ORAL MEMOIRS

OF

ELIZA HONEY BISHOP

A Series of Interviews Conducted
4 November 1992 - 5 November 1992

Interviewer:
Dan K. Utley

Baylor University
Institute for Oral History

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BAYLOR UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE FOR ORAL HISTORY

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INTERVIEW HISTORIES

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ORAL HISTORY MEMOIR

BAYLOR UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE FOR ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Eliza Honey Bishop

Date: 4 November 1992

Place: Houston County Courthouse
Crockett, Texas

Interviewer: Dan K. Utley

BISHOP INTERVIEW NO. 1

DAN K. UTLEY: This is Dan K. Utley, historian with the Baylor University Institute for Oral History. Today is Wednesday, November 4, 1992. I'm interviewing for the first time Ms. Eliza H. Bishop—Miss Eliza H. Bishop—historian with the Houston County Historical Commission. The interview is taking place in the offices of the Houston County Historical Commission in the county courthouse in Crockett, Texas. The interview is sponsored by the Baylor University Institute for Oral History and is part of the Historic Preservation Project, focusing on the development of the preservation movement in Texas. And I'd like to start off by first of all just identifying your full name. You were born Eliza Honey Bishop.

ELIZA HONEY BISHOP: —Bishop, right. Named for two grandmothers.

UTLEY: Tell me about them.

BISHOP: Well, Eliza was my maternal grandmother, and she was named for the first wife of Major John Wortham, who was Eliza Walker Wortham. Carey Ann Wortham, the second wife, named her daughter for the first wife of Major John Wortham, which I think is unusual. And the other was Honey Hargrove—she was my dad's mother, Honey Hargrove Bishop.

UTLEY: And where were these people settled? Where were they in the state?

BISHOP: Well, Major Wortham had land out at what is now the Country Club Lake—it's north of town. And Dad's folks were around the Denson Springs area. His parents died when he was three, and he was adopted by a medical doctor in Palestine. So he really grew up in Anderson County, and came to Houston County on down the years.

UTLEY: Tell me when and where you were born.

BISHOP: Well, right here in Crockett. I'm still at the same site. (laughter) I have a new little place there; I haven't gone far. It's still my main residence, Dan, and I guess it always will be: 629 North Fourth Street. It was a part of my grandpa's old place, and we owned considerable acreage all the way to the railroad track. We had just about everything there when I was growing up.

UTLEY: And when were you born?

BISHOP: June 18, 1920.

UTLEY: Okay. I'd like to start by kind of developing the history of your family. And maybe that will give somebody later on a clue as to why you got interested in history at such an early age and everything. Let's start with your father's family.

BISHOP: Well, actually, I don't know too much about it.

UTLEY: Okay.

BISHOP: As I said, my dad's folks died of yellow fever when he was three, and the medical doctor took him in and reared him near Palestine. And he wanted to be a medical doctor, but he settled to be a registered pharmacist. He was one of our early ones. Then he came to Houston County as a relief pharmacist about 1907.

UTLEY: Now, what's a relief pharmacist?

BISHOP: Relief? Uh, well, for a drugstore that didn't have a pharmacist. Because my dad really compounded prescriptions. Now they're just pill counters, I think.

UTLEY: So he actually did the mixing and everything?

BISHOP: Yeah, the mortar and pestle, and—yeah, all that sort of thing. Put the little calomel in the papers. I always enjoyed my daddy, how he'd fold them and twist them (hissing sound) or put them together. Yes, he actually compounded medications.

UTLEY: Where was he educated? How did he learn this profession?

BISHOP: Well, from his medical doctor, and then self-taught. He always studied all of his life. I think that's how my dad turned me on to studying. He thought living and learning were synonymous; that's about right. When you quit learning, you—

UTLEY: It's time to check out.

BISHOP: It's time to check out. I think a lot of people walk around here that need to be under ground, if I might be so bold. (laughs)

UTLEY: There are some that have already checked out, that's for sure. Well, what kind of person was he? You've already said he was hardworking, or you implied that he was.

BISHOP: Yes. He was hardworking.

UTLEY: Self-taught.

BISHOP: Self-taught. He inspired all of us to be that way. He started us out; we always had chores, and so forth. I grew up with that.

UTLEY: Was he—how many children were in the family?

BISHOP: Three. I had two older brothers.

UTLEY: Would you identify them?

BISHOP: William LeGory was the first born, and John Vaughan was the second. They were ten, eleven years older than I.

UTLEY: Oh.

BISHOP: And, of course, the joke in the family was that they advertised for a girl at Bishops. And I think my grandpa and Uncle Gus put them up to that. But, anyhow, they had that piece of paper that they put out in front of our address. "Wanted at Bishops: A girl." It horrified my mother, because, as you know—

UTLEY: Put the pressure on her, didn't it?

BISHOP: Right. We came of the age about the storks. We didn't know about all the birth situation like kids do now. They know everything, a lot more than their mommas and dads, I think. But, anyway, we were innocent; "innocence is bliss, it's folly to be wise," and all that good stuff. But, anyway, that was the joke in the family until I arrived as per advertisement. It pays to advertise, doesn't it?

UTLEY: How old was your mother at that time?

BISHOP: I think Momma was about thirty-three.

UTLEY: Which was old for that time.

BISHOP: That's correct. Dad was thirty-five.

UTLEY: Tell me about your mother. What was she like?

BISHOP: Momma? Well, there were two girls in the LeGory family, and Momma was the blonde and Aunt Hortense was the brunette. And Eliza Wortham married Augustus LeGory—LeGarie—he was an Italian who came in here after the Civil War. And he was twice the age of Eliza when they married. I always said my maternal grandmother had an eye for business. Major Wortham died, and she had three marriageable daughters. So she married them off to some good prospects. Grandpa was one of them; Joe Long was another one—he married my Great-Aunt Lucina; John Lacy was another one—married Aunt Jenny. So Carey Ann had an eye for business; my momma was named for her—Carey Ann Vaughan Wortham.

UTLEY: Gary Ann?

BISHOP: Carey. C-A-R-E-Y.

UTLEY: Okay. All right, what sort of a lady was she? Tell me about her interests—your mother.

BISHOP: Who? My momma? Well, she was a homemaker. In fact, she took care—my grandmother died early; I never knew her—and Grandpa stayed a lot with us down the

hill. They lived on North College Hill—if you come in here, the Negro college is up there, Mary Allen Seminary it was then. And Grandpa and Uncle Gus, who was one of the older sons, they spent a lot of time with us. In fact, most of their meals they ate with us. Momma looked after them and so forth and so on, as well as her household. And Dad had his drugstore and worked from ten till ten. One of my earliest memories of my dad is that he'd leave early, but he'd always put a honeysuckle or little flower on my pillow. And I knew that my daddy, as I'd say, leaned over me before he went to work.

UTLEY: Well, that's neat.

BISHOP: Yeah—yeah. And, as you see, I'm a Daddy's girl.

UTLEY: Yeah.

BISHOP: Yeah.

UTLEY: (Utley chuckles) There was a lot of love in your family?

BISHOP: Oh, yes. We were a very close-knit family. And now that they're all gone, Dan, it's—you really feel lonely sometimes.

UTLEY: Sure. What were some of the things that you did as a family?

BISHOP: Oh, we had an "or-chester," as we called it—orchestra. Dad loved music, and the boys had a banjo and a guitar; Daddy played fiddle. He could really shine those "Leather Britches." And Momma would lead the singing. Of course, I—all kids had piano then. I played the piano. Eventually graduated to an accordion. And, by then, you know, we had our own "or-chester" as we called it. We'd have home musicals and invite neighbors and all. This was during Grandpa's lifetime. He died when I was ten, and I guess the bottom sort of fell out of things then, yeah.

UTLEY: What kind of music would you play?

BISHOP: Oh, old break-down tunes and hymns. But the Fiddler's Festival, which came along during the centennial year, that was, of course, part of my background with that.

UTLEY: Well, I'm going to be talking to you about that and some of the things that influenced you during the centennial. But—were your parents strong disciplinarians, or—

BISHOP: Yes. I knew how far I could persuade, I'll put it that way. And, of course, I grew up, as I said, with home chores; I helped my mother in the kitchen and all this sort of thing. I also—I've milked cows, Dan. Got left holding the bag quite often, because brothers have a way of having other things to do. "Oh, Eliza, I'll take care of it." We had everything—pigeons, I remember, and rabbits. I remember I raised geese one year for my Christmas money. And I tell you, they may call it a goose, but they know how to take care of the situation. They can beat the fire out of you with those wings.

UTLEY: Did your parents ever set limits for you, or did they teach you that you could do anything or learn anything you wanted to?

BISHOP: They didn't set any limits. The sky was it, I guess, if there was a limit. Dad early on bought every kind of book, because he was always reading. I remember I had the first Texas History Movies, if you remember when they came out.

UTLEY: Why don't you describe that, though, because there's some people that'll listen to this and won't know what Texas History Movies were.

BISHOP: From the Dallas Morning News. They published it, and then they compiled it in a big green book. Had all these comics, they were, in a sense. But you learned more history that way than you ever did in a book.

UTLEY: I've heard other people say that, that they learned a lot of history there.

BISHOP: That's true. The fellows—don't ask me their names now, but I still have my copy my daddy gave me. And it was the pride and joy of our class at school. I'd take it to school with me, because Texas history used to be a big thing in our schools. And it has grieved me considerably that it has dropped by the wayside. I don't like the way it's being taught, either, in a manner of speaking.

UTLEY: Well, tell me about that.

BISHOP: Well, I think it's being switched in some ways. It's not actually factual. And I've done some research on some of that; I'm not trying to cut anybody short or cut anybody out, but I think some of the things need to be left in there that they are sort of watering down.

UTLEY: Can you give me some examples of that so people can understand that?

BISHOP: Well, I think we're getting too much of the Hispanic, for one thing.

UTLEY: Okay. You mean there's more Hispanic history being taught now than used to be?

BISHOP: Yeah, I think than used to be. Of course, I can understand and appreciate why, because we have quite an influx of Hispanics enrolled here.

UTLEY: Um-hm. I know Texas has a large Hispanic population.

BISHOP: Well, this area never did. But now we do have. And, of course, we've always had a heavy black population.

UTLEY: Were the Hispanics moving in because of the lumber industry?

BISHOP: I really don't know why. I have been curious about that. I do know we may have some wetbacks here that should be checked occasionally. Haven't been recently. We've had other problems. Our drug problem is a bad one here.

UTLEY: When you were growing up, how large was Crockett about, at that time?

BISHOP: Well, it was large enough. (both laugh) Well, it's still, to me—I know everybody, and I just like being—but I'd say, well, about six thousand.

UTLEY: And what's the population now?

BISHOP: Not much more.

UTLEY: I was going to say, it's remained pretty steady.

BISHOP: Right. We went down during World War II when folks moved away. And, of course, the depletion to go into service. But a lot of people have moved back. They get tired and come back home.

UTLEY: Well, now, I don't want to go too fast, because you've said a couple of things that are quite interesting to me. One is that your father was a business person. He had a pharmacy, but he also had cattle, and chickens, and pigs. Was that pretty common at that time, that—

BISHOP: Yeah.

UTLEY: —people in town had livestock?

BISHOP: Right. See, we owned considerable land around us which I have sold off at the death of my parents. And then my brothers moved away. My older brother had a pharmacy in Denver for quite a number of years, thirty-five to be exact. And Vaughan was a veterinarian in A&M College of Pharmacy—uh, College of Veterinary Medicine over there. He was their pharmacist.

UTLEY: Was your father's store here on the square?

BISHOP: South side of the square.

UTLEY: We did a historical marker for that building, didn't we?

BISHOP: No, but I would like to.

UTLEY: It needs one, huh?

BISHOP: Yeah. That was my grandpa's old saloon site, too. And—

UTLEY: Now tell me about that. I didn't know about that.

BISHOP: Well, Grandpa used to—when he first came back here from the Civil War, he had a wagon train. He worked—he was in Captain John Smith's company during the Civil War, and he came back with his commanding officer. And Smith had a shipping deal on the Halls Bluff and Alabama crossings—shipping points on the Trinity. Grandpa had a wagon train that would bring in produce that was left there. Trinity was navigable

during flood season, and otherwise flat boating was the way they handled it, carrying it down to Galveston.

UTLEY: How far are we from the river at this point?

BISHOP: About fifteen miles. Fifteen, twenty—it varies on where you hit, you know what I mean, because it curves around there like—

UTLEY: So then he started this saloon business.

BISHOP: Right. He had the watering place on the square as I call it. Speaking of that, my grandmother—my great-grandmother, Carey Ann Vaughan—Wortham—her main boy, Melchijah, or Bud, which is easier to say—he had brought cotton into town and had stopped by Grandpa's saloon to wet his throat, I guess you'd say, wet his whistle, and somebody got in a fight and he was killed. And my great-grandma carried her pistols in her camisole. So she loaded up the wagon, hitched up the mules and whatever Negro help was there, came into town and got Bud's body. She went in the saloon and killed the man that had killed him.

UTLEY: My goodness. Don't mess with that family.

BISHOP: No. Nothing was ever done about it.

UTLEY: Is that the same building that's there now?

BISHOP: Yeah. Same—like a hole-in-the-wall, as I call it. Because even when we were there, it's in-between—you have your roof over it. And my grandpa always boasted it was open front. And we—that was the same way with our drugstore, glassed-in front. We rolled back the doors during summer; of course, in the winter—

UTLEY: Did you say bookstore?

BISHOP: Drugstore.

UTLEY: Drugstore, okay, okay.

BISHOP: We did have a bookstore over here, another friend and I did. That was after, back in the forties.

UTLEY: Okay. Well, we'll pick that up chronologically as we go. Was religion—

BISHOP: —important in our family?

UTLEY: —important in your family?

BISHOP: Yes. My grandpa was a Roman Catholic, but he married a staunch Presbyterian, my grandmother. And, of course, Carey Ann Vaughan was, too. Carey Ann Vaughan Wortham I should say. You notice my brother picks up the family name Vaughan; my other brother picks up the family name LeGory. And that was the way our family passed down through the years, which I think is neat. It ties in—

UTLEY: But their last name was always Bishop?

BISHOP: Yeah, ours was. But I haven't passed on mine; I don't imagine I will. But you know what I'm getting at, you picked up on your names, which I think is kind of neat. But Grandpa always supported the Presbyterian church.

UTLEY: Well, now, do I remember this correctly, that you're related to one of the early pioneer missionaries in Presbyterian work in Texas?

BISHOP: Not that I know of.

UTLEY: Seems like I remembered that we got a marker for an early preacher, maybe Tenney; is that—

BISHOP: Tenney? I wasn't related to him, but I knew him quite well, and he was a very close friend of the families. Dr. Tenney—he was here fifty-four years.

UTLEY: He was a very important person in Texas history.

BISHOP: Right. He was the one who started Mary Allen Seminary. He had a school for blacks here, and from that is the reason that the all-Negro girls school grew and was developed in that area.

UTLEY: When did that school close, about?

BISHOP: Well, it had several closings, but the main one, I think, was '74, 1974.

UTLEY: The last time I came through here and looked at that building, it was—

BISHOP: It's sad to see it now.

UTLEY: —it was in sad shape, but there was somebody inside of it. I don't know if they were living there, or—

BISHOP: Yes, there was a caretaker, and then it was used for—you know, after World War II we had these veteran schools, and they were held there until that was closed down.

UTLEY: Now, the Mary Allen Seminary is on the National Register, isn't it?

BISHOP: Yeah, the building is.

UTLEY: And is there a historical marker for that, too?

BISHOP: Yes.

UTLEY: Okay, good.

BISHOP: Out front.

UTLEY: You've covered a lot of topics already, and we're going to be talking about that, too. Tell me about going to school—your first memories of school.

BISHOP: Went to kindergarten. Yeah, I wasn't old enough. Then you had to be seven. Momma figured I was old enough to go to school. Mrs. Charlotte Faris was our teacher. She had twelve little kids, twelve children.

UTLEY: Is this a private kindergarten?

BISHOP: Yeah. Part of them are her nieces and nephews. And it always kind of got to me because they kept calling her Aunt Charlotte, you know. So she let me call her cousin—Cousin Charlotte. So I got in the family, too. And I remember there were two big holly trees in the yard, and the girls could climb the trees and throw holly berries at the boys. We were equally divided. We had whooping cough, we caught that. We were together very much. And I learned I could draw beautiful oranges and apples; I specialized in that. Still have the little chair that I sat in when I went to kindergarten. But I went on to second grade. We did, those twelve kiddos, when we went to school.

UTLEY: Went on into public school?

BISHOP: Right, um-hm.

UTLEY: And where was the public elementary school at that time?

BISHOP: Well, it's now a vacant lot, but it's a part of the intermediate school—what was my high school; it's the intermediate school. It's on Seventh Street and Goliad. But it's a part of that complex now.

UTLEY: Okay. Tell me about some of your teachers that influenced you in the early years, in the grade school years.

BISHOP: Well, I think—I remember Mrs. McLemore; she was my second grade teacher. Miss Marjorie Ellis was another; she was my third grade. And then Mrs. Bertha McLean was in fourth grade. Mrs. Evie Bennett Willis married while we were in her fifth grade class and became Mrs. Churchill. And then, sixth grade, I got to know Miss Myrtle Arnold, she was then, and is now Mrs. Blankenship. She was our Texas history teacher. And that's when we started making Ivory soap missions. You'd carve them—we had a big sandbox of Texas. Then we'd put the missions—make them all over Texas. And we were so proud.

UTLEY: The missions were carved out of a bar of soap?

BISHOP: Yeah, Ivory soap. And we were so proud that we had one here, you know, our Mission San Francisco de los Tejas. And Miss Myrtle always kept us busy. We put together scrapbooks and did all sorts of things. She has been—is still a good friend of mine and has worked closely with me on various projects.

UTLEY: Now you had her in what grade?

BISHOP: Sixth grade.

UTLEY: Okay, and did she teach you Texas history all year long?

BISHOP: Yes. It wasn't a half-year thing, you know.

UTLEY: Did you ever go out to the San Francisco de los Tejas?

BISHOP: Oh, yes.

UTLEY: What are some of your early memories of that?

BISHOP: Well, I think they kind of came into full focus back during the centennial, because we were trying to get the site. It was still undecided—of course, it still is, for that matter. Pro and con.

UTLEY: Yeah, they don't know exactly where it was, do they, yet?

BISHOP: No. No. We feel like the new land that's been added to that park complex will divulge the site. We'll be able to find some artifacts and all, but we haven't been able to get them out there to do the artifacts dig—archaeological digging, you know. That's the hang up there. But I feel like we'll find it in the San Pedro flood plain.

UTLEY: San Pedro Creek? Is that right?

BISHOP: Yeah, uh-huh.

UTLEY: And that community that's located nearby is Weches.

BISHOP: Weches—

UTLEY: Although it's spelled like the river Neches, it's "WEE-chez."

BISHOP: Well, that should have been—Neches was the name of that, should have been that, but I think there was another Neches.

UTLEY: Oh. There is another—yeah—in—

BISHOP: And when they applied for a post office—and you can't have but one, or whatever. Like Grapeland wanted to be Grapevine. Grapevines were up there, and they applied—said no, so they made it Grapeland. And Waneta is another one here, and Percilla—

UTLEY: Another community—

BISHOP: Yeah, it should have been—it's the Procella League. P-R-O-C-E-L-L-A, but it came out Percilla when they had a post office. And, of course, Waneta is another. It's not spelled like your español. This is a W-A-N-E-T-A.

UTLEY: Oh, okay. (laughs)

BISHOP: And I had a hard time convincing y'all when we got a historical marker down there that that was correct. They thought somebody had flipped besides me.

UTLEY: Well, one thing I've learned in Texas is you can't count on spelling and pronunciation.

BISHOP: No, had too many influences. I think your Mexican, as well as your Indian. And when you combine the two you are in trouble, especially then when you get so many so-called Anglos coming along.

UTLEY: That probably weren't that well educated to begin with.

BISHOP: No. And everything is so phonetic, goes by how it sounds.

UTLEY: Yeah. Of these teachers that you've mentioned besides Miss Arnold, who is now Mrs. Blankenship, who were the ones that you remember the most as really kind of teaching you what education was about and really getting you excited about learning?

BISHOP: I'd say my dad did that.

UTLEY: Oh, okay. What kinds of books was he introducing you to?

BISHOP: Well, all your standards, you know, from kid's books all the way up. James Fenimore Cooper—I remember— the "MOE-he-CONS"—(laughs)—my brothers used to tease me on the Mohicans, The Last of the Mohicans. They'd go, Eliza and the MOE-he-CONS, they would really—and I'd get so mad, "It's Mohicans!" But I remember that especially. And, of course, the Little Colonel story, that's another regular one we had. But all these—I cut my teeth on Pilgrim's Progress.

UTLEY: Well, I don't want this to be taken the wrong way, but I would assume, knowing you, that you had quite a vivid imagination when you were a young kid.

BISHOP: Yeah. Because I was—

UTLEY: I'm not calling you a liar, I'm just saying—(laughs)

BISHOP: No. As a girl with two older brothers that was very much a tagalong. See, too, Dan, I came of an era where your brothers took care of the little sister. And if I had

to go somewhere, well, they had to march me there. In fact, in the car situation, I never did drive until after my dad died, believe it or not. They were always—had to be the chauffeur. "Take your sister somewhere." I bet I was a pain in you-know-what-part-of-their-anatomy, too. But anyway, they endured all those years. That was my fortieth gift to me.

UTLEY: Your driver's license.

BISHOP: Driver's license, yeah. I never shall forget the driver's exam, neither.

UTLEY: I bet there are other people who won't forget it. (both laugh)

BISHOP: Well, he sure won't. When I parallel parked and backed up, oh boy. I was hellbent I was going to drive that car.

UTLEY: I'm not worried about chronology—tell me about that story. Because you're forty years old and you've never driven a car. Who taught you how?

BISHOP: Well, I taught myself. I marched down to ask the chief of police if he'd give me a permit if I promised just to drive in town. That was one of those standard shifts, too. So I learned when you came to a stop, you stopped. You didn't do this roll-through bit, you know.

UTLEY: You mean the chief of police actually gave you a license knowing you couldn't—

BISHOP: Yeah, I promised in six months I'd come back with the real thing.

UTLEY: And so you just got a car and jumped all over town.

BISHOP: Yeah. I remember they had the parallel parking pylons down at the Elk's deal. And sometimes they would get a little happy, you know. And I'd be out there practicing, going out and knock down every time. Mr. Hop Robinson, I never will forget, "Honey, I'll set them up. Knock them down again." I said, "Mr. Hop, I don't want to knock them down." Boy, but he really had something. I got it done.

UTLEY: And what—

BISHOP: When I went to get my exam, why, it was the only time I've ever parallel parked perfectly. That's the truth, that car went up, it came back with that forty-five degree angle, and it just went in there so snug. And I looked at that man, I said, "What did you do?" He said, "I didn't do anything lady, I was praying." I said, "That's what did it." But when we backed up, that's when he lost his teeth, and his cool, too. Yes, he had partials. And he spit them out, Dan. That's what tickled me, because I shot the gas to it. I had a clear street and back I went at a nice clip.

(tape 1, side 1 ends; side 2 begins)

UTLEY: Um, let's go back and talk about your Texas history class. And, if you can, tell me some of the stories that really caught your interest. You said you were interested in the missions because there was one here?

BISHOP: Yes. There was talk about that at that time. Because, you see, the centennial was coming up, and it was coming out into the boondocks trying to find what was happening here. And Judge Aldrich, Judge A. A. Aldrich, was our centennial chairman. And he was trying to get information together. And at that time I learned that my great-grandpa was one of the early folks—Major Wortham. And he was—which didn't mean anything to me then. I don't know if it means anything yet. He was the commanding officer of a local unit—home guard unit—for protection against the Indians and commissioned by Sam Houston. And we had several massacres and that sort of thing early on back then, during the 1830s. He came in here, I believe, about 1834.

UTLEY: Came from where?

BISHOP: North Carolina. I would say in the Tennessee area because he knew the Gossetts, but at that time, that was all North Carolina. That's what sort of confuses you when you start going back trying to dig up records of various things. And then there are a lot of John Worthams; it's a common name. But I do know that he and the Gossetts were friends. He served as one of the first land commissioners with Elijah. And, of

course, Elijah and his son A. E. are the ones that are responsible for naming this county and the town. A. E. supposedly gave the town site. I remember what Frank Gossett, one of his great-nephews, said, "That old skinflint. I doubt if he ever gave anything he made. He got some good money for it." (Utley laughs) Well, I'm inclined to agree with Frank, what I found out about him. But I'm not downgrading the man; I appreciate whatever—I'll share this with you, too. Early on it seemed to me that everything—nobody did anything but the Gossetts. That kind of stunned me after I got into the business. I said, "There's bound to be somebody else here beside the Gossetts."

UTLEY: Well, I'm going to make a generalization and then let you tell me if you found this to be true. But I grew up in East Texas, too, and I got out of high school thinking that nothing really happened in East Texas of any importance, you know, that it was just kind of a—there were the lumber mills and that kind of stuff, but I didn't think that it was pretty significant. And it wasn't until later I started reading and found out that a lot of stuff was going on in East Texas in the early years. How did you—did your teacher tell you about things going on in East Texas?

BISHOP: Well, I don't think that it was impressed on me to that extent. Not even did the centennial wake me up to anything like that. I think you kind of have to get a few years on you, Dan.

UTLEY: Well, we learned about Nacogdoches and we learned about San Antonio.

BISHOP: Yeah, they were the two things that stood out. And we were just sort of the in-between. And you didn't mess with the history of in-between.

UTLEY: But the Old San Antonio Road went across Houston County.

BISHOP: Yeah, it certainly did. I think what really helped us in this area was our history book. And that was one of the only ones that Dr.—Barker?

UTLEY: Yeah, Eugene Barker.

BISHOP: He was the brother of Mrs. Edgar Arledge here. And he was one of the authors of our history text that we had. And, of course, he included about our mission and other things. And that kind of made us feel important in our class that we were—that's the reason I said that emphasized what Miss Myrtle did when we worked on the missions. We were a part of that. They began over here and went toward San Antonio, which is true. I think Mission San Francisco de la Espada is the culmination of the one that began here, and then moved on a little distance in 1731, then moved finally down to where it is.

UTLEY: How did you feel about Crockett when you were growing up here? Were you—did you think this was a big city and that this was—

BISHOP: No, never was disturbed about the size or otherwise. I never did.

UTLEY: Did you travel to other towns around here?

BISHOP: Nope. No.

UTLEY: Crockett was the center of your attention.

BISHOP: Crockett was the center of my universe. Totally. Well, I'll share this with you. I never stayed away from home till I went to college. I was sixteen when I went to Mary Hardin-Baylor. That wasn't unusual either, for young folks, I don't think.

UTLEY: Let's go through your high school years first, and then we'll take you off to college.

BISHOP: Oh, yeah. Get me educated.

UTLEY: Yeah. Who in high school influenced you? What teachers do you remember in high school?

BISHOP: Oh, well, Dr. Sam Bright was my chemistry teacher, also my trig teacher. And he was always wondering what I was going to blow up next, because my partner and I were well known for our explosives. In chemicals, not other remarks. And, again, Mrs. Churchill was still with me, and I had—you know, I don't remember a blasted thing

about any history teacher in high school, come to think about it. English was what I concentrated on. Started my writing along back then.

UTLEY: Tell me about that. Who influenced you to write?

BISHOP: Miss Evie—or Mrs. Churchill, who was my English teacher. She told me that I had a talent for various things, just to put down my thoughts. So I started. And got my newspaper work underway when I was involved in the centennial. I was a Grapeland Messenger correspondent, so to speak. I did some articles for them.

UTLEY: You said you were writing in high school. What kinds of things were you writing?

BISHOP: Essays and stories.

UTLEY: Have you saved those over the years?

BISHOP: They might be somewhere around the place. Momma might have put them away. I still have a lot of stuff I'm trying to catch up with there—weed through.

UTLEY: Well, now, was that considered unusual at the time for you to go around writing about things that you were observing and seeing?

BISHOP: No, unh-uh.

UTLEY: A lot of people did that kind of thing?

BISHOP: I don't know about a lot of people; it wasn't unusual for me. (Utley laughs) Because I was always writing about some of our animals or trees or plants. Now, mother had a lot of flowers, and I helped with those.

UTLEY: And you wrote about it just for your pure enjoyment and not for a grade or anything?

BISHOP: No.

UTLEY: And it was relaxing? Therapeutic?

BISHOP: Well, it filled up the time. When I had time, or whatever.

UTLEY: Well, what other interests did you have? You already mentioned you had chores and that you liked to write. What else did you do?

BISHOP: Music.

UTLEY: You continued with the accordion?

BISHOP: Yeah, and the piano. That was about it. I was in the band. We had a decent band when I was in high school. Of course, now it's standard, but, then, that was something.

UTLEY: Now, did you play the accordion in the high school band?

BISHOP: No, I played the drums and the saxophone. My boyfriend and I—I guess they call them boyfriends—a young man that I grew up with, he was the other saxophonist, so we tooted horns. (Utley laughs)

UTLEY: Now, what year did you graduate from high school?

BISHOP: Thirty-seven. Our centennial here in Houston County. And the state's was in '36. And that's when we really started things. Judge Aldrich had been busy getting sites of various locations here—burial sites as well as other historic sites. And got the limestone markers, which we have quite a few here.

UTLEY: Well, now, Judge Aldrich must have been fairly—

BISHOP: He also published a history, too.

UTLEY: Okay, he must have known people at the state level, too; I mean, it sounds like he was fairly active.

BISHOP: Oh, yes, he did. All of his papers are in the Barker Center.

UTLEY: How did he work his way into that circle of people, being a county judge over in far East Texas?

BISHOP: Well, I think he'd always been—he was our Sunday school superintendent, too. So we had a connection there. Well, his whole background—Colin Aldrich was our

first county clerk here, and he was of pioneer heritage. So it was just a natural for him to follow in that, I would say.

UTLEY: What projects do you remember from the centennial that went on here in Crockett?

BISHOP: Of course, our main one was building the commemorative replica at the mission, which was dedicated with full pomp and ceremony. Governor Neff came over here for that. And we had the new city hall and the memorial buildings built at that time, which I'm sorry to say is in a sad state of repair. And our city hall we turned into a police station—now we have a new one.

UTLEY: Um-hm. Did you go to the dedication at San Francisco de los Tejas?

BISHOP: Yes, I was one of the five thousand that was there and saw it with a full Catholic mass. They had the bishop—we were in the Galveston diocese at that time.

UTLEY: Had the building—had you seen the building constructed?

BISHOP: No.

UTLEY: You just saw it when it was finished.

BISHOP: When it was finished, yeah.

UTLEY: What did you think? What was your reaction to that?

BISHOP: Well, I'll share this with you, Dan. I didn't think it might have looked like that.

UTLEY: I think a lot of people think that.

BISHOP: Yeah. And, sure enough, they say it didn't, in fact.

UTLEY: What do they think it looked like now? More like a fort?

BISHOP: Well, it had more thatched bushes and things rather than the logs.

UTLEY: Okay. Well, you know, there are people now—it's been around so long, there are people that think that that is the mission now.

BISHOP: Yeah, but I set them right on that if I'm down there. How would it have windows in it? There are a lot of things that would be cockeyed. But I do know that was dedicated; it is, shall we say, a holy place. It was dedicated as a church at that time.

UTLEY: What do you remember about Governor Neff? Was that the first governor you had seen?

BISHOP: Yeah. I wasn't very impressed. Well, he married a county lady. His wife was from Lovelady.

UTLEY: Oh, really? What was—do you remember her name?

BISHOP: Mainer— she was a Mainer. And so he was homefolks in a manner of speaking. Because some of my down-the-street neighbors were kin to them, too, so that made them just ordinary people like us. I don't think we were duly impressed with that when I was growing up. But I'm of the age where children were seen and not heard from, too. Observed rather than participated. Sometimes I thinks that's a good way to be, too.

UTLEY: What other events were going on during the centennial? Did they build the Crockett park at that time?

BISHOP: Yes.

UTLEY: Tell me about that.

BISHOP: That came about—I think that—isn't that right, isn't that fifty years ago?

UTLEY: Yeah. A little over fifty years.

BISHOP: Mayor Beasley saw to rounding up the land, and there's about—over fifty acres in it. Now, of course, they've moved on out to the loop—South Loop 304. And that's where the civic center is, and the attention is directed out there now, which is to me very distressing in a sense, because that is such a lovely area out there if we could just keep it maintained. We have our Strode-Pritchett log cabin that we moved in from out State Highway 21 East. Jeremiah Strode had built the house, and it was uncovered when

some of our members were tearing it down. And they gave it to us. It's real neat how they built around this original log cabin that's in perfect condition.

UTLEY: So it didn't show from the outside.

BISHOP: No, you'd never know it was there. It's amazing how those logs have held up, too, since they've been exposed. I expected them to disintegrate; they've held on.

UTLEY: They've probably weathered over the years.

BISHOP: Right, seasoned, and a lot better shape than some of our current lumber.

UTLEY: Yeah, that's true.

BISHOP: That's the way our depot floors are, too. They're big logs, and they've held up over the years. That's a 1909 building.

UTLEY: Are they longleaf pine, or—

BISHOP: I don't know.

UTLEY: —cypress, maybe?

BISHOP: I would say cypress, more than likely.

UTLEY: Yeah. This Davy Crockett Park—

BISHOP: And it is David Crockett.

UTLEY: David?

BISHOP: David. They have it Davy out there, but in the beginning it was dedicated as David Crockett. His name wasn't Davy, it's David, and we've had a hard time—

UTLEY: Davy probably came about as the—

BISHOP: The song.

UTLEY: —as the song, or the Disney movie or whatever.

BISHOP: I know when we organized our David Crockett of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, people insist—I said, "No, it's David Crockett." That was organized in 1955.

UTLEY: Well, that park has got real interesting stonework out there. And it's got a red sandstone—

BISHOP: Are you talking about the Mission Tejas?

UTLEY: Well, I think there's some out there, too.

BISHOP: Yeah, the floor in that commemorative replica is the tree of life.

UTLEY: But I've noticed that red sandstone around the park, too. Is that local stone?

BISHOP: Yes, from out northwest of town. I know I—it made good mudcats for my chimney, and that's where I went for that. It solidifies. Got the moss east of town, but I had to go northwest to get the mud.

UTLEY: Did you build your own mudcat chimney?

BISHOP: Yeah.

UTLEY: You did?

BISHOP: Right, and—

UTLEY: How did you learn that?

BISHOP: —they'd torn down the chimney, you know, when they encompassed the cabin. And so we had to—yeah, it's a matter of so much that you mix, and you finally learn how—what portions to go with.

UTLEY: Now, some of the young people listening to this tape aren't going to know what a mudcat was.

BISHOP: Well, it's a mixture of moss and mud that you roll and roll and roll, and then slap together. You have a certain way you learn how to pat it—this way and that way, and shape on the ends, then make your bricks—

UTLEY: You're kind of making a little brick.

BISHOP: Right, uh-huh.

UTLEY: Now, do you dry it before you put it in a chimney?

BISHOP: No.

UTLEY: You pack it wet.

BISHOP: Pack it wet.

UTLEY: Okay.

BISHOP: And you have boardings on the side that you shape with as you go up. And you take your boards off. You let them hold the form, the platform. Same way with concrete. I've learned that the hard way over at the depot, pouring concrete. You have to have a form. But we built a shaft, as I call it, on the four sides of your chimney. And it works.

UTLEY: Oh, yeah.

BISHOP: We've had fires and roasted marshmallows and otherwise.

UTLEY: When did you build your chimney?

BISHOP: Uh, that log cabin was our spirit of '76; it was our bicentennial project.

UTLEY: And the chimney's still good?

BISHOP: Yeah.

UTLEY: Because it dries like a brick.

BISHOP: Yeah, it's adobe—

UTLEY: It's adobe sort of.

BISHOP: —that moss makes it more so.

UTLEY: And how did you learn—I mean, you must have had some example of how it was going to draft and all that kind of stuff.

BISHOP: Well, Mr.—I had the man that put the roof on for me, he was the one they contacted about the draft and whatever. Mr. Harkins, Walter Harkins. But we had to put a new roof on it because it didn't have a roof, you see. It was an uncovered room. We used a froe to make our shingles, and he saw to it that we had a downdraft or whatever—how we weighed it out, had a little level in here for the suction.

UTLEY: Yeah, because if you do it wrong—

BISHOP: It'll go back in! Tell me about it; we found that out the hard way. (both laughing) But it worked. Because I've had people proof, so we know—the Boy Scouts used to meet out there. We still—people want to visit us, why, we open it up for them.

UTLEY: Has it got furnishings inside?

BISHOP: We did have, but I've had to move them because—

UTLEY: Too much vandalism?

BISHOP: Right.

UTLEY: That's a shame.

BISHOP: You can say that about many of our other projects, too, that we've sort of had to be extra careful. I still have hopes that that's going to go, though. It's going to leave us. We're going to see a new day where we won't have that, where we'll have appreciation.

UTLEY: You know, sociologists tell us that there are swings of civilization, and maybe we're swinging back the other way.

BISHOP: Well, I think we are—this is kind of—I'll level with you, a down-drag for history right now. We're going the other way, but I think we can go the other. I've witnessed that in my lifetime. As I said, during the centennial was a high, then it went by the board, then we revitalized things in '61. Then the historical survey committee came about during that time. And so then we kind of built up; now we're sort of going back the other way.

UTLEY: Like we can't sustain an interest over a long period of time.

BISHOP: No, that's what has grieved me in my own community, because I've witnessed it. Every ten years is kind of a turnover in things. And, you see, I'm old enough now that I can recognize that.

UTLEY: You can see patterns.

BISHOP: Yes. It used to grieve me very much when I came home, and, oh, I was going to set the world afire. I worked for the paper, then became editor of the then Crockett Democrat. And I was gung-ho on this. So I had to be tempered with years, and I have been.

UTLEY: Well, that's what makes good steel, is tempering.

BISHOP: You have to have the trial by fire. And I laugh when people say, All your successes. I don't know as I've had that many, Dan.

UTLEY: Oh, I think you have.

BISHOP: Well, I remember the others more, I guess. And that's good that we do.

UTLEY: When we talked on the phone, you said that the centennial was a time where you really got interested in Texas history.

BISHOP: Yeah, because I was doing the articles for the Grapeland paper.

UTLEY: Now, had you gone off to college yet?

BISHOP: No.

UTLEY: Okay, so as a student, you were writing.

BISHOP: Right. And then when I went into my newspaper work, I did—I was aware of what was here history-wise.

UTLEY: Now, how did you get a job writing for the Grapeland paper as a student?

BISHOP: Well, Grapeland and Crockett always had a rivalry. They were our arch-rivals in football and whatever. Mr. Albert Luker, who was my boss, he thought that would be real good if he could get somebody from Crockett to be his Crockett correspondent, which I was glad to be because it gave me a chance to do my P.D.Q.s, you know.

UTLEY: Now, what do you mean, your P.D.Q.s?

BISHOP: Well, I could write, tell about things.

UTLEY: Okay. You mentioned Mr. Luker—

BISHOP: Albert Luker. L-U-K-E-R.

UTLEY: Okay. And you said he was your boss.

BISHOP: Yes, he was the editor, long-time editor, of the Grapeland Messenger. He was the mayor up there for a long time, too.

UTLEY: But how did he find out about you?

BISHOP: He knew me, through Daddy, you know, through the drugstore.

UTLEY: And he knew you liked to write?

BISHOP: Yeah. I guess, I don't know, but Mr. Albert was—I just knew him always; you were that way in a small town, Dan, you know people.

UTLEY: How far is Grapeland from here?

BISHOP: It's about thirteen miles north. It's close enough.

UTLEY: So how long did you write for them before you went off to college, a year or two?

BISHOP: Yeah. And I still write for them. (Utley laughs)

UTLEY: When you get a good job you don't give it up, huh?

BISHOP: No, they haven't gotten rid of me yet. I've laughed—they have new bosses up there now, Sandra Kerby and her husband own it. But I still submit articles—as they say, a contributing editor. (laughs) They can't get rid of me.

UTLEY: Well, I tell you what, let's stop this tape here, and then I want to start up on the next tape about Mary Hardin-Baylor, about going off to school.

BISHOP: Okay.

(tape 1 ends; tape 2 begins)

UTLEY: You mentioned that you graduated at the age of sixteen?

BISHOP: High school, yeah.

UTLEY: And there were eleven grades, I guess, at that time?

BISHOP: Yes.

UTLEY: And how did you decide to go off to Mary Hardin-Baylor?

BISHOP: Well, I had visions of going to University of Texas, but, as I told you, Dan, I'd never been away from home, and my Dad, he'd already gotten me a place in the Scottish Rite dormitory. And Mom and Dad thought I might be a bit young to go into such an advanced state (laughs) first time away from home and all that good stuff. So some of the college scouts came around about, and I got a scholarship over there. I was salutatorian of my class.

UTLEY: Oh, okay.

BISHOP: And so I started out at Mary Hardin-Baylor.

UTLEY: Now, what did you know about Mary Hardin-Baylor before you went there?

BISHOP: Very little, really, except it was an all-girl school.

UTLEY: It was considered, really, a kind of finishing school at the time, wasn't it? I mean, it had a good reputation, even though it was a small school.

BISHOP: Yeah, it had a good reputation—it was a small school, but that was one of the assets, I think. You had more attention for you. And I will say that's true, because I dearly love some of the ladies that were there. Miss Hoskins, who was my history teacher, Mildred Hoskins, a femme sole, as was Miss Emma King and Miss Birdie McCrary. They were my English teachers. Dr. Vann was another Shakespearean scholar. He had some war injuries, but I was never conscious of his disfigurement. It's amazing how his personality and his voice and his—oh, he knew Shakespeare. And if I'd never loved the Bard, I would have after being exposed to it from this professor I had.

UTLEY: What were your first memories of Belton?

BISHOP: Just like Crockett.

UTLEY: You thought it was about the same as Crockett?

BISHOP: Same as Crockett, yes. And it is.

UTLEY: Yeah, when you think about it they are very similar.

BISHOP: Yeah, it's an old town like this, and—

UTLEY: Courthouse square.

BISHOP: Courthouse square, and you have your old families, and a set routine of this, that, and the other. See, I also worked for the paper there, the Belton Journal. I majored in everything but pottery. (both laugh) I couldn't take it; never could work it in.

UTLEY: Where did you live at Mary Hardin-Baylor?

BISHOP: Burt Hall.

UTLEY: Burt Hall?

BISHOP: Yeah, 207.

UTLEY: (laughs) This is great.

BISHOP: And I—

UTLEY: My sister went to Mary Hardin-Baylor; that's why I can remember some of this. She was a Stribling girl.

BISHOP: Right, Ruth Stribling, Ely Pepper, yeah.

UTLEY: Pepper's gone now.

BISHOP: Yeah, Pepper's gone. It looks totally different in many ways from how it was. But I had a screech owl that lived (laughs) in the tree outside my window, I never will forget that. Little boy, he used to choke to death every night. "Whee! Whee!" I was dorm chairman one year, too, because I helped with my expenses.

UTLEY: Would you mind if we spent a little time talking about some of the traditions at Mary Hardin-Baylor, because—

BISHOP: I'd be glad to.

UTLEY: —when you talk about history, that's a school that's got a lot of historical tradition and heritage.

BISHOP: Well, one of them we blasted when I was a freshman, and that was wearing hose.

UTLEY: Now, what do you mean?

BISHOP: Well, you had to wear stockings. You couldn't wear slacks, you know, or shorts or anything. We were very—you had to be chaperoned, all that good stuff.

UTLEY: On every date you had to have a chaperone?

BISHOP: Yeah, sign in, sign out. But I remember we wore black stockings. We almost got sent home because Dr. Hardy was there that year. That was before the changeover. Dr. Gettys followed him, but Dr. Singleton was the one that was more lenient, shall we say. It was a breakthrough when Dr. Singleton came over. Dr. Hardy stayed with the old concepts, which were changing, of course.

UTLEY: And you went to chapel, I guess, every day.

BISHOP: Yeah, every day. Ten o'clock, yes, sir.

UTLEY: And that was the old Alma Reeves chapel?

BISHOP: No, it had burned.

UTLEY: Oh, had it?

BISHOP: No! Alma Reeves—I'm thinking about Luther; Luther burned. No, Alma Reeves was still there.

UTLEY: So Luther Hall wasn't there when you were—

BISHOP: No, unh-uh, just the ruins. That's when we started our annual Easter pageant—began at that time.

UTLEY: It began when you were there?

BISHOP: Yes.

UTLEY: Tell me about that; now, I think that's fascinating.

BISHOP: Right, well, it was really something to be selected Jesus, you know. The main ones.

UTLEY: Now, this was an all-girl cast.

BISHOP: Right.

UTLEY: And it was performed on the ruins of Luther.

BISHOP: On the ruins, right. And we, of course, had the bells there that we rang, too, at special traditions. But, yes, that began during my junior year.

UTLEY: Were you a member of that program?

BISHOP: A member of the cast, yeah. I wasn't anything as vast as Jesus or anything like that, but I got to be part of the mob and several other things. I also got to cover it because I was an assistant to the publicity department. Mrs. Gingrich—she became; she was Mrs. Dorothea Schlegel when she first came.

UTLEY: I remember that name.

BISHOP: And she married Jack Gingrich and is at Seguin presently. I call her Mama D. And she's still very dear and very close. She had a profound effect on me, too, in many ways.

UTLEY: How so?

BISHOP: Well, she taught me good work habits, and certainly about getting your stories and how to go about it and whatever. Yeah, I served as her assistant in that department. Worked for Mr. Russell, F. B. Russell, at the Journal. Also was over at the Temple Telegram. I was editor of The Bells; that was our paper.

UTLEY: The Bells?

BISHOP: Yeah.

UTLEY: Okay.

BISHOP: Journalism was one of my majors, and English and history—

UTLEY: How did you decide on journalism?

BISHOP: Writing, I guess. Didn't have to have so much science. However, I took botany. I loved plants of any and all kinds. Botany, and I took physics. Didn't really have any lab; I had enough chemistry in high school. All the political science I could get. I even have a teaching degree, and I taught school, believe it or not. Got a permanent teaching certificate, so called. There's nothing permanent; they change. That tickled me

on that score, but I knew to go ahead with my education courses. They're much ado about nothing, Dan. They may be different now, but I think your—well, I don't think I got much teaching from taking education courses. Maybe psychology—

UTLEY: Well, I was a teacher, too, and I feel the same way. I think you're kind of born to be a teacher, and it's hard to teach someone else how to teach. You can—it's kind of like swimming; you can read all about it, but unless you jump in the water and take off—

BISHOP: Yeah, you can't swim on dry land much. No, I still—in a manner of speaking, I think I teach. Because I go into schools with various grades. Like I have fourth, fifth, and sixth grade Venture Classes at Crockett Intermediate School. They're the ones that I do various projects and programs with. Like in celebrating this Columbus quincentennial, they were my ones to present programs for that, which has been great.

UTLEY: Now, is Venture Class like gifted and talented?

BISHOP: Yes.

UTLEY: Let's talk a little bit more about Mary Hardin-Baylor, though. There was a tradition there of the daisy chain. Was that there when you were a student?

BISHOP: Yes, but it—

UTLEY: Tell me about that tradition.

BISHOP: —it had sort of gone down. At least we did not go for that too much.

UTLEY: Okay. But there was also a ceremony of—

BISHOP: Capping?

UTLEY: —capping.

BISHOP: Yeah, when you—

UTLEY: Did you do that?

BISHOP: We had little sisters, yeah.

UTLEY: Tell me all about that program, how that worked.

BISHOP: Well, as freshmen, the juniors were our big sisters. And I had someone who sort of looked after me, my fairy godmother, so to speak, if I had these questions or that, and I became one, you know, when I was a junior. I still—in fact, I'm still corresponding with some of mine. And, of course, my roommates, too.

UTLEY: So each year you had a different little sister?

BISHOP: Right.

UTLEY: Oh, okay.

BISHOP: But I still—today, I'm still in communication with some of them.

UTLEY: And so what was the capping ceremony?

BISHOP: That was—for graduation, our seniors passed on to the juniors. Then there was stunt night; remember about that. Each class put on a skit.

UTLEY: Yeah, I remember a little bit about that. The capping ceremony, though, they would actually pass on the cap and the gown?

BISHOP: Right, to the juniors.

UTLEY: To the juniors. I always thought that was a very—

BISHOP: Very—well, you remembered it.

UTLEY: Very traditional.

BISHOP: And the change of your tassel on the cap, and then "Up with the Purple," the midnight march, and that sort of thing.

UTLEY: "Up with the Purple" being the school song.

BISHOP: Right.

UTLEY: And were you active in the church while you were at Mary Hardin-Baylor?

BISHOP: Well, I was Presbyterian at that time. I'm an Episcopalian now. (Utley laughs) Yes, I—in fact, that's where I sort of became interested in the Episcopal church. Katharine Lake's father was the rector there.

UTLEY: Where was the Episcopal church in Belton?

BISHOP: Um, there was a small one on the way—not too far away from the Baptist, if you remember where it was. Okay. A little small church on the way into town. Remember the Avenue Cafe?

UTLEY: Yeah, I think I know where the church—is it still there?

BISHOP: Yes.

UTLEY: A little brick church.

BISHOP: Uh-huh.

UTLEY: Okay.

BISHOP: But Katharine—I became acquainted with Katharine Lake and through her got to know her daddy. My mother was an Episcopalian. She attended St. Mary's in Dallas. In fact, one of my earliest memories is my momma putting me to sleep with the psalms, repeating psalms, singing sort of.

UTLEY: Having been associated a little bit with Mary Hardin-Baylor—

BISHOP: I taught school there one year. My English teacher had a nervous breakdown, so she had three of us girls as student teachers. And she selected me to finish out her term.

UTLEY: What I was going to say, having been associated with the college a little bit, I know that the newspaper was very important on that campus, that it was—

BISHOP: Bells? Yes.

UTLEY: —and that being an editor was a big thing on that campus.

BISHOP: We sort of set the standards. Our words were the campus voice. I think it's kind of toned down since we were there.

UTLEY: Was it a weekly paper, monthly paper—

BISHOP: Weekly.

UTLEY: So you learned deadlines and schedules—

BISHOP: Right. That's what I said, my teacher, Mama D, got us on the ball, yes. And we sold advertising; we did the whole thing.

UTLEY: What was your goal when you were doing this? What did you hope to accomplish when you got out of college? Did you want to become a writer for a newspaper?

BISHOP: No, I have to tell off on Eliza; I was in love with an Aggie, this boy that I started kindergarten with, and he was at A&M.

UTLEY: So your goal was just to be with him.

BISHOP: Half-way, but also—yeah, I was thinking in terms of newspaper work. At Gladewater—I kind of expected to go there and work for them. But I graduated in '41.

UTLEY: So what happened then?

BISHOP: So we had a war coming on.

UTLEY: And nobody was hiring then, I guess, for a newspaper. So what'd you do?

BISHOP: So I came back to Crockett and went to work for the "Dim Out," as I called it, Crockett Democrat.

UTLEY: And this had just started?

BISHOP: Yes, we were a daily, but we soon went to a weekly.

UTLEY: And who started the paper?

BISHOP: Henry Paul, from Groesbeck.

UTLEY: What happened to the young man that was up at—your boyfriend?

BISHOP: Okay, he went into the service, and he was killed on December 20, 1942, our first casualty in World War II.

UTLEY: The first American casualty?

BISHOP: Of Houston County.

UTLEY: Of this county?

BISHOP: Yeah. He was a B-17 pilot.

UTLEY: And where was he killed?

BISHOP: Amiens, France, in that area.

UTLEY: Could I ask about that—how that affected you?

BISHOP: Well, the bottom fell out, if you know what I mean. But, of course, both my brothers were going into service, and my mother was in poor health. And that meant the drugstore had to be—my brothers were with Dad part-time, so I took over their place with him. So I had plenty to do. Then also his mother had a nervous breakdown. We got the news on Christmas Eve; I never will forget that, you know, "missing in action."

UTLEY: Bad timing.

BISHOP: Yes. And then it was confirmed a month later in January. Yeah, it was bad timing.

UTLEY: Was his body brought back here for burial?

BISHOP: No.

UTLEY: He was buried over in France.

BISHOP: Got in touch with his co-pilot, Charles Mendel. And he was a prisoner—taken prisoner—and he knew about me, and he wrote to me and told me about it—that Robert had been killed at the—

UTLEY: What was Robert's last name?

BISHOP: English. And told him to get the boys out, and he went down with the plane. So I always felt like he burned. Least I like to think that, that his body was consumed by the fire. But Charles did escape, was taken prisoner, and was in the Stalag Luft—or whatever you call them—one of the prisons. He was released; I used to send him care packages. And then he came back to Claypool, Indiana, and came down to see Nannie and me—Robert's mother—and brought his fiancee. He married his childhood sweetheart, like Robert and I had grown up together, you know what I mean.

UTLEY: All the way through school together, huh?

BISHOP: Yes. Yeah, we were Tarzan fans. We used to go to the Saturday afternoon movies, you know.

UTLEY: Where was the theater here? Was it on the square?

BISHOP: There's one on the square over here, and there's one down here on Houston Avenue, and then, of course, the one on the corner down there.

UTLEY: What were their names?

BISHOP: Texas was the name of the one up here. And I don't remember that one, but Auditorium was the one down here. And it's now become the Ritz.

UTLEY: The Ritz?

BISHOP: Ritz, yeah. It has a neon sign still; it's one of the few. Perdue's has the neon sign still hanging on it. But that sort of changed focus after the war years. But there was plenty to do. I know I taught first aid, home nursing, and all that good stuff.

UTLEY: Would you roll the bandages and—

BISHOP: Yeah.

UTLEY: Tell me about that. That's something I have heard of, but I've never had anybody describe before.

BISHOP: Well, we even had an air-raid crew up here on the courthouse. No, I taught most of the Negro classes. I taught over a thousand blacks first aid. And one of my fun times was artificial respiration. Then, you know, you had to pump—get on the back and—

UTLEY: Back pressure—

BISHOP: Right. And I think some of them would come with their husbands and boyfriends or something, and they'd really give them a workout. Our classes were in the Byrde E. Smith Gym up at Mary Allen. And I saw one of my old Negroes came to me, and she said, "I still got my card." You know, you handed out first aid cards. But

everyone was sincere and anxious to learn as much as they might. I think it did good; I think our home nursing classes did excellent.

UTLEY: Now, what was home nursing? What was that for?

BISHOP: That was for women—how to care for sick people and various things in the home.

UTLEY: So that the real trained nurses could participate in the war.

BISHOP: That's correct. See, we didn't have nursing homes or anything then. It was all home care. And it's amazing how little some of us do know about what some of us take for granted that people ought to know. That's the same way now, even. When you have so much—stop and think about it, Dan, there's so many free programs now that are available that we used to do for people—that neighbors did for each other.

UTLEY: And did them for free.

BISHOP: Yes, and could do. You knew how to do it. Now people don't know how to do anything.

UTLEY: But then, back then, you knew your neighbors, too.

BISHOP: Yes.

UTLEY: And in our day and age, you don't necessarily know your neighbors.

BISHOP: No, and sometimes they don't want to know you. I've learned that the hard way, because I'm one of these people that bounce in and say, "Hey, I'm so-and-so, I'm glad you're over here." And I feel like they feel like saying, Well, so what.

UTLEY: Yeah. Well, some of that's probably caused by TV, too, isn't it? We kind of stay in our house with the TV going?

BISHOP: Yeah, they shut down when they come in at nighttime from their job. That's true.

UTLEY: You came back and worked on the newspaper—

BISHOP: That's right.

UTLEY: —and what kinds of stories did you cover? Or did you cover everything?

BISHOP: Everything! I covered everything. Only three of us that put it out, and I even put the paper to bed. In other words, we had hand-set heads. The linotype; I could run the old linotype. And we had a hand press. You'd slip them in—

UTLEY: You had to hand-feed the paper?

BISHOP: Yeah. You kind of shake the paper, and slip it in, slip it in. It's a rhythm to it; it's not all that hard.

UTLEY: And you had a clutch in case something went wrong.

BISHOP: Right, that's correct. That was quite a neat experience. And I thought nothing of going home at ten o'clock, eleven o'clock in the night. Now I wouldn't do it at all. That was back in your forites.

UTLEY: Were you covering the war effort?

BISHOP: Yes. We had quite a few stories about our boys who wrote back, their columns and pictures of all of that. Selective Service was right up the street. Fire station was on down, and when the siren would go off, I'd run down and get on the wagon and go with them. Same way with the gut wagon, which is what I call—

UTLEY: You'd ride the engine?

BISHOP: Yeah. Which I would tell was the ambulance. When they'd have a call about a wreck, I'd go out with them. Sometimes it came in handy, because I could help with first aid then.

UTLEY: Did you carry a camera, too?

BISHOP: Yeah. But we didn't go in for pictures as much as they have in later years. See, I also started working for the Post, the Houston Post then, in 1942. Our local boy went into war, and I got his place.

UTLEY: Would that be called a stringer?

BISHOP: Stringer, um-hm.

UTLEY: Okay, so you were a stringer for the Post doing local news for the Houston area.

BISHOP: County—county news. And I went with the Chronicle in '47. So I did both of them.

UTLEY: But you didn't have to go to Houston?

BISHOP: No.

UTLEY: You just mailed everything?

BISHOP: Mailed everything or telephoned.

UTLEY: And were they paying you for printed news?

BISHOP: Yeah. You kept a string sheet, you know what I mean, you pasted your printed news on galley-sized sheets of paper. I had some good bosses—E. A. Moreno was one; Elbert Turner was another one. James Dickey was another. They were on the Post. Elbert Turner especially was helpful on training, you know what I mean, giving me pointers on this, that, and the other. And then Bill Still was at the Chronicle.

UTLEY: Now, how did they train you if you were here and they were down in Houston?

BISHOP: If I sent in something, and it wasn't what they wanted, Turner was good about sending my copy back and pointing out this should have been this, and do this, that, and the other, which not very many editors will do, Dan.

UTLEY: Now, as a stringer, did you get a by-line?

BISHOP: Yes.

UTLEY: Okay. And how long did you work with the Post and the Chronicle, through the war years?

BISHOP: Oh, yeah, till about 1980.

UTLEY: Oh. And, uh—

BISHOP: We had the East Texas edition of the Chronicle when Bob Bowman—you know him?

UTLEY: Yes, out of Lufkin.

BISHOP: Yeah, he and I were on that.

UTLEY: You mentioned that you became editor of this paper.

BISHOP: Yeah, Crockett Democrat.

UTLEY: When did that take place?

BISHOP: Uh, '41.

UTLEY: Well, you joined it in '41, didn't you?

BISHOP: Yeah, I was the editor.

UTLEY: You joined it as the editor? That's pretty good.

BISHOP: Yeah, for ten dollars a week, I think it's—

UTLEY: For ten dollars a week for editor, well, it's a good thing you weren't associate editor. (both laugh)

BISHOP: No, I was laughing, now people would tell me what all they make, and I just keep my mouth shut.

UTLEY: Forty dollars a month—

BISHOP: I was at home; I was taking care of my folks and all; I was paying rent in that way, so heavenly day.

UTLEY: Well, let's set a context for that. What would forty dollars a month buy you then? And could you save money making forty dollars a month?

BISHOP: I did. Because war bonds were popular, and so I usually—I bought about six a year and put money back. Because we made a garden; we did everything like that at home.

UTLEY: So you didn't buy many groceries.

BISHOP: No, just staples—

UTLEY: You still had animals to tend?

BISHOP: That's correct. Cows and what-have-you.

UTLEY: So you could just about save forty dollars a month.

BISHOP: Right, uh-huh. And dressing, I was never a fashion plate, so no problem there.

UTLEY: Would you explain war bonds? Because—I mean, I know what they are, and you know what they are, but for the people who are listening to this—

BISHOP: Well, E-bonds I guess is what they were.

UTLEY: Series E?

BISHOP: Series E, yeah. That was the popular thing. "Any Bonds Today," if y'all have heard that song. And that went to the war effort. We had rationing, too. Of course, I walked; that didn't bother me.

UTLEY: Well, let's talk about the bonds, though. You—did you buy them all at once, or did you pay a little a month?

BISHOP: Pay a little a month. Or save enough money to buy $18.75. See, that's a twenty-five dollar bond.

UTLEY: So you'd buy it at $18.75; it would mature—

BISHOP: Mature to twenty-five, yeah.

UTLEY: And tell me about how rationing affected you.

BISHOP: Well, it really didn't affect me, Dan, because I walked already. And, of course, we had gasoline rationing, and that didn't bother me with gas or tires.

UTLEY: What about sugar or nylon hose?

BISHOP: Sugar. Nylon hose didn't bother me. Sugar, we managed with my stamps and my parents'. So it was never any problem.

UTLEY: So when you go to the grocery store you'd tear those stamps out and—

BISHOP: Yeah, whatever.

UTLEY: Whatever you were allowed on the stamp is what you could buy.

BISHOP: Because we put up quite a bit of jellies and things. Still do that.

UTLEY: Were there bond drives here in Crockett?

BISHOP: Yes.

UTLEY: Do you remember rallies that dealt with the bond drive?

BISHOP: They were usually held in the courthouse, on the courthouse steps or something here. Some of our folks would get up and make speeches, and we'd have the band playing a song.

UTLEY: Have some soldiers around, I guess.

BISHOP: Right, some boys home on leave.

UTLEY: What about metal scrap drives? Did you do that in East Texas?

BISHOP: Yes, we did that in East Texas. I don't exactly—I know I was involved in it because I had a scout troop, and—

UTLEY: What kind of scout troop?

BISHOP: Girl Scout. And we were into whatever was going on. I know now I'm into aluminum cans for the Houston County Visitor's Center, so when you talk about scrap metal that's what comes to mind more than otherwise.

(tape 2, side 1 ends; side 2 begins)

UTLEY: You mentioned a while ago off tape that when you came back here from Mary Hardin-Baylor, you were—you implied you were idealistic and you wanted to really change things. Maybe not necessarily change them, but get things going and start some activities and get the town interested in its past and so on. What were some of the early things that you attempted to do, some programs besides the Girl Scouts that you worked in?

BISHOP: Hm. I mentioned to you about my fiance. Of course, my two brothers went into service, all right. The younger of the two, Vaughan, became paralyzed from the waist down from football injuries—he couldn't take the training. So he was out of the service and was back home. I had him to take care of. And my mother developed a heart condition and wasn't too well. The other brother went to China/Burma/India, [C.B.I.

theater of operations]. He was a medic—tech sergeant in the medics. And I was, shall we say, sort of involved on the home front. I did leave the newspaper in '43 and went with my dad to help him. Then my mother's condition worsened, and we sold the drugstore in August of '44. And Vaughan was still unable to walk; he was paralyzed from the waist down. But LeGory came home in '45, but he brought home a war situation, that he could not live—well, it was malignant malaria; it's in his bloodstream. They advised that he go to a dry climate, so he elected to go to Denver, and he did and set up a drugstore there.

UTLEY: And got over his illness?

BISHOP: Well, he was able to control it. Whenever he'd come down here to visit, he'd be sick again. So we didn't have too many visits from him. But again, Mother's condition—I got Vaughan up; he was walking again by '47, and he went to A&M, started over there in the veterinary department. But my mother's condition worsened, and she was paralyzed the last three years of her life. She died in August of 1950.

UTLEY: How long did your father live?

BISHOP: He died in December of 1959. And he had cancer. So I bounced from one to the other, yeah.

UTLEY: Well, now what did you do after leaving the newspaper again?

BISHOP: I was with the drugstore, and then I worked for Mr. Crook, George Crook, in an abstract firm, which—

UTLEY: Okay, now—

BISHOP: —got me acquainted with the land of Houston County, right.

UTLEY: I knew you knew abstracts, but I didn't know where.

BISHOP: That's how I got into it. And I also worked for the county clerk and in this office over here. So that provided me with another resource that I could use further on down the creek, shall we say. Then in—back during that time, Nannie English, my

fiance's mother, and I started a bookstore over here in part of the old hotel which has burned. Her husband had a barbershop there.

UTLEY: That's the vacant building—

BISHOP: Vacant lot, yeah.

UTLEY: I mean lot.

BISHOP: And we had a bookstore there for a couple of years.

UTLEY: What was the name of your bookstore?

BISHOP: English Book Store. And then when we sold out—well, I'd better back up. In '47, I went back to work for the paper. Mr. Jeff Davis had bought it. And I worked—I was his editor till he sold to Mrs. Ross Woodall—Ivy. And then I worked for her is who I worked for. May have that in reverse, which I believe I do, in my memory. I worked for Mrs. Woodall in '47, and she sold to Jeff Davis, and I didn't want to stay with him. I went to work part-time for Bud Hale, who was the district clerk. I was his divorce court deputy.

UTLEY: They had so many divorces they had to have a—

BISHOP: (spoken together)—special deputy. And I'll share this with you, divorce is on the criminal court. You have civil and criminal. Well, divorces come under criminal. That was always a laugh to me, and yet I can appreciate it.

UTLEY: Well, some people I know that are divorced probably want to put it there.

BISHOP: But I worked off and on for him. Then we didn't have Xerox machines. You had to make the transcripts typing. No—

UTLEY: No errors.

BISHOP: No errors, right. No carbon copy. So I was his transcription lady, shall we say, off and on. I think I worked for him—golly, Wally—on up to—well, off and on until he died. He'd always call me back to do his transcriptions.

UTLEY: What were you doing in the early sixties when the Texas Historical Survey Committee got going real strong?

BISHOP: I think I had Western Union. And, of course, in this county, Mrs. Genevieve Beasley was our chairman, and Loyd Lovell was the judge that appointed me to that.

UTLEY: So you were appointed to the earliest survey committee here?

BISHOP: Um-hm. I had some real special co-workers—I was the youngest one on it. I don't know why I was asked. Some of the members were Mr. Mainer, who did our Civil War book; and Dennis Frazier from Grapeland; Miss Emma Craddock; and my aunt, Hortense LeGory Sweet; and, as I said, Mrs. Genevieve—Mrs. Jack Beasley, Sr. She was our chairman.

UTLEY: Tell you what, we're a little bit over an hour and half. Why don't we stop today, and then start up tomorrow talking about the survey committee and your work with the historical commission.

BISHOP: Okay. Allrighty.

(end of interview)

ORAL HISTORY MEMOIR

BAYLOR UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE FOR ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Eliza Honey Bishop

Date: 5 November 1992

Place: Houston County Courthouse
Crockett, Texas

Interviewer: Dan K. Utley

BISHOP INTERVIEW NO. 2

DAN K. UTLEY: This is Dan K. Utley, historian with the Baylor University Institute for Oral History. Today is Thursday, November 5, 1992. I'm interviewing for the second time Miss Eliza H. Bishop, historian with the Houston County Historical Commission. The interview is taking place in the Houston County Courthouse in the Commission Office in Crockett, Texas. This interview is sponsored by the Baylor University Institute for Oral History and is part of the Historic Preservation Project focusing on the development of the preservation movement in Texas. Yesterday, when we were talking about the 1930s, we neglected to talk about an event that Crockett has become quite famous for—

ELIZA HONEY BISHOP: It's the World Champion Fiddler's Festival, yes, that began well, in '36, back during the state centennial. Mr. Barker Tunstall, who was an old-time fiddler and he wanted to preserve the old way of fiddling, which is quite different from this bluegrass and other styles that we have now. And Mr. Harry Trube was our mayor, and Mr. Harry used to be a carnival barker down in Galveston when he came up here and married and settled into Crockett. And so he and Mr. Barker and Raymond Cornelius and Mr. Terry Van Pelt, put together this idea of having something on the square. And,

of course, my dad—our drugstore was on the south side, and I remember it was an ice-water day—you know what I mean? Everybody came to the fountain to get a drink of water or buy a Coke—a fountain Coke which was a nickel then. And I made fountain Cokes, and they were—really had this stuff in them, too, you could tell they were powerful. But, be that as it may, that started on the square in 1936, and next year, 1937, was our town—county's centennial, so it really blossomed out that year. We had the Prison Stringsters from Eastham brought up—they were our, more or less, stable band.

UTLEY: Now what was their name?

BISHOP: Prison Stringsters. And I remember they used to play that song "I'm In Love With You, Honey"—that's when I'd come on; I dearly loved Mr. Barker—he was a classmate of my mothers—Mr. Tunstall. So I worked for the newspapers—I was the Fiddler's Festival correspondent for many years, I think, on up until—well, I even worked for the Jaycees after Mr. Barker and then kind of faded out—when Beta Sigma Phi took it over.

UTLEY: Oh, okay.

BISHOP: And it became the World's Championship Festival, and it went all out with prizes and brought in people. Then Jaycees grew up, because I think there's an age deficit there—after you pass so much—they turned it over to Beta Sigma Phi—the chapter here, Mu Sigma chapter.

UTLEY: And they still run it?

BISHOP: No. I think chamber of commerce has it now.

UTLEY: Has it been operating continuously since the first?

BISHOP: Yes.

UTLEY: And this is—is it really a world-class event? I mean, do people come in from all over?

BISHOP: Yes, we bring in, I can't remember, don't know the names, but I remember some folks from Chicago and over on the East Coast, and we've had some from California, too. And there are age groups, too. There are youngsters and second class, and you have your old fiddlers play first, I think, and then the thirty to fifty is another group, and maybe twenty-five—no, twenty to thirty, and then the under twenty. And there are women, too.

UTLEY: But it's not held on the square anymore?

BISHOP: Oh, no. It moved out to the park. And we have a special platform out in the David Crockett Memorial Park. Now it's at the Civic Center and air-conditioned. But I think they had the first one there last year. Used to be on the big pavilion out at the park.

UTLEY: But is the focus still the old-time way of playing the fiddle or has it changed?

BISHOP: It's changed. Yeah, I don't think we are preserving much of the old style of fiddling. They are dying out, too.

UTLEY: So now you are getting a lot of bluegrass and country?

BISHOP: Bluegrass and country.

UTLEY: Yeah, okay. What was your job as correspondent?

BISHOP: Well, it was for local releases. We didn't have radio stations up until 1950. And for the Houston papers—*Chronicle* and *Post*.

UTLEY: Giving them publicity?

BISHOP: Publicity, yeah. Promoting it. And got some AP stories, too. They'd pick up on it and go with it, and that's what would bring in our outside folks, you see.

UTLEY: What happens when AP picks up a story that you wrote? Do you get extra pay for that?

BISHOP: Yeah.

UTLEY: Okay. Well, that's not a bad deal.

BISHOP: No, it's pretty good then—I don't think they do that now, because—no, I don't think they have "stringers" anymore—that's what we were called—rural correspondents. We were rather important, because we were the feeders of big things to go in. If we had something here we thought was hot, we'd get on the line and call, and my state editor would tell me, Yeah, tell me some more about that at a certain time, and so forth.

UTLEY: You said that you worked for both the *Chronicle* and the *Post*; was there a special East Texas edition?

BISHOP: Of the *Chronicle* later on. See, the *Chronicle* was an evening paper—*Post* was the morning paper. And then the *Chronicle* went into the morning competition. So I could handle both with all ease—you had different deadlines then.

UTLEY: You were fixing to tell me something about stories, though, or something.

BISHOP: Was I?

UTLEY: I interrupted you.

BISHOP: Right. Well, the main thing was I didn't have a conflict of interest with either of the papers there because I could hit either deadline. Of course—depended on the time was the one that decided it—not showing any favoritism. If the *Post* time element gave them the better, they got it. If the *Chronicle*, they got it. You know, what I mean—longer deadline, and they realized that and worked with me. Otherwise, it would've cut their throat, I'm sure.

UTLEY: And you did that up to fairly recently.

BISHOP: Yes, about 1980.

UTLEY: Okay. What caused you to end that then? Just too many things going on?

BISHOP: Well, I got a bit much involved—too many irons in the fire. And I had my own PR business—I pretty well started that about then. See, Dan, back in the sixties after my dad died—my mother died in '50—I more or less started all over again. And I joined Texas Press Women and then served as president.

UTLEY: What year were you?

BISHOP: I think it was 1977-78. We had the National Press Women here in San Antonio that year. So, yeah, I'm a member of the National—

UTLEY: And that's quite a honor.

BISHOP: And back in college I became a member of what was then Theta Sigma Phi. It was the National Professional Journalism. It's now Women in Communications, Incorporated—WICI. But I'm still—used to have to have an education to become a member of that, but now, it's semi-professional. So I more or less began my PR business back about '78.

UTLEY: What did you do as president of the Texas Womens—

BISHOP: Texas Press Women.

UTLEY: Press Women's Association?

BISHOP: Well, we had contests—communications contests—I started winning various prizes when I went in and featured. It's in the springtime. It's one of the big things of both organizations, for that matter. But you are in competition with others of your profession. It sort of keeps you in touch and keeps the old brain cells working—sharpens your skills very definitely. And you get to be with other women. Of course, men now are members of our organization. It's open to men.

UTLEY: Well, that's good.

BISHOP: Yeah. So, and also radios included also.

UTLEY: All kinds of media.

BISHOP: All kinds of communication.

UTLEY: I wanted to talk today primarily about your work in the historical commission.

BISHOP: Okay.

UTLEY: Tell me how all that started.

BISHOP: It ties in real good. Back in the sixties I became—we had the Houston County Development Foundation, and they had a tourism program, and I became tourism chairman for that. One of my interests was out here at the park, Mission Tejas. And we cranked up for a state-wide deal. Price Daniel gave us a Mission Tejas Day. And we were going to bring in the Alabama Coushattas, and we had a lot of state figures that were going to come. I think Richards was our representative—George Richards from Huntsville. And Ms. Colson was our state senator—Neville Colson. And they worked with me on that, but the price tag they gave us is a proclamation of that. As I said, everything was going great, and the rains came. There were no hard-surfaced roads in the Mission Tejas, so we were washed out, but we got hard-surfaced roads as a result of that. The state appropriated the funding and that came about. That made a turn-around in that park. But that's one of the things that I very definitely know of. We've had others—statewide—Briscoe proclaimed it as Mission Tejas day, and I started the pilgrimage down—

UTLEY: Dolph Briscoe?

BISHOP: Yeah, that was, I think in '78. We had the pilgrimage down there every October. But going back to the other, I had, as I said, been associated with the centennial, and, of course, my aunt, Hortense LeGory Sweet, once worked with Judge Aldrich at that time and brought in our family background—Major Worthem, my great-grandfather, and my forebears there that had a part of it, so my auntie was still around, alive and well. And Judge Loyd Lovell, had helped him get elected, so he named her to this new committee that the state had requested, this Historical Survey Committee. And Loyd was aware of my work with newspapers, so I got drafted, too. And I had mentioned some of the other stalwarts, I think, yesterday. Mr. Mainer—T. N. Mainer, and Miss Emma Craddock, and Mrs. J. G. Beasley, Sr., who was the widow of Mayor Beasley, who was our centennial mayor—did so much. She was made chairman, but Miss

Genevieve was certainly an aggressive lady. She was one of our cultural leaders. We—the culture club was focused on the memorial building out there. Mayor Beasley had acquired and set up the new city park, and we had a little museum there, and it was all things out there—proms and all our social activities were in there.

UTLEY: I'd like to back up just one minute and get you to repeat what you said your father told you when you were turning thirty-nine.

BISHOP: Oh, oh my.

UTLEY: Because this kinda plays into what you were starting to do, right?

BISHOP: Right. Well, my dad had cancer and was ill off and on for about nine years. And we kept busy—that was my way of therapy because he wasn't given any time. But, believe you me, if you stay busy, you can be up and going and accomplish quite a lot. We made a list of things we wanted to do, and we got after them. But, as he was nearing the finish, Daddy said that I'd given my young years to him and to Mother, and now I was getting near forty, well, life was really going to begin. So I took him at his word. He died on December 2, 1959.

UTLEY: So when you turned forty, you really got busy helping the town.

BISHOP: Yeah, I got busy. Turned loose.

UTLEY: Well, how soon did you get very active in the historical commission?

BISHOP: Historical commission?

UTLEY: Early survey committee at that time.

BISHOP: All right. Immediately, in '61 because I was named to it, and I did their stories because we were getting some markers around. First one, I believe, the state gave us was out at Mission Tejas. It's there at the front. And then Mrs. Beasley got busy and got one for the Methodist Church, which is your oldest Methodist congregation in Texas. We have that distinction. And then we got one for the city of Crockett, which is here on the east side—northeast corner.

UTLEY: Well, for the record, I wanted to note that you're working now toward a goal of two hundred markers.

BISHOP: Two hundred markers if at all possible before the year two thousand. Yeah.

UTLEY: Well, which is remarkable for a county this size. I mean, that's probably more than many urban counties have.

BISHOP: Well, yes and no, but I'll share this with you—I got kinda unhappy back there when I was tourism chairman. Everybody that saw me said, Oh, there's so much history in this county, oh, blab, blab, blab. And they didn't know anything about it. And markers, to me, are instant history. Boy howdy, you can go up there and read, and this tells you what happened here or so in this vicinity and tells you about the person. You are in the know right off. And to me that was just a godsend. That's what I was looking for.

UTLEY: Well, that was one of the things I wanted to get to is why the markers became so important to you, because I mean, you're the leader in the state in getting markers.

BISHOP: Markers? I didn't realize that.

UTLEY: Oh, I bet you are.

BISHOP: Well, I'll say one of the leaders. I was a—I know some others that work hard at it, too, but no, that was my belief—in fact, I'll share this with you—in 1972 we did get twenty-five or more. But that's thanks to the help of the THC with Mrs. Deolece Parmelee.

UTLEY: Well, let's talk about Mrs. Parmelee. You mentioned yesterday off the tape that she was very influential—

BISHOP: She was my mentor. She saw that I was interested, and she nurtured what little knowledge I had. She trained me.

UTLEY: Do you remember when you first met her, or how you first came to know her?

BISHOP: By correspondence.

UTLEY: Okay. So you were turning in applications and she was writing back.

BISHOP: Yeah. I would ask her, Doesn't this qualify? You know I would dig up this one or that one or the other. I'd come up—she used to laugh and say how many I'd hatch on her. And she'd write back and say, Yes, this has some possibilities and give—tell me something else and so forth and so on. So she truly was my mentor and nourished the interest that I had. She trained me.

UTLEY: She was a taskmaster, too, wasn't she?

BISHOP: Yes, but that was all right. I had grown up with that. I was accustomed to that.

UTLEY: I mean, she required a lot of good, thorough research.

BISHOP: Research and, yes, she trained you to know this happened, so and so or hearsay or whatever. I had to have substantial sources.

UTLEY: Well, were there sources here?

BISHOP: Yes. We had a lot of primary sources. And, otherwise, I got to find out those sources; as I had mentioned to you, I'd been an abstract clerk. I worked in the courthouse in various odds and ends. I was aware of what was here. I had knowledge of the deed records and otherwise. I knew where to go and how to go, which very often people do not.

UTLEY: When you were working on markers, who did you have in mind as your audience? Who did you think were going to be reading markers?

BISHOP: Everybody. Primarily the folks right here at home. That was who I was trying to educate along with me. Yeah. But it was mainly for my neighbors and the folks that lived here.

UTLEY: That didn't think there was a lot of history probably.

BISHOP: Well, they had an idea, a smattering of it. But, they needed facts, you know—used to have on the radio show, "Just the facts, ma'am." Well, that's what you are after with the marker. And as I said, that's interesting history.

UTLEY: Well, how did you decide what was going to be marked? Did you set up a list of things that you wanted to do?

BISHOP: Yep. You know, this is politics because you're talking about a commission. Of course, even in survey work, actually we didn't get into marking until further on after I became chairman in '71. That's when I really hit the ball. We are divided into four precincts. You got most of your support and backing from your commissioners court. In fact, down through the years, I was the commissioner court's executive secretary. The only one that ever was in this county. I worked with Judge Selman. So I had some savvy with those boys. Still do for that matter. And not that the county underwrote us on very much, but yes, my listing—see we—our commission members were from all over the county. That's the way I selected those who were to be appointed or suggested to the court. See, they name who is named to it. So you pull out key people in each of your communities.

UTLEY: Are there natural divisions within the county? I mean, do some towns not get along with other towns?

BISHOP: Yes.

UTLEY: You mentioned Grapeland and Crockett.

BISHOP: Grapeland and Crockett used to be rivals, but I'm inclined to think everybody sort of shakes their fist at Crockett. When we had the development foundation, I think a lot of those barriers were removed because the foundation had a board of people from each area. This is the way I've worked. I'm county wide. I seldom say I'm from Crockett. I say I'm from Houston County. And that's the way I operate.

UTLEY: Can you give me some names of the communities that have been active in the marker program?

BISHOP: Oh, yeah. Augusta, for one; that's our first permanent settlement. Augusta and Weldon, Volga community, New Energy, and Waneta, Percilla, Reynard and—

UTLEY: How about Lovelady?

BISHOP: Well, it's not a community. It is an incorporated town.

UTLEY: Well, okay. Tell me about those, too, though.

BISHOP: All right. Well, Lovelady and Grapeland—Latexo was a community then—it's now incorporated. So is Kennard. We have five incorporated towns. And Kennard is the only one that doesn't have a marker, and I'm after the mayor now—I'm gonna have one for Kennard before long. Ratcliff—I did it on the 4-C mill, and on the basis of my research there, I got one for Ratcliff. But they are active down in that area. In fact, we pretty much are alive, because in our sesquicentennial, all fifty-three of our communities participated. But back in '72, railroad came through here—1872. So Grapeland, Latexo and Lovelady celebrated centennials and Crockett celebrated 135—that's what I called our celebration—Celebration 135.

UTLEY: At the same time, you considered geography; I think you were probably also considering a balance of markers, for cemeteries, towns, buildings, and grave markers.

BISHOP: Yes. Buildings and people. And grave markers. And also precinct-wise, as I said, it's all over the county pretty well. We've tried to pull in every community that would come, and eventually I'll get around to getting them, but it just takes a little while. Then there are some biggies that I wish I could get—like for Masonry in this county began in 1845. And it needs some attention. And Sam Houston's mound—of course, next year is the bicentennial; I hope I can get that before that.

UTLEY: Now, I don't know what that is.

BISHOP: That's one of our surveyor's points when this county was separated from Anderson County. It's the northeast point. Mound City.

UTLEY: Oh, okay.

BISHOP: Yeah. Sam Houston's mound. It's kind of a—well, we like to call them mounds over here—it's just a protrusion of the land, so to speak, a hill—

UTLEY: A bump!

BISHOP: A bump, yes! But that's on my agenda. Now, Reed's Opening is another—that's the south end here. It's a clearing of land that was a landmark deal that needs to be noted because it's mentioned in a lot of our deeds. Those things need to be pinpointed and set down.

UTLEY: Well, one thing we need to mention, I guess, because it might not be widely known outside of the commission, is that the money for the markers comes at the local level.

BISHOP: Oh, yes!

UTLEY: The state doesn't pay for the markers.

BISHOP: The state, no, they are the sponsor.

UTLEY: And some of these markers can cost on up to six or seven hundred now.

BISHOP: Well, those biggies down there—that one I got for the county, yeah, for our courthouses.

UTLEY: So you not only have to do the research, you had to get the money.

BISHOP: You had to get the money.

UTLEY: How hard was that?

BISHOP: Well, sometimes it was a little bit difficult. But I had found out if everybody puts in a dollar or five dollars or whatever, they have a part of that marker. It belongs to them. Now, I know down there from Hagerville and Coltharp, I got Coltharp because Daddy was—helped them with their lodge work. I got that for my daddy—it's in honor

of him. But the folks at Hagerville, they chipped in dollars, so forth. Some of our cemetery markers are that way. Cemetery associations members will contribute because they are proud to have such, and I think it is a distinction. That's what prompted our publishing the cemetery books. We have published three editions of our Houston County cemeteries. It also prompted the Highway Department to putting signs where they are. If you go along the roadway—

UTLEY: I've noticed.

BISHOP: All right. That's the reason.

UTLEY: And there are more in this county than I've noticed in other counties.

BISHOP: Okay.

UTLEY: But that's because you call people's attention to it.

BISHOP: Yes, and called the Highway Department's attention to it. I can't say enough about them, though, because they place markers in our right of way. Boys have been mighty good. And they look after them—if I ever—somebody knocks down one or whatever, they report it to me and bring it in, or whatever.

UTLEY: Okay.

BISHOP: They also—

(tape 1, side 1 ends; side 2 begins)

BISHOP: —I can't get along without the Houston County highway boys, I'll tell you that right now. In fact, I always remember them at Thanksgiving and Christmas with fruitcake and candy and stuff. That's little enough for what they do all year. They have, you know, the turnouts—have you noticed them?

UTLEY: Yes, very nice.

BISHOP: Yeah, that's in this county—I think some of the other counties have copied it. But that began here when Mr. Pringle was the superintendent—A. J. Pringle. I know down here, Colin Aldrich—the Aldrich A-l-d-r-i-c-h—we have Arledge and Aldrich

here—this is Aldrich, which is Judge Aldrich our earlier historian who wrote—that's his forebear—he was our first county clerk. Anyhow, the Aldrich cemetery—Aldrich cemetery down there has one of the early markers—centennial markers. Mr. Pringle did these neat little concrete steps up to it. It was so neat, in fact, that somebody took out the centerpiece—you know that—

UTLEY: Oh, the middle seal?

BISHOP: Yeah. But that's all right. I got it replaced.

UTLEY: Well, now you said you were—you became chairman in 1971.

BISHOP: 1971.

UTLEY: And you must have very quickly had a vision that markers was going to be the centerpiece of your program, right?

BISHOP: Yeah, for me it was.

UTLEY: How did you get everybody behind you?

BISHOP: Well, the centennial—timing was good, see. Nineteen seventy-two was the centennial for your two communities—well, two incorporated towns, and the community of Latexo. And they got busy on histories—compiling their history. So it was just natural that they were going to get a marker.

UTLEY: But some towns can do this and some towns aren't able to do it. It takes more than just one person to do it, right?

BISHOP: Well, we had people that were members of our commission from there. We had groups—committees in each one. See, our commission has been made up of people from all over the county—appointed members are that. This—when we were the survey committee, we did our thing, but it kinda died down, I would say. We didn't do much on the Civil War bit—that was in '65. I know Mr. Mainer, who was on our survey committee, he compiled newspaper articles, which we, in 1981, published: *Houston County and the Civil War*. His daughter, Ella Frances Dodd, and Margaret Muenker,

another daughter, were on our commission after we became a commission. So we sorta bit the dust after, I'd say, '67, but in '69 we were reorganized. Ira Rials, the former mayor at Grapeland—he is of pioneer descent—he was our chairman at that time. And we had quite a few good members from up there. I had mentioned Mr. Frazier; he was still with us. We had Margaret and Ella Frances from down at Lovelady to name a few. Wynlie. Then I mustn't forget Evelyn Rice Corley, and Wincie Dell Barnhill. We used to be the CB's. Both of those ladies are about ten years older than I. They were retired school teachers.

UTLEY: And what are the CB's?

BISHOP: Well, Corley and Bishop and Barnhill. That's what we were called, the CB's. Yeah, that's what I called us—usually the three, and they were with me in a lot of our doings.

UTLEY: But in the early years, especially, you must have done a lot of the research yourself.

BISHOP: Yes.

UTLEY: And how did you set aside the time? How did you set aside the structure to do all that research? That's a lot of work.

BISHOP: It still is a lot of work, Dan. I don't know, you just find time, I guess you might put it. I'm pretty well organized. I know what to go after. As I said, Mrs. Parmelee set me up in business there. And if I had questions, she would provide the answers or point me in the direction to seek the information that I needed.

UTLEY: In the early 70s did you start going to the state meetings?

BISHOP: I believe the first one I went to was '71. I think I went down—was it in Del Rio? I believe that was my first.

UTLEY: Might have been. Were they helpful to you?

BISHOP: I got to meet some other folks from up in here, yeah, and we formed good associations—many have lasted quite awhile. In fact, some of them I still correspond with—they are not involved in the work. I think I'm about the only—last leaf on the tree, so to speak. Most of them have either passed on or—

UTLEY: Or passed it along to someone else.

BISHOP: Yes, which I've been trying to do. I supposedly quit it in '88, but I didn't give up the markers. I stayed with that, and I'm sorry to say, we do not have an appointed commission now. It's pretty well my doing it, and I'm the contact person for inquiries. But I turn out about twenty-five a week. All that the county clerk gets, they come to me.

UTLEY: So you are like the county's historian, too?

BISHOP: Well, that "H" in the name isn't for historian, and I've told people that. (laughter) They laugh at me on that—no, it doesn't stand for historian. In fact, I back away from that. I say, I just know where to find it.

UTLEY: Well, who else at the state helped you in the early year?

BISHOP: Well, Mr. Latimer was receptive to what we were doing.

UTLEY: Truett Latimer?

BISHOP: Yeah. Because Truett's a good politician.

UTLEY: Yeah.

BISHOP: And what makes us look good, made him look good; however, that sounds a bit cynical. I don't mean it that way. I'm just honest; I understood that. And it made me—gave me an incentive to work because he turned things our way. Thanks to him, we got funding for our Monroe-Crook house—total funding on that based on the work that I had done. Yeah, he provided the—we got—

UTLEY: A THC grant.

BISHOP: Grants, uh-huh. Our funding for that—Stripling was our architect.

UTLEY: Let's identify him—Raiford Stripling of St. Augustine.

BISHOP: Raiford Stripling. Yeah, the number one, that's right.

UTLEY: And you knew him quite well?

BISHOP: That house—yes—that house is a masterpiece, I think, of restoration. Now, David Woodcock was my deal over at the Downes-Aldrich house. And David is excellent, too. He's still at A&M. And David helped me with our depot work also. He did my initial work over there. But David set the—bent the twig in the way it should grow over at the Downes-Aldrich. In fact, I found our color of the house over there. I was scraping one of the upstairs windows—we always thought it was a beautiful white, you know, virgin. But having been built in 1893, she turned out to be a gaudy lady. Had green and brown—chocolate as I would call it.

UTLEY: Have they redone the colors?

BISHOP: Oh yeah.

UTLEY: I didn't know that. Last time I saw it, it was white.

BISHOP: It was white. No, she turned out to be a gaudy lady of that era, and that's the way the houses were. But she always looked so pretty, like a bride with the white.

UTLEY: Well, is this—is this open to the public, now? The Downes-Aldrich house.

BISHOP: Yes, both houses. They are open on Wednesdays and Saturdays and Sundays.

UTLEY: Okay.

BISHOP: And they have a fee—two dollars.

UTLEY: Now, that's run by the commission?

BISHOP: No, it's separate units at each one. We have a non-profit corporation that runs each of them. I think it is the Monroe-Crook Foundation and the Historical and Cultural Activities Center of Houston County of Texas, Incorporated. I believe in these long names. That was the non-profit group that I organized to take care of that.

UTLEY: And are you involved with both of those?

BISHOP: Well, in the background; I've backed out of both of them. I was president of the Historical/Cultural Activities in, around through, I believe, '81. Then I went to bat to get the depot. And, of course, Missouri Pacific wanted to—they closed our freight office at that time, and wanted to tear it down. And I went with the Chamber of Commerce and other people to go to bat for—to maintain the service, and if they didn't maintain the service, well, I asked for the building for a museum.

UTLEY: Well, see now, that's another thing that every community—or not every community can do. It's kind of on a case-by-case basis. Some towns, Missouri Pacific won't work with the people, and they'll tear the building down. Some towns, they get to save it. What was the difference in your case? Why did they decide to help you preserve it?

BISHOP: We had a hearing. We had a hearing with the Railroad Commission. They came here and took testimony. And I went to bat for it, and I told them—

UTLEY: So you got the state to go to bat for you?

BISHOP: Yeah. I told them that, yes, we needed their service, but I was aware they were losing money, and this, that, and so forth. But, please, let us use the building. The railroad meant too much to this county. It really put it together, you might say. It was our way of getting cotton out. Cotton was king then. He was deposed about 1960, I'd say. But cotton ruled the roost here, and, of course, oil over there was the cotton compress, and the cottonseed mill—all of those buildings.

UTLEY: That was an MKT line, right? What was it originally? Was it a Missouri—

BISHOP: International Great Northern. I&GN. It merged north from here; I think it came from the south.

UTLEY: Was it also used for hauling timber out here?

BISHOP: Some. But not to the extent—timber moves by truck. And that came later. See, the 4-C mill, that was back in your twenties. They cut over all our virgin pine, and

then we had the CCC boys come in in the thirties and replant those 120,000 acres they had cut over. So that took place in the thirties, and they are just now coming into what I call timber.

UTLEY: Well, where were the CCC camps around here?

BISHOP: We had two here. Weches area which built the Mission Tejas and then the Ratcliff area.

UTLEY: Okay.

BISHOP: We hope to get markers for both of them.

UTLEY: Good.

BISHOP: I think the Piney Woods Foundation is—of which Bob Bowman, I believe, is Executive Director—is going to put up the money for that.

UTLEY: Yeah, I noticed that they were giving money for markers dealing with forestry and conservation history.

BISHOP: Yeah. So we have—in fact, I have basis of one for the Ratcliff area, now. Trying to get the knuckleheads to decide where they want to put it. I have an outline of the old camp. See, you have to have photos, now, where you plan to post the marker.

UTLEY: Will it go in the park—the one at Ratcliff?

BISHOP: No, it'll go, I'm thinking, back where the original camp was on 227. Or if I can't get it on the corner there, this is Highway 7 east, and I would like to place it where it intersects with 227, which would be the logical place where it could be seen.

UTLEY: People coming either direction.

BISHOP: Right. Because the original camp was back behind that filling station. I think the camp or, well, part of their work camp is there now for the park—Davy Crockett National Forest Service there.

UTLEY: You mentioned that you had a marker for the 4-C mill.

BISHOP: Yes, and it had the misfortune of being run over by a logging truck. And his misfortune was he lost his license—fell off and was buried under there, and I discovered it. The highway patrol tracked it down, and I got insurance money, and I got it replaced!

UTLEY: Pretty good! Well, that's a mill that's gaining a lot of attention statewide because it is—

BISHOP: It was the biggest operation west of the Mississippi.

UTLEY: Is that right?

BISHOP: Yeah, in the 1900s.

UTLEY: And it was—it's really quite an interesting place now because they've got the concrete foundations and walls.

BISHOP: Right, well, when our marker—there's a concrete foundation just behind where that marker is behind the fence. There were two of them. It straddled Highway 7 back—and, of course, Ratcliff Lake is the old mill pond.

UTLEY: Is there any—

BISHOP: They have 4-C trails to go to, yeah, and they are quite neat. There are marathon races and other kilometer runs on them.

UTLEY: Is there any effort under way to do archaeology out there, or to try to map the site and compare it to old photos and things?

BISHOP: Well, I don't know. When Mr. Ippolito, I think he is in Lufkin.

UTLEY: John Ippolito?

BISHOP: Yeah. He was the chairman over there in Angelina County. We had tried to get some of those buildings in the national registry, and do some other work. See, John is an archaeologist, I believe.

UTLEY: Works for the Texas Forest Service, I guess. Now, I talked to him—or maybe he works for the National.

BISHOP: I think it's National.

UTLEY: National Forest Service. I talked to him not long ago, and he's still working on that. They're going to try to get it on the National Register.

BISHOP: Right. Well, I haven't—if he needs any help, I'll be glad to help him because I know he had approached me once before when he was chairman. And see, Bob Bowman was his predecessor as chairman of the Angelina County Historical Commission.

UTLEY: As chairman. You mentioned also the Downes-Aldrich house, and that, too, has gained state-wide attention because it is probably one of the best examples of—

BISHOP: Eastlake Victorian.

UTLEY: Eastlake Victorian, and isn't it a mail order house? Didn't it come in here and it was put together through a kit?

BISHOP: Oh yeah! Right.

UTLEY: Well, that's pretty amazing. And it's a wonderful house.

BISHOP: Yes, except I think they sorta lost the overview that we intended. They have brought in other families' furnishings to go inside, and, well, I'll level with you, that was a conflict of interest—I couldn't persuade the board to do otherwise. I felt like just the two families—the Downes and the Aldrich should have been kept there—that should have been the sole furnishings and otherwise pertain to them rather than bringing in others. Many of the families they have there had no—didn't even know some of them. So sometimes you can go astray from your original intent if your board doesn't see eye to eye with you—it's not that it takes away from the structure because I have been able to—with hard effort to dent in their heads because they didn't paint the right green—we had to make a change in that to keep it as it should be because once you are in the National Register, you have certain standards you maintain—same way over at the Monroe-Crook—it's Greek Revival and an excellent example of that. Both houses—we are blessed in that respect. I always wished I could have gotten one of our colonial homes

included. There are two on SH-21—or East Houston. It'd have a good history—family history. The Elliott home has one and the other is the Edmiston home. Congressman Patton lived there and two mayors have lived there—Driskell and Edmiston. And, of course, the Elliott home is Dr. Elliott. He came in here from the Augusta area. He's one of our old-time physicians.

UTLEY: You mentioned that you have set a goal of two hundred markers in Houston County by the year 2000?

BISHOP: Well, I hope by next year. At least have them cranked up and set to go.

UTLEY: How many markers do you have now?

BISHOP: We have 170, and we still have a couple that they haven't come around to doing anything about yet.

UTLEY: Okay. As you look back over the 170 markers that you worked with—or worked with most of those 170, which ones do you remember as really being very interesting or very unusual to work on?

BISHOP: Well, the one that we have at Pine Springs Campground, which is on Highway 21—Pine Springs Campground was the watering hole—seven little springs bubbled up there and they are no longer doing that, but in the beginning, and it was sort of the natural stopping place for covered wagons on the El Camino Real, which it was on. And it is supposed to be haunted—it was a stopping place for your Indians, too, and, oh yeah, you can hear the Indians out there on moonlit nights war dancing. (chuckle) That was our fox hunting campsite, too, back through the years—one of the hunts was in the thirties—I can remember that—of course, you never did find any foxes, you just listened to the dogs—so is their nature. But those are some. But that to me was the most poetic, and Mrs. Parmelee was the one that did that inscription. And it had the misfortune also to get stolen, but I got it replaced with the foundation—Texas Historical Foundation underwrote some markers, and they replaced it.

UTLEY: What other markers come to mind as ones that you enjoyed working on especially?

BISHOP: That I've enjoyed working on. Well, it took me three years to get the 4-C mill. And then I got to know some wonderful people over at Stephen F. Austin in their department, and we had our dedication on a flat-bed truck. I never shall forget that down there. Quite a few of the state people came for that, but our marker dedication for this at Pine Springs—we had Indian—Boy Scouts did Indian dances, and I had the Latexo Little Pioneers—they were in the covered wagon. We depicted each of them—how it was used, which was good. But that research on that was kind of hard to come by—had to interview people and find old timers that remembered this, that, and the other. Then I guess it was the hard ones. Reynard was a hard one to come by—community of Reynard—that's kind of recent.

UTLEY: Why was it so difficult?

BISHOP: Getting the information together. It was hard to pinpoint. We have had some fires here in our records, in '65 and '82, and you kinda have to work around them.

UTLEY: You mean in the courthouse?

BISHOP: In the courthouse. We lost quite a few of our records, but there are enough of them here that if you keep searching, you come up with whatever you are looking for.

UTLEY: Well, how do you—how do you start researching a community? You know, I mean, what records do you start with to research a small community?

BISHOP: Was it a—has it been platted? Does it have a post office? How did it get its name? Who were some of the early folks there? How long has it been a community? Those are some of the things that come to my mind.

UTLEY: Well now, you also use oral history, too, didn't you?

BISHOP: Some, yes. I did for the 4-C mill particularly.

UTLEY: Are there still people around that worked in the 4-C mill?

BISHOP: There might be. There were then when—

UTLEY: They are fewer and fewer, though.

BISHOP: Fewer and fewer, yes.

UTLEY: Because it closed in the twenties?

BISHOP: Yes, and—but it was a big operation; in fact, Ratcliff, I understand, had four or five thousand people in there at that time. No, all of the markers, in a way, are exciting. I know working on the one I got for the courthouse, that took me a dent of time. I didn't do that overnight. See, there have been five, and it's really—what I turned in is five stories—five and composite deal.

UTLEY: And that's all on one marker?

BISHOP: Yes.

UTLEY: I think I remember that one because that was tough to write.

BISHOP: It was. And then the one on Mary Allen College was another tough baby. And it's in the National Register.

UTLEY: While we are talking about Mary Allen Seminary, how active has the black community of Houston County been in the marker program?

BISHOP: They—I've worked on them, and I'm still working on them. In fact, I'm very happy to say, this next year I'll have my first black grave marker.

UTLEY: Who's that for?

BISHOP: For the Kings—Richard and Rachel King. He came in here as a slave and was out in the Hopewell Community—we have a marker for that Hopewell Community, too. Yes, and I hope I can have at least three more black grave markers before too long, if I can—

(tape 1 ends; tape 2 begins)

We've had black members on our commission, which I've been very proud of—Mrs. Addie Ware; she celebrated her ninety-fourth birthday just Saturday. And Reverend

Oscar Sanders was another one. And Mrs. Daisy Pender—goodness, I can't forget Daisy. She was named best historical survey committee member. That was back in '72. See, we were still the survey committee then. I think it was—what was it?—'75?

UTLEY: Somewhere in there it changed.

BISHOP: Yeah. And, of course, a big thing with me—I always went to state meetings—annual meetings—and I encouraged as many of my commission to go with me. And here again, the county didn't pay our way; we paid our own.

UTLEY: Well, now, you wouldn't probably tell me this if I didn't ask it, but you were also awarded a state award yourself.

BISHOP: Yeah, I was—

UTLEY: About 1980, somewhere in there?

BISHOP: Well, there again, 1972, I was state chairman in 1972.

UTLEY: Well, I think in the early eighties you got a state award, too, didn't you?

BISHOP: Well, I may have. (Utley laughs) But I've been—

UTLEY: For your years of service and everything.

BISHOP: —been state chairman, I believe, twice, if I'm not mistaken. Yeah, '72 and '78. And I've been a runner-up a couple of years. But we've had some other state recognitions beside Daisy. Mr. Cutler, H. P. Cutler, was a committee member. Glenda Steed and Charles and Carolyn Dailey. Glenda was on our bicentennial work, and the Daileys did outstanding work at Grapeland, and both of them are gone now. So is Mr. Cutler and so is Daisy. Mary Aldrich was one of our big members. She's the one, of course, who—through Mary, I was able to develop the house. Miss Mary Aldrich. She was the Judge and Miss Willie's last daughter.

UTLEY: Well, now, we've talked about a lot of successes, and I don't want to dwell on the opposite, but were there ever defeats? Were there ever times that you wanted to get a project going and just couldn't?

BISHOP: Well, I've lost some—I'm still in that shape in a way. Certainly, in getting funding for some things. And I've lost some markers, like over here for the building. The gentleman who purchased it changed the architecture, and we had to recall our building marker.

UTLEY: Now, which building was that?

BISHOP: That's for the Spinks-Mayes Building. But there's more ways to choke a dog than on butter, and I've got a site marker for Miller-Spinks-Mayes. And it's right over there bright and pretty; it's the last one we dedicated. And he didn't want us to put it where I wanted to put it, so I got the Highway Department to let me put it where it is. So he doesn't know what an ornery little lady I am. Notice I said "lady." (Utley laughs) I know it's not too long it's been the witches, and I do fly a broom occasionally; sweep with it, too.

UTLEY: Who withdrew the marker? Did you do it, or did the state do it?

BISHOP: The state. I brought in the state architect who talked with him and didn't get anywhere, so forth and so on, and so I finally got clearance.

UTLEY: Was that—he probably didn't care, did he?

BISHOP: No; he didn't want it.

UTLEY: What happens when a marker is pulled?

BISHOP: I asked him for it, and it's over at the depot.

UTLEY: So you put it up with a display?

BISHOP: Right.

UTLEY: Okay.

BISHOP: That is permitted. Like I saved the old 4-C marker, the one that they knocked off. And I have it over there. Because I have some earlier pictures of the 4-C mill and logging train at Ratcliff Lake. So that goes with that. But we are permitted to do that if a marker is pulled.

UTLEY: What other disappointments have you had—things that you wanted to mark but just couldn't get to?

BISHOP: Well, you were involved in this one on the Patton block. I wanted to get a grave marker for Mr. W. M. Patton. And the Patton block is six buildings there. I think you were serving on the committee that thought he wasn't worthy of it. And to me that man was for the odds that he overcame. He used to live over there near the depot; he lived across—

UTLEY: Is he buried in the county?

BISHOP: He's buried in Glenwood Cemetery. I wanted to get a grave marker for him.

UTLEY: And that wasn't approved either.

BISHOP: No. And I've had a few others. [tape stops, then is restarted] I think you can get to know the person that you're writing about when you research. I suppose that's one reason I so admired this man for the personal odds that he overcame. He came in here just a country boy from out in the Tadmor Community. Now, that's an interesting marker down there: Tadmor. Tadmor in the wilderness, T-A-D-M-O-R. Not with an "E" on it like the state insisted, and we finally came to an understanding that it was without the "E." Anyway, he came from Tadmor into Crockett, and did all right for himself. Built a building at a time until he had six. He went blind, but he persisted. And set a good example for the town, because everybody admired him. Which comes about.

UTLEY: Well, what's the best story out there now that you haven't marked that you would like to see marked? You've talked about a lot of them that you're working on; is there one story that you'd like to do more than the others?

BISHOP: Yeah, Sam Houston's mound. I'd like to get that going. And the Eastham Prison Farm would be another. I've got most of the background on that; it's putting it together.

UTLEY: Let me ask you—this might be a trivial question, but I notice in all your correspondence to the state, and even now, you write with lower-case letters on your names. Where did you pick that up?

BISHOP: Well, as a child, I was never, I guess, overly impressed—I came home, was a bit chesty, shall we say. My daddy got a sufficiency of it. One day he drew a glass of water over at the drugstore. "Stick your finger in that. All right. Pull it out. Okay." He says, "How much impression did you make in that glass of water?" (Utley chuckles) So that sort of cut me down to size; I always think of that. No, I've always been lower-case or whatever.

UTLEY: Well, is that your way of kind of letting people know that you don't think you're that important.

BISHOP: I'm not that important, no. I'm background. I'm here to do the work and get the matter across, if I can.

UTLEY: But you certainly had your share of being in the limelight, too, I mean—

BISHOP: Yeah, but don't ask me why. No, basically I am a rather shy person. I can be a bit horsey and feisty, as can most females, I think, Dan. But, basically, I'm the other way.

UTLEY: Well, I always heard if you kick a possum long enough, it'll bite you.

BISHOP: Yeah, it'll start sulling, right.

UTLEY: I notice on your desk here you're working on the Old San Antonio Road, the El Camino Real project. Now, that's a new project; tell me about that.

BISHOP: That's passed. That was last year.

UTLEY: But tell me about that; that's just fairly recent.

BISHOP: Yeah, well we were pleased to host them. They were here two days, April seventeenth and eighteenth of last year.

UTLEY: Now, when you say, "they" you mean the commission?

BISHOP: The commission. They were traveling east, and I put together this little brochure for them. It shows you how they crossed the county, what you see as you cross Houston County.

UTLEY: Now, did you have to put together the research for where the El Camino Real actually crossed?

BISHOP: I know where it actually crossed, yeah, and where it varies. I worked that out with our highway boys. When we were checking on the markers—we have nine of those red granite markers that outline the road through here.

UTLEY: And they're fairly accurate?

BISHOP: Right.

UTLEY: Let's do a little bit of history on the El Camino Real Commission. It was set up just a few years ago to mark the trail accurately. In some counties those markers aren't necessarily where they should be.

BISHOP: No. Some of ours are not, but I know where those are not, and rather than have them lost, they were brought forward and placed on SH-21. But I know those that are at variance, I'll put it that way.

UTLEY: Now, was the effort of this commission to add new markers or somehow recommemorate the Old San Antonio Road?

BISHOP: I think they were focusing attention on what transpired there to promote tourism and what it's going to be all about. I know this—what we have—like our Mission Tejas is on that route, and our Pine Springs Campground, which as I mentioned—and we, of course, talk about the ghosts and everything down there. And it's a good campsite for young folks. Then here in Crockett—it comes through Crockett, crosses, and goes on down to Austonio, out that route. Of course, Austonio is a combination of Austin and San Antonio—that's how that name came—

UTLEY: See, I didn't know that. I've been going through that town for years.

BISHOP: It's Austin and San Antonio—it was named back—

UTLEY: Then it goes over to Wheelock, doesn't it? Somewhere—or Midway.

BISHOP: Midway, right. Turns back and goes—but where it varies down there—well, I guess—I think it's about maybe five miles out, it's supposed to cut back where it's dirt and kind of comes around. That's one of the earlier bearings. But, otherwise, it bears straight on out like you're going.

UTLEY: Well, we've talked a lot about markers and about the historical buildings that you've worked on. Are there other projects that the commission developed over the years? You mentioned the book; we ought to give credit for the book.

BISHOP: We put out a history book in 1980.

UTLEY: Now, what's the title of it?

BISHOP: *Houston County History*. Amazing. (both laugh) We are very grateful to Judge Aldrich who put out one in 1943. And like everything that you put down in black and white, you make errors. But I think one of the nicest compliments people can give you is to come and tell you, This is a mistake. It should be so-and-so. Believe it or not, that's true. Then you can correct what it is if you have the information—so actually, you appreciate somebody doing that.

UTLEY: Have there been many errors in there?

BISHOP: Well, I was putting that with regard to Judge Aldrich. He gave us a start on it, and we built and added to and corrected that which he had. Ours is the history of when we began, shall we say, about the 1600s—1690—and goes on to 1980—the book.

UTLEY: Well, and that's the nature of history, that somebody is going to come along one day and revise what you did.

BISHOP: Well, so we've got something for them; that's the way I look at it.

UTLEY: All you're doing is bridging the generations—

BISHOP: Right.

UTLEY: —and getting ready for the next one.

BISHOP: I did have a lot of pictures of them I used in newspaper work which we were able to use. I had been publishing a mini-history off and on for many years. We used to have a newsletter. In fact, we had a prize-winning newsletter in state competition. Called it the *Discovery*.

UTLEY: While you're talking about columns, tell me about the "Honeybee."

BISHOP: Well, that was one that I started back in my newspaper days when I was editor here.

UTLEY: What was the official title of that column?

BISHOP: Well, "Buzzings from—

UTLEY: "Buzzings from the Honeybee." (chuckles)

BISHOP: Then we published three cemetery editions. And I keep a current listing on that. The last one goes through '87, but I need information to carry on through current listings. Which is used—amazes me how much we use—you know we published the *Houston County During the Civil War*, because as I mentioned we did not do much of the marking of the graves of veterans. I do work with getting those free markers from the government, and it helped quite a few in doing that. We have those forms.

UTLEY: The Civil War tombstones?

BISHOP: Yeah. And World War I and II veterans, too. They also can get them for Vietnam and other ones now.

UTLEY: In your years as editor of the county newspaper, did you ever have any controversies that you were involved in, or trouble that you were associated with, in trying to tell the truth and getting reprimanded for it?

BISHOP: Yes. We have racial problems here. And sometimes—I know back in integration time, that was a rough go. We also had some liquor problems back there in those early days, too. Now, of course, it's drugs. Alcohol is that, too, but—

UTLEY: But as an editor you had to take a stand against these things. And on the racial matter, did you take a stand for—

BISHOP: For, yeah.

UTLEY: —for integration. And it wasn't a popular decision, I guess.

BISHOP: No.

UTLEY: What kind of repercussions did you have?

BISHOP: Some unpleasant ones, I'll put it that way. Personal. It's personal. To my home. But that goes with the territory, Dan.

UTLEY: You never thought about leaving the community, though.

BISHOP: No. See I—another time I've been on the hot seat was when I was elected to the city council. And we had trouble, there again, with our black and white issues—the police department. You have to make up your mind and hang loose and stay with it.

UTLEY: What prompted you to run for city council?

BISHOP: That was back during the sesquicentennial—'86, 1985-86—coming on, and we were twin cities with Wudinna in South Australia. I was building up to that. Just wanted the town involved in it. That's one way of getting it done.

UTLEY: Well, how did you put together a political campaign?

BISHOP: Wasn't all that hard. We have areas that we represent, and I was in two—that's what you get for being a local yokel, Dan; everybody knows me or whatever, and I go around and meet the new people. Nowadays I don't think people care about meeting others like we used to.

UTLEY: Well, you know, we just ended what's been called one of the dirtier national campaigns—

BISHOP: It has certainly been that.

UTLEY: Did you have any trouble with that in the local level? No mudslinging locally?

BISHOP: No. I stayed clear of it. I've learned early whenever you sling mud you lose ground. No, I just did my thing and let them fuss about it.

UTLEY: Did you have competition? You had an opponent?

BISHOP: Me? No.

UTLEY: Okay, you ran unopposed.

BISHOP: Right.

UTLEY: Okay. And how many terms did you serve?

BISHOP: Oh, just one. That was enough for me.

UTLEY: Really?

BISHOP: Yeah, I got tired of these long night sessions. We were sometimes at city hall until one, two o'clock. And then your phone starts ringing in the morning at six or earlier.

UTLEY: About what you'd decided the night before?

BISHOP: But that has kind of cooled off. We were able to bridge the gap, so I'm thinking we did some good. I hope so. I tell you, one of the big disappointments is that I have not been able to get us as one of those cities—

UTLEY: Main Street cities?

BISHOP: Main Street cities. I worked long and hard for that. Brought Anice several times.

UTLEY: Anice Read.

BISHOP: Read, yes. But I just couldn't—

UTLEY: Well, now, that's another situation where some towns are successful with that, some—

BISHOP: This town would have been wonderful.

UTLEY: I think it'd be a good place to have a Main Street program.

BISHOP: I did get Gus Hamblett to come in here, and we worked up a—he's from A&M—survey of the town. I'd hoped when I was on the council to get some historical districts—zone—set up a zoning board, and have a historical area where you would be restricted to—you know, includes the houses that we had. I did get Gus over here, and we got that done. And they're invaluable. That also points out some things to be marked or—

UTLEY: So there is historic zoning in Crockett?

BISHOP: No.

UTLEY: Oh.

BISHOP: It went by the board.

UTLEY: But there were districts that he suggested—

BISHOP: —yeah, we set up in this all-over survey. And the plan is here, if it could ever be implemented.

UTLEY: What is it that prevents the city from doing that? What's their fear?

BISHOP: Money we don't have. There's so many other things—

UTLEY: So they don't want to give property abatements.

BISHOP: No.

UTLEY: Well, maybe the time will come, and the vehicle will already be here.

BISHOP: Yeah, well, it's available.

UTLEY: Who paid for the survey?

BISHOP: Got a grant.

UTLEY: Oh. (chuckles)

BISHOP: Better believe it. I think it was $2500. What he put together is really great, with pictures and everything.

UTLEY: Now, you served as county chairman from 1971 to 1988? Does that sound right?

BISHOP: Yeah.

UTLEY: And, so now, you're the marker chairman, and you've already set your goal for two hundred markers. What else have you got going that you're interested in now, that you're trying to accomplish?

BISHOP: We have our depot that we received from Missouri-Pacific by deed back in '83. Christmastime.

UTLEY: And that's your county museum?

BISHOP: Yes. Discover Houston County Visitor's Center. Another one of those long—

UTLEY: Long titles.

BISHOP: And it—Historical Projects of Houston County, Texas, Incorporated, is the owner. When we got it, it came to the commission, because I was with the commission then, and it was as commission chairman that I asked that we be given it. Of course, that meant that your commissioners' court was in charge of it, because the commission has nothing. Commissioners' court that had to okay. You know anything about commissioners' court?

UTLEY: Well, the ones I've seen don't work too well.

BISHOP: No, do well or certainly not too fast. So they just finally threw in the sponge when the money—they needed this, that, and so forth. So we bought it. They advertised it for sale, and we bought it—the Historical Projects. So it is ours, now. We got it in December '87—that's when we became owner.

UTLEY: We started this tape yesterday by you mentioning that your father always taught you, as long as you're learning you're living. There was an association between the two. Are you still learning things?

BISHOP: Yeah. If you don't learn something everyday, even if it's the fact that you don't move around as fast as you once did, (both laugh) you're learning, and you're trying to cope with it.

UTLEY: So you've got to be moving forward.

BISHOP: Yes.

UTLEY: Well—

BISHOP: You look back and kind of sort of keep your perspective, but you don't stay looking back. You're looking forward. That's the way you're going. And I hope that's what we're doing with our history. I hope we're swinging back into that. I think in a sense folks are tending to appreciate that. I don't know if they'd like me to get out of the way, old Dan Tucker or not. I get amused at people, how they—when you have a few years on you, they sort of want to be gentle with you, and this sort of thing. But people have been mighty nice to me this year. Channel 9 named me one of the nine that make a difference—

UTLEY: In the East Texas area? Great.

BISHOP: But I thought it was also very funny that two years before, this character that had torn up all my historic houses, he had won it—you know, and building.

UTLEY: Well, then it's only justified that you make it this time.

BISHOP: I said that's retribution. (Utley laughs) Slow in coming, but it got there. No, that was—and then you wanted to come over here and visit with me, so—how nice can people be?

(tape 2, side 1 ends; side 2 begins)

UTLEY: I have done all the questioning so far, and I'm not sure I've covered everything that you want to cover. Let me say, is there something that we haven't talked about, in terms of what a county historical commission does, that you think we need to add?

BISHOP: I think the—well, for me, I looked on the commission work as setting your basis for tourism. In that way, it is an economic tool, and it should be utilized in that respect. It grieves me, in a sense, that our Chamber of Commerce did not use us to that advantage. They accepted various things we had, but then they would go contrary to that.

And believe it or not, the truths and the facts—they are fabulous. You can build on them. You don't have to stray from them in the least.

UTLEY: And there are all kinds of studies that show that people come to Texas for history.

BISHOP: History. And from that history, just like I mentioned at Pine Springs, that has all that you want there for intrigue and whatever. Your imagination can just run wild. We can take a group of kids there, and we'll have great time. And those kids are all ages. I'm not talking about just small ones here. Same way out at the Mission Tejas. Because we have the Rice Cabin there, now—thanks be to God that we got it moved out there, got Mrs. Rice to give it to the state. Parks and Wildlife agreed to move it and to restore it.

UTLEY: They haven't really utilized it fully, yet, though.

BISHOP: No, simply because they cannot put things there. It's not—you don't have your protection that would enable them to do so. Can't do that at the replica either. We used to have icons, back when we had our annual pilgrimage. And we put—plus it is or was dedicated as a Catholic mission back in '35. And so the icons were in order.

UTLEY: But they've disappeared?

BISHOP: They disappeared.

UTLEY: Do they still have church services out there?

BISHOP: Yes.

UTLEY: That's good.

BISHOP: We have Friends of the Mission Tejas now, which I started, and we have four programs annually which focus attention on that. One's an Easter sunrise program in which we involve all our county churches.

UTLEY: Oh, I bet that's beautiful.

BISHOP: Yes. Some of our Easter weather, of course, is a bit nippy, but it's nice.

UTLEY: Well, you know a well-kept secret, I think, is that there are a lot of maple trees out there.

BISHOP: Yes.

UTLEY: And I get tickled at people traveling from here to go up into Arkansas or something, and there are trees just as beautiful here.

BISHOP: Right. And then July the Fourth, and then in October in St. Francis's month, and then in December. And we have something at the Rice log home—Christmas with the Rice family. So those are four programs that we developed—

UTLEY: What's the Christmas with the Rice family? Is that a sit-down dinner?

BISHOP: No, it's telling stories all around the fireplace, the big fireplace—and we have hot cider and gingerbread. Singing sometimes. But it's just kind of a folksy get-together, which I think people enjoy. Certainly these campers do. We built a little outdoor stage down there.

UTLEY: By the cabin? Or on down by the mission?

BISHOP: By the—no, it's close to the picnic shelter. It's off in there. And that's where we—we have log seats and we put on some of our mighty feats. Like this year we sailed with Columbus, so that was a neat deal.

UTLEY: Well, you always have something going on, don't you?

BISHOP: Well, I try to.

UTLEY: Well, Eliza, I appreciate so much you taking the time to remember some of these things with me. Like I said in my letter, when I thought, Who could tell us the best story about county historical commissions, I thought of you immediately. Because, to me, you're one of the best, and you've always—

BISHOP: Well, I love this county.

UTLEY: —had a quality program. I know you do, and you're leaving quite a legacy, too. When the Eliza Bishop story is going to be written, you've got a legacy of great accomplishments.

BISHOP: Well, the main thing is holding on, Dan. It isn't done overnight. You have to hang with it.

UTLEY: And all you can do is pass it along to the next generation and hope they have the sympathy you do.

BISHOP: That's correct. That's the reason I favor young people. I work with elementary and intermediate groups.

UTLEY: Well, in fact, we started a little late today because you had a special event. What were you doing this morning?

BISHOP: Well, this morning was my teacher's birthday. So I had a cake, and we had a VCR of the depot, of various depots and trains, steam trains. And so we had refreshments and watched that.

UTLEY: This is in the city school?

BISHOP: Right, Crockett Intermediate—sixth grade—and she'll show them films all day, and I started them off this morning. Wouldn't have minded you joining us—

UTLEY: Well, I would have appreciated that, but I didn't even think about that. I bet that was fun, though.

BISHOP: Yes. These are very—well, they're talented kids; they're the tops in the school, I think. They're the sharpest minds.

UTLEY: Hopefully, there'll be somebody in there that's going to stay in the county and love it just as much as you do.

BISHOP: And work.

UTLEY: Yeah, and work. Well I appreciate your time. Thanks again.

BISHOP: Well, that's what it's all about.

(end of interview)