliver on Saturday morning and Wednesday morning.

Jenkins: How about local corn and melons and such. Did you get much involved in that?

Ada Reed: No.

Bob: They would sell to the neighbors, etc. They weren't big enough to supply anything except a few neighbors.

Ada Reed: Most people canned their things. Of course they didn't freeze back then, but they canned their produce.

Jenkins: So you didn't do much selling of local produce.

Ada Reed: No. In fact we didn't carry produce, except just potatoes and onions and this sort of thing.

Jenkins: From your earliest experience with the store, was there always refrigeration?

Ada Reed: No, I am sure that there wasn't.

Bob: The smokehouse is back there.

Ada Reed: We still have, by this elevator that we were speaking of, back of it, is what we called the meat house, and they carried smoked meat and they hung them up on the hooks back in there. There was no refrigeration.

Jenkins: So they sold meats, but they were not refrigerated.

Ada Reed: No, they were not fresh meats or things that had to be

refrigerated. Cured bacon, they called it.

Jenkins: How about beef?

Ada Reed: No, we didn't get into that.

Bob: There was a meat market here in town that had beef and all.

Jenkins: Did they have refrigeration?

Bob: Well, they had ice. They had an ice house here.

Ada Reed: That's right.

Jenkins: Oh, an ice maker?

Bob: The ice would come from one of the ice plants, and it would be put in a vault. Then the ice would be sold out of there or used to the different purposes.

Jenkins: And the meat market had ice, but the grocery at the time did not.

Ada Reed: No, we didn't. I was trying to think. Well, Bob, Mr. Newton had an ice house back there on the end of his . . .

Bob: That is the ice house I am speaking of.

Ada Reed: Okay.

Jenkins: Do you remember when the store first started getting any form of cooling for preserving things?

Ada Reed: No, I really don't.

Bob: You had a refrigerator in there in 1936.

Ada Reed: Just a regular refrigerator, though, but not for meat or anything to sell.

Jenkins: Did all of this come after you took over the store?

Ada Reed: 1936 was, of course, before.

Bob: That was when I visited up here courting.

Ada Reed: But I don't remember that really.

Jenkins: Even in '36 then there wasn't a meat counter with ice in your store?

Ada Reed: No.

Bob: In '39 I bought one and put it in.

Jenkins: So that was the first refrigeration.

Ada Reed: Yes.

Jenkins: In '39. What kind of contraption was it?

Bob: It was a Frederic meat case, display case.

Jenkins: And it was pretty well developed by then.

Bob: And then about the same time I bought a vegetable display case from Tyler Manufacturing Company.

Jenkins: Was this electric refrigeration?

Ada Reed: It was when we started handling fresh produce.

Jenkins: So you never did go through the ice bit.

Bob: No.

Ada Reed: Not really.

Jenkins: Okay. Well, let's move along, then, from the time that the two of you got involved and some of the changes that you started bringing about. These, then, were some of the first big changes, refrigeration.

Ada Reed: I guess so.

Bob: Rural electrification was coming through here, Lyndon Johnson's pet baby, and I took on a line of appliances, which was Philco.

Jenkins: This was about when?

Bob: '39. And we sold a large number of refrigerators. And I took on a line of washing machines which was called Easy Washer,

which we sold a lot of. Philco had an electric range. We just kept on going from there in the appliances end.

Jenkins: Did you get out and sell, or did you just depend on people to come into the store and look?

Bob: I got out and sold.

Jenkins: How did you do that? I have heard some interesting tales.

Bob: So-and-so would tell you that such-and-such place had just gotten electricity. So you get on over there and talk to them and try to sell them an electric refrigerator or stove.

Jenkins: You did a lot of this yourself?

Bob: Yes, I did it all.

Ada Reed: Yes, he was the appliance salesman.

Jenkins: A lot of these were farms, I suppose?

Bob: Oh, they were all farms.

Jenkins: If you came out to my farm, how did you try to sell me a refrigerator, at the time?

Bob: "You are getting electricity, are you ready for an ice box or a refrigerator or stove, etc.?" We would offer them as good terms as we possibly could and go from there.

Jenkins: Did you have a pretty good percentage of contacts?

Bob: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: So when they got electricity they were ready for things.

Ada Reed: Yes, that's right.

Bob: They had been waiting too long.

Jenkins: Those must have been pretty good years.

Bob: They were.

Jenkins: This was just before the war. You never did take an appliance out with you to make the sale, though?

Bob: No.

Jenkins: I have heard of people who had generators and carried them out, left them, and said, "I will be back."

Ada Reed: Oh, my.

Bob: No, we never did have to do that.

Jenkins: Did you ever have anyone to buy one before they got electricity?

Bob: No, never did.

Jenkins: I have a strange tale of that. What are some of the things you remember about those appliance days.

Bob: The refrigerators, etc., were easy to sell due to the fact that people were just able to take advantage of the convenience and all that. One of the things I remember about when television came into the area here, we sold televisions. Generally they would come in the store and watch it and tell us they would like to try one, or something like that. And it was surprising the number of times after you had taken the television out or sold it, that they would call you up and tell you it wasn't working, etc. You go out there and you found out they had unplugged it due to the fact that they were accustomed every time a storm came up to unplug all of their electrical appliances, and they just didn't think about plugging it back in.

Jenkins: Was the store the major source of appliances in this particular area, or at least in the town?

Bob: Yes.

Ada Reed: It was in the town.

Jenkins: So you really had a market.

Bob: Yes.

Jenkins: Do you recall how much, percentagewise, or any kind of guess, how much business increased during those years because of appliances?

Bob: I would say that it was somewhere in the neighborhood of about \$10,000 to \$12,000 a year.

Jenkins: Increase?

Bob: Increase in refrigeration, ranges and washing machines.

Jenkins: Over about what?

Bob: It would just be over a two year period.

Jenkins: Yes, but I am talking about \$10,000 or \$12,000 increase in addition to what?

Bob: In addition to, say, about \$40,000.

Jenkins: Oh, so it was a substantial . . . Still though, groceries and . . .

Bob: Drygoods.

Ada Reed: Yes, that's right.

Jenkins: Were the staples.

Bob: Appliances were just a sideline, a moneymaker for us.

Jenkins: What about flour and corn meal, was that all commercially brought in, or did anyone locally here grind?

Ada Reed: We had a mill at one time, but most of it was brought in, of course.

Jenkins: And you did handle some of that?

Ada Reed: Oh, yes. They brought it in by the car load at one time, train boxcar load.

Bob: We bought flour from several different companies. The major company was in Shawnee, Oklahoma, Shawnee Flour Company up there. It would come in in a boxcar. Normally it would be, say, 50% flour and a small percentage of corn meal, and the rest of it would be feed. That is where I learned how to develop muscles on the elevator. And after unloading a number of boxcars there, I decided that elevator could use a motor. So I put an electric motor on it.

Jenkins: So your store was in on the growth of all the new appliances. What about air conditioning, did you get involved in that?

Bob: That's right.

Jenkins: Home window units.

Ada Reed: Yes.

Jenkins: Was that a big thing in Bertram?

Bob: Yes, for a while.

Jenkins: Were you also called upon by your customers to repair things?

Bob: Yes.

Jenkins: How did you deal with that?

Bob: Most of these units are sealed units. So therefore all you had to do was change out a unit. You didn't actually do any repairing.

Ada Reed: He is talking about on air conditioners.

Bob: Refrigeration, on either one. You take in a stove there, all you have to do if you are mechanically inclined, if the element

is burned out you just put another element in there. You don't repair it, you just put another element in there. And in a refrigerator, if the unit went out in there, you just ordered out another unit and put it in there. It is just a mechanical process, sort of like changing a tire.

Jenkins: How did you learn? Did you have manuals? Did you go to school?

Bob: We had the manuals and we had workshops and so forth and so on like that by the manufacturers in San Antonio and Austin.

Jenkins: So you did a lot of nightschooling then.

Bob: No, it was daytime.

Jenkins: You took off from Bertram, then.

Bob: Originally we would leave one day, and then we would come back two days later.

Jenkins: Had you had any kind of background in this kind of thing?

Bob: Yes, with Firestone.

Jenkins: Ah, so you were handling not just tires but all of those things. Okay, it just didn't hit Bertram until a little bit later. All right. Now somewhere along in here you probably did get called into service.

Bob: Oh, yes, in 1942.

Jenkins: Anything else about the business before you get called into the service now, in terms of change or growth that you can think of?

Ada Reed: Nothing I can.

Bob: There was one thing that would be of interest I think. Due to the fact that the Depression was just more or less winding

down in '39, we divided the store with a partition on the west side, about 20 feet there--it was a 60 foot wide store, we went over there and divided it. We were then able to go ahead and reduce the floor space, which in turn made our stock look better because we had lowered the rundown stock. The upstairs there was available, so I put a partition across half of it, and we had a dance hall up there.

Jenkins: Oh.

Ada Reed: You see, that way they came in this west door. You have been in there, and you know there are two rows of posts that run . . . This partition was put down the row of posts on the west side, and then this west door was the entrance, and they went right up the stairway.

Bob: We would have 200 or 300 people up there on Saturday night.

Jenkins: Was this only Saturday night?

Ada Reed: Yes. And this went about, what, two years?

Bob: Until I went into service.

Ada Reed: That is what I am saying.

Jenkins: Only Saturday night and every Saturday night?

Bob: Just about.

Jenkins: What kind of music?

Bob: We had a live orchestra.

Ada Reed: It was local area groups.

Bob: It was groups from Burnet, Marble Falls, around. Area musicians.

Ada Reed: Fiddle musicians, fiddle music.

Jenkins: So it was country music.

Ada Reed: Yes, country music.

Jenkins: Square dancing or . . .

Bob: Everything.

Ada Reed: Well, most of it was not square dancing, it was social dancing.
What do they call it?

Jenkins: Ballroom, round dancing.

Ada Reed: Yes, whatever.

Jenkins: Was this strictly a dancing thing, or was there food and drink?

Bob: Well, there was lots of drinking, but that was done outside.

Jenkins: Outside. Your rules were against that, or the town's rules
were against that.

Bob: The town's rules were against it.

Jenkins: So it was a dry town.

Ada Reed: Yes.

Jenkins: Probably still is.

Bob: No.

Ada Reed: We were until about, what, five years ago?

Bob: Five years ago.

Jenkins: Well, was that a pretty profitable thing?

Bob: Oh, it wasn't for profit. It was just merely to go ahead and
have community activities.

Jenkins: You were simply providing a place for them.

Ada Reed: They seemed to enjoy it. We have had church benches up there
around the walls in the dance hall.

Jenkins: Did you lose money on it?

Bob: I don't think so.

Jenkins: You did charge, though.

Bob: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: And you had to pay the musicians.

Bob: We had to pay the orchestra. We weren't in it for the money. We were just wanting to go ahead and contribute to the community and benefit from it ourselves.

Ada Reed: A little activity.

Jenkins: But wartime came, and you left and . . .

Ada Reed: That took care of that.

Jenkins: Let's see what was happening to you while he was gone.

Ada Reed: My mother and I ran the store.

Jenkins: Had she been involved?

Ada Reed: Oh yes, she had been involved all the time. Yes, she was the mainstay, she was always in it. And I went back and forth when Bob was still in the States, to California several times. Of course, when he was sent overseas I was home permanently.

Jenkins: What were some of the major problems and opportunities of the wartime, as far as the store was concerned? Did you have much problem getting things?

Ada Reed: Oh, yes, you had problems. I don't remember what was the main one, but merchandise was just not as plentiful as it had been, I will say.

Jenkins: Were you involved in rationing there?

Ada Reed: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: What were some of the things that were rationed?

Ada Reed: Groceries.

Bob: Meats, fish.

Ada Reed: Yes, but I mean it was just groceries.

Bob: Poultry was rationed, too.

Jenkins: Was it rationed to you, or to the customer too?

Ada Reed: Both, yes. It went from the customer to you to the wholesaler.

Jenkins: How did you handle the rationing? How did you know how much you could sell to the individual?

Bob: I foresaw, as I told you I was going to have to go to the service, so from the time that war was declared or Pearl Harbor was bombed and war was declared, I made darn good and sure that everything that was available I bought.

Jenkins: You stocked up then.

Bob: I had a terrific stock of groceries upstairs in the warehouse up there. When they came around to go ahead and take inventory on it and all, they were astounded that there was that much stuff in Burnet County. So the girls were left in real good shape as far as having merchandise and all. But the thing that I didn't foresee was that the rationing to the consumer would be as stringent as it was; therefore it took us several years to work out from under my warehouse. Do you remember that, Hon?

Ada Reed: I had forgotten it.

Jenkins: Did the stock that you already had, did that in any way determine how much stock they would ship you in the future?

Bob: That gave you a basis.

Jenkins: So you were in good shape not only because you had goods to sell now, but it gave you a basis to order more goods.

Bob: Right.

Jenkins: And the rationing device was what?

Bob: They had these little coupons and tokens that they would issue to the public. And they would come in, and if you wanted something you had to have a coupon for it or a token for it. That prevented people from hoarding, etc.

Jenkins: Were you aware or suspicious, since you saw who brought these things in, that there was any blackmarketing and swapping or buying or overloading or trading?

Bob: I wasn't home.

Ada Reed: And I don't think we did, not really, as I remember.

Jenkins: You don't remember a few individuals . . .

Ada Reed: Not that being a problem.

Bob: The only blackmarketing I had any dealings with was, I came home . . . I went into service in August, and I was able to go ahead and maneuver a 3-day pass from California, and I flew home, and I was home for Christmas. When I got here the girls were taking out ashes and bringing in coal. And I didn't like that. The boy that was supposed to work found another job because men were very much in need and all. He left just the girls there, and it was difficult for them to do that. So I got busy and found a butane tank up at Brownwood that a gentleman had up there that would sell it to me for cash only at \$250 for a 250 gallon tank. So I told him I would be up

after it. He said, "Bring the cash." I said, "Yes, sir, I will." I drove up there. Borrowed a pickup from a local feed merchant here, and drove up there. I got the tank and brought it back. I needed some plumbing, I needed a hole dug, and I needed some stoves. So I got on the telephone, and I called Walter Tips Company, who was an oldline hardware company in Austin that would wholesale stoves to us, and they said, "We just can't sell you a stove unless you have got the permit for one." I thought a few minutes, and I said, "Well, let me speak to Mr. Posey." He was the president of Walter Tips Company. I explained to him the situation that Mrs. McGill and Ada Reed were having to carry in coal and carry out ashes, and I wanted to do something about it, and I didn't have time to go through the regular channels to get permits for the stoves. He said, "Bob, we can't sell you a stove, but I will tell you what. I will send you up two on a loan." So we are still using one of the stoves right now. And there was a gentleman up in Burnet that rented a building that belonged to my wife's grandmother at one time. It belonged to the family there. He was very close to us, so I called him up, and said, "Hansford, I need a favor." He said, "What is it?" I told him that I needed the building plumbed for butane gas. And he said, "I will be down there." So sure enough, that left the hole in the ground. I went over to the county commissioner here and asked him if he could go ahead and use his equipment to dig that hole. He said, "I sure can." So

when I got ready to leave, it was in there.

Ada Reed: You are talking about in the store, of course.

Bob: Yes.

Jenkins: So during the war just the two of you ran the store?

Ada Reed: We had clerks, you know. But my mother and I really ran it.

Jenkins: How many clerks would you have?

Ada Reed: We had Cleo Goode and Ms. Annie Russell, we had two.

Jenkins: Have you ever had many more than that?

Bob: We have had as many as three, in addition to ourselves.

Jenkins: Things were pretty busy.

Bob: It is just a lot better to have enough personnel than it is
to be stretched too thin.

Jenkins: Mostly just local people?

Ada Reed: Yes.

Jenkins: Did some of those people stay with you for a long time?

Ada Reed: My father inherited a lady when he bought the store. She was
not married; she was a single person, and she stayed until
she got sick. I don't have any idea how many years, but quite
a long time. And then he had a bookkeeper who also worked
on the floor. She stayed until she married, and this was
like . . .

Bob: 25 years. And Jennie Gibbs stayed about 15.

Ada Reed: Yes.

Bob: And Lila stayed about 20.

Jenkins: So it wasn't come-and-go type folks.

Ada Reed: No, not really.

Jenkins: The first one you said stayed a long time, you didn't estimate how long.

Ada Reed: I really don't know because he bought the store in '13, and I don't remember when she died. It is Nannie Kate I am talking about.

Jenkins: Are you talking 20-30 years?

Ada Reed: I will say 20 years. I don't think it would have been any longer than that.

Jenkins: All of them stayed a long time.

Ada Reed: They did back then. Of course, now they don't.

Bob: During her father's lifetime he had more employees than we did.

Ada Reed: They had about 6 or 8.

Jenkins: They were doing a lot different and more things.

Bob: Back there, instead of being a self-service type operation, it was strictly a clerk operation. Somebody would come in, and a clerk would stay with that person and sell them everything that they wanted. And another person would come in, and the clerk would stay with that one and sell them everything.

Ada Reed: This cash register that Bob was speaking of that Mr. Reed bought off of the baseball game, has 8 drawers in it, and each fellow had his own drawer. This kind of gives you an idea.

Bob: It was an entirely different type of operation. In '39 when I came into the operation we went to self-service instead of clerk service.

Jenkins: You brought self-service in '39.

Bob: Yes.

Jenkins: So the number of employees . . .

Bob: Dwindled.

Ada Reed: That's right.

Bob: The overhead was cut that much.

Jenkins: Now you and your mother ran the store for how long?

Ada Reed: Until Bob got out of service in '46. Four years.

Jenkins: Are there any other highlights of those war years, or did things just kind of run pretty smooth?

Ada Reed: I am sure we had lots of problems, but I really don't . . .

Jenkins: As related to the time, though, you don't remember any particular thing?

Ada Reed: I really don't. No, I don't.

Jenkins: No big changes of any kind.

Ada Reed: No, no. We tried to keep the boat from rocking.

Jenkins: Hanging in there.

Ada Reed: That's right.

Jenkins: Did it remain as profitable during the war years as it had been?

Ada Reed: It probably didn't, but that I don't remember either. Bob could probably tell you.

Bob: The war years were more profitable than the years before that, because instead of having the Depression that we had been in the middle of, we were having inflation there.

Jenkins: And people had more money.

Bob: Yes, that's right.

Jenkins: Were the goods you were handling during the war appreciably different? Were there so many things that you couldn't get

that you had to substitute for, that really there was much of a change in merchandise at all?

Ada Reed: Not except that during these years, not particularly the war years, but we gradually got into more ready-to-wear, ladies. Well, men's, too, ready-to-wear, and added to our stock.

Jenkins: Did this cause much of a change in how you operated and what your help did?

Ada Reed: No, not really, because the girls that work there do everything.

Jenkins: Whatever is to be done.

Ada Reed: That's right. Of course, the men don't wait on the ladies as far as clothes are concerned.

Jenkins: Did you have to put in dressing rooms?

Ada Reed: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: That was during the war.

Ada Reed: We had dressing rooms before then.

Bob: We had a restroom that was used for a dressing room.

Ada Reed: Yes, but I was thinking back of those big, old mirrors that we had. No, that's right, I guess we didn't. After the war we put in the dressing rooms.

Jenkins: But during the war you did increase your ready-to-wear.

Ada Reed: Yes. It really started before the war, didn't it?

Bob: It started a little bit before the war. They still used the restroom as a dressing room, yes, but it picked up.

Ada Reed: At that time, in comparison, we had a huge restroom, really big enough for a dressing room and a restroom.

Jenkins: There was not a problem.

Ada Reed: No, not really.

Bob: No, there was not a problem there. The thing that makes it a little bit hard today than then, I sold many, many pairs of overalls for 98¢. Now we are getting \$19 and \$20 for them.

Ada Reed: You are not supposed to remember that, are you?

Bob: I sold many, many blue chambraywork shirts for 49¢. Now they are \$10 and \$11.

Jenkins: Socks were . . .

Bob: 5¢ and 10¢.

Jenkins: Did you have much of the five-and-dime store type stuff?

Ada Reed: No, not really. We don't have as much today as we used to.

Bob: There was a variety store here in town.

Ada Reed: That's right.

Bob: We stayed out of his hair, and he stayed out of ours.

Jenkins: Was it just a local . . . or was it a chain?

Ada Reed: No, it was local. A fellow by the name of Ottinger.

Jenkins: Okay, so we get through the war, and you get back. Do you see things that you want to do different now, or do you just kind of fall into the routine?

Bob: The war gave us an excellent opportunity to cut back on our accounts receivable, our credit business. They had a regulation "Z" way back there that said that you couldn't give credit for this and you couldn't do that and you couldn't do something else. So we used it as much as we possibly could to our advantage to have people go to the bank for financing instead of us being the financier.

Jenkins: This is for appliances and big things?

Bob: Groceries or anything else. We ran people up until, well, I guess, until about 1950 by the year.

Jenkins: Really? Even up until 1950.

Ada Reed: Yes, that's right. You see, a lot of these people, oldtimers I will say, were used to doing that, and you just don't break a habit overnight for that sort of thing.

Bob: It is a reflection on them if you do.

Jenkins: Sure. Did you charge interest?

Bob: Sometimes and sometimes not. If the accounts were not paid promptly like they were supposed to be and all, why, then we would go ahead and take a note and put interest on it and all.

Jenkins: But if it was understood that it was a yearly account, only after that would you charge interest.

Ada Reed: That's right.

Jenkins: You did not charge during the yearly period.

Bob: That was the reason we wanted out from under it.

Ada Reed: About that time, too, then we took that partition down. That is when we started increasing our stock. That was about '50 or '51, wasn't it?

Bob: About '50.

Ada Reed: We took that partition down that we told you about building down this row of posts when we put in the dance hall. We took it down, and extended the store back into the whole building.

Jenkins: How were you able to finance these accounts for a year? Were

you borrowing?

Bob: Not really, no.

Jenkins: So you were strong enough to carry the accounts even without interest, especially when you were not having to pay interest on borrowing. Over the years has the financing of the business been almost entirely internal?

Bob: That's right.

Jenkins: So from the beginning, at least from the time y'all got into it, do you have any knowledge of earlier at all?

Bob: The papers that I have seen in the old files, etc., her father was an exceptionally smart, good merchant. He was able to stay within bounds and handle it pretty well. The only borrowing that I think he did was from the man that owned the business originally for the purchase price.

Jenkins: But after that?

Ada Reed: Remember his name was McGill.

Jenkins: Did they speak of the kind of relationship they had with suppliers of buggies and farm equipment at all? I don't know what kind of things they did with that.

Ada Reed: I have no knowledge of that.

Jenkins: Now we are up to about 1950's or so when you said you kind of quit at least the yearly credit business. Have you still carried individual short-term accounts?

Ada Reed: Oh, yes.

Bob: We had 30-day accounts, and then on our appliances we would give up to a year. And 30-day accounts run into six months

accounts sometimes. You know how that is.

Jenkins: What all will you put on a 30-day account? Groceries, anything?

Bob: We don't have groceries anymore.

Ada Reed: Anything that we sell.

Bob: Anything we sell.

Jenkins: You two got out of the grocery business.

Bob: Right. It was so labor intensive.

Jenkins: When did you do this?

Ada Reed: About 12 years ago. Ten years ago.

Jenkins: But through those 50's and into the 60's and the 70's you were still selling groceries.

Ada Reed: Yes.

Jenkins: And you were carrying accounts? Whatever anybody bought?

Bob: If they had an account with us.

Ada Reed: That's right.

Jenkins: How restrictive were you in that?

Bob: I was as restrictive as I could be. I wanted to make sure that I didn't lose any more than was absolutely necessary, and I made many mistakes in that.

Jenkins: How did you decide, and how did you refuse charge accounts?

Bob: It was their reputation and what their assets were, etc. Because it was a small community and all, we knew who was who and so forth. If they had a good record in the past here we would continue to charge to them.

Jenkins: Your record of credit losses, do you know what that is?

Bob: It is in the neighborhood of about 1%.

Jenkins: Which is not bad. Do you charge interest now?

Bob: Yes. 18%.

Jenkins: Starting . . .

Bob: After 60 days.

Ada Reed: Now wait a minute, Bob, that is on appliances you are talking about.

Bob: No, I am talking about on the open accounts here. Every month you go through there, and if the account isn't paid, you add 1½%.

Ada Reed: That's right.

Jenkins: But for the 30 days it is interest free.

Ada Reed: Oh, yes.

Bob: And for the next 30 days we give them the grace period there.

Ada Reed: In other words for 60 days. That's right.

Bob: As I said, a 30-day account runs into a lot more than 30 days.

Jenkins: But you do, after 60 days, start the interest.

Ada Reed: Unless it is some unusual circumstances.

Bob: If somebody has hard luck or something like that, why, what difference does it make.

Jenkins: How widely do you draw customers?

Ada Reed: Austin, of course we have some, not accounts, they could be accounts; Fort Worth we have a few people; especially around the lakes area. You know where that is.

Bob: A retirement area. We get people going from Houston, San Antonio, Texas City, in through there. They come up here and they see the store, and they stop. Lots of times after

they have visited with us several different times, they will ask to open an account.

Ada Reed: We go down to Houston. Now this is not a whole lot. We have a few accounts.

Jenkins: They are regulars.

Ada Reed: Yes, maybe once a year they come up or something.

Bob: We have one woman who might spend \$400 or \$500 at Christmas.

Jenkins: What kinds of things do people from those distances buy from you?

Ada Reed: Clothes.

Bob: They say it is more enjoyable and better here than it would be to fool around going to the shopping mall and everything else down in the city.

Ada Reed: I tell you, we have so many, or I have heard so many people say that they can't get waited on even in Austin. Of course, Austin has gotten to be quite a city. We try to give them personal service and make them feel at home.

Jenkins: You have already given me at least part of the answer to the question I am asking, I suppose, is why would anyone drive all the way to Bertram?

Ada Reed: That is what a man asked me, a paper salesman asked me the other day, he was asking where our trade came from, he said, "Why?" And I said, "Well, we try to give them personal service." We do as much as we can. Then we get to know people and feel like they are friends. This happens to be two girls that live here in their younger days, and they both live in

Georgetown. And they come up pretty regularly. Of course, Georgetown is not but 30 miles, 25 miles away. Anyway, we have quite a few out of Austin, this sort of thing.

Jenkins: What about fashion, though?

Ada Reed: You mean what I sell?

Jenkins: Yes.

Ada Reed: I go to market. Bob says I spend more time at market than I do in the store. And, of course, I see all of the fashion shows and try to buy according. We don't buy what New York does. We don't buy what Dallas does in a lot of things. We really cater to the mature woman, mainly I guess, I being one of them. I have a little high school girl that works, and I have a lady that is about my age, too, that works. But anyway this is the type of thing, and they know that we will have it for them.

Jenkins: Where do you go market?

Ada Reed: Dallas. See, it is the second largest in the United States.

Jenkins: How often do you go?

Ada Reed: Five times a year, at least. I am fixing to go the end of this month. It is always January, then either March or April, then May, August and October.

Jenkins: Mostly women's merchandise?

Ada Reed: Yes. Of course, we buy a lot of things from salesmen that come to the store, but the women's stuff, the fashions, I buy there.

Jenkins: There is not as much men's.

Ada Reed: Not really.

Jenkins: What would you handle in men's clothes?

Ada Reed: We carry jeans, of course, dress shirts, sport shirts, under-wear, shoes, slacks.

Jenkins: Sport coats, suits?

Ada Reed: No sport coats or suits. And socks.

Jenkins: If I came in there to look at the women's merchandise, if I said, "Where might I see some of this same stuff in Houston?" What stores might carry the same things that you carry?

Ada Reed: Of course, many of us carry the same thing because there are not that many different manufacturers.

Jenkins: But price range.

Ada Reed: Foley's. Of course they carry a much broader price range than we do.

Jenkins: But your stuff would be the same.

Ada Reed: Oh, yes, it would be the same thing. They are national brands. We carry Levi's for women. They make women's clothes as well as men's, only just a lot of them. Foley's and . . . well, I can't think of another Houston store right off the top of my head, but I think Neiman-Marcus is in Houston, is it not?

Jenkins: I think so.

Ada Reed: Of course, here again they naturally would be much broader in price range.

Jenkins: But you carry some of the same things as Neiman's does?

Ada Reed: Yes.

Jenkins: How do you think your prices compare to their prices on the same merchandise?

Ada Reed: I would think they would be comparable. Of course now, a lot of times I am sure that they will get a good bit more markup depending . . . especially on their better lines and things, than we do.

Jenkins: Is this a substantial portion of your total sales?

Ada Reed: Women's wear, yes. Yes, it really is. If you could see our stock right now, you would know why.

Jenkins: Let's explore a little bit more here the reasons why and evidence of people coming to Bertram and doing business here and why. We have got a letter here and a story behind it and maybe another story in addition to that.

Ada Reed: Shall I tell the story first?

Jenkins: Yes, tell the story.

Ada Reed: We have a customer in Baytown, Texas, who trades with us periodically when she is in the area visiting relatives, and has been wearing navy blue hose made by Hanes. She wrote and asked me for some of these stockings. As it so happened Hanes quit making the navy blue stockings, but I had two boxes, not in her size, but in the size that she could use, the next half-size up. So I wrote her and told her about this. This is the letter that I got from her. She says, "Thanks for your information about the hose and mailing me my bras. You are such a kind and accommodating person. Always such a pleasure to be in your store. Look so forward to a shopping spree there when we visit the Lavoices. Now for the hose: please save me both boxes size 10 medium. Will pick them up and exchange the bras to

a 36D when we make our visit to Burnet. Thanks again for your kindness."

Jenkins: Apparently this isn't an unusual thing.

Bob: No, it happens very, very often.

Ada Reed: It doesn't happen every day but every little bit. We feel very flattered.

Bob: One of our clerks, Ms. Bird, received a similar type of letter, more flattering than this from a customer that is a very difficult person, and she knows she is difficult. And she was thanking her for her patience and for the way that she went after clothing and sold her additional merchandise that the woman wasn't even thinking about, but when she saw it she wanted it. And she complimented her on the fact that she was interested in doing for her and also for the store. This type of letter and all, or compliments from the customers, is not unusual.

Jenkins: Now your people have been with you a long time.

Bob: Yes.

Jenkins: Are you conscious of training them at all?

Bob: It is sort of like monkey see--monkey do. Taking an example now, about, I guess, it was in October or November, in through there, before the last market. We had a salesman that came in, and I asked him if I could help him. He said, "No, I want to see Mrs. Brewer." I said, "She is busy at the moment." Well, he was a new salesman, so he just walked on up there to where he knew she was, due to the fact I looked up there. And she was talking to a customer and listening to the customer

tell her her troubles, what was going on, why she was doing this and why she was doing that, etc. The salesman made the remark, "I wouldn't put up with that ten minutes." I didn't say anything because after all it didn't matter. And a few minutes later, why, the customer left. Ada Reed came over and asked if she could help him and all. He said, "Well, I have my line out here, I want to show it to you." I will let Ada Reed take over from there.

Ada Reed: I had handled his line before, and I did not do well with it. So I told him that I was not interested and wasn't going to buy it. He said, "I have been waiting 15 minutes to see you." I said, "I am sorry, but I am not going to buy the line. If I can't sell it then there is no point in me spending my money." But before he left I told him that I would be by his showroom in Dallas, and I would look at the line. Which I did. And I got up and walked out. Which is one of those things.

Jenkins: You do spend a lot of time, then, hearing things that happen that seemingly have nothing to do with business.

Bob: If it is customers, and they are enjoying it, why, it is part of business.

Jenkins: But I mean, to someone else, it is wasting your time.

Ada Reed: That's right.

Bob: Well, he just didn't have much compassion. If somebody has a story they want to tell you, it means something to them.

Ada Reed: You don't just walk off and leave them.

Jenkins: You know everyone from miles around, I guess you get a lot of

that probably.

Bob: We get a good deal.

Ada Reed: You know people like to unload, maybe whether you know them or not, but they like to have an ear bent for listening.

Jenkins: You said a paper salesman. What kind of paper? Just wrapping paper? You were saying awhile ago, though, that some paper salesman came through. But you don't handle wallpaper or anything like that?

Ada Reed: No, no. I know what you are speaking of. It is wrapping paper, gift wrapping paper.

Bob: Lone Star Paper Company, a Mr. Hillsberg.

Ada Reed: Yes, that's right. He was the one that asked us where trade came from and how we held it, etc.

Jenkins: Has the store ever gotten involved in selling wallpaper?

Ada Reed: No, no.

Bob: A lot of the salesmen are curious as to why we do the volume of business that we do and how we are able to handle the grade of merchandise we handle. And they will ask questions, like the Ship and Shore salesman not very long ago, but a couple of years ago, he made the comment, "I don't see how you all handle the merchandise that you do." His merchandise is what he meant there. And it is just due to the fact that our customers appreciated it.

Ada Reed: And your personal approach.

Bob: That's right. We just responded to their needs.

Jenkins: Do you do much mail order?

Ada Reed: No.

Jenkins: I call it mail order, but you ship to them?

Ada Reed: We do, but not much.

Bob: It is not a big item.

Jenkins: You don't encourage it, then.

Ada Reed: Oh, yes, we would be glad to.

Bob: We got a call during the last cold spell from Texas City, a Mrs. McCauley. She called up and wanted to know if we had some thermal underwear. I said, "Yes." She said, "Well, would you check and see if you have got the following and sizes and also check and see if you have got some flannel shirts in the sizes." So I went and checked and said, "Yes, we do." She said, "All right, send me such and such and such and such. We can't find it down here."

Ada Reed: They also have a ranch out here between here and Marble Falls.

Bob: They are good customers. When they are here, they and their daughters might spend several hundred dollars on a visit.

Ada Reed: They do day leasing on their ranch out there. Deer hunting.

Jenkins: Well, a lot of your longtime customers are ranchers around here.

Ada Reed: That's right. But, you see, we really depend more on the out-of-town than we do the town.

Jenkins: Really?

Ada Reed: You know, people in a small town . . . I guess in the big town they do the same thing, they want to go to Austin or they want to go somewhere else. So really we couldn't depend on our local.

Jenkins: So folks here tend to go somewhere else.

Ada Reed: That's right.

Bob: We get our share of their business. We don't depreciate it a bit in the world, but we do really depend on the people that are maybe within a hundred-mile radius.

Jenkins: Do you get much drop-in business, or do you know most of the people who come?

Bob: We get a tremendous amount of drop-in business.

Ada Reed: Going to the lake area up here.

Bob: Word of mouth, "Go by McGill's."

Jenkins: I was fixing to say, who knows to stop at McGill's in Bertram?

Ada Reed: That's right. Well, one thing that draws them, and Bob says that we get more lookers some days than we do customers because of the building and the old store.

Bob: Word of mouth. We used to have a friend that is no longer alive by the name of Lomis Slaughter who owned a chain of grocery stores in Austin and a packaging house there. He married a local girl and was an old friend of the family. He would come up, and just as soon as he got inside he said, "Bob, when are you going to get rid of these damned old fixtures. I remember these from Dave Reed's day." He did, and he made me feel about this big. Sure enough, maybe a week or two or three weeks later, Mr. Lem Scarbrough, the Scarbroughs in Austin, who were old friends of the family and all, would be up. He would walk through the store and give a suggestion here and a suggestion there because he had a very modern department

store. I said, "Mr. Lem, Mr. Lomis was up the other day, and he was raising sand with me because I haven't changed out the fixtures and all." He said, "Bob, don't you listen to him under any circumstances. This is the biggest and best drawing card you could ever have. I will never come back if you do that. That is one of the pleasures I get of coming up here, the nostalgia. This is going to be the biggest drawing card you could ever think of." And sure enough, he is right.

Jenkins: And so if you attempted to do as they do, you would be losing some of your best . . .

Ada Reed: They feel like they could go to the city and see that, you know; whereas there are not many of these left. Your wife was telling me about this one in Denton, this hardware store.

Jenkins: We were kind of grazing through the years. I don't know if we can identify where we are, but let's attempt to grow on up through the years toward now, and see what changes, if any, what kinds of growth has been happening over that time. When we get up to this time, then I will go back and do some summarizing.

Bob: As you have perhaps realized, I am very proud of Ada Reed's development. She is a darn good buyer, and she is able to go ahead and handle the customers and public relations very well. The merchandise is of a grade that any department store would be proud of. It is not a country store type of operation there as such.

Ada Reed: Bob, you and I were talking about brands and in comparison to

what Houston carries and so on.

Bob: When she goes to market there, she buys with people in mind as well as for general purposes. And it is surprising that it works out that way. She can come back and call and say, "I saw such and such, and I thought of you." And there it is.

Jenkins: And they have a strong tendency to come down and get it.

Ada Reed: I was telling that we catered to the mature woman, mainly. Of course, we carry junior things, too, but that really isn't our business. What I mean is, where our volume is.

Jenkins: You were also saying that you don't carry anything like that kind of line for men, and you had mentioned the things that you do carry for men.

Ada Reed: Just slacks and jeans and shirts.

Jenkins: Why haven't you gotten into that, then?

Bob: In the rural areas they don't dress as much as they do in the city. Jeans, shirts, boots, hats, that's about it.

Ada Reed: Slacks.

Jenkins: But you draw women here.

Bob: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: Why wouldn't you draw men?

Bob: I can't answer that. I don't know.

Ada Reed: I don't either.

Jenkins: But you don't.

Bob: We do carry Stetson hats up to \$250, and that is not a small item. Just sold a \$250 Stetson hat today.

Jenkins: Now women come here from a considerable distance. Do men come,

except just to bring their wife?

Ada Reed: That's it. Well, they will come, as Bob said, for Stetson hats. We have them come a pretty good distance when they know that we have them, and we do carry a good stock.

Jenkins: Why would they come here for a Stetson hat instead of going somewhere else?

Bob: A very, very few stores carry a stock of Stetsons and carry them in the depth that we carry them. You go into the average store to see the best Stetson made, and they don't have it.

Jenkins: So you carry the full range. At least from the top to the bottom, you may skip a few in there.

Ada Reed: Yes.

Jenkins: Shoes?

Bob: We carry a line of shoes, but shoes are not a big item. When did you buy your last pair?

Jenkins: A long time ago.

Bob: That's what I mean. Men are not style conscious.

Ada Reed: Men don't change as much as women.

Bob: When did you buy your last shirt? Your wife bought it for you.

Jenkins: Probably. I have no idea.

Ada Reed: He is not supposed to ask those questions.

Jenkins: That's all right. I don't buy many clothes.

Bob: That is what I am saying: Men don't buy many. We are not clothes horses.

Jenkins: They will just run down and get something.

Bob: Really, that is not comfortable until you have had it two or three years.

Jenkins: That's right, and then they want to throw it away.

Ada Reed: You can't wear them out, these polyester things.

Bob: A man's store, except where there would be social pressures, etc., isn't desirable.

Jenkins: Well, let's come up through those years again. Have there been many changes? Now you got up through the '50s, and we are kind of grazing into the '60s. Were there many changes coming about through there?

Bob: Stylewise, yes.

Jenkins: Yes, but you were keeping up with that as you went to market.

Ada Reed: Yes, trying to, anyway.

Jenkins: Do you ever miss very badly and have things you can't get rid of?

Ada Reed: Oh, yes.

Bob: That is the story of life. They don't taste good with salt and pepper.

Jenkins: Do you have any idea how you compare to other stores in how poorly or well you do?

Ada Reed: No, I really don't.

Jenkins: How do you get rid of this stuff?

Ada Reed: Sales and that sort of thing.

Jenkins: Do you have regular sales or just when you accumulate stuff?

Ada Reed: We try to have regular sales, you know, at least twice a year, big ones twice a year. But this building we have next door,

our original store building, was our flea market, not flea market but sidewalk sale or outlet thing until it got the corner knocked off it about five years ago or six years ago, and we had to put a stop to that until we got it fixed, and it just has never been repaired.

Jenkins: How did the corner get knocked off?

Ada Reed: A truck jackknifed and went into it on a slick pavement.

Bob: The man was going a little bit faster than he should, and the truck hydroplaned and he lost control. It knocked the front end out of it.

Jenkins: Since you two took over the store, has there been much change in the square footage of the store?

Ada Reed: It is just the same.

Bob: 6,000 square feet. The merchandise content has increased, and the aisle space has decreased. The rack space has increased.

Jenkins: You are actually carrying just not more dollars but more garments.

Ada Reed: We've increased our children's department for one thing, as well as our ladies'. I guess you would say our men's, too, somewhat.

Jenkins: Is the ladies' department the big department?

Ada Reed: Yes, it is.

Jenkins: What follows that, kind of, in succession?

Bob: I would imagine the men's.

Ada Reed: The men's would be next. And then the shoes, and then the children's. We have really just upgraded our children's department, so it is kind of still taking hold.

Bob: We do a fair appliances, too.

Ada Reed: We sell Frigidaire rather than what Bob was saying a while ago, Philco.

Bob: Philco is out of business. They went out of business about 15 years ago, and we took on the Frigidaire line.

Jenkins: What appliances then, the big appliances?

Bob: Refrigeration.

Ada Reed: Stoves.

Bob: Air conditioning, washer-dryer.

Jenkins: You are not into television sets?

Ada Reed: Yes.

Bob: We have RCA. We have been a RCA dealer since 1960.

Jenkins: Are you still repairing?

Bob: No. When they went to the integrated circuit or solid state, that let me out.

Jenkins: Who does your repair?

Bob: I have several different sources.

Jenkins: In town?

Bob: No, no.

Jenkins: How far?

Bob: I have a man at Burnet that does service work, and I have one in Georgetown.

Jenkins: You ship the stuff to them.

Bob: I take it to them.

Jenkins: How fast can I get something fixed if I bring it to you?

Bob: If it is something I sold. If it is something that I didn't

sell, you take it to where you bought it.

Ada Reed: But he said how fast, Bob.

Jenkins: If I bring you something that you sold me.

Bob: Normally I give you one-day service.

Ada Reed: Depending on how long it takes the repairman to do it.

Bob: But normally if I take it in, they will get right on it and get it out for me.

Jenkins: Do you go back and get it?

Ada Reed: Yes.

Bob: Or I bring it back with me. With the integrated circuit it is mostly a snap-out proposition. If they have it in stock, they can just put it in there, and I can come on back. If they have to order it, why, naturally they have to wait on the order to be delivered.

Jenkins: Do you usually wind up just taking one thing or maybe you carry several to him at one time?

Bob: Just one. There is not that much service work. That is the reason you see very few TV shops anymore, repair shops.

Jenkins: So you don't worry a great deal about . . .

Bob: No, service doesn't bother me a bit in the world. It is very unusual that you have any trouble with a TV set in 3 years.

Jenkins: Do you have to be a seamstress at all?

Ada Reed: No, we don't do alterations. We have two or three ladies here in town that do them that we recommend and will call them to come in.

Jenkins: But you are not responsible for them.

Ada Reed: No, no.

Bob: One of the girls that works for us is on maternity leave right now who will do alterations and such as that on her own. And we will tell the customer that so-and-so or Cindy will be glad to do that, but it will be between you and Cindy. We don't get involved in it.

Jenkins: Okay, as we come through the years up to now, are there any other major changes or significant events that you recall before I dig into some specifics here as you grew along?

Ada Reed: I really don't think of anything.

Jenkins: Changes in style, you just kept up with those.

Ada Reed: You have to or you are gone.

Jenkins: You said you dropped groceries. That is kind of where we were at one time. You dropped groceries about twelve . . .

Ada Reed: About twelve years ago.

Bob: It was so labor intensive.

Jenkins: That was a blessing, I suppose?

Ada Reed: It was.

Jenkins: Did your volume of business go up or down after you got out of the grocery business?

Bob: I think it went up.

Ada Reed: Because we made better use of the space in the store.

Bob: You see on groceries the major chains, such as Safeway, Kroger's, H.E.B. and on like that, they work on $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1% of their volume. And there was no way that we could do that; therefore we had to have a person available at all times for

groceries, and they couldn't be out on the floor selling other stuff.

Ada Reed: It had to be a man, too. See, we are down now to just ladies, and Bob is the only male that we have in the business.

Jenkins: Where do the people in Bertram go to buy their groceries?

Bob: There are two grocery stores here in town.

Jenkins: Chains?

Bob: No.

Ada Reed: No, they are individuals.

Bob: We call them drive-ins.

Ada Reed: Yes, that's right. Nearly all of the service stations now have groceries and this sort of thing, you know, quick shops.

Jenkins: Do you have a bonafide . . .

Bob: Oh, yes. They sell fresh meats and a full market.

Jenkins: Affiliated or anything like that?

Ada Reed: No, they are individually owned. Local people.

Jenkins: Well, let me do one more thing. No more things that you can think of through the years in terms of significant changes then, the way you do things?

Ada Reed: No, not really.

Jenkins: Are you growing? Where is that growth coming from?

Bob: It is coming from the Austin area that is coming north.

Ada Reed: You are speaking of the town?

Jenkins: No, I am talking about your volume.

Ada Reed: Yes, we are.

Bob: People that have moved out of Austin, or people that are

moving into Austin, whichever way you wish to look at it. Austin is becoming the computer center of Texas, or the United States.

Jenkins: You are how far from there?

Bob: 30 miles one way, 20 miles another.

Ada Reed: You see, Austin is growing this direction, northwest, which is what we are. We are scared to death they are going to come take us in.

Bob: Every day that I sell there are people that come in that have been in the area there, "We wanted to come in and see the store. We have moved here," and so forth and so on. "Well, where do you live?" "We live such and such. We bought a house or we are building a house," and all like that. The farms and ranches are being cut up into smaller units and people moving out to them. It is very unusual that at least one person doesn't come into the store there and introduce themselves and say they are in the area and so forth and so on. They may be from Liberty Hill, they may be from Leander, maybe from Round Rock, Georgetown, but they are in the area there, and Austin is drawing them.

Jenkins: As those communities grow, is Bertram itself growing much?

Bob: Yes, it is growing, too.

Jenkins: Are there new communities, new housing areas, that you are pulling from? Is there a housing addition coming up near Bertram?

Bob: There is a sub-division that is known as the Bear Creek Estates out from Liberty Hill. That has maybe 50 or 60

mobile homes and all in through there, plus homes. Right out of town here, at what we call the Russell place and is now known as Sunset Oaks, it has been cut up, and people are moving in there buying the acreage and so forth. Off to the south down here about six miles there is a place known as Durham Park, where they are moving into. To the west here we have what they call Bob Bill's Estate there. It has got maybe 12 or 15 homes that have been built in through there. And all around here. We have a young man that has moved here by the name of Clements that is a grandson-in-law of one of the local landowners here that is deceased now. And his father-in-law has sent him up here with the expectation with him of building fifty homes.

Jenkins: So your business opportunities are growing very fast.

Bob: Take for instance now, the paper yesterday said that Motorola was buying some acreage and was going to move their research and development from Phoenix, Arizona, to Austin. They were going to move 400 of their scientists and specialists to Austin. Those people are going to try to go ahead and get something in the area that they like, and they will be coming northwest. The Bureau of Business Research says that all of the cities in Texas are growing northwest.

Jenkins: Okay, anything else you want to tack onto that before we go on?

Bob: We were saying a few minutes ago that you had talked with Mr. Smith and Mr. Dych over there at Antique Stone. They moved up here and brought their business up here to get out

of Austin. Jimmy Dych bought a home in Burnet because he couldn't find what he wanted here. There is a subdivision, or a land development, whichever way you wish to look at it, by the name of Horseshoe Bay on the other side of Marble Falls. And that has brought untold amounts of money into this area. We get business from that. Jimmy and Leroy there are doing a project for Horseshoe Bay right now that they call Applehead, and they are making the insignia for them.

Ada Reed: They are huge. Is it concrete?

Bob: Yes. You can see them tomorrow if you want to. They have got them there. But they are doing a big item there in dollars and cents, as well as in structure for them. So all of this area is available if you go after it.

Jenkins: What are the big businesses of Bertram?

Bob: Pedernales Electric is the big one. It has about 28 or 29 employees.

Jenkins: That is a public utility.

Bob: We have got about four or five good and medium-size construction companies. They do masonry, building, contracting, etc., and they employ a number of people. But from the local manufacturing standpoint, about the only two that manufacture locally is Antique Stone and Tiffany Marble. To show you Tiffany Marble, we were down in Austin on Sunday about six to eight months ago, and I noticed a pickup from Tiffany Marble over at a motel that was being built next to where we went in for breakfast. We were going into Bennigan's there, and

next to it was where they were building a motel where 290 and I-35 comes down. And I noticed this pickup there. The next day or two I saw Mr. Neighbors, who is the owner of Tiffany Marble, and I asked him, I said, "Bill, I noticed that you were down in Austin at the Sunrise Motel. Are you doing a little work down there?" He looked at me and said, "Well, I guess I am. I have got 165 bathrooms down there." I said, "My Lord, I didn't realize that you were doing that." He said, "Yes, I have got a contract for 350 more that I don't know whether I am going to be able to take care of or not."

Ada Reed: They are down here at the east edge of town.

Bob: They make this cultured marble for vanities, bathtubs, etc. They go all over this area. The way the area has been expanding they do a terrific business.

Jenkins: Are they older in town than Antique Stone?

Bob: Technically, yes.

Ada Reed: They bought out a company. They bought out the man that owned Tiffany Marble.

Jenkins: And that was an old . . .

Ada Reed: No, not that old, but it is older than . . .

Bob: It is about five years old, six years old.

Jenkins: Oh, in Bertram.

Bob: Going back now to Antique Stone there, they ship all over the United States and in foreign countries, too, their tile. They supplied--I think I have this right now, may be exaggerating a little bit--a little over a million square

feet of tile for a shopping mall in Denver.

Jenkins: And made right here?

Bob: Made right here. They supplied a shopping mall up in Midland, and they have a picture of Kenny Rogers' home. He spent 15 million dollars on it, and they supplied the tile for it.

Jenkins: I will ask them all of those things. What about your own advertising?

Bob: For years I used direct mail advertising. When we got out of the grocery business, that gave me an opportunity not to have to be as hardpressed as we had been. So I dropped it, and we have been using newspaper. It doesn't do as well, and I am going to go back into direct mail advertising.

Jenkins: What newspapers do you use?

Bob: We use the Burnet Bulletin.

Ada Reed: You see, our local paper combined with the Burnet Bulletin a number of years ago. We used to have the Bertram Enterprise here.

Jenkins: You reach what market with that paper?

Bob: Very little.

Ada Reed: I tell you, my feeling is it goes more to the people who used to live here and they subscribe to it in order to keep up with what is going on in the area.

Jenkins: But in reaching Houston and all, you make no attempt.

Ada Reed: No, no. Except direct mail, we do. We have a mailing list.

Jenkins: You are engaged in that now?

Bob: My wife is, yes.

Ada Reed: It has been kind of slack, but, as Bob says, that is really our best method.

Jenkins: How often do you send things?

Ada Reed: Well, at one time we got them out weekly.

Bob: Then we dropped down to about every three months.

Jenkins: In your mailings, most of which, I guess, go out of this area, what do you do? What do you attempt to accomplish? What do you put in that ad?

Bob: Just let them know that we are thinking of them, and we have got this merchandise.

Ada Reed: Or if we have a special sale. Just like Easter coming up, hopefully we will get out one within the next, well, I will say ten days or two weeks at the most, because Easter is just a little over a month away.

Jenkins: Do you put pictures and prices?

Ada Reed: We have the cards that we buy.

Bob: Brochures from the manufacturer and all.

Ada Reed: Then we get mailers, like from Ship and Shore blouses, that have a few designs, a few of their blouses on them.

Jenkins: If you have any copies of newspaper ads and mailers and things that you can afford to let me have, I would sure like to put them in the Archives.

Ada Reed: Don't ask me that because it would take me now until doomsday to go through them.

Jenkins: I can wait.

Bob: I have got several folders of them.

Ada Reed: He has got several carloads of them.

Bob: You were asking about the local paper, etc. The other day, two weeks ago, I ran a coupon in there. It was \$2 off on Levi's. To show you how much that benefits us, we got in one.

Ada Reed: That sort of thing just doesn't do us any good.

Bob: Now about two years ago I did the same thing with another paper that was in business down at Liberty Hill that is no longer in business. It was the Sentinel. I kept the adding machine tape on each sale that came in. For instance if they came in and bought a pair of blue jeans or two pairs of blue jeans, there was no limit on the number of blue jeans they could buy. If they bought five pairs of blue jeans we would put five pair there, and then if they bought anything else it was on this so I could identify it. The sum and substance of it was that we did not pay for the advertising.

Ada Reed: For some reason we just don't do well with coupons.

Bob: We just did not pay for the advertising. I identified what we sold. I identified that we sold so many pairs of blue jeans. The price of the blue jeans was such and such, which gave us a gross margin of such and such. The other merchandise we had a gross margin of such and such, and you could go ahead then and relate it to the cost of the ad. And we didn't recover the cost of the ad.

Jenkins: Do you have a budget, or do you just kind of do what you like?

Bob: We do what we want to.

Ada Reed: It is kind of hit or miss, I am sorry to say.

Bob: We don't try to budget.

Jenkins: You don't say you are going to try to spend so much this year or a percentage or anything, it is just whatever feels right.

Bob: If we have something we want to advertise, why we do it.

Ada Reed: In the past we have done well with radio advertising.

Jenkins: How widespread?

Ada Reed: This comes out of Burnet. And they reach pretty good.

Bob: They probably reach down to Leander.

Ada Reed: Yes.

Bob: And they reach over to Johnson City and up to Llano and Lampasas.

Jenkins: Does it reach Austin?

Bob: I don't think so.

Ada Reed: If it does it has to freak in.

Bob: For a person to listen to it down there they would have to be wanting some local news. They wouldn't have a following down there.

Jenkins: So radio is pretty regular?

Bob: No, that is spasmodic. It is just according to what we want.

Jenkins: And newspaper, is that regular?

Ada Reed: That is more regular than anything that we do.

Jenkins: But you don't carry something every day?

Ada Reed: No, no. Well, this is a weekly paper.

Jenkins: Do you carry something every week?

Ada Reed: No. We'll say . . .

Bob: About three times a month.

Jenkins: So you don't really spend a great deal of time on advertising.

Ada Reed: No, and that is the problem.

Jenkins: And you do your own.

Ada Reed: You mean make it up, etc.?

Jenkins: Yes.

Ada Reed: Unless it comes from a manufacturer like Levi or somebody.

Jenkins: But you decide what you are going to do.

Bob: And really most of our advertising is pirated. We get it out of the Dallas News, we get it out of the Fort Worth Star Telegram, or we will get it out of the Austin paper.

Ada Reed: The idea or the ad, we will cut them up . . .

Bob: Cut it out and paste it up and give it to the newspaper.

Jenkins: And both of you do this.

Ada Reed: Yes. We are both advertising directors, yes.

Bob: We have got to give them what we want, and then they are able to go ahead and go from there.

Jenkins: You have people working in the store besides yourselves. Do you take the opportunity to leave town while the store is still going?

Ada Reed: Not both of us at the same time.

Jenkins: One of you is always there.

Ada Reed: Yes.

Bob: Now we do close up following Father's Day for a week or 10 days.

Ada Reed: Everybody takes a vacation.

Bob: Everyone takes a vacation at the same time.

Jenkins: So that is vacation time. The town knows you are not going

to be here.

Ada Reed: We don't publicize it for obvious reasons. We have done this since . . . Well, when Bertram celebrated their 75th anniversary. Of course, in a small town everybody does everything, and we felt like we had been hassled. So we just decided to try this, and it worked real well. Up until now we have had no problems with being closed.

Bob: We used to kind of stagger vacations, and we would take off, and one of the ladies would take care of everything, that we had that was dependable and all. Then it just got to be such a hassle for them to take the responsibility and all, that we just decided that the best thing to do was to just close. And we have done that for 27 years.

Jenkins: Do you have local competitors here? Does anyone in Bertram do anything that you are doing?

Ada Reed: No, no one handles clothes. One place handles work clothes. I guess that is about all. Not anyone else but Norman carries . . .

Bob: He doesn't have \$500 worth of stock.

Jenkins: So you are pretty unique, not only in Bertram but in the area, apparently.

Ada Reed: Well, of course, Burnet is just ten miles away, and there are several stores there.

Bob: They have got a number of very good stores up there.

Ada Reed: In Liberty Hill there . . . No, they don't have any drygood

stores down there. The little town of Florence over here has western wear and this sort of thing. But Burnet, I guess you would say, is our main competitor.

Jenkins: Do you have any idea how you compare in volume to those nearest competitors?

Ada Reed: I have no idea. I don't really know.

Jenkins: And don't care.

Bob: It doesn't bother us too much.

Ada Reed: We just try to . . .

Bob: Do the best we know how.

Jenkins: Do you belong to any trade associations?

Bob: Texas Retail Association.

Jenkins: Do you get involved in them very much?

Bob: I have been a director twice.

Jenkins: When?

Bob: Oh, in the last ten years I have been twice.

Jenkins: What did that involve?

Bob: Meeting with the board down there and attending the annual meetings, giving suggestions, listening to members, etc.

Jenkins: What does that organization attempt to do?

Bob: That organization is one of the finest organizations for re-tailing that you can imagine. I don't know how familiar you are with the bank cards. But most bank cards like Visa, MasterCard, etc., most of the small-town merchants are paying anywhere from 5% to 10% to get those handled. The big merchants may be paying 3% or 4%. Through our Association

we got 2½%. That is one of the things. You perhaps have heard of the so-called blue law.

Jenkins: Yes.

Bob: Lots of the major department chain stores have tried to go in and get it to where they could be open seven days a week and sell everything. Through the Association we have been able to keep that law into effect. Right now they are soliciting contributions from the different members so that they will have a PAC fund, Political Action Committee Fund, that they will be able to influence the voting of some of the new legislators that are coming in, because they are up for re-election. They are planning a trip right now to Washington, D.C., in May to meet with our representatives and senators and try to go ahead and explain to them our situation and why they should listen to us.

Jenkins: Does the Association hire lobbyists or do the members get involved?

Bob: The members get involved. Now we do have an executive secretary, and he has an assistant, but other than that, that is all. Now the directors and officers are the main lobbyists.

Jenkins: So you have been a lobbyist?

Bob: Well, if you want to call it that. I met with Lieutenant-Governor Hobby a couple of times, and he has been very helpful to the organization, and he understands our problems. We have an open house every now and then down there and invite the different members of the Legislature to attend. We try

our best to tell them our problems and ask them to help us.

Jenkins: A lot of people would be curious how you manage this, since a lot of, especially big city folks, wonder why in the world these blue laws, how they manage to stay on the books when people want to go down and buy what they want to buy when they want to buy. How do you manage to keep that on there?

Bob: Let's just stop and think a minute. If you had to teach school seven days a week, how happy would you be?

Jenkins: I wouldn't care for that at all.

Bob: If a store has to stay open due to competition in making sales seven days a week, that means the employees someway, somehow would have to be there.

Jenkins: Somebody would, yes.

Bob: It is that simple. Why can't we enjoy Saturday or Sunday?

Jenkins: And that is your approach.

Bob: That is one of the approaches. But the monetary consideration is also there.

Jenkins: What is that?

Bob: Well, if we have to be open seven days a week, that means we have got more overhead.

Jenkins: Oh, I see. So those are your main . . . or do you have other pitches?

Bob: Really, no. You can try to think of a lot of things, but it boils down to the fact that you want off a day a week, and monetary.

Jenkins: Does it tend to be the big cities that are against the blue

law, or not?

Bob: The big cities are not against it. It is the chain stores that are against it. You take Safeway, for instance, take H.E.B., take Kroger's, K-Mart, you just name them. They want to be open seven days a week, and sell all of the merchandise that are in that store seven days a week. You don't find the department stores wanting to be open seven days a week. You don't find the average store wanting to be open seven days a week. It is just the real big chain stores that are trying to go ahead and to corner the market.

Jenkins: Does the general public communicate much with legislators about this?

Bob: I can't answer that. Every now and then you will see a letter to the editor, etc., and some appreciate the fact that people are not required to be open, which if the brou-ha-ha wasn't there we practically would have to be.

Jenkins: Both of you are still fully active in the store.

Ada Reed: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: How many days a week?

Ada Reed: Six.

Jenkins: Six days, all day.

Ada Reed: Right.

Jenkins: What hours?

Bob: I can take off if I want to, and she can take off if she wants to.

Jenkins: The store is open from what?

Bob: From 9 o'clock until 6.

Jenkins: Six days a week.

Ada Reed: Yes.

Jenkins: And what kind of holidays do you take, except for that vacation?

Bob: We take Christmas, Fourth of July, New Year's Day, stuff like that.

Ada Reed: Thanksgiving.

Jenkins: If they fall on the weekend, do you still take them?

Ada Reed: Yes, oh, yes.

Bob: It doesn't matter what day they fall on, we will take them.

Jenkins: I mean if it falls on Sunday will you take Monday?

Ada Reed: No, we don't do that.

Jenkins: That is what I am asking.

Ada Reed: No.

Jenkins: Unless it falls on a work day, you don't take it.

Ada Reed: That's right.

Bob: It is company policy and company rules and we have all of days that we are off, etc., and what is expected of each and every clerk.

Jenkins: Can I get copies of those?

Bob: If you wish.

Jenkins: Just to put with the historical records. Do you have any visions or hopes for the business to be any different or bigger or anything than it is now?

Bob: No, we don't.

Jenkins: Just hanging in there.

Bob: We are doing what we want to do, and we enjoy doing what we do.

Ada Reed: We really do.

Jenkins: You have spoken to this in various ways, but I have a specific question about it. This is a very old company, and you two have been involved in it now for more than 40 years.

Ada Reed: Yes.

Jenkins: It has grown, I presume.

Ada Reed: Yes.

Jenkins: It has made you a good living.

Ada Reed: Yes.

Jenkins: How do you account for this? You can't separate your personal success from the company's success, it is all one. How do you account for this?

Bob: Just enjoying what we are doing and being available.

Jenkins: Yes, I think Ada Reed has a special talent there on buying.

Ada Reed: No.

Bob: As I say, she grew up in the store; so she doesn't realize her capabilities.

Ada Reed: It is kind of hard to break away from old ways, too. We have to kind of fight that a little bit.

Jenkins: That is kind of one of the things that I want to ask about, and you have sort of spoken, both of you have, to it: that in some ways they are old ways, at least the store looks old.

Ada Reed: That's right.

Jenkins: The merchandise is modern.

Ada Reed: We still do the books on the same old posting machine that was in the bank.

Jenkins: You send out statements how often?

Ada Reed: Once a month.

Jenkins: And how do you address them? On the typewriter, individually?

Ada Reed: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: About how many of these do you send out?

Bob: We send out in the neighborhood of about sixty.

Jenkins: Well, there is not an overwhelming amount.

Ada Reed: Not as many now since charge cards, you know.

Jenkins: So staying with it a long time, hard work.

Ada Reed: Enjoying what you do.

Jenkins: You really enjoy what you are doing. You like to go down there.

Bob: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: You really like to go down there. What do you see as the future, the long run?

Ada Reed: When we are gone, that is the end of the store. We have two boys, and neither one is interested in it. I have five nieces and nephews and this one sister. They are not interested in it. So, you know, that old saying "the devil take the hindmost?" We have no idea . . .

Jenkins: You were born in what year?

Ada Reed: 1914.

Jenkins: You were born?

Bob: '15. She has raised me like she wanted me.

Ada Reed: Oh, I knew that was coming.

Jenkins: Almost exactly the same difference that we are here, very close to the same. In terms of age and in terms of ability, you could retire any time you wanted to, could have probably.

Bob: To what?

Jenkins: This is where I am going. Why not? How long do you expect, intend, want to keep doing this?

Ada Reed: As long as we are able.

Jenkins: As long as you are able and . . .

Bob: Enjoy it.

Jenkins: So you have no plans to quit.

Ada Reed: No, we really don't.

Bob: Our two boys are foster boys. One is in real estate in Dallas, and the other is in real estate in San Antonio. The boy that is in Dallas originally, when he went off to college, took merchandising with the intention of coming back. But along the way somewhere he changed his mind. I am hoping one of these days . . .

Ada Reed: He got to the big city, I think, that is what got him.

Bob: I think one of these days that he will come back.

Jenkins: How old is he?

Ada Reed: He is 33. In '49 and '50 is when they were born.

Bob: As I say they are foster sons. So he is up in Dallas. Every time Ada Reed goes up to market, he makes a lot of the shows and a lot of the salesrooms with her. So he is keeping his finger in, and we are just hoping that he will . . . We are not pressuring them, we are leaving them alone so that it will

be his decision and something that he can live with instead of wishing he hadn't done it.

Jenkins: You've spent all of your life here, I suppose?

Ada Reed: Yes, except when I was off to school.

Jenkins: And you have spent the largest part of your life here. You talked about your trade association. That is the only trade association?

Bob: When we had groceries, I was with the Texas Retail Grocers Association.

Jenkins: Did you get involved in that?

Bob: Yes.

Jenkins: To what extent?

Bob: I was a director in that. It is easy to get involved in anything like that.

Jenkins: What about local, civic, community.

Ada Reed: You take part in everything.

Bob: I take part in everything from the Chamber of Commerce on up and down. Churches, fire department, whatever it is.

Jenkins: So you belong to everything in town.

Bob: Well, we have at one time or another.

Ada Reed: Right now I have to put this plug in for the Oatmeal Festival. Have you heard of the Oatmeal Festival?

Jenkins: You gave me some stuff on it.

Ada Reed: I gave you that book, didn't I. Okay. Instead of a Chamber of Commerce, we don't have that anymore, we have the Oatmeal Festival. And the directors take the place of the Chamber

of Commerce.

Jenkins: And Oatmeal is a community?

Ada Reed: Yes. It has a little community center. It is all there is to it right now.

Bob: It is the old schoolhouse.

Ada Reed: They took them off of the highway map, so that kind of got the dander up on some of these, I call them, younger kids. So they had this idea, one fellow did, of starting the Oatmeal Festival with the idea of getting Oatmeal back on the map. And it has grown and grown and grown.

Jenkins: Is it on the map?

Bob: Yes.

Ada Reed: I think I probably told you that Three Minute Oats takes part in this. They furnish all of the prizes.

Jenkins: How nice.

Bob: You haven't seen it on TV?

Jenkins: I don't think so.

Ada Reed: I don't think they get it up there. Well, Phil had seen it, but you would have had to be watching for it.

Bob: My sister over at Mobile has seen it.

Jenkins: When is this?

Ada Reed: Labor Day weekend. It is the Friday night and all day Saturday of Labor Day. There is a fellow that flies over the parade on Saturday morning and dumps oatmeal all over the place. All of that is furnished by . . . not the plane, but the oatmeal, by the Three Minute Oat Company.

Jenkins: Now let's be a little bit specific. This is the Chamber of Commerce. What other organizations are there in town?

Bob: There is the fire department.

Jenkins: And you belong to that.

Bob: As a matter of fact I was one of the organizers of it back in 1946.

Jenkins: Those are some of the things I want.

Ada Reed: We have the EMS here, which is fairly new with us here. We have just gotten a new ambulance within the last year.

Jenkins: Were y'all involved in that?

Ada Reed: Yes.

Jenkins: To what extent?

Ada Reed: Donations.

Bob: Financially. We secured financing for it. When they first started I told them I would give them \$1,000. They were talking about buying a used ambulance. I said, "I will give you a thousand dollars on it, but I will give you two thousand dollars if you will go ahead and buy a new ambulance and have it paid for when you get it. I won't give you a nickel otherwise, but I will give a thousand dollars just on a used ambulance," because I knew it would be paid for. So that gave the incentive to get out and get the money, to raise it. They raised \$23,000.

Ada Reed: We have a real good group here of what I call young people.

Jenkins: Kind of home grown, or a lot of them have come in?

Ada Reed: We have a Baptist minister here that has been here like three

years and people like that, but they are mostly local people.

Jenkins: What other organizations now have both of you been involved in?

Bob: Then you have the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Jenkins: Are you in those?

Bob: Not in VFW. I am in the American Legion.

Jenkins: Have you been an officer in that?

Bob: Yes. I have been Commander there twice. Then we have the Masonic Lodge. We have the Woodmen of the World.

Jenkins: Are you in both of those?

Bob: Yes.

Jenkins: Officer in those?

Bob: I have been, yes.

Ada Reed: In a small town you serve in everything.

Bob: Then we have the different young people's organizations which play down here at the gymnasium in volleyball and softball and football.

Ada Reed: That is in connection with the Oatmeal Festival.

Jenkins: Any other organizations or things over the years that you helped to organize or support?

Ada Reed: Well, really, you support them all because, as I say, in a small town everybody does everything.

Jenkins: What are some of the things that you do?

Ada Reed: I am not that outgoing.

Jenkins: Of course, some of these are men's organizations.

Bob: In anything that I worked in, she worked in also.

Ada Reed: The American Legion Auxiliary is about it.

Bob: The Chamber of Commerce, she worked in it. The Oatmeal Festival, she has done her part in that, too.

Jenkins: Have you been involved in any other business ventures besides the store?

Bob: We had a store down at Liberty Hill for a while.

Jenkins: A branch, would you call it?

Ada Reed: We bought out a business down there and continued it for a while.

Bob: That was in the early '50s. There was an old gentleman there that was a friend of the family. He had a store similar to what we had that had gone down to nothing. He was wanting out, and he asked me if I would buy his business, and I said, "Yes," and I bought it and operated it for three years. He came to me and told me he had a man that was wanting to buy the building, etc., and would I sell it to him? I said, "If you want him to have it, you can have it." So we sold him the building back again.

Jenkins: Was that a blessing to you?

Bob: Yes.

Ada Reed: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: How were you running it? Was someone there running it?

Ada Reed: He had some good help. The man that had had it had some good help.

Bob: We had a manager and a clerk there. Then my first experience

with an outside business was over at a town close to here by the name of Briggs in about 1940. I heard this store was for sale over there. I wanted to branch out and see what it would be like. I talked Mrs. McGill into okaying me going over there and buying it. I bought it, and we operated it for a year and closed it up and forgot about it.

Jenkins: Expansion isn't something that you are looking for.

Ada Reed: No.

Bob: Then in 1946, as I told you a few minutes ago, we bought the Bertram Mercantile, and we operated it for several years. I had a boy when I was in service that came over and managed it. It just wasn't a paying proposition to operate two stores in one town.

Jenkins: How did it differ from your present store?

Bob: It had lower end merchandise.

Jenkins: Similar thing.

Bob: Similar thing. It had groceries, drygoods, etc., but it was lower income.

Ada Reed: And notions.

Jenkins: Notions, yes.

Bob: What are notions?

Jenkins: Is a thimble a notion?

Ada Reed: Yes, a thimble is a notion.

Jenkins: And thread.

Ada Reed: Thread and buttons, zipper, etc.

Jenkins: I have got to find out where notions came from.

Bob: But really as far as wanting to try to be the biggest or something like that, we have no desire at all.

Jenkins: How about politics?

Ada Reed: Oh, no, we don't get into that.

Jenkins: Never run for office?

Ada Reed: No.

Bob: When politicians come around, we are very courteous. If he asks us to support him, we will say we will consider it, and that is it.

Jenkins: Is this a personal thing, a business thing, or where did this attitude come from?

Bob: I think it is strictly personal. I don't like to feel like I have obligated myself to support a particular person over somebody else and get out and tell people that I don't think they know what they are talking about, that I know what I am talking about, but they don't.

Jenkins: Have you had hobbies? Is the store your hobby?

Ada Reed: It is mine, but Bob has a lot of hobbies.

Bob: I told you a few minutes ago that we do direct mail advertising. That was my hobby, I printed it. We have got an offset press, we have got a camera, we have got a folder, we have got an addressing machine and the whole darn works. We have a ranch or a farm out here in the country, and the boys and I have cattle on it. I get away from the store every day for a little while and go out there. I enjoy it.

Jenkins: Is that an investment, a money making thing, or a place to play?

Ada Reed: No, it isn't. It is a hobby.

Bob: For tax purposes it is an investment and a money making thing.

Jenkins: But it is an excuse, too. A hobby kind of thing. It is one of your hobbies.

Bob: That's right.

Ada Reed: He likes to work on old cars, is another hobby. He likes to fool with machinery, is another hobby. Bob has got lots of them.

Jenkins: Do you have any of the old cars?

Bob: Would you like a Model T Ford? Would you like a Model A Ford?

Jenkins: Where do you keep them?

Bob: In the warehouse.

Ada Reed: Now the Model T Ford is right here in the garage, and he has got a '51 black Oldsmobile up there. We have just sold my old home up here, and it is in the garage. He is going to have to move it. He has got a Pontiac out here in the driveway that has got four flat tires on it. The one you saw me drive up in tonight? This one out here is just like it.

Bob: It is a '60 model Pontiac. When it got a little bit old I figured I had to have some parts from some place, so I bought two or three more of that year.

Jenkins: Do you go to the shows? Do you drive to those?

Bob: I have got a '48 Ford pickup and different things like that. It is just something I enjoy.

Jenkins: Have either or both of you ever considered very much moving to the big city where the action is?

Bob: What do they have to offer?

Ada Reed: We like it out here.

Bob: It is just 30 minutes away.

Jenkins: So you can be in Austin . . .

Bob: In 30 minutes.

Ada Reed: Depending on where you are talking about in Austin.

Bob: If we want to go out there to the University to a cultural entertainment, we have. If we want to go any place else, it is there. Why should we be right there? If we lived on the south side of town, it would take us an hour to go to the north side of town. If we lived on the west side of town, it would take us an hour to go to the east side of town.

Ada Reed: No, we like it out here.

Jenkins: How about the social life of Bertram? How active is it?

Ada Reed: It is what you make it.

Jenkins: Friends and neighbors mostly.

Ada Reed: That's right. And we have a little supper club and get together when the notion strikes somebody and this sort of thing. Church activities, of course.

Bob: You don't have to try to keep up with the Jones's, try to put up a big front or pretense.

Ada Reed: I guess you could kind of say we are lazy or something.

Jenkins: That is a matter of definition. We have pretty well covered the outline, and we have gone in many directions from it, which is where we get most of our good stuff, but are there things that perhaps I have overlooked, are there things that

you would like to say before we finish this?

Bob: You have pointed out several different times that we enjoy what we are doing, and that is absolutely the truth. If not labor as such, it is a labor of love. We enjoy it. We see people. We meet new people. We serve a purpose, and by the same token we are rewarded in these associations that we form.

Jenkins: How about you?

Ada Reed: He said it all.

Jenkins: If there are no other observations we will end it here. Thank you very much.

A P P E N D I X

T. S. REED & SON,

. . General Merchants . .

Letter to Prof. J. E. Barton 1898

Marble Falls, Texas, September 30, 1898.

Dear Sir:

The price of cotton is extremely low. So low that the chances are that you will not have much money left after settling up, this fall. But no matter how cheap the price of cotton, there are certain necessities, such as Shoes, Cotton and Woolen Flannels, Clothing, Blankets, etc, that you are positively bound to have. We have these necessities and in no small quantities, either. We have always been recognized as

◎ Leaders in Low Prices. ◎


and are going to keep up our reputation as the Leading merchants.

We are going to help you make both ends meet, by making the following special 30 days offer to all cash buyers. On bills amounting to \$10 and over we will allow you a DISCOUNT of

five per cent on groceries, ten per cent on shoes, hats, dry goods, clothing, etc, and on general mixed bills of \$25 and upwards
TEN PER CENT ON EVERYTHING INCLUDING GROCERIES.

This is no fake business or humbug, but a genuine saving of ten cents on every dollar you spend with us. Below we quote you some prices that can't be beat in Texas, regardless of our big discount scheme, and when you buy one bill at these prices you'll say you've never before bought at such extraordinary low prices.

	Regular Price	In general mixed bills of \$25 and over:
10 pounds XXXX coffee for.....	\$1.00	90 cents.
One sack Mac's Bert Flour.....	1.00	90c
33 yards cotton checks.....	1.00	90c
One ten quart galvanized bucket.....	15c	13½c
All wool red flannel, sample enclosed.....	15c yd.	13½c
Men's Heavy Boots. One pair.....	1.50	1.35
Full size 10-4 blankets. One pair.....	65c	58¢
The best suit of clothes you ever saw.....	5.00	4.50
25 yards good yard wide domestic, sample enclosed.....	1.00	90c.

 We want you to appreciate the above low prices. We know that times are hard and want to help you out all we can, by working for the least possible margin on the absolute necessities of life. Give us your business and we will save you big money.

Yours Truly,

T. S. Reed & Son.

November 4th 1904

The State of Texas
County of Jefferson

KNOWN ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS, that I,
T S Reed, of the State of Texas, County of Jefferson, in consideration
of ^{one dollar} (\$1.00) and other consideration, have this day granted, sold and con-
veyed and by the presents do hereby sell, convey and deliver unto
David C Reed of the County of Burnet, State of Texas, all my right,
title and interest in and to the General Merchandise and Banking business
of T S Reed & Son at Bertram, Burnet County, Texas; including all mer-
chandise, monies, store and office fixtures, accounts and notes receiva-
ble together with all and everything pertaining to or used in connection
with the said business of T S Reed & Son. And it is further understood
as a part of the consideration to this transfer that the said David C
Reed assumes and agrees to faithfully discharge all debts and obligations
of the said firm of T S Reed & Son, holding me harmless and free from any
liability whatever in connection with the affairs of T S Reed & Son that
have heretofore or may hereafter accrue. Witness my hand this the
4th day of November, 1904.

T. S. Reed

The State of Texas)
Jefferson County)

BEFORE ME, Paul H Stevens, A notary Public in and
for Jefferson County, Texas, this day personally appeared T S Reed
known to me to be the person whose name is subscribed to the foregoing
instrument and acknowledged to me that he had signed the same for the
purposes and consideration therein stated. Witness my hand and official
seal this 4th day of November 1904.

Paul H Stevens

Notary Public. Jefferson Co., Texas

I note that you expect to pay me remaining \$600 - due me on over
your paper You don't give me your paper at 8 per cent until it suits you to pay it.

November 4th 1904

Dear Dave:

I return herein deed to all of my worldly possessions at Bertram and also Bill of Sale to my business there. I have made the consideration \$10,000 thinking you would not like for the Tax Collector to get you down for a larger sum, though I believe you have paid me about \$22,000 for the same. I also return the notes signed by Gussie Weston and will ask that you endorse the same with your own name, the omission of which was no doubt an oversight on your part, as you would hardly expect me to take notes due as much as ten years off the same as cash without your endorsement. Of course, after the first three

as cash without your endorsement. Of course, after the first three or four notes are paid the property would probably bring the balance at forced sale, but as I am now clear of all Bertram real estate I would not wish to run the risk of having to buy more to protect my interests.

I have also made your note for \$3208.00 to read with interest from date instead of maturity, as the rent will cease after October 31st. I note your very remarkable business for October \$10,190Q27 which as you say is by far the biggest month's business ever done in Bertram or perhaps in Burnet County. With the start that you have now got and the firm hold on the trade I predict that no sort of opposition will be able to jar you very much, but I can not too often remind you to be very careful in your banking business especially and not use your deposits up too close, which is about the only criticism I have ever ventured to make on your conduct of business. Bear in mind that safety in Banking must be the first consideration, progressiveness, liberality, politeness to customers and all those things should follow. Our business here lost nearly \$11,000. in October but we are gaining right along in November and I do not think there is \$,000 difference to-day between last years sales and this year. Wm. Weber tied his competitor at 116,000 on bids for the Huntington W Va Post-office and we are sending strong endorsements to Washington in the hope of landing the job for Prince William. With love to all, I am,

Yours truly/

F. S. Rud

T. S. REED



D. C. REED

T. S. REED & SON, MERCHANTS & BANKERS

- UNINCORPORATED -

BERTRAM, TEXAS. 3/12/1912.

Mr. Brown McGill,
Burnet, Texas.

Friend Brown:-

I have been intending to drop you a line in reply to your letter of some days ago, but Miss Willie is still sick, and out of the office, and I am holding the whole thing down by myself. I have bought about 100 bales of Cotton, and delivered 110 bales of Cotton within the past week, and attended to all the other work here besides. Hows that for being busy, and believe me I have been busy. I am glad you can get down here as early as April 15th, and in case your new man should prove as apt as I hope he will, maybe you can get off on the 1st of April.

I hope you can, however I will make it all O.K. until 15th in case you cant get off sooner. In order that you may have a record from me as to what your salary is to be I will state in this letter that \$100.00 per month is the price agreed upon.

I am indeed glad that you have decided to make the move down here, and I think it is a good move for you, and I trust you will have no occasion hereafter to regret it. I consider myself fortunate to get you. From all appearances Adam is in a good humor about the whole thing, and I am glad that he is for I have a very high regard for Adam and would not want to appear in his eyes other than his friend. Let me have a line from you as to whether I am correct in my opinion that Adam is in harmony with us in the move. With my very best regards I am,

Your friend,

Badger-Johnson Company

General Merchandise

BURNET, TEXAS. March 29th, 1912.

Mrs. C. C. McGill,

Tucumcari, New Mex.

Mrs. McGill;--

You will doubtless be surprised at receiving a letter from a stranger, but having known your boy so long, and thinking as much of him as I do, I feel that you are not altogether unknown to me and that the information I am going to give you may be the means of filling your heart so full of pleasure that you will pardon my presumption.

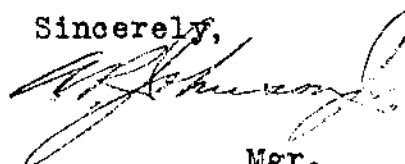
Brown is going to leave me about the 8th of next month to work for T. S. Reed & Son, Merchants and Bankers doing business at Bertram Texas, a town twelve miles from Burnet in this County. This is a very rich firm composed of the finest kind of people and I am sure will always treat your son right. They have offered him a very attractive position with fine prospects for some-thing better and I feel that he is doing a wise thing. Of course much depends upon Brown's individual efforts, but I am sure he is equal to any demands that may be made upon him.

Brown has been with our firm five years under my management, and I have tried him from every side and in every way and it affords me the greatest pleasure to say that I consider him one of the finest young men I ever knew--well equipped and worthy to fill any position of trust. We regret exceedingly to lose him but we feel confident that the change, from a financial point of view, will be a good one.

In conclusion I want to say that after five years of close association your boy and I part company good friends in the truest sense of the word, and I shall always deem it a pleasure to aid him in any way.

With kindest personal regards, I am.

Sincerely,



Mgr.

D. C. REED

A. B. MCGILL

D. C. REED & COMPANY

UNINCORPORATED
MERCHANTS & BANKERS

BERTRAM, TEXAS

December 16th, 1919.

TO MY FRIENDS AND CUSTOMERS:--

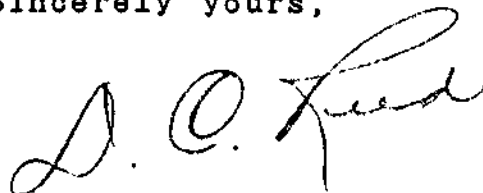
On account of some changes in the ownership of our business in Bertram I wish to take this means of advising you of the changes.

My remaining interest in the mercantile business of D. C. Reed & Co., was sold last January to Mr. Carter N. Moses and Mr. S. D. Moses, and this business will after January 1st, 1920 be conducted under the firm name of A. B. McGill & Company, Mr. A. B. McGill having previously acquired a controlling interest in this business. There will be no change in the management or policy of this business, and I wish to ask you to continue to favor them with your patronage, and to assure you that they are able and willing to give you the very best of service.

Mr. T. J. Taylor has been made a full partner in the banking business of D. C. Reed & Co., and will after January 1st, 1920, be in full charge of the affairs of the Bank. The entire assets of Mr. Taylor and myself constitute the responsibility of this Bank and we owe nothing to anybody except our depositors. We believe that this Bank has always rendered the very best service to its customers, and feel sure that on account of our financial strength and willingness to serve your Banking needs, that we can give you so many advantages, not obtainable from incorporated Bank, that you will find it decidedly to your advantage to do your Banking business with us.

I wish to take this occasion to thank you for the many kindnesses you have shown me during my several years business in Bertram, and to assure you that I am deeply grateful to you for them all, and that I attribute whatever success I have attained to the patronage, friendship, and good will which you have given me.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "D. C. Reed", written in dark ink.

Today And Yesterday Mingle At McGill's

Greg Olds

BERTRAM — Time is making many changes in Burnet County but the A. B. McGill and Company store at Bertram is one thing that has remained pretty much the same. The business establishment has for the past 100 years been one of the area's leading dry goods places and today it is as interesting a place to shop as ever.

The firm was established some 100 years ago by a man named Lockett in the town of South Gabriel, the forerunner of today's Bertram. Bertram replaced South Gabriel when the railroad moved through in 1882.

Before that happened, however, Lockett had sold the business to T. S. Reed, who later made the move to Bertram with other South Gabriel business houses. The store when it first was set up in Bertram was one block east of today's location. M. D. C. Reed came into the business a few years after a new building was erected in 1905. That building still houses the firm today.

The Reeds and later the Moses brothers and, still later, A. B. McGill — all members of the same family — have operated the store during its colorful history. Today the place is run by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Brewer. Mrs. Brewer is the former Ada Reed McGill. She and Mr. Brewer, who is from Alabama,

met while attending the University of Texas in Austin.

Mrs. Brewer, who was born near the store, practically grew up in the place and, 32 years ago, her husband joined her in the business.

Today a visitor or shopper at McGill's cannot help but be struck by the old-time warmth and charm of the store, its impressive variety of merchandise — some of it of modern vintage, some of a more traditional type — and the friendliness of the brewers and their co-workers.



THE BREWERS — Mr. and Mrs. Bob Brewer run the McGill and Company store now. Mrs. Brewer has worked at the store most all her life. Mr. Brewer has worked there for 32 years.

Probably the most interesting establishment in town was built in 1905 and is a fine example of the architecture of that period.

In 1960, the second year of the paper's operation.

Suzy Bell, writing for The Highlander, put it this way:

Five-cent calico, cracker barrels, buggy whips and bulk brown sugar are gone. But bottles of Garrett's snuff are still there, along with frozen dinners, electric blankets and chic ensembles for mademoiselle.

"Everything to eat or wear," is the slogan of A. B. McGill and Company's general merchandise store at Bertram. The visitor can roll away the years and visualize grandma's shopping days in the same two-

story stone building.

While her father traded mohair or grain for credit at the store's private bank (still visible in a corner of the building), her mother ordered a peck of prunes, a 100-pound sack of sugar, several pounds of coffee-beans, the biggest sack of American Beauty flour, and a can of lye (must bleach the rose off the flour sack before making unmentionables).

She bought lamp wicks, a chunk of cheese and perhaps a sack of licorice gumdrops for a special Saturday treat.

Grandma, then a demure and wistful maiden, was pinching the calico, fingering the fancy hatpins, and perhaps casting side glances at your future grandpa. He was there trying on ten-gallon Stetsons for size, or maybe

buying his pa a new mustache cup.

Little brother was stationed at the entrance, keeping one eye on the horse and buggy out front. The other eye was glued to the candy barrel or the gun he'd buy when he picked enough cotton or sold enough hides to pay for it.

Today -- in breezes Mom to look over a new shipment of Herman Marcus dresses and pick up a hurried lunch of frozen TV dinners while the kids scatter to various departments to spend their weekly allowance on anything from popguns to bubblegum or bathing suits.

Levis (tighter than ever) and Stetson hats (still of the Western style) are about the only merchandise that hasn't changed -- except snuff, for the grannies.

No more Brown Mule chewing tobacco. No more harness or leather-mattress ticking or cotton sacking. Instead of ordering pump organs the store now orders electric ones. Now, the harness is gone and so are

the well buckets and the button-hooks.

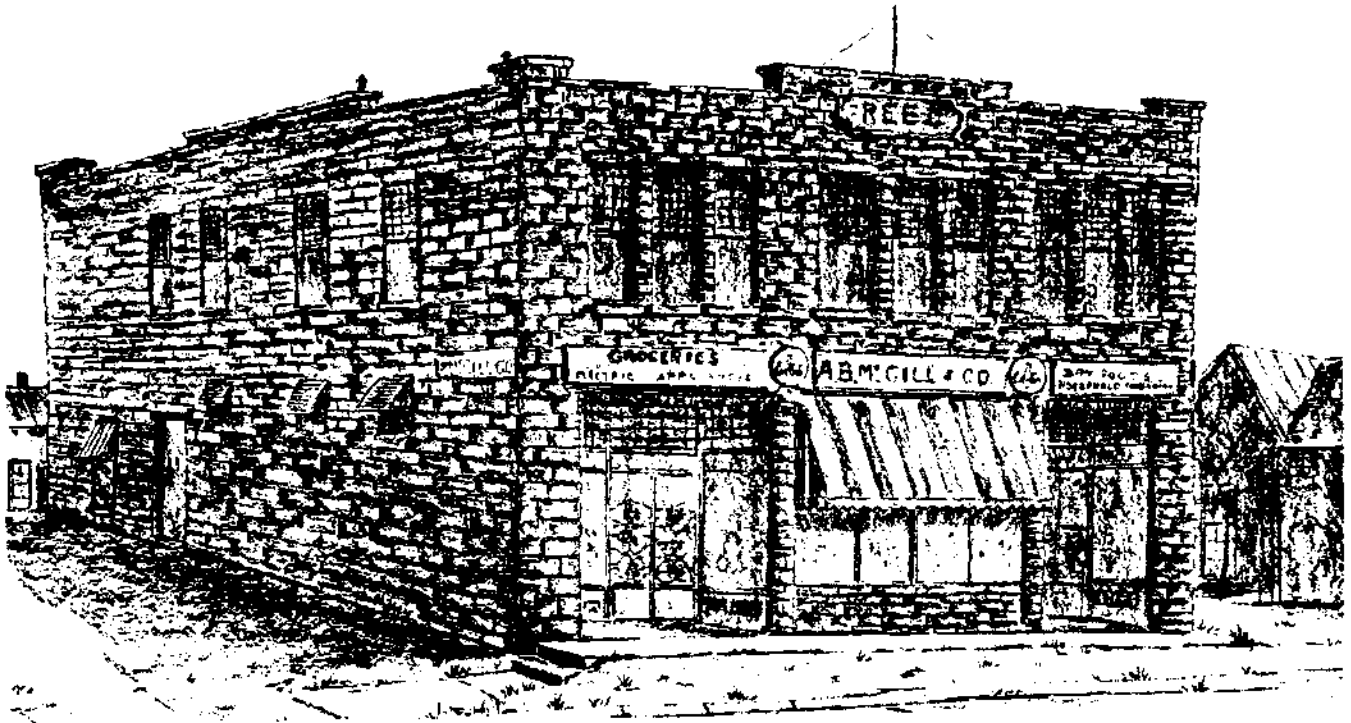
But there are plenty of beach sandals and many figure-deceiving gadgets made out of foam rubber!

Yet -- the observant customer can tell at a glance that this is a store with a history. Reproductions of old crystal patterns are displayed in well-preserved walnut cabinets. In the old private-bank corner (now the business office) he sees an ornate, carved, wood-and-brass cashier's cage reminiscent of the days when gentlemen wore high celluloid collars. The old vault room (once storing capital assets over one million dollars) now houses office records.

So it was in 1960, so it is in 1971 and, hopefully, so it will ever be. The A. B. McGill and Company store at Bertram.

A Hundred Years To A Day

by William Fowler, TAMS 2138



Have you heard of the wonderful one-horse shay,

That was built in such a logical way

It ran a hundred years to a day,

And then of a sudden—ah, but stay—

(*Oliver Wendell Holmes, The Deacon's Masterpiece or The Wonderful One-Horse Shay — A Logical Story*)

Stay, and hear the story of the McGill Store at Bertram, Texas, which — like Deacon Jones' one-horse shay — has run a hundred years to a day; but unlike that wonderful conveyance which — you'll remember — ran without fault until reduced to a pile of rubble by an earthquake on its hundredth birthday, McGill's Store is alive and well, and looking forward to a second century of service to the good people of Central Texas.

Actually, though, our story begins some ten years earlier in the little village of South Gabriel. When a post office was established there in 1872 the postal authorities refused to accept the name of its predecessor, Lewiston, because of its similarity to already existing post offices in the state. South Gabriel was then selected because of its proximity to the South Fork of the San Gabriel River. Lewiston had been founded by one Thomas Lewis and consisted primarily of his frontier "stand" that served as a stop

The second Reed-McGill store, erected in 1905, is depicted in this drawing done in 1933 by artist Bob Klingensmith.

on the old Liberty Hill to Burnet stage coach road. Over this road passed the wagon trains from Austin and Bastrop carrying supplies to Fort Croghan (which evolved into the present-day city of Burnet), as well as hordes of restless pioneers who pushed ever westward looking for new lands to settle as the Federal forts lessened the threat of the Indians and their depredations.

The moccasin prints of the Apache and the Comanche were, however, still to be found in Central Texas when South Gabriel came into being in 1872; and this despite the fact that the Federal Government considered the area safe enough to deactivate Fort Croghan along with the other military outposts forming the protective cordon extending from Eagle Pass on the Rio Grande to Fort Worth, and to reestablish the line of protective posts still further west.

The Indian threat was pretty well dissipated in the area after the defeat of an Apache raiding party at Packsaddle Mountain in adjoining Llano County in 1873, and the retirement of Quanah Parker, last chief of the Comanches, to the reservation in 1875. South Gabriel then experienced a period of relatively rapid growth as the merchants began building "a town of worth," and soon there were additional store



Cotton was King in Central Texas during the first part of the 20th century, as shown by this 1911 Bertram, Texas photograph.

buildings, a hotel, wagon shop, shoe and harness maker, a cotton gin, and a saloon. It was during this period that T.S. Reed, central figure of this story, made his appearance, as we find him having assumed some part of the management of M.B. Lockett's mercantile business by 1880.

South Gabriel's prosperity was short-lived. The Austin and Northwestern Railroad Company was chartered in 1881, and completed to Burnet by the summer of 1882. South Gabriel was bypassed by the railroad in spite of having offered the Company the then munificent sum of \$3,000 to route its tracks through the town. And South Gabriel, like so many other Texas towns skipped by the iron rails, was doomed to extinction. Today there remains only a well-kept cemetery, and a historical sign marking the site of old South Gabriel-Lewiston.

Its demise began in the summer of 1882 with the move of thirteen residences and two storehouses north to the new town of Bertram — on the railroad. The move of nearly two miles, accomplished by oxen power, required about two days. It is reported that the owners of the houses cooked, ate, and slept in them while they were en route.

In addition to the two storehouses that were moved, other South Gabriel merchants soon moved to Bertram, including Melvin Lockett with his business associate, T.S. Reed. Young Reed was, however, soon operating independently in his own building which he erected with stone salvaged from the South Gabriel school structure. The remains of this building are still standing, though in a sad state of repair. Plans are under consideration for its restoration and use as a public facility.

The present building, shown here, was constructed in 1905 of Central Texas white stone. It is typical of the type buildings constructed in small Texas towns by leading merchants. Nearly every town of as much as four or five hundred population has at least one building of this kind.

Young Reed's business prospered and his family grew. By 1898 he had taken his sons, Malcolm H. and David C., into the business. Shortly afterwards, he

moved to Beaumont where he operated a wholesale-retail grocery business with branches in other East Texas cities. Malcolm also soon moved to nearby Marble Falls, where he became a well-known and affluent Central Texas businessman. So by 1905 Dave had become sole owner of his father's business, and had erected the new building to house it.

By this time the nature of the business was changing. Like many other small Texas town establishments that used trade tokens as a means of advancing credit to their customers, the Reeds soon found the next step one of advancing cash for the purchase of goods and services they could not themselves provide, and this then evolved into the establishment of full banking facilities and services to meet the needs of the area they served.

This process was the genesis of many privately owned banks throughout agricultural Texas — some of which are still in existence.

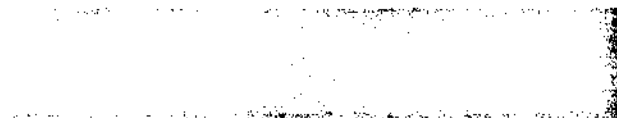
As the banking business grew, Dave devoted much of his time to it, and brought in his brother-in-law, Brown McGill, to assist in the business. McGill became a full partner in 1912, and took over active management of both the banking and mercantile activities when Dave moved to Austin to look after other business interests.

Today the store is still in the hands of family members. It is operated by R.E. Brewer, husband of Ada Reed McGill Brewer who is herself active in the business. It has dropped its grocery line and is no longer involved in the banking and undertaking businesses. It now concentrates on the sale of clothing, piece goods, electrical appliances and hardware items, and serves a large rural population in portions of Burnet and Williamston Counties.



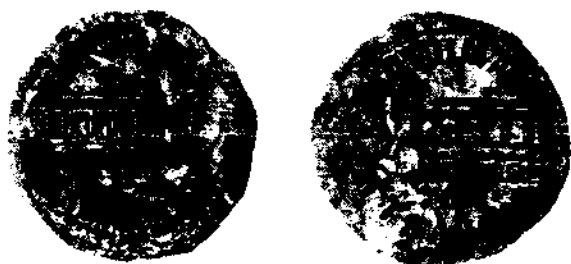


The tokens for T.S. Reed and Son are thought to have been struck in the late 1890s or early 1900s. The A.B. McGill tokens were struck only in the 50¢ and \$1 denominations, since there were still plenty of the smaller denomination tokens left over from the T.S. Reed and Son Group!



Unusual Tokens

by Joseph Schmidt, TAMS 2466



Illustrated above is a brass personal token I chose from a group sent to me by Rich Hartzog. It is crudely struck on a thin, rough planchet, the reverse being the incuse of the obverse. To personal token collectors or members of the American Vecturist Association this item has special qualities! It is so early, probably a century old, that Hamilton Carhartt pictured a "trolley" of the era, followed (on the right) by a heart to serve as his personal token. A "car" back then brought to mind a simple horse drawn trolley car, not an automobile, because the automobile had not yet been invented! For such a crude piece, the horse car is

well depicted, and the heart assures us that Mr. Carhartt was, indeed, issuing a personal token. About 23mm, this unusual token is charming as well.



This 26mm brass piece, sent in by Jerry Yaeger, is self-explanatory! I find it amusing and wonder who would stay at the "Terminal Hotel" for a night. Surely this hotel was not run by Alan Bates, but was situated next to a bus or train terminal, hence the name. For good measure I have also illustrated Jerry's "Terminal Tower Building" token. This 24.5mm piece is struck in silver, or nickel, with deceptive toning. When was this

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MCGILL'S RECALLS DAYS GONE BY

It's a wonderful stroll back in time to a place where lazy ceiling fans hum overhead, where the fragrance of wood fills the air and century-old fixtures rest in the streams of sunlight passing through windows set high in stone walls.

A. B. McGills, tucked away in the small town of Bertram, has all the appeal of days gone by when infrequent and long-anticipated trips to the general store held all the promise of a glamorous dream.

Early customers were hard-working farmers who traded most of their crop for staples. But with what was left over, they could chose from the variety of store-bought specialties, brightly patterned cloth for their wives and daughters, special tobacco for their pipes, fancy hats.

McGill's has carefully preserved that link with the past. The display cases are the same ones those early customers looked through, the beautifully ornate cash registers haven't dulled in their 100 years of use and in the sewing department there is not a plain button to be found: they sparkle with rhinestones.

The origins of these special items go way back to the days before Bertram was founded, back to 1882,

to the small town of South Gabriel and the founder of McGill's, T.S. Reed.

Reed was a young man just starting out in South Gabriel when he joined the mercantile business of M. B. Lockett. But when South Gabriel was bypassed by the Austin and Northwestern Railroad Company, it was doomed to extinction. Lockett and Reed joined other merchants and storekeepers in their move to a town served by the

railroad - Bertram.

Reed was soon operating independently in his own store constructed with stone salvaged from the South Gabriel school structure. Business prospered and by 1898 he had taken his sons, David and Malcolm Reed, into the business. Shortly afterwards, he moved to Beaumont and his son, Malcolm, moved to Marble Falls. By 1905 David Reed was sole owner of his father's business and had erected a

new building to house it. His brother-in-law, Brown McGill, assisted in the business and in 1913 bought the store. Since 1939, his daughter, Ada Reed Brewer and her husband Bob Brewer have owned and operated that store, now known as McGill's.

They have both been instrumental in preserving the history of McGill's. "They tell me there's not too many of these old-timey mercantile stores left," Ada Reed said. "So many people come along and may look at

something in the store and say 'we used to have one like that.' I don't know what happened to it. We gave it away or threw it away."

But the Brewers share a great admiration for history, not only the fixtures in the store but also the people who made the present-day McGill's.

"Back in that day and time, merchants bought the produce straight from the farmers. This was a cotton growing country, Bertram had five cotton mills," Ada Brewer said. Farmers would trade their crop for credit tokens, she explained. And that is the reason McGill's also operated a bank in the back corner of the store at one time.

The hand-painted safe now stores a treasure of old photographs, the stores' original trading tokens and early business correspondence. "When Roosevelt did away with privately owned banks in the 1930's, we made this our office," Ada Brewer said. But visitors can still see the remnants of that early bank. If you're lucky, Bob Brewer may show you those original trading tokens.

"You'd be surprised how many collectors come in and want to buy them," he said. "But I wouldn't part with them. I have a great admiration for history." It's this attitude that he shares with his wife that makes McGill's special.

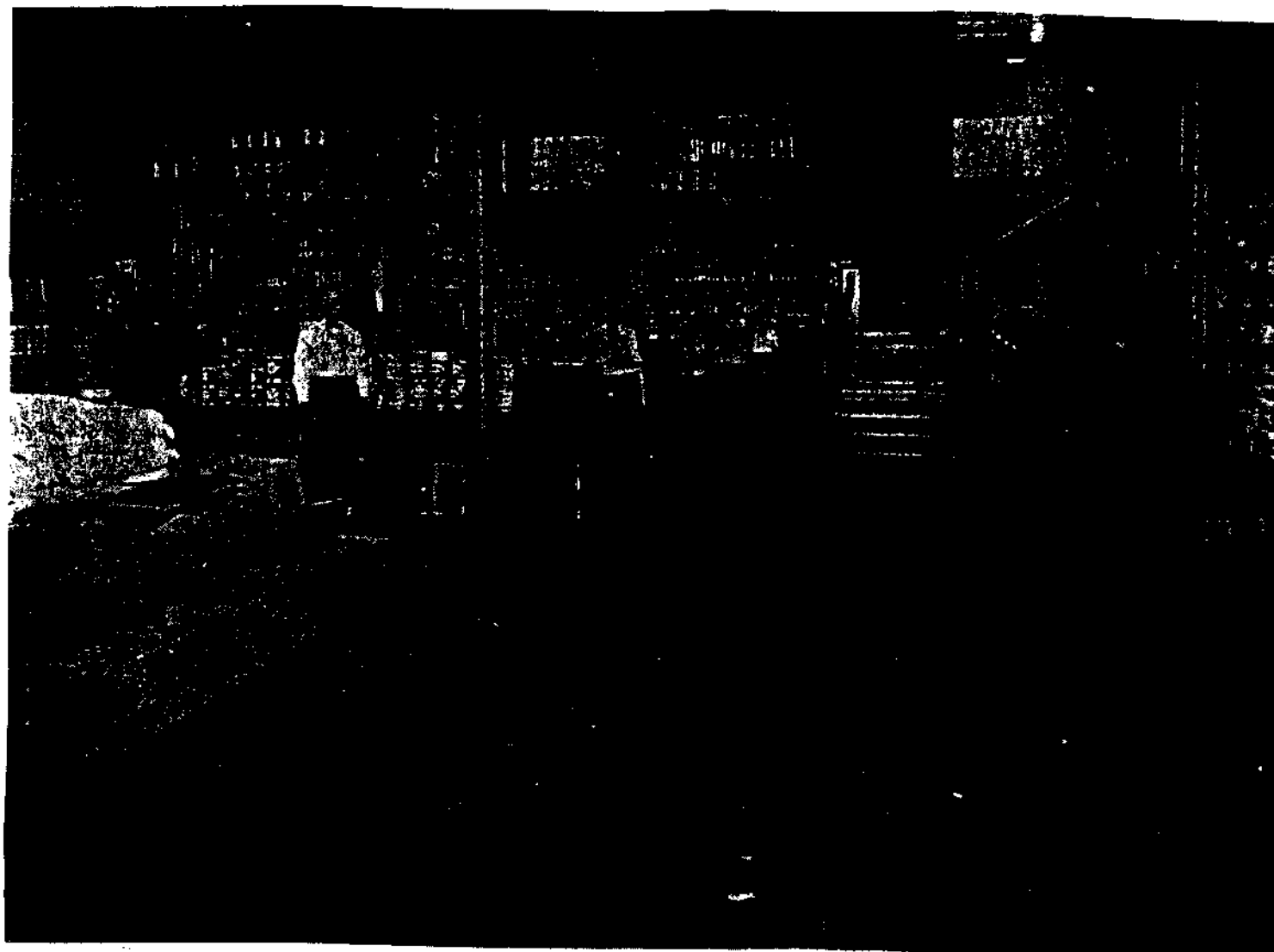
"People ask us when we're going to retire," Ada Brewer said. "We say when they carry us out feet first."

So if you're driving through Bertram, out on Texas 29, there is a very special place and two very special people. They'll share their stories with you and you will leave

yourself enough time to browse. It's the kind of place you won't want to leave in a hurry.



A look at the inside of McGill's as it is today. This unusual store carries the latest in merchandise in an old fashioned setting.



A GENERAL STORE-- A.B. McGill and Company at Bertram looked this way in 1915, when it served the area as a general store. Today, however, the store has a different sort of merchandise than it did then, in keeping with the changing times. Gone now are the cracker barrels (at left) and the harness department and, later, the funeral parlor that were located at the top of the stairway. Shown, left to right, are A.B. McGill, owner; E.A. Marcus and A.B. Marcus.

This photo was taken around 1907 or 1908 according to Bob Brewer, owner of McGill's Department Store in Bertram, when the store was known as T.S. Reed's. The crowds are gathered to see Johnny Clifton of Buster Brown shoes, dressed as Buster Brown. The midget shoeman even brought his dog Tige with him on the tour. "He used to travel all over the United States." Brewer said.

