

KVLF



**Voice
of the
Last
Frontier**

Gene Hendryx

Truman Visits Alpine

Truman's written speech was definitely not what people had come to hear. When a rancher's voice came booming out of the crowd, "Give 'em hell, Harry," the President laid his prepared speech aside and made the most rip-snorting, stem-winding speech ever heard in these parts.

Dan Blocker at Sul Ross

Blocker showed up on the Sul Ross campus following World War II, a 320 pound teenager, holding his mother's hand. He was turned over to football coach Paul Pierce with a typical mother's admonition, "You look after my baby."

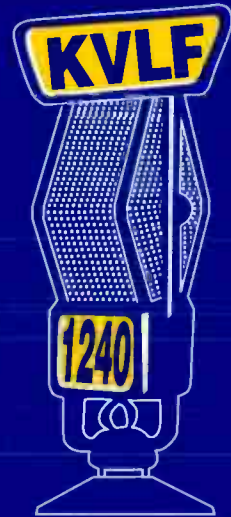
...Dan Blocker's impact on Sul Ross will never be forgotten, just as his impressions on those who knew him will never diminish. He was truly the most unforgettable character I have ever known.

Elvis Presley's First West Texas Performance

Each year, on the anniversary of Elvis's death, newspapers in San Angelo, Odessa, and other area papers write stories about Elvis being in their town on his first West Texas trip. That's a lot of bull. Elvis's first West Texas visit was to Alpine in 1953 when he was seventeen years old. I paid him \$250 to come out here and put on a show, and I lost \$30 on the deal.

Lady Bird in Big Bend Country

In 1966, Lady Bird Johnson made her first trip to Big Bend country, accompanied by over fifty female reporters. Though her press secretary, Liz Carpenter, had warned her about the ruggedness and isolation of the area, Lady Bird was pleased as punch during her three day visit, and the crowds were equally pleased with her.



Voice of the Last Frontier

GENE HENDRYX, a veteran Texas broadcaster has assembled fifty broadcasts from among hundreds of his broadcasts over the past half century, giving us a glimpse of small town America and the people who live there. Just as he brought to life a vision of World War II in his 1950s novel, *Semper Fi!*, Gene Hendryx's *Voice of the Last Frontier* brings to life an insider's view of small towns seldom seen by outsiders.

For three decades Gene Hendryx was one of Texas' most popular public speakers, until failing health confined his narratives to his first love, radio. He continued to broadcast daily on KVLG in Alpine, Texas, until his recent retirement, and though KVLG is now operated by his son and grandsons, listeners still thrill at his radio recordings about characters ranging from Dan Blocker and Harry Truman to local cowboys, merchants and housewives.

GENE HENDRYX was only four years old when he became enchanted with the magic of radio—it captured his imagination and became a driving force for the rest of his life. From his childhood's homemade broadcast studio with its tin can microphone to the legacy of KVLF, his accomplishments have benefitted a wide range of areas in his local community of Alpine and his home state, Texas.

His career as a broadcaster included many years as Director of, and a term as President of, the Texas Association of Broadcasters, representing 771 radio and television stations in Texas.

Successful in many business ventures, Gene also spent much of his adult lifetime in public service as a county official and state legislator. He served on countless state-wide boards appointed by eight governors, both Democrat and Republican. He declined offers of federal appointments by Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. He continues his lifelong support of Sul Ross State University, alma mater to three generations of the Hendryx family.

Gene and his wife Nancy reside in a turn-of-the-century home they recently restored in Alpine, Texas.

Voice of the Last Frontier





Voice of the Last Frontier

Gene Hendryx



TREGO-HILL PUBLICATIONS
EL PASO • TEXAS

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FIRST EDITION

ISBN 0-9636577-4-7

*Cover design, book design & typesetting by
Vicki Trego Hill of El Paso, TX*

*Printed on acid free paper by
McNaughton & Gunn, Inc. of Saline, Michigan.*



TREGO-HILL PUBLICATIONS
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Foreword

VOICE of the Last Frontier is a duke's mixture of stories, speeches, biographical profiles, essays, anecdotes and yarns broadcast by me on a variety of programs on KVLG in Alpine, Texas.

Beginning in the 1950s, Phil Wayne Ebensberger started taping some of my broadcasts, and during the next several decades quite a number were accumulated. These were rebroadcast during the Fourth of July every three or four years.

From time to time listeners have asked if they could acquire copies of some of these broadcasts. With one excuse or another we never got around to reducing the tapes to the written word for publication. Frankly, I've never felt there was any great demand for such a manuscript.

Recently, Jack Henderson stopped by the house and expressed an interest. I explained the broadcasts were for the ear, not the eye, and the difficulties involved in transferring the tapes to written form for use in a book.

My bride, Nancy, said, "I can do that." I ignored her.

Unbeknownst to me, she got a copy of the tapes from my son Ray, who now manages KVLG. She then went to Houston and

hijacked her son's computer, stole my tape player, and began the task of listening to all those tapes while converting the sound of the voice to the written word. Her determination astounded all of us.

We finally selected a half hundred broadcasts for the final manuscript.

My grandson, Travis Hendryx, a Sul Ross English major, was enlisted to help with the editing, and between the three of us, the manuscript was completed.

For those of you who grew up before World War II and to those who enjoy small town Americana, perhaps you'll find a story or two that tickles your fancy.

—*Gene Hendryx, 1996*

Prologue

THE YEAR was 1931, and the Great Depression had set in with intensity. Men were out of work throughout America, and there was little possibility they would find employment anytime soon. Yet the “yodeling truck driver” had scraped together enough money to buy one of those newfangled appliances called a radio. It wasn’t just any radio; it was a Stewart-Warner cabinet model, a beautiful addition to any living room. It had a superheterodyne receiver, the finest radio receiver ever built. It would pick up distant radio stations like no other receiver ever built before or since. And it was delivered to the little squat that produced most of the food the truck driver’s family would eat during the decade to come.

His wife and five children were thrilled at even the thought of such wonderful home entertainment this new device provided. But the biggest thrill of all was felt by his four-year-old son who became completely enchanted with radio and remained so the rest of his life.

He sat in front of the radio hour after hour trying to figure out how the musicians got into that wooden cabinet and why he could never see them when he peeked into the back of the box, all lit up with tubes and wires running every which way.

When his dad told him the sound was coming from the speaker, he spent additional hours searching the box for a human being so small that he could crawl into a radio cabinet and make speeches. That was what a speaker was to the little boy.



THE YEAR was 1935 and there was no relief in the depression. The little boy was in grade school and was able to follow events of national importance on the radio. His family gathered round the wireless in total silence as President Roosevelt delivered one of his fireside chats. They gathered for Fibber McGee and Molly, for the great prize fights of that era featuring Max Baer, Jimmy Braddock, Joe Louis, and a host of other fighters. The World Series games with great match ups between the St. Louis Cardinals and Detroit Tigers, Dizzy Dean and School Boy Roe were also listening favorites. News events such as the killing of Bonnie and Clyde, the plane crash of Will Rogers and Wiley Post, and the vanishing from the skies of Amelia Earhart tugged at millions of American ears. The Saturday night lineup of the Grand Ole Opry from WSM in Nashville, the National Barn Dance from WGN in Chicago, and the great bands from the grand hotel ballrooms across America provided what was the beginning of musical entertainment through electronic media. So many events, large and small, were being brought into the house around the clock by this miracle called radio.

The little boy and his siblings built their own broadcast studio consisting of a tin can for a microphone mounted on a broom stick. With bales of hay as a back drop they would entertain other children with their homegrown radio skits or their imitations of Roy Acuff, Patsy Montana, the Great Gildersleeve, or whomever impressed them at the moment.



THE BOY was a freshman in high school and a talented trader. As a small child he had sold enough produce grown in the family patch from his red wagon, going door to door to help him acquire a trader's instinct. He had put in a few summers with a shine box on the streets and was street savvy at bartering. That's how he accumulated a bicycle, roller skates, and his most prized possession, a battery operated radio that weighed almost as much as he. He was invited to all the parties because he was the only boy in school with his own portable radio that provided music for dancing.

He toted that suitcase-sized radio wherever he went, never letting it out of his sight.



THE BATTLE for Guam had ended in the summer of 1944, but the Marines would again sweep across the island to seek out and kill the Japanese who had hidden in caves or had otherwise concealed themselves during the actual battle.

A gaunt malaria-racked 16-year-old marine stood by the radio jeep at battalion headquarters, listening to battle reports from the island of Peleliu. After awhile he asked Pee Wee Stewart, the radio operator, if he could pick up the World Series back in the states. Stewart rotated the dials back and forth until he located a short wave transmitter delivering play by play of the St. Louis Cardinals and the St. Louis Browns. The series was won by the Cardinals.

The young Marine who had enlisted a year and a half earlier at the age of fifteen remembered what seemed to be eons ago when he and his family sat around the Stewart-Warner radio

listening to other world series. Slowly his fascination with the magic instrument returned. He lay awake in his foxhole for many nights, wondering how radio worked, but mostly how a person might seek employment in such an industry. Finally he pushed the thoughts from his mind as more important events were at hand.

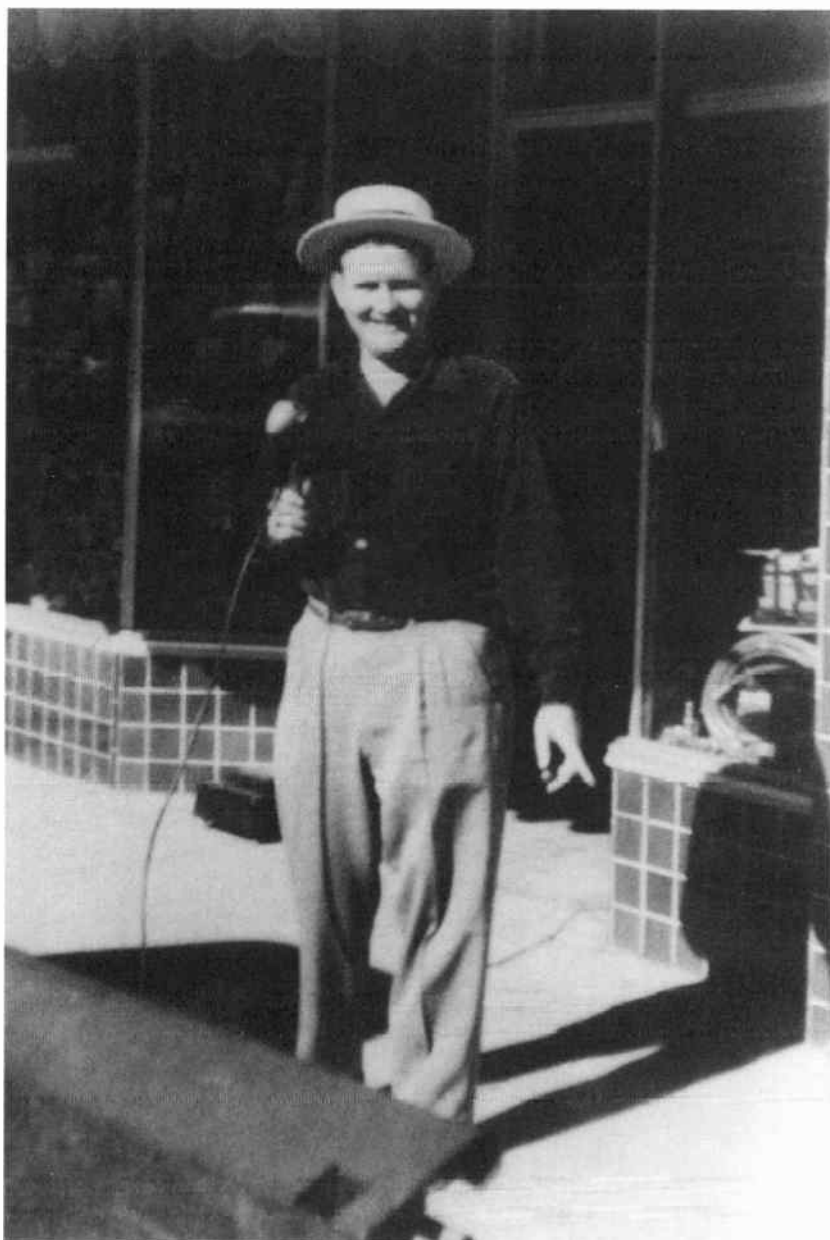


THE YEAR was 1947 and the young man stood on the steps of the library building at Sul Ross College, gazing out at the clouds resting atop Twin Sisters mountains, and he thought, My God, I wonder how many of these people realize the beauty surrounding them?

His thoughts were broken by George Peters, a former captain in the 3rd battalion, 9th Marines, the same outfit he himself had been attached to four years previously at Guadalcanal and remained with thru the battle of Iwo Jima. Peters had recently been hired as a newscaster at a local radio station which had been on the air four months. Peters told the young man tryouts would be held that afternoon for a part-time announcer. A few hours later he was placed on the payroll of the recently licensed radio station as an afternoon announcer, and he was practicing different ways to say "This is KVLV in Alpine, with main studios in the Holland Hotel, your host in the Big Bend." Thus began a career in broadcasting that lasted nearly half a century. Now approaching three score and ten, he marvels at being selected over other applicants that day so many year ago in 1947. And as he did in 1931, he still holds in awe the magic of radio.



THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED to all the loyal listeners out there in radioland who granted me the privilege of visiting in their homes over the airwaves of KVLB, the "Voice of the Last Frontier," for so many years ...with a special blessing to advertisers who helped put beans on the table of the Hendryx family.



Gene Hendryx broadcasts 1950s version of "man on the street" in front of C.G. Morrison Variety Store on Holland Avenue.

Voice of the Last Frontier: The Early Years

The following is the text of the 25th Anniversary broadcast on Radio Station KVLFF on February 10, 1972 by Gene Hendryx, President and General Manager of KVLFF in Alpine, Texas.

A LOT OF WATER has passed under the bridge since that first week in February of 1947 when KVLFF went on the air with 250 watts of power. Studios and offices were located in the Holland Hotel. Later, when the entire radio operation was moved to the transmitter site, the studios in the Holland Hotel were converted into a tap room, and the acoustical tile from those studios is still there.

The transmitter site, which is now the site of offices, studios, and transmitters, was then part of the 06 Ranch, and there were no houses or any other structures in this area of town. Livestock grazed around the building, and engineers at the transmitter kept a big pile of rocks at the front door to throw at coyotes. A large herd of antelope roamed in this same pasture and they would come peer over the fence around the transmitter and look over the equipment. A nice assortment of snakes used to crawl into the building during winter months to keep warm.

Twenty-five years ago, Glen Miller had been missing for two

and a half years from a mission in World War II, but his music still dominated the entertainment industry throughout the World.

Twenty-five years ago, KVLF broadcast the news one time each day—compared to over forty news broadcasts each day at the present time. Glenn Burgess was the first manager at KVLF, and down through the years KVLF has turned out many young men who have carved out successful careers in the broadcast industry throughout the United States. Some are now station managers, program directors, news directors, and advertising personnel, while others are active in related fields. Not long ago in San Antonio, the program directors at the two top rated stations in that city were both former KVLF announcers.

KVLF was the first station in the United States to be granted a permit following World War II. This resulted when the United States Government ended the freeze on construction of radio stations. Monahans, Kermit, Fort Stockton and other stations came along later. In early 1947, though, Pecos and Alpine were the only two towns in the West Texas area with radio stations.

In those days, it took four hundred pounds of remote broadcast equipment and at least two men to broadcast from a remote hook-up. Now one person can handle such a broadcast with a remote unit no larger than a pack of cigarettes. There were no press boxes in those days, so sports were broadcast from the hood of a car, a tree, or anyplace else that could be found. It was necessary to run an electric line in addition to a telephone line, and the constant loss of the broadcast was the rule rather than the exception. Today if we lose a remote broadcast we howl to high heaven, but in those days everyone expected it and nobody complained.

Also, in those days, Alpine had an independent telephone

company which was housed next to the alley on North Sixth Street. Everytime it rained, the telephones went out—including our broadcast lines. A lot of the time the electric company also went out of service when the weather was damp.

Not many of the same business owners are around today who were here among the original group of advertisers on KVLF. Grady Nelson opened his locker plant about the time KVLF went on the air, and the first radio remote broadcast ever to take place in Alpine was from his new plant.

In February of 1947, Alpine boasted seven automobile dealers, compared to one today. Casners was selling Buick and Chevrolet, Brewster County Motors sold Ford, Starnes Motors handled Keyser-Frazer, Hord Motors sold Chrysler-Plymouth, Wally Davis was the dealer for Hudson and Packard, Van Fosson Motors sold Dodge-Plymouth, and LaBeff-Ritter Motors sold DeSoto and Plymouth. If you wanted a Studebaker, you went to Webb Brothers in Marfa.

The area where the First National Bank is now located was then occupied by a flourishing black smith shop and a combination greasy spoon restaurant and beer joint. Some of the business establishments which existed then have moved to other locations, and some are much larger then they were twenty five years ago—for instance, Forchheimer's and Morrison's.

Alpine boasted three hotels in those days, and all three did good business. There was the Holland Hotel which was the center of everything, the Locke Hotel where the City Drug is now located, and the Ritchey Hotel. The only motels were the Cozy Courts, the old Grandview which is now part of the Siesta, and a one-story Spanish-style structure known as the Bien Venido, which was later torn down and replaced by the present two-story Bien Venido.

Two wholesale grocery companies did a good business in Alpine in those days. All milk was sold in bottles, and most of it was produced here in Alpine by some half dozen small dairies which no longer exist. Hudson Bakery sold most of the bread in town, and it was located about where the Alpine Avalanche is today.

The big depot fire had already occurred, and Southern Pacific was doing business out of a box car which was pulled over on the siding. The bus line serving the area was Baygent Coaches, headquartered in Marfa. Sometimes they ran and sometimes they didn't.

There were more ice boxes than refrigerators in those days, and ice plants located in Alpine and Marfa did a land office business. An enterprising Sul Ross student named Henry Bertrand bought an old beat up truck and made a small fortune hauling ice to customers.

The Chamber of Commerce didn't have their own building and they operated out of an office in the lobby of the Holland Hotel. Jimmy Pate was the manager.

The City Administration in Alpine was composed of Louie Starnes, George Baines and Clay Holland. That was before the present five man council form of government was put into effect. Vic Heil and Jim Skinner are about the only two county officials who are still on the scene from those days. Jim Skinner was a deputy sheriff at Marathon serving under the late Clarence Hord, and Vic Heil was the deputy tax collector, also serving under Mr. Hord. In those days the office of sheriff and tax collector were the same, which dated back to the old days of the West when you needed a gun to collect taxes.

The last legal hanging in the state of Texas took place at the Brewster County Courthouse, and in 1947 portions of the

platform which had been used many years earlier in the hanging were still in existence on the courthouse square, including the old band stand.

At that time, there were no paved roads at all going into Big Bend National Park. Highway 90 going east was a little narrow strip of paving now known as the Old Marathon Road which winds down in front of Highland Motor Inn along the railroad track.

The highway between Alpine and Fort Stockton was not paved. North Fifth Street, in the area north of the Presbyterian Church, was a narrow bit of paving with no curbs or gutters. There was not one single block of paving south of the railroad tracks. Other than the highway through town and the business district, there wasn't much paving north of the tracks either. Most of the paving since those days has been done by various county commissioners.

The Alpine Public Schools consisted of three buildings, the main high school plant which was one building, the old two story Central School building, and the old single structure building at Centennial School. There was not a single gymnasium in the entire school district. There was no AG farm, no high school football field, no HE building or AG building at the high school. There wasn't a sprig of grass on the public school property.

Up at Sul Ross, the only buildings were the administration building, the old library building, the old museum building, and the old gym (which has since been doubled in size and converted to a women's gymnasium), Lawrence Hall, one story of Hancock Hall, and the co-op. Dr. Barton Warnock, Red Pierce, and Jack Perryman are about the only faculty members still around who were there in February of 1947.

Public School Superintendents in this area included Peyton Cain

in Alpine, Mr. Gregg in Marfa, and John Prude at Fort Davis.

Alpine's social life in those days consisted of the Holland Hotel Coffee Shop which sold beer and wine and had live band music in the evenings, and the Toltec and Bull Beer Parlor. Married students who attended Sul Ross in those days were housed at the old Marfa Air Base, and they traveled back and forth to classes on two surplus army busses.

There was also a small area of surplus trailers on the campus which housed some of the couples and it was known as Toonerville. Two men were assigned from the Veterans Administration to Alpine. One officed in the Holland Hotel Building next to KVLF and the other officed at Sul Ross where he took care of the six hundred veterans who were on the campus.

That year a student strike occurred on the campus of West Texas State at Canyon. Student leaders at West Texas State contacted some student leaders at Sul Ross and proposed that the student body at Sul Ross walk out on strike as a sympathy for the striking students at West Texas State. The student leadership at Sul Ross was sympathetic and made plans to call a strike at Sul Ross, blocking the doors to the classrooms. The veterans at Sul Ross—six hundred strong—held a meeting that afternoon. They informed the student leaders who were planning the strike that the first person who attempted to block a doorway was going to be carried out on a stretcher, and that ended any more talk of a strike at Sul Ross.

The recordings we played in those days were all 78 rpm which was all that was made back then. Four record companies controlled the entire record industry in the United States. That was before the advent of the tape recorder which is used so widely today, so everything was broadcast live. There was no way of taping something for later use.

The Holland Hotel, where the KVLFF studios were located, leaked like a sieve. We had an announcer named George Peters who delighted in standing up in front of the studio mike to do his news broadcast. (George's son incidentally now attends Sul Ross.) George was an excellent news broadcaster and he made a big production of it by standing rather than sitting in the control room. One day he was broadcasting the news and, as usual, the hotel was leaking. Suddenly a large piece of acoustical tile became dislodged because of water coming through the ceiling. It came crashing down on George's bald head, right in the middle of the news broadcast. It sounded like a cannon when it hit, and of course George thought we were being bombed, and the rest of the staff had a blast.

In addition to the Hotel leaking badly, it was difficult to get a good ground on the equipment anywhere in the building. One day a bolt of lightning hit while the Spanish announcer was on the air, and it knocked him clear out of his chair. He went scooting across the floor on the seat of his pants and finally hit the wall. When he got control of himself, he jumped up and ran out the front door, and that's the last we ever saw of him.

Various Sul Ross students used to put on radio plays from the studio, and Dan Blocker was a leader in that group. Many times they would write their own plays as well as broadcast them.

One of the early day station managers had the only key to the studios in the Holland Hotel and he refused to let anybody else at the station have a key. One day he made a trip to Ojinaga and got caught on the other side of the river when the bridge closed at midnight. He got back to Alpine about ten o'clock the next morning, and there sat all the KVLFF staff on the curb in front of the Holland Hotel because none of us had a key to the studios. Of course, the station signed on some three hours late that day.

Today it's a far different operation. We now broadcast at one thousand watts. We have two transmitters in case one goes out; we have two complete separate control rooms which are not related to each other; we have a ten thousand watt generator in case of loss of commercial power. We have a complete fall out shelter which will house two men for up to two weeks at a time in case of national emergencies, and KVLV is equipped to serve as the national emergency broadcast station for some eleven West Texas counties.

One early day incident which I have remembered down through the years has to do with, of all things, ladies foundation garments. Back then, ladies underclothing was unmentionable and about the only place you heard of ladies underclothing was in the Sears Roebuck Catalogue. Miss Margaret Linn owned a little shop on North 6th Street which specialized in ladies foundation garments. I took it upon myself to sell Miss Linn some radio advertising. Then, the embarrassing part came when I started to write a commercial about ladies underthings. No radio commercials were available to use as guidelines because no other radio station talked about those unmentionable items. This was embarrassing, or at least I thought it was, but I really didn't know what the word embarrassed meant until one night during the broadcast of a ballgame. Right there in the middle of the game I had to do a commercial on Miss Linn's foundation garments. So far as we know, that was the first time in radio history such a thing ever happened, and I thought if I ever lived through that night, nothing in radio could ever embarrass me again.

All in all, it has been a great twenty-five years, and, for those who sit around and say nothing ever happens in Alpine or nothing ever changes—you might do well to go back and look over what has come to pass in the last quarter century.

Boyhood Weapons

Broadcast 1962

WE ALL HEAR and read about all the forms of violence society is subjected to these days, particularly on television, the movies, and in various other forms. Children are singled out as the ones subjugated to the greatest exposure of violence. Yet anyone who is at least thirty years old can well remember all the various types of weapons little boys owned and used daily, weapons which today would cause a child to be branded as a juvenile delinquent.

We all had cap pistols, of course. There was the early variety which could handle just one cap at a time, and then later came the automatic cap pistol which would hold an entire roll. It was a repeater—it would blast a cap each time you pulled the trigger.

But most of the weapons we used were the ones we made ourselves. The cheapest and easiest to come by was, of course, a plain rubber band we shot spitballs with. This was a handy weapon in the classroom as well as at play because when the teacher turned her back you could shoot somebody and hide the rubber band without ever leaving your desk. Of course, there was always a tattletale in the class, so we usually wound up getting a good whipping with the principal's belt.

Then there was the sling shot which consisted of a piece of leather about three or four inches wide with a thong tied at both ends of the leather. The thongs were about three or four feet long. You placed a small rock or some other projectile in the leather, grasped both thongs by the end and twirled the apparatus around your head, finally releasing it in the general direction of your designated target. This weapon was by far one of the most dangerous and the only reason more people didn't get killed or hurt was the sling shot was not an easy weapon to master. My oldest brother was fairly proficient in its use. In fact, he hit our neighbors registered bull. We worried all day at school that he had killed it because we saw the animal fall to its knees from a perfect head shot. I could have hugged and kissed that old bull when I saw him grazing in the pasture that afternoon on my way home from school.

Another dangerous weapon which today some people call a sling shot was known back then as a "nigger shooter." I suppose a person would be in all sorts of trouble today for using that term, but it was quite common when I was growing up in the '30s. It consisted of a stock made from the fork of a limb with an eight-to ten-inch strip of inner tube attached to each prong of the fork. The other end of the inner tubes were tied to a small piece of leather which folded into a pouch when a rock or a metal ball bearing or some other smooth projectile was placed in the leather. You simply aimed through the fork, pulled back on the inner tube strips by pulling the leather pouch folded over the projectile, and let it fly. Most boys learned to use this simple weapon without much difficulty and used it to hunt birds, rabbits and other small animals. Many boys after awhile carved the stock out of a piece of wood instead of using the tree fork. The end of a packing crate would do quite nicely.

We wore these weapons around our necks, and boys took great pride in who could make the smoothest stock. Some were even hand rubbed and varnished. These “nigger shooters” were also highly dangerous weapons. When boys chose up sides for a gang fight, someone got hurt.

We also had pea shooters or bean guns made of a small piece of hollowed out fishing pole or some other tubular devise. You got a mouth full of beans and simply blew them through the tube. Rubber guns were also big in my youth. They were made out of a piece of wood either in the shape of a rifle or a pistol. A rubber band was the projectile on a pistol and a piece of inner tube on the rifle. The distance wasn't too great, but they could sting a person bad enough to make them cry. There was always the danger of hitting someone in the eye, and although I never saw it, we all heard stories of somebody getting their eye put out with a rubber gun.

The safest weapon was the water gun. There wasn't any danger except getting wet. I suppose all schools had some little boy who would fill his water gun with ink, but he generally wound up coming out the principal's office crying and rubbing the seat of his pants.

Most boys at one time or another had an air rifle. The ultimate in that weapon was the Daisy and it could be very dangerous. One day while I was bending over in the yard my brother shot me in the backside which smarted considerably and broke the skin. My mother had always said if any of us ever pointed that BB gun at anyone, she would break the gun. And she did just that. I thought then and still think it was unfair. My brother shot me with my own BB gun and my mother broke the gun around a fence post.

Most of those weapons we grew up with would be frowned

upon today and with just cause. Exposure to violence didn't just start with children of the present generation. Even King David was a fair hand with a sling shot. Today he would be branded a juvenile delinquent.

Chamber of Commerce Banquet

Broadcast 1960

ONE of the big social events of the season in the 1930s, '40s and '50s was the Annual Chamber of Commerce Banquet.

The Chamber was originally formed in 1907 as the Brewster County Chamber of Commerce and after a few years it folded. About 1910 the Commercial Club was formed. In 1920 this group changed its name back to the Brewster County Chamber of Commerce. Then in the 1930s it became the Alpine Chamber of Commerce.

Some of those who served as president of the Chamber included Shirley Scales, Dr. Joel Wright, Milton Smith, Clay Holland, T.A. Beard, Jim Casner, Worth Frazer, John Gillett, Alan Frasier, Don Littleton, Dom Adams, Johnny Newell, Jack Cross, Frank McCullum, Harry Watson Jr., Felix McGaughy, Marvin Kay, Bill Winter, Jim Francois, myself, D. D. Thomas, Hugh White and many others. In those days the election of the officers and directors took place during the annual banquet and it was a big community affair. Generally two people ran for president and they openly operated campaigns for about a week before the annual banquet.

The election would be by secret ballot for the President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Directors. It was a momentous occasion when the winners were announced because in those days the Chamber of Commerce provided the leadership for everything in the Community.

Everybody dressed up in their best bib and tucker on the night of the banquet and some 200 people would show up at the Holland Hotel Ballroom.

People didn't look to the government to solve problems then. They didn't look to the city or county or any other government group. Instead they looked to the Chamber of Commerce. This was because the Chamber of Commerce was the group that sprayed the alleys, for instance, during polio outbreaks. The Chamber provided the people for community clean up campaigns. Whatever was needed in the community, the Chamber provided not only leaders, but also the brawn and the money. Whom ever was president practically gave up a year from his or her business or profession and almost worked full time for the Chamber of Commerce. The directors also worked a lot of hours each week. In those days there were no private clubs such as we have today, so when visiting dignitaries needed entertaining, officers and directors of the Chamber would rent a suite in the Holland Hotel, buy a couple of bottles of hooch out of their own pockets, and put on the party.

It was deemed to be a very high honor to hold office in the Chamber and those who attained office devoted lots of time and their own money to the job. That's one reason the Chamber could get so much done. They had many people involved.

For instance, the Chamber of Commerce office building was an old barracks from the Marfa Army Air Base. Chamber members trucked the building to town, sold bonds in \$100

denominations to fix up the building, and converted it into an office. When it needed painting, Chamber members donated the paint and did the painting. When new Christmas lights were needed downtown, Chamber members built the strings of lights with materials donated by various people.

The publishers of area newspapers such as the *El Paso Times* and the *San Angelo Standard Times* covered the banquet in person. There was lots of camaraderie and visiting at those meetings and there was also a great sense of pride by everyone in the community, mainly because of their own participation in the events which effected their lives.

Well, things are not all that simple anymore, and people have more activities in the community now, but it gives people a good feeling to think back on those days when the Chamber of Commerce was the focal point of just about everything that took place.

The Christmas Ball

Broadcast 1961

ANOTHER outstanding social event in the 1940s and early '50s in Alpine was the Annual Charity Christmas Ball. People came from all the surrounding towns, and money was raised to buy Christmas baskets for the poor. This affair was run by a group of ranchers and businessmen and was held in the Holland Hotel.

All the beauty parlors in the area were busy that day, along with the florists, while the ladies prepared for this big event. Ladies' clothing stores did a good business, too, and everybody cooperated on the Charity Ball.

The churches helped, providing the names of the needy who would be without Christmas. Although most of the pastors didn't think too highly of a Christmas Ball, where people might be known to imbibe, for the most part, they looked the other way and were thankful somebody was looking out for the poor.

The area people would book up all the rooms in the Holland Hotel and plan to spend the night there. No alcoholic beverages could be served downstairs, but this was of no consequence because there would be thirty or forty people serving free drinks to anybody who wanted them in the rooms upstairs.

Well, the ballroom was so crowded with dancers nobody could sit in the ballroom, so they sat in the lobby or the coffee shop. A real fine band from out of town was always booked for this affair, and there was no set admission price. You gave whatever you thought was fair. Those who could would drop in a hundred dollars while some dropped in ten bucks.

The ranchers and business people paid the band out of their own pockets so all the money that came in went directly to buy food and sometimes gifts for the poor.

There was no welfare in those days, no government services for the poor. This was the only way some people had food on the table Christmas Day.

For a few years I was one of the people who delivered the baskets to the homes and we never gave out any names or told anybody where the food came from. Many families acted as if a real Christmas Fairy had come to their house when a basket of food showed up.

The people who raised the money had a good time doing so. They danced into the wee hours, visiting with friends and neighbors they didn't see often. It didn't hurt anybody and in my judgment, did a lot of good.

Cas Edwards

Broadcast 1962

THE FIRST TIME I saw Cas Edwards he could best be described as an old worn out hippie. Except the year was 1947, not '67, and the word hippie had not yet entered the English language. He had on an old floppy hat, his shirt tail was out, and he wore sandals. His wife, Lil Edwards, operated a flower shop just down the hall from KVLB in the Holland Hotel. Cas was offering a discourse to anyone within earshot about himself: that he was a total failure and had been his entire life. He enumerated all the business ventures he had entered into (and they were many) and how they all came to the same bad end. To make matters worse, he seemed to enjoy narrating being a flop.

Cas Edwards came to the Big Bend area shortly after the turn of the century when his family took up ranching in the Glass Mountains. At twenty years of age, Cas didn't take to ranching anymore than he had farming in Indian Territory, now Oklahoma. Since Alpine was the nearest town to the ranch, he moved here, and for the next fifty odd years engaged in various and sundry businesses that never panned out.

Shortly after he came to Alpine, Cas met and married Lillie Young, daughter in J. Frank Dobie's *Vaquero of the Brush Country*.

He built a public swimming pool where the City Hall parking lot is now located and operated it for many years, always at a loss. The State Health Department shut it down when they issued new rules on filtering systems in public pools. He built Alpine's first radio station which the feds promptly shutdown for failure to comply with federal regulations. He organized Edwards Motor Company, dealer for Hupmobile. It goes without saying that his automobile agency was no more successful than the Hupmobile. He then became a partner with Poke Hinson in a taxi business. Like his other ventures, the taxi company fizzled. His next project was a motion picture theater which he operated successfully for awhile, but then it too expired.

About that time, Cas took up philosophy. He even wrote a book of poems called *Cowboy Philosophy*. Cas was a good story teller, and if you invested a couple of beers in him, he would spend the entire afternoon as the rural sage.

Cas was a good writer and it's a shame he didn't use that talent earlier in life, because he did much to publicize this area. He wrote for various West Texas papers as well as western magazines. His home grown poetry often appeared in print.

Cas also loved baseball and served the Alpine Cowboys baseball team as secretary-treasurer for many years.

Although he loved to describe himself as the world's biggest failure, in truth he did much and accomplished much in providing recreation and pleasure to the people of a small West Texas town.

Vacant Lots

Broadcast 1980

ALPINE, Marfa, Fort Davis and Marathon have an asset we seldom if ever think about. That asset isn't hidden either; it's right out in the open where everybody can see it. That asset is vacant lots.

Now, vacant lots may not sound like very much of an asset to little girls, for grown-ups maybe, but to little boys, vacant lots offer a whole new separate world. And we're blessed with them out here in far West Texas. We have more vacant lots than inhabited lots. City officials tear out their hair trying to figure out ways to keep the weeds cut on these vacant lots, and folks with hay fever go ape trying to avoid the hundreds of pollens the various flora and fauna on vacant lots send into the air.

But to little boys there is no playground in the world—no matter how expensively equipped—that can compare with a vacant lot for hour after hour of sheer pleasure. A vacant lot is where a little boy learns about lizards and horny toads and red ants and a lot of other important things like that. A vacant lot overgrown with broomweeds is a literal forest of trees to a little boy out killing Indians or sneaking up on a deer. A vacant lot full of tumble weeds is a real jungle, full of man-eating tigers,

lions and elephants, and all sorts of wild beasts, and when a neighborhood alley cat comes charging through that jungle, why there is not a more spine-chilling thrill in the world than for a little boy to meet face to face with such a wild, ferocious jungle cat. When it rains and a nice mud hole forms, did you ever see such a swamp—one that breeds bull frogs and mosquitoes and above all, a slick gooey slide to romp in?

A vacant lot is a good place to dig, no matter if it's with a little toy pail and scoop just an inch deep, or with daddy's big shovel, digging a cave a whole foot deep and pulling brush over it and crawling inside. There, little boys keep their secrets, both mental and physical. It's there they probably take their first draw off a cigarette, or, practice up on the latest cuss words they've heard, probably in their own home.

I see where Odessa is going to have to annex 2600 acres of land because they don't have any more vacant lots. Now that's a downright shame for all the little boys in Odessa to grow up without a vacant lot they can call their own. Every neighborhood needs an allocation of vacant lots.

It won't be long before some butt-head at city hall louses up the vacant lots here, just as other incorporated towns have. They'll come out with a rule ordering all the vacant lots to be mowed, and there goes all the wild grass and mesquite bushes little boys used to hide in during Indian attacks. Those clumps of wild grass and thorny bushes that are an abomination to a city hall bureaucrat become giant hedge rows and forests to little boys facing mortal combat with an unseen enemy.

I recently sat in a doctor's office, and all of you know that can be anywhere from a one-to two-hour wait. Glancing through the usual array of old magazines one usually finds in the doctor's waiting room, I spied a story in an old *Sports Illustrated* about

vacant lots and I thought, Oh boy, this will be a good half-hour story to kill time with. Before I could turn to the story, this voice says, “Gene Hendryx, report to the EKG room.” Never before in my life has this happened. The one time I wanted to read an interesting article in a doctor’s waiting room, and low and behold, they don’t have me wait. So I guess I never will get to read what some other citizen thinks about vacant lots. But I’ll bet he agrees that they are pretty important to little boys.

Benjamin F. Berkeley

Broadcast 1964

ONE OF THE MOST colorful characters ever to hit West Texas was Benjamin Franklin Berkeley, medical doctor, bank president, dry land farmer, civic leader, mayor and state senator. He came to West Texas around the turn of the century, although some records indicate his presence in 1899.

Dr. Berkeley established a medical practice on his arrival in Alpine and was designated the company doctor for Southern Pacific Railroad from Del Rio to El Paso. This appointment naturally gave him a pass to ride the train. No other doctor lived within two hundred miles, meaning that Berkeley's services as doctor were very much in demand. No highways and very few ranch roads existed at the turn of the century, so when the good doctor was needed at a distant ranch, he would hop the train at Alpine, travel to some point nearest the ranch, and have the conductor stop the train; then he would get into an awaiting hack and finish his journey to the patient's location. Once on a trip to El Paso in the 1950s he showed me the various points along the Southern Pacific line where he would disembark the train, then board a buggy to treat an ailing patient at some distant ranch.

In 1906 he helped organize Alpine State Bank which became State National Bank in 1923. Following the “bank holiday” during the Great Depression, State National sold to First National Bank which is still in existence today.

Berkeley served as president of the bank he helped organize and he had some well-known citizens on his bank board including J. D. Jackson, Jim Wilson, John Young (who later became famous in J. Frank Dobie’s *Vaquero of the Brush Country*), J. L. Crawford, C. A. Brown and others. This created a chasm in the community because of the existence of First National Bank, organized two years earlier by Herbert Kokernot Sr., A. S. Gage, W. J. McIntyre and other well-heeled landowners. Even after the two banks combined nearly thirty years later, friction continued to exist among some of the bank stockholders. Because of his leadership in organizing the second bank, Dr. Berkeley took the brunt of unfavorable remarks even after his death in 1962.

Berkeley helped organize the Alpine Commercial Club, forerunner of the Alpine Chamber of Commerce. He was Alpine’s first mayor, and a water well site he chose in 1919 is still producing on A Hill. The Texas Legislature created Sul Ross Normal College during that period of time and it fell on Dr. Berkeley’s shoulders to comply with all the requirements of the Board of Regents before a shovelful of dirt could be turned to construct Sul Ross.

A city water supply, sewer system, paved streets between the college and the town, dormitory, lighting system and other improvements were in the contract, and Berkeley saw to it that the City of Alpine met them all. There was a powerful movement in Austin to repeal the act establishing Sul Ross at Alpine, and had it not been for Mayor Berkeley’s tenacity, there is little doubt the act would have been repealed.

Some of Alpine's modern day city officials would do well to study how Berkeley and his contemporaries handled construction of a water system, sewer system, street paving, water storage and other municipal problems without any federal or state grants, with no city sales tax, very little property tax and no revenue from garbage, water and sewer. They certainly didn't have any city manager, city finance officer or other experts to do the heavy mental lifting.

Dr. Berkeley wanted another challenge after his municipal chores had been completed, so he ran for the Texas Senate. In those days the senatorial district extended from Uvalde through El Paso, so he had a formidable challenge. Berkeley swept the field, going on to serve eight years until 1932 when Ken Reagan took his measure in a one issue campaign. The cigar smoking senator from Alpine passed Texas' first cigarette tax, which didn't include cigars. Reagan hammered this point home and with not one other issue in the campaign, ended Berkeley's political career.

State National Bank sold out to First National Bank in 1934, Senator Berkeley retired from the business arena, and except for a few real estate investments which required little of his attention, he devoted the remainder of his life to community service. Alpine Rotary Club, Orient Railroad, Alpine Chamber of Commerce, West Texas Historical and Scientific Society, Big Bend Museum, Mitre Peak Girl Scout Camp, these and dozens of other community and area enhancements can be directly traced to his efforts.

During World War II, he briefly hung out his medical doctor's shingle because of the tremendous shortage of doctors. As he later said, though, he pulled down the shingle in a hurry when he discovered that advancement in medicine had long passed him by.

I first met the senator after World War II when he was in his

early seventies. Age never diminished his optimism as he continued to work for and support projects he felt would be assets to the community.

A gazebo occupied a prominent place in his backyard where he along with Cap C. D. Wood, Billy Burcham and others of his generation gathered each afternoon for a game of cards, enjoy their pipes and cigars, and strike a couple of blows for liberty.

In Dr. Clifford Casey's book about the history of Alpine, he refers to Captain E. E. Townsend as Father of Big Bend National Park. Although Mr. Townsend played a major role in securing the park, other old timers of that era who assisted with the park maintain that Senator Berkeley's efforts to create the park predated Townsend's by at least a decade.

The senator, tapping along with his cane, walked along the business district streets each day, decked out in colorful trousers, an old fashioned frock coat and four-in-hand tie. He would visit along the way with anyone who wanted conversation, and he showed particular interest in any remodeling or updating of the various stores. His faith in the future of Alpine never wavered, even into his eighties. As a matter of fact, he joined with me in advocating a public swimming pool when he was well past four score years. It took me another fifteen years including service in the Texas Legislature before the swimming pool came to pass, but I've never forgotten the senator's support even though the city administration was adamant in its opposition at the time.

It was my pleasure in 1957 while a member of Brewster County Commissioners Court to erect a large stone adjacent to the Chamber of Commerce designating that quarter block Benjamin F. Berkeley Plaza in honor of the statesman.

Dr. Berkeley died in 1962 and with his passing West Texas lost one of its most colorful and effective characters.

Drought – 1956

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER is flying over West Texas today. Air Force One landed at Goodfellow Air Force Base this morning where Mr. Eisenhower boarded a smaller aircraft to get a closer look at drought conditions which continue to plague the whole Southwest. The President has already said there is nothing he can do, but this is an election year and his handlers adhere to the belief that if the President shows a concern, then people will believe something will happen.

The only thing that can happen with any benefit would be for it to start raining again, but even the President with all his benevolence can't bring that about. This drought, like the previous ones and those that come in the future, will run its course eventually, and then it will rain.

Ranchers who lease from others have already turned their leases back. They are broke and gone. Those who own their land for the most part have already gotten rid of their livestock, locked the gates, and have taken a job to ride out the drought. Feed bills have eliminated the cow-calf operations for the duration.

Old timers say this is the liturgy that's followed in all prolonged dry periods. It happened during World War I, during

the 1930s and now during the '50s. Those who own their land free and clear will probably make a comeback. The others are doubtful.

Look how many houses have "for sale" signs in their yards. There aren't enough jobs to sustain the population. Businesses that have a heavy ranching constituency are folding. People go elsewhere to seek temporary employment but most won't return.

West Texans are appreciative of Mr. Eisenhower's visit, but not even he can bestow a cloudburst, not even a light drizzle.

Louis Forchheimer

Broadcast 1964

LOUIS FORCHHEIMER arrived in New York in 1907, fresh off the boat from Germany. The eighteen-year-old headed for New York's garment district. His first job was cutting cloth for dresses, which would then be stacked many feet high, up to the ceiling, until the seamstresses were ready to piece the dresses together. Louie said he didn't have a place to stay, so at night when the garment factory closed down, he would climb up on top of a stack of piece goods and spend the night. That is until he got caught. Then he was summarily fired.

He stayed around the garment district, picking up knowledge of various aspects of the trade until he was ready to strike out on his own.

In 1921 he showed up in Alpine and opened Forchheimer's Dry Goods Store in the 100 block of West Holland Avenue where it remained for over six decades until Johnny Marlin closed the store in the 1980s.

In addition to the Alpine store, Louie, as he was affectionately known, opened stores in Balmorhea, Fort Stocton, Wink and other West Texas towns, with no money but with all the moxie he had learned in New York's garment district. As Louie

explained to me, most suppliers or wholesalers in the garment district would ship any order on thirty days' credit. So Louie would place an order for merchandise to the Balmorhea store and thirty days after receiving the shipment he would pay for it with an unsigned check on that store. In that era it took several days for a check to get to New York and back to West Texas with a note that the check was unsigned. He would then send them an unsigned check on the Fort Stockton store, and he would keep this up for several months, kiting checks back and forth until all the merchandise had been sold. Then he would send them a legitimate check and pay for the goods. Thus, he was using the garment district in New York to finance his retail operations in West Texas. Louie said he never had a dime tied up in merchandise, and yet he built a small empire in the clothing business as well as playing the stock market on the side.

Louie would keep all the lights turned off in the store until a customer came in and he would then turn on one bare light bulb.

Jiggs Terry would laugh and tell me about the day he went into Forchheimer's looking for a pair of black high top shoes which was all Jiggs would wear other than his boots. The only size Louie had that would fit Jiggs was brown. Jiggs didn't like brown, so he didn't buy the shoes. Late that afternoon Louie showed up with a black pair of high tops in the exact size Jiggs wanted, so the sale was completed. Of course, the first time Jiggs wore the shoes in the rain they turned spotted brown because Louie had taken black shoe polish and put it on the brown shoes Jiggs had seen that morning.

Louie was delighted when I would ask him about those shoes or some other similar story I'd heard about his early day shenanigans. He had a wonderful sense of humor and it was easy to see why people liked Louie Forchheimer.

Louie loved to sell Stetson hats, but he hated selling boots and shoes. Many is the time he tried to get me to quit selling advertising and come sell shoes for him. He also hated red tape, and during the Korean War he offered me a job filling out all the government forms which were in use during the time of price controls.

Louie's entire set of books consisted of a ledger with the names of customers written in with pencil and the amount they owed. When they paid their bill, Louie erased their name and used that space in the ledger for someone else.

Louie Forchheimer loved that store; he loved to sell merchandise. On a Sunday afternoon in September 1953 the manager of Morrison's Five and Dime Store, Thad Corkins, noticed the door open at Forchheimer's and found Louie dead of a heart attack. Thad and Louie were good friends. In those days people still sat up with the body. Thad called me and we sat at the funeral home with Louie's body until his son Paul, who was out of town, could be located. There being no synagogue in Alpine, his funeral was held at the Methodist Church. It was one of the largest funerals ever held in Alpine.

Worth Frazer

Broadcast 1966

WORTH FRAZER was another of the old timers who came out to the Big Bend Country around the turn of the century. He clerked for some of the quicksilver mines around Study Butte and for awhile managed a store at Castolon. After a few years he moved to Alpine as a clerk in Mitchell-Gillett, a general merchandise store. He ran for, and was elected to the office of county clerk in 1928, a job he held until his death thirty-four years later. He was the longest serving county clerk in Texas and held office longer than any other person in the history of Brewster County

In the book *Alpine, Then and Now*, Dr. Casey maintains Worth Frazer never had an opponent in thirty-four years. However, both Frazer and Senator Berkeley have told me a different story. During the Depression, Berkeley was serving as manager of the Alpine Chamber of Commerce at a stipend of \$35 a month. It wasn't much of a job, but it satisfied Berkeley, and he was good at extolling the virtues of this area to tourists and prospective visitors.

Berkeley decided Worth Frazer had held the job as county clerk long enough, so the senator announced as a candidate in

the Democratic primary. Frazer won the election, but that wasn't the end of the matter. Frazer became president of the Chamber of Commerce and his first official act was to fire the manager, Benjamin F. Berkeley.

Worth Frazer deeply resented anyone even thinking about running against him. The county courthouse was a closed corporation in his mind, and he resented anybody who ran against any county incumbent.

In 1956 I defeated an incumbent commissioner. Until that time, Worth Frazer and I had been coffee-drinking friends, but after the election our relationship cooled considerably, and he wasn't above using the shaft when he had the opportunity.

I suppose because of his protective attitude toward incumbents, he wielded far more clout around the courthouse than a county clerk should have. For instance, any job opening at the courthouse was cleared with Frazer before the appointment was made, even though it was absolutely out of his jurisdiction and none of his business.

Most citizens never saw Worth in a fit of rage as I did in 1954 while covering election returns. A hotly contested race developed between Senator J.T. Rutherford of Odessa and Congressman Ken Reagan of Midland for the office of congressman from the 16th district. It was late at night and only a few votes separated the two, when finally the last holdout ballot box was brought to the county clerk's office from Terlingua. You have to remember in those days there were no telephones in the rural parts of the county, and no way of finding out the returns until the ballot box and tally sheets were turned over to the county clerk.

Ollie Hinsen was the election judge at Terlingua and she not only put the tally sheets in the ballot box but also the keys.

There was no way to find out the vote count without opening the box, so while half of Texas waited to get the election results, Worth Frazer took turns cussing Ollie Hinsen, the Republican party, and the locked ballot box. He finally fished the keys out and when he removed the tally sheets they showed J.T. Rutherford had defeated Congressman Ken Reagan.

Worth Frazer was active in many civic groups and was a life-long Mason. Like many old time politicians, he never missed a funeral, regardless of who the deceased might be. He was a dyed-in-the-wool yellow dog Democrat who would rather cuss Republicans than eat a steak dinner. Each afternoon he and the late Dr. Joel Wright would have coffee in the Holland Hotel and spend an hour cussing and discussing the Republican party and its nominees on the national level. There wasn't any Republican party on the local level in Texas in the early and mid '50s.

The county clerk's office in Brewster County was considered to be one of the neatest and best kept in Texas. Records could be located at a moments notice, always correct and always up to date. That tells you a lot about why Worth Frazer was able to hold the office for thirty-four years.

A Tub of Jell-O

Broadcast 1974

IT WAS COLD as a well digger that November night in 1952 at Buck Stadium. I was broadcasting a high school football game that Alpine was losing rather badly, my wife was out of town, I was hungry and probably not in the best humor because of the game score. Suddenly, standing right there in front of the broadcast booth was none other than Dan Blocker.

None of us knew he was back from Korea, but there he stood in living color. He wanted to go somewhere private and talk—he wanted to talk about the Korean War, and like most combat veterans, he wanted to discuss it only with another combat veteran. I told him Lucille was out of town and to meet me at my house after the game, which he did, with a fifth of Old Charter in hand. We sat in the living room the rest of the night talking—him doing the talking and me listening. He wanted to tell about the killing, the chattering machine guns, the always present fear that never leaves the battleline.

Blocker dated a local girl, Dolphia Parker, a few times before leaving for Korea. A couple of weeks after his return, I was in the bank where Dolphia was employed as a teller, and she showed me a diamond engagement ring Blocker had given her the previous night.

They rented an apartment from Mrs. Billy Burcham on North Second Street and moved furniture in to be used following their December wedding. After the wedding they planned a three week honeymoon lasting till mid-January when Dan would enroll at Sul Ross to pursue a master's degree.

Blocker and I had a long history of playing practical jokes on each other, and I lay awake at night trying to think up an appropriate honeymoon prank.

The honeymooners had been gone for a couple of days when it hit me: Fill the bath tub with Jell-O! I enlisted the aid of a couple of Blocker's buddies, Kenneth Stucke and Billy Weston, and we bought every box of red Jell-O in Alpine, every last box.

Several bags of crushed ice were acquired from somewhere and the race was on. We knew if the landlady, Mrs. Burcham, caught us, she would call the police and the whole caper would backfire with Blocker having the last laugh.

We dumped everything in the bathtub, mixed it all up, and when ice was added, the tub was filled almost to the top. When it set, it wouldn't melt in the middle of winter, and Blocker and his bride would be welcomed home with a bath tub of red Jell-O.

When they returned in about three weeks the newlyweds found a bathtub of red Jell-O, and covering it all was an inch of green mold on which none of the culprits had planned.

Not many people in this world have been faced with the dilemma of what to do with a bathtub filled with Jell-O, but Blocker did his best. He tried shoveling it out the window, he tried melting it, everything in the book except eating the slimy stuff. And of course, everyone in town knew about it and awaited the outcome, everyone except the landlady. When he got the mess out of the bathroom after several days of heroic effort by both Dan and his bride, in walked Mrs. Burcham and kicked

them out of the apartment on the grounds they had loaned the key to the apartment to someone else, which of course they hadn't. The apartment lock was the old fashioned kind that you merely unlocked with a skeleton key, available at any five and dime or hardware store. Anyway, they had to find another apartment and I might add that Jell-O pitted the bottom of the bathtub forever after.

Blocker schemed for months on how to get even. No one at the time ever admitted who fixed the Jell-O, but Blocker instinctively knew who was the lead character. Stucke and Weston never admitted their part, and I never found out if Blocker knew. It was me he was after, and he went to a ready-mix concrete company in Fort Stockton and ordered a truck load of concrete dumped into the tub through my bathroom window. The concrete company could envision all sorts of lawsuits so they reluctantly turned him down.

The following August, my son Ray was born in Southwestern General Hospital in El Paso. When we arrived home, every stick of furniture in the house was upside down and the floors were covered with ashes and cigarette butts. Blocker had some semblance of revenge.

But his escapade wasn't in the same league as the biggest batch of Jell-O ever made in Alpine.

Give 'em Hell, Harry

Broadcast 1981

Area daily newspapers estimated the twilight crowd at over 5000 people that September evening in 1948. They were jammed in the area where the Southern Pacific depot now stands, between West Murphy and West Holland Avenue. The depot wasn't there; only a lonely boxcar substituting for a depot was in the block. The depot itself had burned in early 1946 and had not been rebuilt in September of 1948.

President Harry Truman along with his wife Bess and daughter Margaret were on a whistle stop campaign tour of the United States, the train ride that catapulted Mr. Truman back into the White House, the train ride that became the most famous in American history. As a matter of fact, historians still write about it, television specials are made about it, and modern politicians try to emulate it.

Yet, here in the Big Bend Country, little is said or known about it except for those of us who were there. Dr. Casey's history of Alpine, *Alpine, Then and Now*, doesn't even mention it. When I offered a photograph of Mr. Truman's party standing on the rear platform to the local historical society they gladly



Left to right: Governor Beauford Jester, Mrs. George Kempen, President Truman, Bess Truman, Dr. Joel Wright. Mrs. Kempen is the grandmother of Ray, Forrest and Houston Hendryx. Dr. Wright's daughter, Betsy, became chief of staff for Bill Clinton in Arkansas. Photo taken on rear platform of Give 'em Hell Harry's campaign train, September 25, 1948.

accepted the photo. Yet, when asked why it wasn't included in their historical display at the courthouse, everyone involved denied ever seeing the picture. I'm grateful we had another copy of the picture, otherwise it would be gone—an irreplaceable part of Alpine's history. On several occasions, Southern Pacific has been offered a copy of Mr. Truman's whistle stop picture in Alpine, and they've never bothered to answer. It remains a mystery why local history buffs ignore such an event.

KVLF was set to broadcast the event, particularly the President's remarks from the rear of the train. We had a couple

of hundred extra feet of microphone cable because none of us knew the exact spot the train would stop.

The assemblage had come from all over West Texas, San Angelo, Pecos, and the Permian Basin. They were in good humor and expected to be entertained by the fiery little man from Missouri who was criss-crossing America lambasting Tom Dewey in particular and the Republican Party in general. This was in the days before TV, but the newspapers and radio were keeping the country informed about the activities of the man nobody picked to win. But even in their good humor, the crowd jostled each other for position while they waited.

When the train stopped, I approached the rear platform with the KVLf mike as I had been instructed. A secret service agent stepped forward, took the mike and placed it in the stand on the rear of the train. The area swarmed with plain-clothes officers from all federal agencies and standing in front of the presidential seal guarding the rear platform was the biggest, most rugged uniformed officer I'd ever seen. He was a captain on the capitol police force and his job was to see that nobody climbed up on that platform.

President Truman stepped out on the platform and the crowd went wild. The Marfa High School Band, directed by Raymond Wheat, struck up "Hail to the Chief." Brewster County Democratic Chairman Dr. Joel Wright was on the platform to introduce the President and tell him what good democrats everyone in West Texas were. Dr. Wright's daughter, Betsy, four decades later would serve as chief of staff to a fellow named Bill Clinton from Arkansas.

Mr. Truman started his speech, and it was dry as popcorn, all about the establishment of Big Bend National Park. It was easy to ascertain that some Washington bureaucrat had written the

speech and obviously had never been to Big Bend. His written speech was definitely not what the people came to hear and within a few minutes a rancher's voice came booming out of the crowd, "Give 'em hell, Harry!" It was as if this was a signal the President had been waiting for. He laid the speech aside and made the rip snortingness, stem-winding stump speech ever heard in these parts, before or since. He jumped all over the "do nothing Republican Eightieth Congress," accusing them of everything from blocking his housing bill to destroying the middle class in favor of the rich, and the crowd was going wild. When he paused for breath, somebody in the crowd would holler, "Give 'em hell, Harry," and he'd light out again. Truman that night stuck a knife in the Republicans so deeply that had the election been held then he would have carried all five thousand votes gathered around his train. He not only knifed his opposition, he twisted it, turned it, sliced it and then rode them raw. This was the crowd-pleaser folks had driven hundreds of miles to see and hear.

When he finished you could tell he was right proud of himself; he knew how to work his audience. Then he reared back and asked if they'd like to meet his bosses and everybody went wild again. Out came Bess and Margaret, to be presented with a large bouquet on behalf of the ladies of Alpine by Mrs. George Kempen. Mrs. Kempen had been selected for the honor because she was related to Hilda Weinert of Seguin, Democratic National Committee Woman for Texas and a close friend of the first family.

Governor Beauford Jester, Congressman Ken Reagan, and other political leaders were also on the train, but stayed well-hidden until they saw the public reaction to President Truman. Then they couldn't get out on that platform fast

enough to show their support.

Police finally got the tracks cleared so the train could pull out. This was the first and last time a President of the United States made a speech in Alpine, but those who were there never forgot it.

The rest is legend as Mr. Truman went on to pull the biggest political upset in history, partly because of his “give ‘em hell” oratory that went over so well that evening at dusk in Alpine, Texas.

Cap Wood

Broadcast 1967

WHEN Charles Drury Wood stepped off the train in Marathon in 1911, he had already witnessed more adventure than most people in a lifetime. The forty-one-year-old former West Pointer had come to West Texas to seek his fortune, hopefully in the candelilla wax business.

He had served in the Army with the rank of Captain in Cuba, commanding a mounted unit during the Spanish-American War. Later he pulled a tour of duty in the Philippines where he met his bride to be, the daughter of an American missionary. When his military service ended in 1901, Wood stayed in the Philippines a few more years as a civil servant, during which time he and Julia Bouchette were married.

Following their return to the States, Wood, who then answered to the name of Cap because of his former military rank, tried his hand at various tasks up North. However, his Tennessee heritage and his Yankee father-in-law's military service during the Civil War was a constant source of friction. Cap came to Texas.

He and his associates established a wax plant about forty miles south of Marathon and he sent for his wife and young son, who were appalled at the primitive living conditions. This included a

house built out of sotol stalks with dirt floors. Cap built two other wax plants in Brewster County, at McKinney Spring and Glenn Springs. The wax was hauled to Marathon by freight wagons and then shipped by rail to northern industries. A great deal of money was made in the wax business during the years of World War I.

Pancho Villa's troops were raiding along the border during that same period of time and they thought nothing of crossing the Rio Grande, plundering and killing on both sides of the river. This unrest caused Cap Wood to bring his wife and son to Alpine in early 1916 where the two remained while Cap returned to Glenn Springs to manage the very profitable wax processing plant.

One night in May 1916, Cap was awakened by gunfire near the company store. Pancho Villa's bandits killed four Americans during the gun battle. Cap Wood hid out in the brush until daybreak after being shot at as he approached the wax camp. This was the famous Glenn Springs Raid. Much has been written about the raid, including allegations that U.S. Army troops knew about the impending raid at least a week prior, but did nothing including not notifying the nine man army garrison stationed at Glenn Springs. Three members of that garrison were killed along with an employee of the company store.

Cap Wood stayed at Glenn Springs until 1919 but did not bring his wife and child back. He later sold the wax plant and set up a new operation at Agua Fria where he remained until the wax business collapsed.

Cap Wood moved to Alpine during the late twenties and became county school superintendent. In March of 1928 the Brewster County Commissioners Court appointed Cap County Judge on the death of Judge James Burke. He ran for the office

that year and was elected to a two year term, then re-elected in 1930. All county office holders served two year terms in Texas until a Constitutional Amendment in 1956 increased the length of terms to four years.

During his second two year term, the Depression set in hard. Taxpayers had a difficult time paying taxes, and property tax collections fell behind. The county judge is chief financial officer of the county, and Brewster County simply could not meet its obligations. Time warrants were issued in lieu of cash, and these were discounted by those who accepted them. Cap Wood was held responsible although the county's declining financial situation was certainly not of his making. He gave up the judge's office at the end of his second elective term. At the age of 62 Cap Wood was unemployed and the Great Depression was just setting in.

Being unemployed in 1932 was far different than being out of a job in 1972. Unemployment compensation hadn't been invented, and you'd be laughed out of town for mentioning such far out programs as subsidized housing, food stamps or Medicare, let alone Social Security. It was root, hog, or die. Cap did what everyone else in that era did. He sought employment.

He was able to raise the money to drill one or two oil wells which were dry holes, but that enterprise kept the wolf away from the Wood door for awhile. He also dabbled in real estate, and at some point in time, his wife Julia became society editor of the *Alpine Avalanche*. The job didn't pay much, but then it didn't take much if you were healthy.

I met Cap in the late '40s. He was one of the retirees who came to the lobby of the Holland Hotel for conversation each day. KVLV was located right off the lobby, so it was just a matter of time till I became acquainted with most of the

senior citizens of the area.

Cap was approaching eighty, but was active in various pursuits which were of interest to him. When Lucille and I were married in 1950, Cap became an almost daily visitor as he and Lucille's dad, George Kempen, took their daily afternoon ride around town. When our three sons were born, Cap took delight in coming by and picking one up for a ride on his knee. He continued this up into the 1960s when our last son was born and Cap was well into his 90s.

His dog, Mutt, was a terrier and when he rode around town with his head out the window of Cap's old Chevy, he thought he was a terrorist instead of a terrier. He verbally thrashed every dog in town till one day Cap turned a corner a little too fast, and Mutt went flying out the window. His passion for barking at everything was somewhat subdued after he high-tailed it home with every dog in a ten block area nipping at him.

Cap smoked one of the foulest smelling pipes ever created and had done so all his life. Another little habit he had which may have been responsible for his continuous good humor was drinking two bottles of Pearl beer before noon each day. After a nap, he then would down a pint of bourbon during the afternoon and evening.

When this man was ninety years old he retained his bright outlook on life and spoke out strongly on behalf of parks, playgrounds and a swimming pool, none of which Alpine had at the time. He was a strong believer in providing recreational pursuits for families and particularly youngsters.

Late one afternoon I went to the Holland Hotel Coffee Shop, and there sat Cap Wood in the lobby, all by himself, looking like death warmed over. I asked him what was the matter and he said he had been feeling ill for a couple of weeks and the doctor

had cut out his pipe, his beer and his bourbon. I said, “Cap, how old are you?” He answered, “ninety-two.” I said I believed if I were him I’d change doctors.

He did. He got back his pipe, his beer and his bourbon, and in a few days Cap was his chirpy old self with that twinkle in his blue eyes. He lived to be ninety-six. I suppose they might say those bad habits finally got him. He was a **f**ine human being.

Anna Kate Turney

Broadcast 1980

IN TODAY'S SOCIETY, Anna Kate Turney wouldn't stand out more than many other women, but by the standards of the first half of this century, she was nothing short of remarkable. During the latter part of 1920, women were given the right to vote in America with approval of the 18th Amendment. Less than three short years later, Mrs. Turney was appointed Postmistress in Alpine, an unheard of award. Postmaster was the biggest political plum in the county, awarded strictly on political influence of the highest order.

Anna Kate Etheridge came to Alpine in 1907 to visit her cousin, the wife of Wigfall Van Sickle, a former member of the Texas Legislature and the most prominent attorney in the area. During the visit she met A.M. Turney, a forty-two-year-old attorney and friend of the Van Sickles. He had already launched a successful lifetime political career, having served as county attorney, county commissioner, and county judge. When they married the following year, they went straight to Austin on their honeymoon where Turney was serving in the legislature. For the better part of fifty years, A.M. Turney held various political offices, so it should not have come as a great surprise that Turney,

along with some help from Van Sickle, was able to secure the Postmistress appointment for his wife. After all, Turney and Van Sickle had more connections than the rest of the county put together. However, it has never been determined how or perhaps why a Republican president, Warren G. Harding, would appoint the wife of a life-long Democratic office holder.

During the next thirty years, Mrs. Turney gave an excellent job performance in running the postal service in Alpine, unequaled before or since. She resigned the position when her husband became ill and required around-the-clock assistance.

During her tenure Mrs. Turney let the male workers know she didn't approve of drinking or gambling, among other transgressions. Cecil LaBeff, one of the window clerks, was known to have a few snorts on occasion, and he delighted in needling Mrs. Turney concerning unregenerate life-styles, so long as his misdemeanors didn't offend the little lady's dignity. Among the countless government forms Mrs. Turney had to deal with were mileage charts between West Texas towns. In the late '40s the highway between Alpine and Fort Stockton was paved, and some of the hill passes were lowered. Mrs. Turney asked her all male staff if any of them knew the distance between Alpine and Fort Stockton since the roadwork had been completed. LaBeff immediately popped off, "I don't know the distance in miles but it takes about a six pack to get there." Mrs. Turney was not amused.

Local postal users were appreciative of Mrs. Turney. Three windows were open from 8:00 to 5:00 Monday through Saturday and were manned by Billy Vest, Knox Reid, Cecil Duncan, Fritz Bill Weyerts, and Vernon Boysen among others. There were no waiting lines extending to the entrance.

The postal service wasn't the only all-male field she cracked. A lifetime Presbyterian, Mrs. Turney became the first woman

elder in the area and served in that capacity for many years. She was also active in some of the women's clubs such as the Pilot Club and the Alpine Study Club.

Her son-in-law, Earl Anderau, was a local garage owner and an avid golfer. He was dubbed "Chongo" by his many Hispanic friends because of his hilarious conduct, but one thing he didn't find amusing was leaving the golf course Saturday evening after eighteen holes and tending to Mrs. Turney's yard, a chore he performed for many years. What he really hated was his golf buddies heading for the nineteenth hole when he was headed for the lawn mower.

Mrs. Turney lived to be ninety-seven years old, an extraordinary woman in any era.

R. B. Slight

Broadcast 1954

RB. SLIGHT came to this country from England where he was born in 1868. When he was eighteen years old he decided he wanted to come to America and showed up in San Antonio. In 1888 Slight came to Alpine to hire out on the Haley Ranch. The Haley Ranch later became known as the Brown Ranch at Cathedral Mountain.

Slight worked as a ranch hand for about ten years before coming into Alpine in 1898 to work as a store clerk. He later bought the Alpine Drug Store.

Lawrence Haley got Slight to go back to work for him and Slight looked after the Haley interests until Haley's death.

Haley left a large herd of cattle to Slight when he died in 1917, and Slight went into the ranching business on his own.

Sometime prior to 1930 he went broke. So, in the deep Depression in 1932 he tried his hand at public office and replaced County Judge Capt. C.D. Woods. He continued to hold on to that job until 1946 when he voluntarily gave up the post so Felix McGaughy could run when he returned from World War II. Slight ran a tight rein while serving as Brewster County Judge and the county spent little if any money on ranch

roads. I sat in the Masonic Lodge with Judge Slight when he was presented with a gavel made of Cedars of Lebanon on his 50th anniversary as a Mason.

Slight died in 1953 at the age of eighty-four. He smoked good cigars and led an interesting life that started in Nottingham, England and wound up in the Big Bend country of Texas.

Memorial Day Speech

Memorial Day speech by Gene Hendryx, broadcast from the front steps of the Brewster County Courthouse May 30, 1960

THIS COURT HOUSE LAWN is a fitting place for us to assemble to honor our heroic dead. An enduring monument of marble is situated on the southeast corner, commemorating those who marched away to war, and on the east lawn an artillery piece of World War II vintage stands in honor of our American heroes who likewise marched away, never again to return.

Thousands of battles on the land, on the sea, and in the air echo the glory of their valiant deeds. Although their bodies sleep in peace under the quiet sod or beneath the waves, the destinies of their souls go marching on. Because of them, our lives are free, and our nation lives on.

When we gather here to recall the things they did, their spirit seems mighty in our midst. When peril threatened and their country called, they left their paths of peace and with divine self-sacrifice, sprang to arms, making their bodies a barricade against the nation's foes. No sorrow for loved ones left behind; no weariness on the march kept them from their purpose.

No horror on the field of battle, at sea, or in the air kept their courage down. As they fought—and fell—for us, now in deepest reverence let us honor them. And for their sakes, let us also remember their loved ones left behind. Tears or words of sympathy cannot bring back their voices; only the solemn pride of having given more than all the rest of us is the reward of sacrificing loved ones.

All the world is in debt to them.

All of you who stand here today are asked to pledge anew to patriotic service and to consecrate yourselves to emulate the sacred service of those who rest in heroes' graves.

Let us stand, with bowed heads, in solemn memory of the heroic dead.

John Sotello

Broadcast 1974

ONE OF THE FEW early day pioneers who was actually born in the Big Bend area was Juan or John Sotello. He was born in Marfa in 1886, and in the 1890s his family moved to Alpine. As did most other boys of that era, John went to work on a ranch during his early teens, and by the time he was twenty-three years old he had dug post holes, punched cows, doctored wormies and cowboy'd generally on a half dozen area ranches including the WH Kokernot, Green Valley, Lawrence Haley and Leoncita ranches.

John learned to play baseball before he went into ranch work. As a matter of fact, he and some others cleared the brush and cactus off a plot of ground east of where the Alpine Community Center is now located on East Avenue G. This was before the turn of the century and may have been Alpine's first baseball diamond. There wasn't much baseball to be played out on the ranches and that, coupled with his desire to live in town, caused John to give up ranch work and hire out to Jiggs Terry who owned a meat market. He also worked in a grocery store at the Ritchey Hotel, and between those two jobs he picked up enough knowledge of the retail grocery business to try it on his own.

He located his store, Sotello's Grocery, at the corner of South Seventh Street and Avenue F. He not only operated a successful store at the location for more than forty years, but he raised a large family in an addition at the back of the store.

Mr. Sotello had been established in business for over a quarter of a century when I came along in the late 1940s trying to sell advertising. Persuading someone to start advertising after they've operated successfully twenty-five years without any advertising isn't the easiest chore in the world. But John Sotello liked baseball, and he would help sponsor the baseball broadcasts on KVLFF. We spent many hours talking baseball as well as other sports, and I learned a lot of the early history of this area from those conversations. I don't know whether Mr. Sotello realized it, but his was the first Hispanic owned business to advertise in English on KVLFF. It wasn't planned that way; it was just that nobody bothered to call on the little stores such as Sotello's Grocery until I came along. Some of the Hispanic operated businesses advertised in Spanish, but nobody had ever talked to them about other programs. I soon had four or five dependable businesses to go to in South Alpine who would sponsor athletic events. Sotello's, Brun's Grocery, Charlie's Food Market, Green Cafe, Blue Room, and one or two others helped out.

John Sotello's grandson, Jerry, would one day work as a part-time announcer at KVLFF and would learn enough there to pursue broadcasting as his lifetime career.

Mr. Sotello had a long life. He died in 1973 at the age of eighty-seven. He had an enduring influence on the community around him.

Elvis

Broadcast 1985

EACH YEAR on the anniversary of Elvis Presley's death, the Odessa, San Angelo and other area newspapers write up big stories about Elvis being in their town on his first visit to West Texas. I'm here to tell you that's a lot of bull. Elvis Presley's first visit to West Texas was to Alpine, in 1953, and he was seventeen years old. I know. I paid him \$250 to come out here and put on a show, and I lost \$30 on the deal.

I expect I'm the only human being who ever lost a dime promoting Elvis Presley. Elvis had just begun his career. He had made one recording. I called him in Tennessee and he agreed to come to Alpine for \$250 to perform in the high school auditorium. The high school was located on West Avenue D in those days, and the school let us use the auditorium at no cost. Admission was one dollar a person, and two hundred and twenty people came.

But Elvis didn't show.

I finally got Jerry Williams and some of his fellow musicians to go up on stage and entertain the crowd while I went out to search for Elvis Presley. I started out Highway 90 just as Presley came into town, and I escorted him to his motel where he and

his two musicians, a guitar and a bass player changed clothes. Well, the reason he was late was that he ran into a wagon loaded with cotton coming through Arkansas and wrecked his car. He borrowed a car from Jim Ed Brown's sister and continued the trip to Alpine. When he finally got to the auditorium the two hundred and twenty souls who had paid a dollar each were ready, and they gave Elvis and his two musicians a big welcome.

Although the group was black and blue from their ordeal, they put on a real show, twisting and cavoring all over the stage and pouring out the music. Elvis was more hillbilly than he was rock and roll. In fact, "rock and roll" had not become part of the English language at that time.

Anyway, the crowd liked their act, and Sandra Holland came up on stage and had Elvis autograph her petticoat. She and Elvis had a date that night after the show.

Elvis signed his autograph for anyone who wanted it; he sold some records and did a bang up job of pleasing everybody there. We had a radio announcer at KVLF named John Nelson, and John thought that since he was a disc jockey he was supposed to stay up on stage with Elvis. Elvis kept eye-balling John like he thought John was crazy, and I finally had to go up on stage and ask John to go sit down. After the show Elvis went on his date, and his two musicians came out to the station and sat up and shot the bull with the radio staff for a couple of hours. The next morning when they checked out of the Bien Venido Motel, the two musicians along with Elvis came back to the station and hung out for most of the day. The two musicians told us when Elvis turned eighteen he was going to get drafted and that would end their group. That's what happened. When Elvis got out of the army he formed another group, changed his style, and went more Hollywood.

A few weeks after his show here in Alpine, Elvis was paid \$25,000 to appear on the Ed Sullivan Show. The cameras wouldn't show him except from the waist up because of his twisting which was considered indecent at the time. But Elvis Presley's first trip to West Texas was to Alpine and I lost \$30 on the deal.

Student Government Speech

During the Spring of 1963, the American Legion Auxiliary Big Bend Unit 79 sponsored a week-long county government program at Alpine High School, which won first place in the State of Texas. Rep. Gene Hendryx delivered the keynote address at the concluding banquet, which was broadcast on KVLF.

I APPRECIATE very much being invited back home to speak to this group on county government. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to know that the county government program has become an integral part of the activities of Alpine High School. As one of the people who had some small part in getting this program initiated in Alpine a few years ago it gives me a double pleasure to be here with you in the culmination of your week's activities. I know that you have had a good dose of county government thrown at you during the past several days, and certainly you are now more aware of the actual role and scope of county activities and county affairs. A great many of you are no doubt better informed on county government, now that you have had this experience, than are your parents.

No such program existed when the adults here attended high school and the first real knowledge I had of county government

came some seven years ago when the people of Precinct One in Brewster County elected me County Commissioner.

County and city governments are the closest governments we have directly associated with the people, and yet we find that quite often the people do not pay as much attention to city and county affairs as they do to state or national affairs. In my opinion, if the people throughout this nation were more fully informed about their own local government, they wouldn't have as many problems with the national government.

Many problems now in the hands of the national and state government could have been solved locally if the public would have taken the time to know about local government and to know about the people they elect to local office. As a result of this, we now find the state and national governments passing legislation that should have rightfully been attended to on a local basis. We have signs which point that the people of this nation are now becoming aware of this, and if these signs prove correct, we can possibly prevent the transfer of authority and responsibility of local government to the state and national governments. The only way we can prevent the state and national governments from taking over these local duties, the duties you have learned of this week, is for our local governments to live up to the responsibilities which are entrusted to them. I, for one, am included in the group which believes that states' rights and state responsibility are one and the same, and may the Good Lord deliver us from the politicians who go about the country shouting the doctrine of States Rights but who refuse to face up to state responsibility.

The same is true on the local level. I have nothing but contempt for an office holder in local government who always shouts about the national or state government, but refuses to carry out

the responsibilities of the local office he or she holds.

By your participation in this county government program, you have shown that you are interested in the affairs of your government, and someday, some of you will no doubt be a candidate for some office, but let me make this one request of you: don't ever put your name on the ballot as a candidate for some public office unless you have the courage to carry out the duties of that office. Having a knowledge of government should be a prerequisite to running for office, but you can know all the government there is and if you don't have the intestinal fortitude to do what you should do in the office you seek, then you aren't worth a continental to your people or yourself. If you don't have the backbone to begin with, then find something else to do and leave government alone.

In government, you should make certain of the facts on any issue before you arrive at a firm conclusion, but after you have objectively arrived at that conclusion, stick with it. If you play the game, you should take the stand you feel is the right stand, then stand there come the devil or the deep blue sea.

Many of us remember a day when it was taken for granted that we could never get a county hospital, and we remember a lot of other things that couldn't be done, but which are now realities. When you take these stands, you get scarred up sometimes. You sometimes get a knife plunged into you. You get criticized and cussed. But you can learn to live with those things. You will learn to be lied to and about, but you will learn too that your opposition can't eat you. You also learn that in the end you live with yourself. And when you go to bed at night, you live with the type of person you really are. The chickens all come home to roost at night, and you look into yourself and determine what kind of servant of the people you really are.

And when the opposition scars you up and kicks you around, you can still sleep at night if you have done what, in your judgment, is the right thing for the people.

All of you here will find a great sense of achievement in serving in government if you take the time to learn what you are doing, and then have the courage to stick with your convictions.

In the short time that I have been in the Legislature, I've had many thrilling experiences. I've been given committee assignments I never dreamed of receiving and have been designated chairman on several subcommittees which handle a great portion of the legislation in this state. I meet myself in the halls running from one committee room to another and one of these committees, the State Affairs Committee, controls the policy of State Government. That is some little chore when you realize how many bills will be introduced, and some of these bills contain over a thousand pages.

I'm not complaining about it. I like it or I wouldn't be there. But it takes a little stamina sometimes to keep up with things.

You meet all kinds of people in government just as you do in business or any where else. You meet some of the finest people in the world. Dedicated. Religious. And brilliant. You also meet some very mediocre people and once in awhile you run across individuals who are just plain dumb. A few people in government are evil people, people who represent all the things in life which we have been taught to look upon as rotten and bad.

You also meet the politically ambitious person, the type who, because of his own personal ambition, will resort to any political expediency to help his own career. You can spot these people if you know what to look for and you certainly should be aware of them. They will double-cross anyone if it might further their own personal careers.

Programs conducted throughout this country similar to your county government program have brought on a new awareness of government and people in government. For instance, in the Texas Legislature, the days of the back-slapping, snuff-dipping politician are gone. In the present Legislature we have only one snuff-dipper.

The Legislature, although still dominated by attorneys, has a more businesslike approach than in days gone by.

You'll find radio station managers, newspapermen, engineers, bankers, and a broad segment of business and professional people seated in the House of Representatives. A few years ago, the Legislature consisted mostly of the old time politicians who controlled the government along with law students who were going to law school while serving in the House. This is now changed, and today most of the House Members are people who are successful in their own right in their own communities. As to age, most of them are in their late '30s and '40s. Out of the 150 members, at least 100 of them were elected without the help of any special group or segment, and this adds up to better government in Texas.

We have a few members who probably would vote to abolish our entire system of public schools, public highways, and the other public facilities if they had the chance, and on the other extreme you have about nine of them who would vote to give the whole country away if they were in control. Both of these groups, though, are in the minority, and we intend to keep them there.

If you choose to walk the political pathways, before long, those who classify people will classify you, as either a conservative or a liberal. The newspapers, the lobbyists, the labor unions, and the other politicians keep a very close tab on you and they peg you

one way or the other, as either conservative or liberal. This does not mean that if you are a conservative you will vote conservative on every bill, and that if you are a liberal you will vote liberal on every bill. If a bill is introduced that you believe is really worth while, you will vote for it regardless of whether a conservative or a liberal introduced it. You will do this if you are fair and honest with your people.

You find extreme liberals and extreme conservatives who wear a brass collar for all practical purposes. They will not vote for or against a bill unless it is being supported by one of their own kind. You should beware of these people from both extremes. One is just as dangerous as the other. This country was not created and has not become the most powerful force for democracy in history of the world because of people with extreme points of view. You can be a conservative or a liberal without being a darn fool about it.

One of the things a person needs to do in government, as well as in business or anything else, is to be sure of your facts before you open your mouth.

There's a story about five crows over on the east coast which illustrates this point. These five crows loved prunes, and so one day they decided to fly out to the prune picking state of California and eat all the prunes they wanted. When they got to California, they started eating prunes, and they stuffed themselves until they could hardly move.

Finally, these five crows decided it was getting late and that they had better fly on back east. So they took off, but after about half an hour they just couldn't fly any further because they were so full.

One of them spotted an old abandoned plow handle in a field so they decided to land on that plow handle and rest

awhile before they resumed their flight.

After resting about half an hour, they decided to take off. The first one lifted his wings from the plow handle and flew east about fifty feet, and he dropped dead.

The next one decided there must be something wrong with flying east, so he took off in a northerly direction and when he reached fifty feet, he dropped dead.

Well, the other three crows held a consultation sitting there on the plow handle and decided the next one would fly south. So he did, and when he had flown fifty feet, he dropped dead.

So the fourth crow decided he had better fly west, back toward California. He took off, and after fifty feet, he dropped dead.

This left one crow sitting on the handle and he decided to fly straight up. He did, and when he was fifty feet in the air, he dropped dead.

And that's the end of the story. If the story has any point at all it is to point out the fact that you should never fly off the handle when you're full of prunes.

I think former President Eisenhower summed it up pretty well when he stated that throughout his some seventy odd years he had always found that people who take extreme viewpoints on any issue are invariably wrong.

And I think former President Truman summed up a good attitude to have for those of you who contemplate entering government and politics. He said, "If you can't stand the heat, stay out of the kitchen."

Dusty Rhodes

Broadcast 1987

DUSTY RHODES came back to Alpine to retire after many years in the East during which time he rose from the ranks to become International President of the International Carpenters Union.

What a lot of people don't know is that J. L. "Dusty" Rhodes came to Brewster County in 1910 with his father. They had purchased a thousand head of Angora goats that had grown to two thousand head so they came to Brewster County looking for grass. They drove those goats from ten miles northwest of Rankin in Upton County to what is now known as the Rosios Ranch adjacent to Big Bend National Park. The trek was 265 miles—all on foot—herding goats, horses, burros and their household supplies. The trip took ninety-three days travel time.

As a boy, Dusty Rhodes became acquainted with every gulch and canyon in that area. Dusty said that the twenty-five billy goats that had traveled with the herd wore bibs that hung down behind their forelegs so no kid goats would be born out of season.

Dusty said his family used to stay at the old Ritchie Hotel when they came to town, but when the hotel was full they stayed in the wagon yard where Casner Motor Co. later located.

Dusty lived away from Alpine all his adult life until his retirement when he moved back to the country he was familiar with as a boy. He said the mountain air, the scenery, the weather, the public schools, the hospital and above all the people drew him back to Alpine.

Lady Bird – 1966

LADY BIRD JOHNSON has come and gone after three days packed full of so many activities that it left most of us wondering how the First Lady stands up under it all.

Two thousand people were on hand at the old Marfa Air Base to greet Mrs. Johnson and the bevy of women reporters making the trip. Mrs. Johnson had never before been to the Big Bend Country, and she brought along fifty or sixty women reporters. Her press secretary, Liz Carpenter, has been out here several times, and Liz warned them about the ruggedness and isolation of the area. They were all shocked to see a couple of thousand people standing out in the middle of a cow pasture to greet them. Mrs. Johnson was particularly pleased to see so many school children on a Saturday morning. I'll say this for the crowd; they were all well dressed and well behaved. Folks had on their Sunday go to meetin' clothes and I think that too was a culture shock to the crowd from Washington. Many of the women reporters asked the ladies in the crowd if they went to Neiman-Marcus in Dallas for such beautiful clothes. They couldn't believe the ladies when they were told the clothes came from shops right here in Alpine and Marfa.

Lady Bird spent a lot of time shaking hands with the crowd, and folks appreciated that. Paul Forchheimer presented the visitors with western straw hats which they definitely needed before the three days were up.

John Ben Shepperd, the former attorney general and a long time Johnson family friend, had been out here for several weeks putting the whole thing together. He reported directly to the White House which means that he pretty well called the shots. Before this past weekend was over, some of the bureaucrat-politicos from the National Park Service in Washington had their nose out of joint because they didn't have the last say in everything.

Mrs. Johnson and her entourage boarded a bus at the airbase for a short tour of the Alpine area before leaving for Big Bend Park. John Ben acted as guide on the bus, describing various sites and scenes, and when they passed McMillan's Shop on East Highway 90 John Ben remarked that it was the student parking lot at Sul Ross, because the people of West Texas would never permit junk cars along the highway. His remark got a big laugh from everyone because of Lady Bird's many beautification programs.

Lady Bird's party was well entertained Saturday evening in the park. Sunday was spent rafting the river, or at least part of the river. Most of the group took about a five hour raft trip through Mariscal Canyon, including the First Lady and Secretary of Interior Stewart Udall and his wife who made the trip from Washington with Mrs. Johnson. The National Park Service is, of course, under the Department of the Interior.

Udall was first appointed Secretary of the Interior by President Kennedy, and then President Johnson kept him in the job. I still have a letter from Udall offering me an appointment to the National Parks Advisory Board, which I declined in the event a



Gene Hendryx, Nellie Connally, Lady Bird Johnson, Park Supt. Frank Smith at dedication of Fort Davis National Historic Site.

conflict ever arose between the National Park System and the State of Texas. He wrote me a second time saying he couldn't see the possibility of a conflict. I've lived around the national parks long enough to know there can be many conflicts.

Several months ago the Speaker of the Texas House, Ben Barnes, and I went to Washington to see if we could borrow a restoration expert from the Parks Service to advise us on restoring forts and missions in Texas. Udall called in the Parks Service people and they said no, they didn't have the money or personnel. We pointed out that we just wanted the man for a week, and when they again said no, Udall rocked back in his Kennedy rocker and said, "This request comes from the White House." The National Parks Service had a sudden change of heart.

Mrs. Johnson and the large contingent of women reporters had to leave Big Bend Park fairly early Monday morning

because Mrs. Johnson was slated to dedicate Fort Davis National Historic Site about mid-morning. The group's advance planner didn't tell the ladies no restrooms existed between the park basin and Alpine, well over one hundred miles. As a matter of record, not even a decent size bush to hide behind exists along most of the route of Highway 118.

The ladies were pretty well loaded up with coffee when they left the park and by the time they had traveled fifty miles, nature was taking its course. Suddenly a secret service car followed by other security vehicles pulled out of the caravan and raced down the highway into Alpine. They surrounded Jack Roach's Exxon Station at the intersection of Highways 90 and 118. After cordoning off the area they inspected the restrooms, including the toilet paper, then locked the restrooms and the storeroom. When Lady Bird's vehicle arrived she was the first in and the first out. I don't know how many of the other ladies used those facilities, but for awhile there, old Jack didn't peddle much gasoline.

Lady Bird enjoyed herself immensely at Fort Davis. Her friend of many years, Nellie Connally, wife of Governor Connally, had flown in from Austin and many other Texas friends were on hand to greet the First Lady. I had been designated as her official escort at the Old Fort and as we walked under the porch of one of the restored barracks, Mrs. Johnson spotted the name Templeton on some of the new lumber. She grinned like a child and said, "Arthur." Arthur Templeton was, of course, one of the Johnson family friends of many years as well as a long time heavy financial backer of LBJ's political campaigns.

Later during the program when Mrs. Johnson was speaking to the crowd of several thousand, she turned to me and asked where John Ben Shepperd was. Without thinking, I jokingly

said John Ben was out searching for Indian Emily's grave. The crowd loved it, but the National Park prigs from Washington were offended because they had ordered any mention of Indian Emily's supposed gravesite and any mention of Indian Emily removed from the Fort property.

They claimed there was no proof she ever existed, so when the fort was restored, out she went. Some of us told their historian no proof exists of Santa Claus either, but the Park Service didn't dare abolish him. They would have thrown me off the podium if Mrs. Johnson hadn't been there.

Following all the doings at Fort Davis, speaker of the House Ben Barnes had some doings of his own at the Marfa Air Base. He had flown out Sunday in a Lear jet to be on hand for the dedication events, and as their jet started down the runway for take off, a herd of antelope ran onto the runway. Nobody was hurt, but the Lear suffered a lot of damage as did the herd of antelope. Barnes had to come into Alpine and locate some transportation back to Austin.

Lady Bird was pleased as punch about the whole shebang out here in West Texas, and all the crowds I saw were equally pleased with her.

First Baptist Speech

In 1967 Gene Hendryx was asked to be the speaker at a morning worship service at First Baptist Church in Alpine. The following is the exact text of that presentation which was broadcast on KVLFF. Needless to say, it ruffled a few feathers.

I'VE MADE a lot of speeches in my time, but this is the first time I've ever attempted to fill a pulpit.

I'm sure that after this morning, it will also be the last.

During my years in public life, the question has often been asked: What can a Christian do to change or to influence his government and the community around him? This is a very difficult question to answer, sort of like "how high is up?" This is the topic I will attempt to discuss this morning.

According to history, the Baptists first came to America from Holland in the 1600s. Their reason for coming here was so that the government would have no influence on them, and they would have none on the government. The Baptists who were here before the Revolutionary War are entirely responsible for the First Amendment to the Constitution which provides for the separation of Church and State. They were strong believers in the Churches staying out of the government's business. They

apparently were the last Baptists to believe in the doctrine because ever since then, various Baptist groups have attempted to influence or dictate policy of various governments on the state, national and local level. I have sometimes wondered if this has come about because perhaps the Baptist denomination has not been too successful in converting the rest of the country to their beliefs, so instead, they simply want laws written which would make the rest of the country abide by Baptist doctrine whether the rest of the people liked it or not.

The influence the Baptists once exerted has waned for several reasons, but one of the main reasons is that the denomination no longer provides the personal service they once did.

This is just as true of other denominations as it is the Baptist, which has helped to cause a decline in the amount of influence all the Churches were able to muster in days gone by.

Many people feel that the Church no longer serves mankind, that it no longer makes much of a contribution to the community as a whole and that it fails to render service not only to its own congregation but to others as well. Many of the services which used to be the accepted responsibility of the Church have now been taken over by various levels of city, county, state and national government. These units of government did not necessarily want to take over those functions, but they were forced to do so because the Churches, for some reason, changed their viewpoint on what was and what wasn't a responsibility of the Church.

Up until a few generations ago, practically all major medical institutions in America were owned by various Church denominations and operated by them without any help from the government. Of course, in those days people did not go to the hospitals as often as they do now. Most babies were born in the home; most ailments were treated in the home; in fact, hospitals

existed only in the larger communities. But, even though no hospital facilities were available in most areas of the land, the Church members went into the homes of the sick and took care of them. This was all done on a voluntary basis by members of the Church. I can recall an incident in the early '30s when six members of my family were nearly killed in an accident which left us all bedridden, and members of the Church moved in and took over. They did the cooking, the nursing, the house cleaning, the washing and ironing and chopped the wood. They did everything necessary to provide for my family until we were on our feet again. This was the rule—not the exception. This was the accepted way things were done, and after a major crisis, families were not left destitute with bills which had piled up—simply because they had no bills to pay. Members of the Church voluntarily performed those duties and provided the necessities which were required. This was true regardless of how much income a family had. It was just an accepted fact that in time of crisis, members of the Church moved in and took care of things.

Some of you may recall several years ago here in Alpine when a lady had cancer and was bedridden for five years before she passed on. She had to be attended day and night throughout that five year period, and Christian women of this community volunteered. They took turns looking after her throughout that entire period. It would have left the family entirely destitute had they had to pay for around-the-clock nursing service. You see very little of this any more. When somebody has sickness, they are taken to the hospital and if they can't pay the bill, they expect the county to do so. The Church no longer enters into the picture at all.

This is also true in other areas of service which historically had been under the realm of the Church. Most of our orphanages

and homes for dependent and neglected children are now operated by the state. The Baptists still have several orphans homes, but the state of Texas has built and operates several homes for children. The state did not necessarily want to enter that particular field, but it became necessary because the various Churches either could not or did not operate enough facilities to take care of these youngsters. This is also true in homes for the aged and infirm and other similar institutions. Now we see where the Churches are surrendering more and more of their responsibility in many instances in the field of education. Many institutions of higher learning have closed because of lack of financial support, and practically all of the religious-owned colleges and universities are facing dire financial straits. Our own Baylor Medical School is now being turned over to a separate organization so that it can receive state tax money in order to continue to operate. More and more we see our religious schools looking to the federal government for building funds and grants.

It will be a sad day for all America if our colleges and universities all wind up being controlled by the State. When all the institutions of higher learning have to abide by policies set down by some state agency—regardless of how excellent those policies may be—then we have failed miserably. When all the institutions teach alike, using the same text books, the same material, with teachers all trained the same way, then we really have become a stereotyped society. Hitler couldn't accomplish it. Communism couldn't accomplish it. But we may do it to ourselves. This is another example of the Churches of all denominations either intentionally or unintentionally failing to provide service to mankind which was generally conceded to be a basic responsibility of the Church. Many people feel, and perhaps justly so, that the Church no longer serves mankind,

that it no longer makes a contribution to the community, that the Church is no longer its brother's keeper. Some Church members say these fields are not our responsibility. They should be taken care of by the government.

I think all of us know and realize that some of this is the responsibility of the government, but if we are to believe what the Bible says, then some of it is also the responsibility of the Church.

As Baptists, we are taught all our lives that we should tithe. I once asked an outstanding Baptist teacher who also was a great linguist if he could define the word tithe. He told me tithe was a Greek word and that it meant that everybody was to bring in a tenth of their earnings to a central place, and these earnings were to be used to take care of the poor, the widows and orphans.

Ever since that conversation, I have been studying the budget of the First Baptist Church in Alpine, Texas and to this good day I've not found one dime in it designated for the poor, for the widows or the orphans. It may be there under some other title, but not under the listing of poor.

Apparently many other people had arrived at that conclusion long before I did because it would amaze you to know the number of people who contribute their money directly to some beneficial charity rather than to the Church. They honestly believe that in doing so, their money is serving a better purpose. They argue, and perhaps rightly so, that there is nothing in the Bible about having fine buildings, beautiful choirs and other similar tangible possessions.

A great many people believe that Jesus placed more emphasis on love and on service than anything else and that He expected his followers to do the same.

In one particular instance in the Bible, Jesus and his twelve

disciples were gathered around before his crucifixion. Peter and James got into an argument about who should be seated on the Savior's right hand, the position of Supreme Importance. Peter and James attempted to get Jesus to settle their quarrel, and they asked: "Master, which of us is the greater?" And His answer was: "The greatest among you is he who serves the most."

Service implies complete participation and involvement in life, and not just being a spectator who avoids getting mixed up with the every day problems in the community, and whose chief contribution is generally to offer criticism of what others are trying to do to serve their community and mankind.

Out of all the various channels of service open to participation, how many members of this Church are willing to serve their fellow man? I know of one member of this Church who serves in a district office, one in a county office, one in a city office, and one on the school board. Yet on various local boards and agencies, over 150 serve, such as the hospital board, parks board, library board and airport board. These boards take a lot of time, a lot of effort, and often a great deal of compassion. In addition to these, what about all the various service and civic clubs which benefit their fellowman? How many Baptists work in those organizations?

The opportunity for the influence of good, for service, is beyond calculation. In my judgment, service means something else besides showing up at the First Baptist Church every Sunday morning. It requires the exercise of responsibility in all phases of life. If Christians expect to have some influence in the affairs of the community, they must be involved in the community. That means more than just showing up at some public meeting every year or two and bellyaching. That kind of influence is nil, and it only reflects on those who perform such acts. If a person is not

willing to devote his time and service to his community, then he has no kick coming when the community is not operated according to his wishes.

In the first place, most of these people who are serving in public life are mature people with a pretty fair education. I recall that out of 150 members of the legislature, we had 278 college degrees. Most people in public office are capable of thinking for themselves and arriving at a logical conclusion. There is no greater insult to a public official than to attempt to put pressure on him. Anybody in public life who is afraid of the public is a coward and not man enough to hold office. If he is so preoccupied with trying to please the public all the time, then he is not spending enough time tending to the duties of his office.

If you as Christians want to influence what goes on around you, then inform yourself about the issue, top, side and bottom. Not just what somebody else said, find out all the facts you can. Then either visit in person with the public servant involved or write a courteous letter outlining your views and why. Any public official appreciates such communication and if he or she doesn't, then they are too ignorant and self centered to hold the position.

Many of the hate letters written in America today are written by so called Christians. Some are deacons, Sunday School Superintendents, and people with positions of leadership within the Church. Most people in public life are not so infatuated with holding office that they will take threats or insults or hate mail in order to stay in office. One of the reasons for the declining influence of the Church is that some Church people forget they are supposed to be Christians, and when they express an opinion, it comes out just how bigoted and narrow minded they really are.

If you maintain that you are a Christian, remember that it helps to act like one when you deal with other people.

Mark Twain on several occasions commented on the conduct of Christians. He remarked that he didn't know anything about the devil or hell, but he preferred to go there rather than associate with the people who called themselves Christians and maintained they were going to heaven. It would be interesting to know how many people are in sympathy with Mark Twain's observation. They observe and see Christians in action daily, and they see back-biting, vicious gossip, and at times down right hatred and sheer meanness. It gives anyone cause to wonder.

That recalls to mind a statement made by one of your great Baptist Ministers several years ago at Paisano Encampment. He said he would rather have a man in his congregation who cusses, than a man who is cussed.

If people who say they are Christians would spend more time doing what a Christian is supposed to believe in, they would have a profound impact not only in this nation, but throughout the entire world.

Some of you have heard me tell the story about the time I was a member of the five man investigation committee studying the Texas Prison System. It came as a great shock to a great many people when it was disclosed that a large percentage of the young people now going to prison are not necessarily the product of broken homes; they do not necessarily come from the wrong side of the tracks; they do not necessarily have watusi dancing mothers and whiskey drinking daddies. They are from homes such as yours and mine.

The Christian home, in many instances, is failing to teach and more important, to practice love, honor, and service, to our fellowman. The greatest effect Christians can have is simply

carrying out, by living in their daily lives what a Christian is supposed to be. To put it simply, Christians would have far more influence if they practiced what they preach.

People of all faiths need to stop shouting at each other. They need to learn to listen to one another, to care and to understand one another, to display in their everyday relations with their fellowman the virtues of goodness, decency, love and kindness. This is what I happen to believe that Christianity is all about. We must practice as well as teach the principles of freedom, of justice, of love, and of service to mankind. At all times we should remember the serenity prayer, which says: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

Holland Hotel Barber Shop

Broadcast 1986

BACK SEVERAL YEARS AGO, a person could get a lot of conversation hanging around the old Holland Hotel Barber Shop. Just about everybody connected with the shop in those days was a character in his own right.

Joe Hord, one of the original owners, spent more time trading cattle and playing poker than he did at the barber chair, and his ability at cattle trading and poker was well known. Many people left Alpine sadder but wiser after an afternoon of poker with Joe Hord.

Bill Lane also operated the barber shop for a while and Bill was well acquainted in the rooster fighting business. Although fighting game chickens was illegal in Texas, seldom did a week go by without a well attended and heavily financed battle between game roosters.

Buddy Lane who was also connected with the hotel Barber Shop figured out an easy way to make money back in the days of the Major League Game of the Day radio broadcast. The games were fed from the network on a delayed basis one hour after the game started. In those days Ft. Stockton, Kermit, and

these other towns in Texas did not have radio stations, so Alpine was about it. Each afternoon we carried the Major League Game of the Day. Buddy Lane had a high powered radio rig, and he would find the outcome of the game from some distant radio station; then he would turn on the radio at the barber shop and the game of the day on KVLFF, with him already of course knowing the outcome of the game. Some poor pigeon would be sitting there in the barber chair not knowing the broadcast was delayed and Buddy would get up a bet. Sometimes he would set the odds way out of sight, betting that so and so would get a homer in the 8th inning.

A lot of pigeons got their feathers plucked before somebody wised them up to what Buddy was doing. Incidentally, that old radio was an \$18.00 Emerson bought in early 1947 and is still working and is now located in Novaks Barber Shop.

Otto Hilbrich, a Southern Pacific telegrapher who later became the local railroad agent, cut hair in the Holland Hotel off and on for twenty years. So far as I know, Otto never participated in any of the barbershop hijinx.

One of the barbers married a California girl during World War II, but she never took too strong to West Texas. Every few months she'd board a plane and go back to California and Mama. This didn't help the barber's finances any, to say nothing of his disposition. She would stay on the coast for a month or so and then call him to pick her up at the airport. She wanted to come back.

This went on for a couple of years. One day she called for him to meet the plane, which he did, and when she came down the ramp, he popped her right in the mouth. He told her to get her butt back on that plane and go back to California and stay there.

I don't recommend his solution to marital problems, but in their case it apparently worked. Twenty years later they were still happily married, and she no longer had a yen to visit California every few months.

Roman Gonzales was the shine boy at the Hotel Barber Shop. He wasn't really a boy, he was a middle aged man when I first met him in the forties. He too was a character, such a card that I wrote and recorded a song about him, "Roman Gonzales, King of the Shoeshine Stand." He got a shock the morning that tune came blaring out of his radio. Roman also owned a restaurant near Centennial School where some of the most larapin' food in the area was served. Roman and I used to make up racial cuss fights for the benefit of tourists, and when some New Yorker was getting a shine, I'd come in and start in on Roman. Other times he would be the aggressor and get after me. We would switch back and forth from English to Spanish in a way so convincing that sometimes the tourist would jump out of the shine stand and take off. Everyone else knew what we were doing of course and had a good laugh, all except the poor tourist who would go back to New York and tell his friends that those crazy Texans are still fighting the Battle of the Alamo.

So far as I know, no one is still living who was connected to the Hotel Barber Shop. The business closed during the mid 1960s. But for several decades it was a fun place to hang out.

Marfa Movies

Broadcast 1961

MOST FOLKS know “Giant” was filmed near Marfa, but few realize several other motion pictures were filmed there also. The first was in 1949. “High Lonesome,” “Giant,” “Sancho, the Homing Steer,” and “The Andromeda Strain” all had their beginnings at Marfa.

“High Lonesome” was filmed in late 1949 and early 1950. Alan LaMay was director, John Barrymore Jr., Chill Wills, Lois Butler, Jack Elam, and Ristine and Cristine Miller were the stars.

Chill Wills and I became amigos during the filming, and it probably came about because we shared more than our share of popping caps. Chill Wills made KVLB, which at that time was located at the Holland Hotel, his headquarters and from there we would advance on to the tap room of various other places. Wills loved to laugh at John Barrymore Jr., the pretty faced son of the great John Barrymore. Barrymore Jr. couldn't drink because of his pretty face. It showed up the next morning on the camera, but old Chill Wills could stand in there with the best of them and the next morning look bright-eyed and bushy-tailed on the camera. He was supposed to look like a homely critter anyway. He had been drinking since heck was a pup while

Barrymore was still wet behind the ears, according to Chill.

A delegation of Marfa dignitaries including Judge Claude Lee, Mayor Johnny Mathews, Chamber of Commerce type folks and others greeted the film colony when they first arrived at the Presidio County Airport, between Marfa and Alpine, for the filming of "High Lonesome." I remember a bus took everyone into Marfa. It was a Baygent Coach to be exact, and through some act of mercy the bus did not break down. The Marfa High School Band was on hand, too, and everyone went to the Paisano Hotel where the Hollywood crew had reservations for the duration of the picture making. Chill Wills preferred to come over the pass to Alpine each evening and that's how we got hooked up.

Several ranches were used during the filming of "High Lonesome" and they included the Brite Ranch, the Nopal, Flectcher, Sheely, and perhaps some others.

Extras to work on the film were hired from Marfa, Alpine, Ft. Davis, and other area towns, and the film was completed in record time. "High Lonesome" was never a big box office attraction, but it opened the way for other films which would be made in this area later on.

Chill Wills made a lot of friends here during his stay in 1949-50, and when he came back a half decade later to film "Giant," he remembered those friends. We might talk about that later.

Roberto Valadez

Broadcast 1986

I ATTENDED the funeral of an old friend the other day. Roberto Valadez went on to his reward after a lengthy illness.

Roberto and I met in the summer of 1946, both fresh out of the Marines, both still puny from the ravages of malaria, yellow jaundice and other destructive diseases from the South Pacific.

We were both elected county commissioners in the 1950s mainly on a pro hospital stance while the two incumbent commissioners we beat were openly hostile to the idea of a county-owned hospital. I always thought it ironic that some of the most blatant draft dodgers in West Texas would intimate that two combat veterans were somehow un-American because we believed sick people ought to be able to go to a hospital without traveling 226 miles to El Paso. But that's another story for another time.

Roberto's father, Tomás, was born in Mexico in the 1880s and migrated to Alpine at the turn of the century. Tomás worked on various ranches before learning the craft of brick laying and rock mason. He followed that trade for a number of years.

Tomás married Juanita Gallego when he was in his early thirties, thus bringing about a union of families that would

become a powerful political force in years to come. A total of twelve children were born to this marriage.

Tomás went into the grocery business in a two story building at the corner of Fifth and Murphy. The building is still standing at that location.

I used to go by the Valadez Store and try to sell old Tomás advertising. He would look me right in the eye and say “*No hablo ingles.*” He knew that I knew he was lying, but that was a game he played when he didn’t want something, and we played the game a couple of times a year for ten or fifteen years.

Tomás died at the age of eighty-six and to my dismay, never spent a dime on advertising.

His son Roberto was elected County Commissioner over a popular incumbent in 1954, and with the exception of one four year hitch, has held the job for over thirty years.

Roberto and I got into some very hot arguments over the years, but there was a popular belief around town that no one else had better ever interfere. A couple of people learned of this the hard way to their lamentable dismay. Roberto and I took a lot off one another but never from a third party.

Roberto was the first Hispanic permitted to play football at Alpine High School. Other area towns maintained their policy of strict segregation, and when Alpine met them on the field with a Hispanic in the backfield, trouble sometimes followed. But the Alpine team and the people of Alpine always rallied to the support of Roberto. During a game with Fort Stockton, some of their fans threatened Roberto with bodily harm. Worth Frazer, George Pugh, and some others from Alpine stood along the sidelines with open pocket knives to make sure the threats weren’t carried out.

One of Roberto’s teammates was Tommy Barrow, and they

formed a friendship that lasted throughout their lifetime. Tommy also joined the Marines. Many years later when Tommy passed away while serving as school superintendent in New Mexico, I told Roberto of Tommy's death, and he was inconsolable.

Together on the commissioners court we were able to accomplish worthwhile projects in addition to our efforts on behalf of the hospital. With volunteer pilots, we paved the first airstrip at Starnes Field. We paved hundreds of blocks of streets on both sides of the tracks, and we forced the commissioners court to start using bids not only on county road equipment but on sheriff department vehicles and other purchases. Often we had to fight the whole courthouse gang, but we won a lot more battles than we lost.

I'm sure there will be others just as capable as Roberto and with just as much courage, but he set the pace. He loved America, and those who had belittling things to say about this country during the wildness of the '60s took a wide path when they passed Roberto.

Mourners were standing in the street at his packed funeral service. His widow said the phone rang day and night from men pleading to serve as pallbearers.

Roberto and I were the first two of our generation following World War II to crack the political union at the county level. Another generation has now positioned itself to take over, and that's as it should be. I've always believed that six or eight years in one office ought to be enough, but then what I believe may not always be the smartest opinion around.

But I know this: I'm going to miss hoisting a cool one with Roberto.

Blocker

Broadcast 1974

“**B**LOCKER.” The voice was barely audible as it drifted into the second story window of the drowsy English literature class. Alma Litrell, Associate Professor of English at Sul Ross State College continued her reading of “Beowulf,” the English classic which we were informed was the first known effort of English lit.

“Blocker.” This time the voice was audible to most of the class, but not to Miss Litrell who was completely immersed in her oral description of the early masterpiece. Blocker’s neck began to redden and he slouched deeper in his chair, immediately in front of me. He never was accused of sitting in a chair. He might slouch in a chair, he might sprawl in a chair, he might even lay down in one, but sit, never.

“Blocker.” This time even Miss Litrell heard it. She looked up from her text with a sharp glance at Blocker, then continued with a description of Grendel’s mother. Blocker slid a couple of more inches before a booming voice yelled out, “Blocker, you son-of-a-bitch, I’m calling you!”

The entire room, Miss Litrell included, made one headlong dash for the window, and there, seated on the steps two stories

below was one of our absent classmates, Levin Davis. He was big as life, twice as ugly and drunk as a hoot owl, and at ten o'clock in the morning.

Not one word did Miss Litrell address toward Levin, but she lashed out at Blocker with a stinging tongue that only a woman can possess. Blocker, who knew he was the cause of the uproar from the minute he first heard his name called, hadn't bothered to run to the window. He simply slouched a little lower in his chair.

After seeing Blocker slump still further, Miss Litrell continued her reading. Coming to the most dramatic portion of the entire story, her voice rose as she shouted "Grendel came gliding, God's wrath he bore!" At that point, I goosed Blocker as hard as I could. He jumped straight up out of the chair screaming. Miss Litrell went into hysterics.

So ended Dan Blocker's tenure in English lit. He got an F and I received an A.

Dan Blocker's impact on Sul Ross College will never be forgotten, just as his impressions on those who knew him will never diminish. He was truly the most unforgettable character I have ever met.

He showed up on the Sul Ross campus following World War II, a 320-pound teenager, holding his mother's hand. He was turned over to football coach Paul Pierce with a typical mother's admonition, "You look after my baby."

Coach Pierce was the first person Blocker ever met at Sul Ross, and thus began a hero worship Blocker carried to his death in a Los Angeles hospital some twenty-five years later.

Davis, his childhood friend, tagged along with him to Sul Ross because he "wanted to be with Blocker." Levin loved Blocker as much as any man can love another, and Blocker returned that love.

How I became a third part of that threesome I've never known, other than perhaps it might have been because I had the good fortune of making A's and yet could still find time to raise hell and get drunk as a fiddler's bitch after class. We had little or nothing in common, other than none of our families had any money.

It was Blocker who left a legend, a legend he alone created and which all of us recognized long before he graduated in 1950.

He never really became the great athlete his public relations men depicted years later, and he never was the intellectual he himself attempted to etch into the minds of others. But this jolly giant of a man was the most amusing buffoon, the cleverest storyteller, the most hilarious and pleasurable person ever to come up the pike.

In college he participated in football, track and boxing, but his toothpick-like legs weren't designed to hold that massive body. This was his physical failure as an athlete, but he had a far greater drawback—one that remained with him throughout his remaining years. Dan Blocker could not stand to inflict pain on others, nor could he abide seeing it. He simply would not knock another fellow down. In later years, when he made the rodeo circuit as the star of "Bonanza," he would leave the arena prior to the bulldogging event because he couldn't stand the sight of pain in either man or animal. It wasn't crocodile tears he shed when he saw pain; he shed real tears on the inside.

Blocker's obsession against physical pain was equaled only by his dogmatic belief in the underdog. He was for the underling come hell or high water, right or wrong.

During the football season, Coach Pierce did make use of Blocker's services against opposing teams in a psychological manner. Wherever the team went, Blocker went. He was always

the first athlete off the bus, the first into the hotel, and the first at the dinner table. The shudders he sent down the spines of the opposition when they saw his mammoth frame still ring in football stadiums from California Polytechnic to the Tangerine Bowl in Orlando, Florida.

During that era, I served as president of the Veterans Association at Sul Ross. We had 600 veterans out of a total enrollment of 950 students, so the influence of the veterans on campus was not minimal. Blocker was not a veteran at the time although he later served with distinction during the Korean conflict.

We were both enrolled in a government class taught by a sweet little lady whose entire knowledge of government came from courses she had taken in college half a century prior to our time. Many of the veterans enrolled in the class had studied various foreign governments during overseas service and some had fairly definite ideas along with some knowledge of the subject.

During a lecture period, this nice little lady made some remark about what she described as the burden on the taxpayers to send veterans to school. Still bitter from my memories of the war and only a 112 pound shell of my original 188 pound self, I took the remark with perhaps more resentment than I should have. I stood up and asked, "Do you not believe we are entitled to the GI Bill?" The instructor answered, "Mr. Hendryx, there are a great many Americans who feel you are not entitled to anything." I immediately gathered my books and left the class.

Dan approached the teacher and said, "You shouldn't have done that. You know how Hendryx feels about the war. You know that he was given six months to live and he could drop dead anytime. You are a mean, selfish bitch," and he departed the class. When the grades came out, Blocker received an F and I got an A.

Eighteen years later, when I was described by the press as one of the most powerful men in Texas government, Blocker, then an international television star, visited me in Austin. The Legislature passed a resolution inviting him to address the House, which he accepted. Seated at my desk on the House floor that day was the same little old lady, now retired, who had made the trip to see two of her former pupils.

Blocker's ability to consume vast amounts of alcohol, any kind, was phenomenal. The only time he was ever "bested" was in a drinking contest with a local high school teacher, Emmet Tiner. The bout was scheduled for a nearby bistro. Both Levin and I had part time jobs and didn't arrive on the scene until the contest had been in progress for some ten hours. When we walked into the bar, Blocker was out of the picture, his head resting on a table. Tiner was on his feet at the bar, and still going strong. I said, "Tiner, doesn't the school board frown on your drinking?" He pointed to the man standing next to him and said, "Ask him, he's the president."

Once when he was supposed to be participating in a Sul Ross track meet as a shot-putter, Blocker couldn't be found. However, about halfway through the meet, an open-top model A Ford came streaking down the track, and there sat Blocker behind the wheel. He was well on his way to being drunk and the star of the show. Coach Pierce, more righteous than holy, shamed Blocker after the meet, but he didn't have the heart to expel the team jester.

Blocker also had a habit of never having anything in his pockets, including money. He prevailed on a mutual friend, Kenneth Stucke, then a service station operator, to lend him a gasoline credit card so he could travel to Dallas. A couple of months later, Stucke began receiving violation notices from the



Former classmates, left to right, actor Dan Blocker, Congressman J.T. Rutherford, broadcaster Gene Hendryx, and businessman Thad Corkins, lead Sul Ross homecoming parade, 1960.

City of Dallas. Realizing that he hadn't been to Big D, Stucke ignored the citations. A few weeks later in walked a Texas Ranger with a warrant for the arrest of Kenneth Stucke. To say the least, Stucke was dumbfounded, but he attempted to explain to the officer that he had not been within miles of Dallas in five years. The ranger didn't believe the story; he didn't even take kindly to it and serve the warrant he did.

Later, not suspecting any connection between the credit card and the warrant, Stucke asked Blocker to return the credit card. After stammering a while, Blocker finally revealed that he had been picked up by Dallas police on a traffic violation, and not having a driver's license, he simply handed the officers Stucke's credit card and identified himself as Kenneth Stucke from

Alpine, Texas. As coach Pierce had done many times before, Stucke forgave him. Nobody could stay mad at Dan Blocker.

Alpine is located in a border county in southwest Texas, and in those days, an old fashioned shoot-out was not uncommon. Following a rather spectacular slaying near the Rio Grande, Blocker and I decided to watch the show we anticipated would be forthcoming between opposing lawyers during the trial. The District Judge was Alan Frazer, and while he was tolerant of students, he would not tolerate outbursts in his courtroom. After admonishing us on several occasions to keep quiet, the judge finally lost his temper and had us removed from the courtroom after we had made rather loud remarks over what we considered to be the utter stupidity of the lawyers in their handling of the case.

We withdrew to a nearby cafe to discuss the sorry state of affairs of the legal profession. Several beers later we had determined that only through our brilliant practice of law could the profession be upgraded. Not only that, but we would become not only the best lawyers in Texas but in the whole damn world, and immense riches would be accumulated in the process.

As the hour was growing late and not wanting to deny the world our talent any longer, we high-tailed it to San Antonio. Still under the influence on our arrival, we enrolled in St. Mary's Law School, a fine old Catholic school which would accept us in spite of our Baptist heritage.

Once admitted and with visions of our future greatness at the bar, we proceeded to another kind of bar. The Gunter Hotel had one of the finest smorgasbords in the state, all you could eat, at one price. Eat we did, and after the third time around, the manager asked us to leave.

At a nearby drive-in we were sipping a beer when a car crowded

with young lieutenants from Randolph Field parked alongside. The boisterous young officers began making derogatory remarks about civilians, directing several 4-F and draft dodger remarks in our direction. I opened the door of Blocker's convertible and started toward them, knowing fully well I was going to get the short end of the stick. Suddenly the officers' car screeched out of the drive-in and sped away. Blocker had been slouched in his usual sitting position with his huge body hidden, but when I opened my door and started over to the airmen's car, Blocker stepped over his door, and that ended the matter—well almost. A motorcycle policeman pulled up alongside with instructions to hit the road.

Roaring down San Antonio's glamorous Broadway, we spotted a jeep with a gorilla chained in the back seat, promoting a jungle movie. Blocker climbed on the back of the convertible, and I put on my best side show barker pitch, and the crowds immediately shifted their attention from the gorilla to the "Wild Man from Borneo." Blocker's contortions broke up the crowd, except for one detail—the same motorcycle officer we had met earlier again pulled alongside with additional comments to hit the road.

Five blocks later we ran a red light, creating havoc at a busy intersection. The same officer pulled alongside, this time with instructions to "follow me." He led us to the outskirts of the Alamo City and, pointing down the highway, told us to go back to West Texas and never return, thus ending our budding careers as lawyers.

Although our college days ended in 1950, we remained in close contact through the years, and as I moved into politics, his interest and fascination in government increased. He came to know the great and near great in the political arena of not only

Texas but the nation. When John Kennedy was assassinated, Blocker called me in the middle of the night and we talked for hours about the fallen leader. In 1964 his fears of the extreme right led him to barnstorm the nation on behalf of Lyndon Johnson, and his appearances brought forth larger crowds than any of the candidates.

Blocker never had any serious intention of entering politics as a candidate, but he did scare the britches off conservative and liberal candidates alike when he intimated he might run. Actually, he detested actors who became candidates themselves, often pointing to California as a prime example of what he considered to be unqualified candidates elected simply because of their popularity.

Blocker's political motives were pure. He became disenchanted when a candidate failed to perform in what Blocker felt was the interest of the little guy.

During one of our last visits he said he was only happy when he was with children, saying they were not contaminated by selfish motives and demands.

A lot of us "little children" are going to miss him.

Moonwalkers

Broadcast 1980

IT WAS a perfect spring day in the Big Bend country, this first day of April 1964.

A large crowd including many school children grabbed up out of class by their mothers were on hand to welcome the celebrities to West Texas.

KVLF had been notified by NASA only the day before that sixteen of NASA's twenty-nine astronauts would land at the old Marfa Air Base April 1 for intensified field training in geology. The field trip, conducted and taught by the Chairman of the University of Texas geology department, was designed to illustrate geological structures such as faulting and folding and to inspect volcanic rock features. The NASA Manned Spacecraft Center and the US Geological Survey were holding courses to teach future moon landers how to selectively obtain samples of the lunar surface to help unlock the secrets of the origin and history of the moon.

John F. Kennedy had promised America that we would land a man on the moon and bring him back safely before the end of the decade. Lyndon Johnson had chaired the space committee in the Senate and headed the space program as vice-president.

There were still a fair amount of nonbelievers throughout the land but most of us believed we would live to see it happen. Now the isolated residents of the Big Bend country were to get a first hand look at the men who would walk the surface of the moon.

The assemblage was becoming restless when a DC-3 circled the field, landed, and lowered the ramp. A roar of welcome followed as the crowd thrust forward. Then a strange thing happened. Today they are called undocumented aliens, but in those days they were referred to as “wetbacks,” and they came pouring out of that DC-3 just as the crowd rushed forward. Armed Border Patrol appeared out of nowhere and held the horde of people at bay as the “wets” were quickly boarded on two busses which likewise came out of nowhere.

A lot of weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth occurred as many of the multitude headed for their cars, complaining of the cruel April Fool’s joke an announcer named Phil Wayne Ebersberger had pulled on them. As they headed back to Alpine, Marfa, Ft. Davis and elsewhere, a stake through the heart of Phil Wayne was uppermost in many minds.

As they turned on their car radios, there was Phil Wayne’s voice telling them the astronauts are coming, so don’t be discouraged. A few cars turned back to the airfield but most drove on their way.

Back at the airfield the NASA plane was indeed landing, and first off the plane was Alan Shepard, the first American to ride in space, a ninety-minute trip that gave hope to America’s space program, much maligned because of Sputnik’s early initiative. Shepard was followed off the plane by Astronauts Edwin (Buzz) Aldrin, William Anders, Charles Bassett, Alan Bean, Eugene Cernan, Roger Chaffee, Michael Collins, Gordon Cooper,



Alan Shepard, first American in space, is first off the plane at Marfa Air Base, April 1, 1964.



Astronauts Charles Bassett, William Anders, Alan Bean, Michael Collins and Roger Chaffee chat with local admirers.

Walter Cunningham, Don Eisele, Theodore Freeman, Richard Gordon, Russell Schweickart, Davis Scott, and Clifton Williams. This was the astronauts' first step into the Big Bend country, but before the Apollo program was ended, every astronaut who walked the moon, including Neil Armstrong, trained in the Big Bend country of Texas.

The following Sunday afternoon, Jim Glasscock, publisher of the *Alpine Avalanche* at the time, and I representing KVLB, received a phone call from NASA, inviting us to come to the Bien Venido Motel to meet and question the astronauts. I showed up Johnny on the spot, but Glasscock sent Hallie Stillwell, a local ranchwoman approaching her 70s who wrote a weekly ranch column in the *Avalanche*. They were all gathered in an upstairs combination bedroom-sitting room which the Bien Venido proudly called "The Suite." In 1964 the Bien Venido was the classiest motel between El Paso and Del Rio.

The geology professor explained what the astronauts had been studying for the past three days and the usefulness of those studies when they landed on the moon. Hallie Stillwell, who kept abreast of the cattle industry but paid little attention to the space program, spoke up. "You people aren't really serious about going to the moon, are you?"

There was an awful lot of silence in the room for a few seconds, and finally someone from NASA told Hallie that yes, they were really serious and that the United States was spending billions of dollars to make it so. Hallie was one of many in 1964 who didn't believe in the space program, and shortly she closed her notebook and left.

She never mentioned meeting the astronauts or questioning them in her later columns.

On April 14, two weeks later, the remainder of the astronauts

came. Most of their training was around Big Bend Park and the Marathon Basin. I asked their instructors if three or four days in the field would remain with them and was told that this was an exceptional group of young men with very high I.Q.'s and an equally lofty dedication. They would also undergo at least two months of classroom instruction in geology.

Even though they were putting in fifteen and twenty hour days, all the astronauts took time out to give autographs to the children. Hundreds of people in the area are in possession of autographs of every man who set foot on the moon.

The Way We Were

Broadcast 1988

A FEW WEEKS AGO Lillian Miles brought me a copy of an essay which was presented at the Homecoming for the Class of 1936 at Baylor University. I don't know if Lillian was in that class or if Elton, her husband, was in the '36 class, but they were there, and Lillian brought me a delightful story she thought you folks out there in radioland would like to share. So I'll just read the entire essay, as is with no changes:

IT IS SAID there are three ages of woman: Youth, Middle Age, and "You haven't changed." But change is the name of the game. Consider: Graduates of the class of 1936 were before the pill and the population explosion, which inexplicably, went hand in hand. We were before television, before penicillin, polio shots, antibiotics, and Frisbees, before frozen food, nylon, dacron, Xerox and Kinsey. We were before radar, fluorescent lights, credit cards and ball point pens. For us, time-sharing meant togetherness, not computers; a chip meant a piece of wood, hardware meant hardware, and software wasn't even a word.

We were before pantyhose and drip-dry clothes. Before ice-makers, microwaves, dishwashers, clothes dryers, freezers and electric blankets. Before Hawaii and Alaska became states. Before men wore long hair and earrings, and before

women wore tuxedos.

We were before Leonard Bernstein, yogurt, Ann Landers, plastics, hair dryers, the forty-hour week and the minimum age. We got married first and then lived together. How quaint can you be?

In our time, closets were for clothes and not for coming out of, and a book about two young women living together in Europe could be called *Our Hearts Were Young and Gay*.

Bunnies were small rabbits, and rabbits were not Volkswagens. We were before Grandma Moses and Frank Sinatra and cup sizes for bras. We wore Peter Pan collars, and deep cleavage was something butchers did. Pizza, Cheerios, frozen orange juice, instant coffee and McDonalds were unheard of. We thought fast food was what you ate during Lent. We were before FM radio, tape recorders, electric typewriters, word processors, Muzak, electronic music, disco dancing—and that's not all bad.

In our day, Coke was something you drank, grass was mowed, and pot was something you cooked in. We were before day-care centers, house-husbands, baby sitters, computer dating, dual careers, and computer marriages.

In our time there were five and dime stores where you could actually buy things for five and ten cents. For one nickel you could make a phone call or buy a coke or buy enough stamps to mail one letter and two postcards. You could buy a new Chevy for \$650, but who could afford that in 1936? Nobody. A pity, too, because gasoline was ten cents a gallon. If anyone had asked us to explain CIA, MS, NATO, UFO, NFL, SATS, JFK, BMW, ERA or IUD, we would have said "alphabet soup."

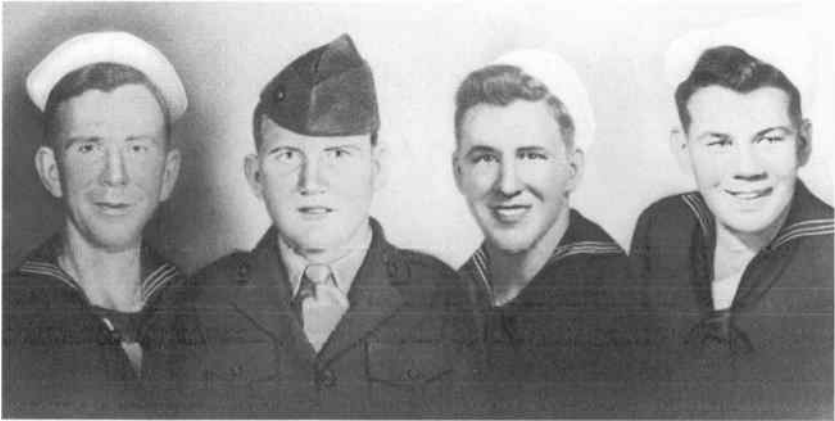
We were not before the difference between the sexes was discovered, but we were before sex change. We just made do with what we had. And we were the last generation that was so dumb as to think you needed a husband to have a baby.



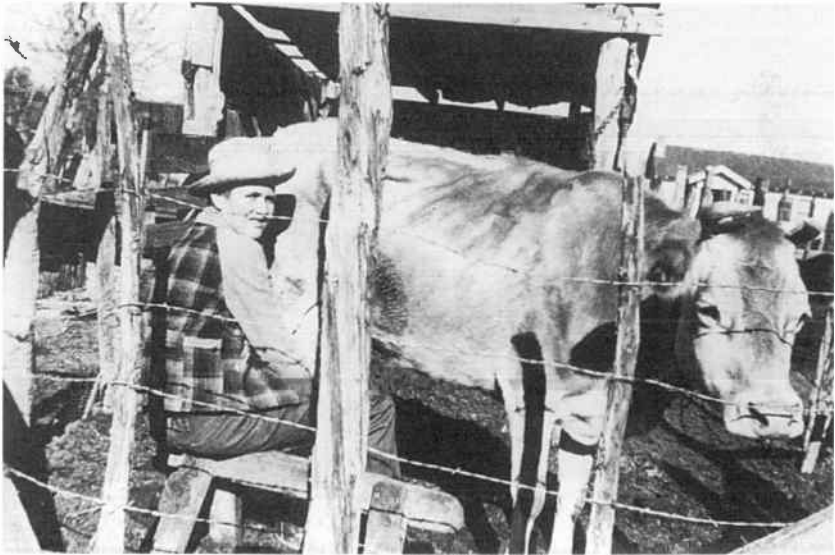
*Gene Hendryx broadcasts from Cactus Network
flagship station in Pecos, 1949.*



Earl Hendryx, the “yodeling truck driver,” 1930.



Earl Hendryx and all of his sons volunteered during World War II. All served in active combat against the enemy. Left to right: Earl, Gene, Burton, Jim.



At age fourteen, Hendryx has already decided there must be an easier way of making a living than milking.

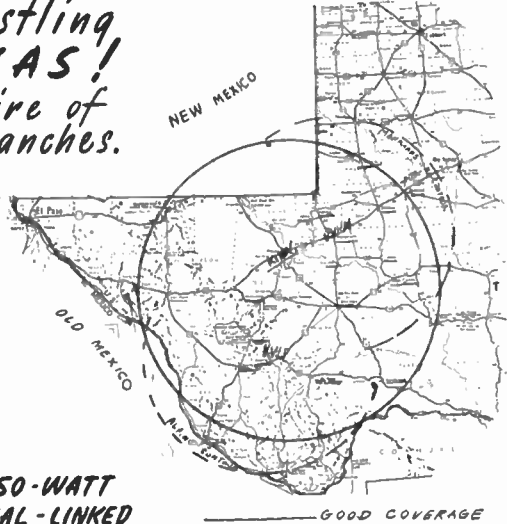
NEW RADIO FRONTIERS... REACHED Only BY THESE LOCAL STATIONS

In busy, bustling
WEST TEXAS!
Serving an empire of
Oil, Farms, & Ranches.

KIUN PIONEER VOICE WEST OF THE
PEGOS - ESTABLISHED 1935 -
RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF
THE "PEGOS BOOM"

KVKM VOICE OF KERMIT & MONAHANS.
A BEAUTIFUL STATION, DOING A
BEAUTIFUL JOB. IN THE HEART
OF OIL-RICH PERMIAN BASIN.

KVLF ONLY STATION IN THE DAVIS
MOUNTAIN-BIG BEND AREA -
GATEWAY TO BIG BEND PARK -
WORLD'S HIGHEST RANGES



THREE FULL-TIME 250-WATT
STATIONS - ALL MUTUAL - LINKED
WITH THEIR OWN 24-HOUR PROGRAM WIRE

* ALL CENSUS FIGURES UNRELIABLE FOR THIS BOOMING AREA - IN MANY CASES, POPULATION BELOW IS TRIPLED.

HERE ARE THE VITAL STATISTICS FOR THE "GOOD LISTENING" AREA OF THESE STATIONS

County	1940 population	Retail Sales	Buying Income	Income per family
BREWSTER	7,800	\$5,201,000	\$7,214,000	\$3,424
CHLBERSON	1,400	1,820,000	1,877,000	2,660
ECTOR	18,400*	23,948,000	19,500,000	3,136
JEFF DAVIS	2,100	694,000	969,000	1,740
PEGOS	9,200	7,424,000	11,260,000	4,225
PRESIDIO	9,200	5,575,000	7,070,000	3,047
REEVES	9,900*	3,778,000	14,225,000	4,764
WARD	10,600*	10,081,000	16,343,000	4,505
WINKLER	10,000*	9,915,000	13,768,000	4,660
TOTALS	78,600	74,536,000	91,485,000	

REPRESENTED NATIONALLY BY THE SOUTHWEST NETWORK
LOCAL ADDRESS - JACK HAWKINS, PEGOS, TEXAS RADIO BUILDING, EL PASO, TEXAS

1947 advertisement of Cactus Network, later expanded to other stations.



KVLF studios in lower right of picture. Holland Hotel, 1947.



In 1949 KVLF studios were combined in new building with the transmitter site at the edge of the 06 Ranch. Deer, antelope and coyotes were regular visitors.



Gene Hendryx, sportscaster Cactus State Network. Southwestern Semi-pro Baseball Tournament, Dudley Field, El Paso, Texas, 1949.



Frances Newsom looks on as American Legion Auxilliary President Mary Jo Sohl presents Hendryx with the Community Service Award, ca. 1950.



Early day track meet broadcast from Buck Stadium, ca. 1950.



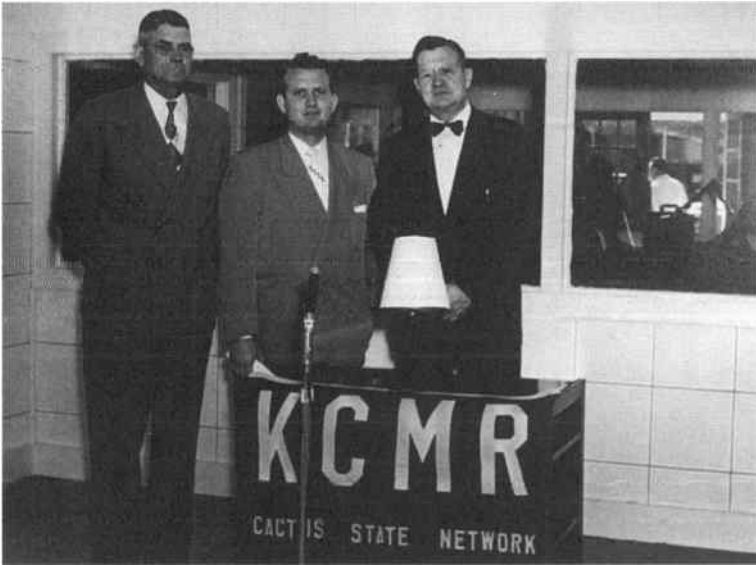
Gene Hendryx prepares to broadcast Pecos Livestock Show over Cactus Network, 1950.



Alpine Pilot Club recognizes Gene Hendryx for raising funds to pay for heart operation of small girl sponsored by Pilots, 1950. Left to right: Lil Edwards, Lucille Hendryx, Jo Ella Livingston, Hallie Stillwell, Gene Hendryx, Sunshine Epperson, Anna D. Linn, Electa Wade.



Left to right: Program director Phil Wayne Ebensberger, announcer Sam Wade, KVLf manager Gene Hendryx, salesman Jimmy Pate, engineer Sherman Newsom, 1957.



Left to right: Barney Hubbs, Gene Hendryx and Jack Hawkins at one of their stations, 1954.



Rep. Gene Hendryx presides as Speaker Pro Tem during 1960s legislative sessions. Lt. Gov. Ben Barnes is to the right of Gene.

WE ARE FULL GROWN NOW!

KVLF HAS JUST COMPLETED 21 YEARS OF BROADCAST SERVICE

In 1947, KVLF began broadcasting from a small studio in the Holland Hotel, and our first remote broadcast was from Nelson Locker Plant which also opened that month.

Today, we occupy our own building containing over 3,000 square feet of floor space, adjacent to Kakemot Field.

KVLF broadcasts 100 hours each week, including daily 10 HEADLINE NEWSCASTS, 5 TEXAS NEWSCASTS, 8 WORLD NEWSCASTS, NUMEROUS WEATHER REPORTS, 3 SPORTSCASTS, 5 DOW JONES STOCK REPORTS, 3 LOCAL NEWSCASTS, the LIVESTOCK MARKET REPORT along with numerous other informative programs. Two SUL ROSS NEWS and INTERVIEW programs are featured each week, in addition to a wide variety of musical programs.

KVLF Will Hold OPEN HOUSE Saturday, from 2 until 5 p.m.

We invite everyone in the Davis Mountain-Big Bend Area to visit our offices and studios, our newswans, and to inspect our full-out shelter and emergency broadcast room which will be your only source of information with the outside world in the event of National Emergency.

All of the staff will be on hand to greet you and Refreshments will be served.



Gene Coffin - Announcer



Anita Gibson - Receptionist



Mike Parenti - Announcer



Cam Corkins - Announcer



Gene Hendryx
President, Big Bend Broadcasters



Vidal Torres - Spanish Announcer



Jerry Austerl - Announcer



Ray Hendryx - Announce



John King - Chief Engineer



Elvie Williams - Bookkeeper



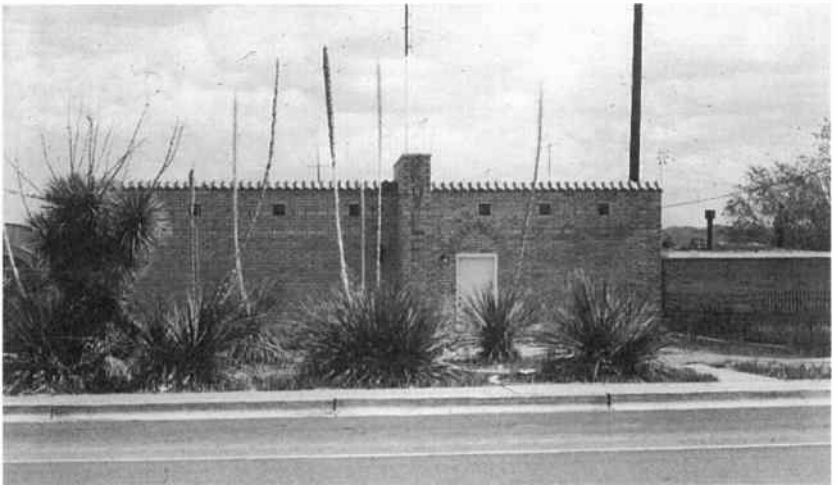
Phil Wayne - Program Director

JOIN US IN CELEBRATING OUR 21st BIRTHDAY SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17, FROM 2 to 5 P.M.

KVLF, Voice of the Last Frontier, celebrates 21st birthday in February 1968. Hundreds of listeners attended the Open House.



Hendryx broadcasts semi-final game during 1970s Sul Ross effort toward National Football Championship.



KVLF's state-of-the-art broadcast equipment, along with KALP-FM, are currently housed in this modern broadcast building, site of the KVLF transmitter building fifty years ago.

Brucellosis

Broadcast 1969

PERHAPS the most important occurrence in agriculture in the Big Bend area during the last half of the twentieth century came about in the late 1950s.

Brucellosis, an infectious bacterial disease common to cattle, swine, goats and man, was cropping up in various places throughout Texas. One of its common names was "Texas fever," in addition to "Malta fever," "Mediterranean fever," and "Bangs disease." Hippocrates described the disease in Greece in 400 B.C.

In livestock, Brucellosis causes abortion, sterility and decreased milk supply. In man brucellosis is generally referred to as "undulant fever" and is acute as well as chronic. It is characterized by weakness, chills and fever, painful joints, nervous disorders and miscarriage. It is transferred from animal to man by contact with infected animals or by drinking the milk of an infected animal. During the early 1950s, Alpine's last significant dairy was shut down by health authorities after the dairy herd tested positive for brucellosis.

During the latter part of the 50s, many states banned the import of Texas cattle because of the possible infection with the disease. The only way livestock could be shipped into those states

was to be certified as brucellosis free, and no county in Texas had that certification. It soon became apparent to some of the more progressive cattle raisers that the entire livestock industry in Texas was in jeopardy.

Keesey Kimball, a local rancher, who had been elected president of the Highland Hereford Association, had been in contact with animal health officials in Austin and had come up with an outline of a plan to defeat the brucellosis problem in Brewster, Presidio, and Jeff Davis counties. It was a preposterous scheme, and after he explained it, I told him he was nuts.

What the plan envisioned was that all owners of livestock in these three counties round up twenty five per cent of all their stock on dates specified by state veterinarians for inspection for brucellosis. The livestock producer must bare the expense. If one single head of stock was found to be infected, the entire herd would then be inspected, not just twenty-five per cent. Of course, any animal infected would be destroyed.

If and when this massive inspection was complete, and the state was satisfied that no brucellosis existed in these three counties, when all the i's were dotted and all the r's were crossed to the satisfaction of the Department of Animal Health, then a certificate would be issued stating that these three counties were "CERTIFIED MODIFIED BRUCELLOSIS FREE." This would permit shipment of livestock from this area to any place in the United State. The only problem was that at that time there was not one such county in Texas. No county had ever attempted such a hellacious undertaking.

In the 1950s, much of the rangeland in this area was still owned by the pioneers who carved it into being, and in no place on earth would you find a more hardheaded, independent, strong-minded, unregimented group of people.

The Reid Brothers in Jeff Davis County, Perry Cartwright, and Newt Gourley, all cowmen whose self-sufficiency was legendary, and Keesey Kimball, not even half their age, was going to persuade them to go along with such a proposition?

What Keesey wanted to do was to get specific instructions, one step at a time from Austin over the telephone, and for me to record the conversations with Austin so the tapes could be played at meetings with the ranchers. Thus there could be no misunderstanding by either the cowmen or the State of Texas about what was expected.

Under the name of the Highland Hereford Association, meetings were called in the district courtrooms of Brewster, Presidio, and Jeff Davis counties, and a barrage of public service announcements from KVLFF encouraged ranchers to attend. There Kimball explained in detail the plan, and then we would play a tape of his conversations with state animal health officials in Austin. Hopefully, the tapes answered most of the questions from the producers, but notes were made of those not answered, and the next day Keesey would come to KVLFF and call Austin while we recorded the questions and answers.

Some of the holdouts among the ranchers had begun to come around as the inspections progressed. A few ranches had a complete roundup and testing when brucellosis was found. Finally the last holdouts joined in the effort when it appeared the program was a success. The Highland Hereford Association had triumphed. Brewster, Presidio, and Jeff Davis counties were certified as modified brucellosis free, mainly because of the tenacity of Keesey Kimball.

Today you seldom hear the word brucellosis. Most people outside the livestock industry never heard of it. Calves are now inoculated with a vaccine developed in the late 50s. A broad

spectrum of antibiotics is available for treatment of the disease in humans.

Because of the achievement in the brucellosis campaign, the Highland Hereford Association could claim another benefit within a few short years. Jim Bob Steen, Bill Donnell and other ranchers came to me with a problem that had plagued the hunting industry in the Trans Pecos ever since hunting regulations were created.

Texas hunting licenses had two buck deer tags. That's all. Hunters from the rest of Texas would use up those two buck deer tags on white tails in their vicinity and then had no tag to come west of the Pecos for a mule deer buck. Hunting is big business and during the drought of the 1950s the only income for many ranchers was from hunting. The Highland Hereford Association wanted a third tag added to harvest a buck mule deer.

This was in the 1960s and I was representing this area with some modicum of success in the Texas Legislature. I took the problem to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and hit a brick wall. The leadership of that agency opposed any change in the state hunting license, regardless of my contention that adding a mule deer tag would benefit all parties concerned, including the State of Texas.

Finally I had enough. I've always believed there's no use in having political power if you don't have the guts to use it when circumstances offer no other solution. I'll not bore you with details but suffice it to say that when the smoke cleared, not only did the Texas hunting license have a buck mule deer tag added, it had a fourth tag for antlerless deer which could be used in areas where state biologists declared a surplus and the landowners agreed. Never before had anything like this happened in Texas.

Since that time many different types of deer and turkey tags have been added to the hunting license. It all started as a suggestion from the Highland Hereford Association, the people who brought the designation of “certified modified brucellosis free” to the Davis Mountains of West Texas.

The Green Cafe

Broadcast 1979

ONE OF MY FAVORITE PLACES in the 1940s was the Green Cafe. It was a small cafe located on West Avenue G and operated by the Gallego family. It was actually a house that had been converted into a cafe which served Mexican food.

Pete Gallego Sr., who founded the business, died in 1944 and his wife, daughter, and son-in-law ran the place. When Pete Gallego Jr. returned from World War II, he joined them in the business.

Some of us Sul Ross students ate there; in fact, you could get a dozen tamales to go for a quarter, and sometimes we would take those tamales over to the Toltec Cafe and eat them along with having a bottle of beer. I don't think this endeared us too well with the Toltec Cafe management—bringing in someone else's tamales.

After Pete Gallego Jr. had been in the business a few years, he moved into a large barracks and had it remodeled. It was the grandest cafe in Alpine. Wall to wall paneling and modern fixtures. He built it on the site of the old Green Cafe and called it the Green Cafe, also, although it was covered with white asbestos shingles.

KVLF broadcast a remote program at the grand opening, and Mayor John Gillette made a speech.

I remember the place could hold eighty-eight people without bringing in any extra tables and chairs, and it had a separate bar up front where the beer drinkers could meet in peace.

The Green Cafe remained a popular dining place for travelers as well as locals well into the 1970s when Pete Gallego Jr. built a modern restaurant on East Holland Avenue and named it Gallego's Mexican Food Restaurant. He then closed the Green Cafe, but many of us remember the original Green, the little house that had been converted into the best Mexican food place in town.

Sul Ross Annuals

Broadcast 1978

IF a person is interested in taking a look at some of the history in this area, a gander at the early day annuals at Sul Ross State University is an excellent place to start.

The first annual was printed in 1920 in the days when the administration building was the only building on the hill, in fact the only building just east of what is now Cockrell Street. Early day pictures of the campus were pretty bare, but the annuals contained many pictures taken throughout the area.

During the 1920s and '30s, the college sponsored lots of area events for the students even though there were no paved roads and in some places no roads at all. The only mode of transportation was the Model T.

Those old annuals contained pictures of picnics held in Ranger Canyon, Terlingua, Lajitas, up in the Davis Mountains which is now the Davis Loop although no such loop existed back in those days.

The type of clothing worn back then is also documented in those annuals. In the '20s and '30s there must have been a heavy emphasis on writing, especially poetry, because all the annuals for the first twenty years contained a lot of poetry written by the

students. In fact, the Sul Ross Alma Mater was written by Rose Sharp and appeared in the 1920 annual. Rose Sharp was later to become Rose Sharp Brewer and taught English at Sul Ross. It is interesting also to look at the 1920 annual and then look at another annual fifteen years later and see that some of the faculty used the same picture for over fifteen years.

Apparently there were a number of barbecues given by area ranchers with all the students and faculty invited. The great outdoors was where most of the extra curricular or social activities took place, including hunting. Both the men and women students had rifle clubs, and they competed in statewide events just as schools now participate in other sports.

It is also interesting to look at the early day advertisers in the annual. In 1980 there were no business houses in this area that existed in 1920 except the bank in Alpine and the bank in Marfa, at least according to the advertising section in the early day annuals.

When you get ready to look at the annuals, set aside at least a day for the project. Then you can really feel that you are part of the early days of history.

Dick Riddle

Broadcast 1975

AROUND the turn of the century a youngster in Tennessee gathered all his cash and told the railroad clerk he wanted a ticket as far west as the money would take him. It took him to Monahans, Texas, and that is where Dick Riddle got off.

He got a job on a horse ranch near Monahans and was put in charge of moving a large herd of mares to the river in what is now known as Big Bend National Park. He became the top horse trader on the Rio Grande and raised stock from Nine Point Mesa to the Rio Grande on a half million acres.

World War I came along and Dick Riddle soldiered in France. On his return he became manager on the quarter of a million acre 02 Ranch, south of Alpine, a position he held until Lykes Brothers Steamship Co. bought the 02 in the 1940s.

Riddle then went to work for Herbert Kokernot on the 06 Ranch. That's where he died, at his home on the 06 in 1960.

Dick Riddle never owned a clock or a watch, but they said he could tell time within five minutes day or night. He never read newspapers, listened to the radio or watched TV and never discussed world events.

He used to rope wild mares as a young man, and when he

roped the mustangs he would slow them down by cutting the leader on the inside of the front leg so the animal couldn't run as fast. His hands were as hard as the rope he used on the saddle.

Old timers say Dick Riddle had no time for women. He would pick out some little out of the way grocery store to buy his groceries where he knew he wouldn't encounter a female.

Riddle would go to the Rio Grande and bring back gallons of sotol which he used as an all purpose product. He used it for aftershave lotion, used it on bruises, poured it on burns, and occasionally was known to drink the stuff. His idea of a good time was to buy about a half dozen bottles of soda pop, drink all of them and then go get his bedroll and camp out on the river.

Old time ranchers and cowboys said Dick Riddle had more information on how a cow and calf operation ought to be run then you can find in all the textbooks.

Dick Riddle was one of the last of the old time cowboys.

Bodie Hunter

Broadcast 1981

A LOT OF FOLKS have asked me over the years to broadcast something about the late Bodie Hunter, the former Marfa football coach who dominated football in this area of Texas for a decade and a half.

Bodie Hunter was hired as football coach for the Marfa Short-horns just prior to World War II. Some of the men who were on the school board at that time said the only question they asked Bodie was “Can you beat Alpine?” He replied that he could, and they hired him. He pretty well beat Alpine as long as he coached until the last couple of years when he simply ran out of material.

Bodie played his college ball at the old Daniel Baker College in Brownwood, which later closed its doors.

I first met Bodie in the summer of 1947. I was playing baseball for Marfa. Another Sul Ross student, Jim Henry, pitched for Marfa and I was in the outfield. Not that I was any great shakes as an outfielder, but I hit left-handed and they wanted a left-handed hitter.

The reason we played in Marfa was Sul Ross students weren't playing in Alpine at the time. I forget who all was on the Marfa team. I think Smitty Baker played short stop, Fritz Kahl was the catcher, and Legs DeVolin played first base.

Bodie Hunter was the base umpire, and in the first game I played I got an easy two base hit. When I started into second base I thought I would show off a little, so I hit the dirt and slid a half a block into the base. Bodie Hunter called me out, and I couldn't believe it and neither could the rest of the Marfa team.

Bodie and I got into it pretty hot and heavy; in fact, he threw me out of the game. I found out after the game that he called me out because I was from Alpine. Bodie didn't want anybody from Alpine playing baseball for Marfa.

That was the way he was. If you were from Alpine, he was going to be against you in anything you did.

That fall I broadcast all the Marfa football games. Those were the days when Marfa really produced football players, dominating in the district and on up into the regional playoffs, which was as far as we went in those days in small school classifications.

In addition to broadcasting Marfa games, I broadcast a half hour concert of the Marfa High School Band each week and did a weekly fifteen minute football program with Bodie Hunter and some of the Marfa players.

It wasn't long before I got to know Bodie, though not too well for several years. But when the game between Marfa and Alpine came up, Bodie swelled up and wouldn't even give me the starting lineup. Finally I said "Damn you Bodie, you can't hide them when they get out on the field and I'll find out who they are then."

Later I was to make that same statement to the so called great Coach Bib Falk at the University of Texas when he refused to give me the Texas lineup for the Texas University-Sul Ross baseball game.

Bodie played the single wing backfield, and he never changed to the T or any of the other sophisticated formations. He stayed with the single wing, and that cost him a chance at the Pecos job

later when he applied there. The Pecos school board flatly refused to hire a man who coached the single wing.

Pecos went thirty years without winning too, but that is another story.

I kept broadcasting Marfa games through the years and Bodie finally warmed up enough to invite me to ride to the games with them on the bus. We would go into the gymnasium where the players rested the afternoon of the game, and Bodie would tell me stories of his college days and early coaching days. I had a little portable radio with me when Marfa was playing over at Iraan for the bi-district championship, and Bodie and I listened to Kyle Rote take Doke Walker's place in the SMU backfield and run wild through Notre Dame.

That night I originated the first broadcast in the history of the town of Iraan. The Iraan Lions Club and the Marfa Lions Club split the cost of the broadcast. We set up a public address system in the gymnasium in Marfa and rented a telephone line from the KVLFF studios to the PA system in Marfa. The folks in Marfa, who could not get to the game in Iraan, listened to the game over that PA system.

Bodie was all for it and helped get the Lions Club behind it.

We became good friends as the years passed, and then one day the Marfa school board relieved Bodie of his coaching duties and made him a principal. It nearly broke his heart. Marfa had lost population, and they could no longer compete with Alpine on the football field. I never will forget Bodie telling me with tears in his eyes that he no longer had the boys to compete against the bigger schools and said, "Damn it, I can't breed 'em."

Bodie Hunter stayed on in Marfa as principal until he died of a heart attack, but for about fifteen years Bodie Hunter from Marfa was the winningest coach in Texas.

Prayer

Broadcast 1957

MAYOR HUGH WHITE brought a prayer by the radio station. I don't know if he had himself in mind or me. It must be him because he's quite a bit older than me and the prayer is obviously for an older person. Or perhaps he had Dr. Lockhart in mind—they're always dueling. Anyway, its not a bad prayer.

It says:

LORD, thou knowest better than I know myself that I am growing older and will someday be old.

Keep me from getting talkative, and particularly from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something on every subject and every occasion.

Release me from trying to straighten out everybody's affairs.

Make me thoughtful, but not moody; helpful, but not bossy.

With my vast store of wisdom it seems a pity not to use it all, but Thou knowest Lord, that I want a few friends at the end.

Keep my mind free from recital of endless details; give me the wings to get to the point.

Seal my lips on my many aches and pains. They are increasing,

and my love of rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by.

I ask for grace enough to listen to the tales of others pains. Help me endure them patiently.

Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally it is possible that I might be mistaken.

Keep me reasonably sweet. I do not want to be a saint; some are so hard to live with, but a sour old person is one of the crowning works of the devil.

Help me to extract all possible fun out of life. There are so many funny things around us, and I don't want to miss any of them.

AMEN



That's the end of Hugh's prayer, but here's a little P.S. that could easily be included:

Lord fill my mouth with worthwhile stuff, but close it when I've said enough.

November 22

Broadcast 1982

“**L**YNDON JOHNSON forced Jack Kennedy to come to Dallas to save his own political hide.” I’ve heard David Brinkley say that so many times on television I’ve become convinced Brinkley’s ignorance of Texas politics is surpassed only by his arrogance. His repeated telling of that false statement puts him in the same category as Oliver Stone and New Orleans District Attorney Garrison.

President Kennedy had been pushing Governor John Connally to put together a statewide Kennedy campaign tour for at least six months prior to November. Connally was opposed to the trip in 1963 for many reasons. Connally was a freshman governor. He had just taken office in January, and he had all he could say grace over dealing with a legislature that might not pay any more attention to him than it had his predecessor, Price Daniel. The former Secretary of the Navy knew a lot more about Washington politics than Texas politics, and he was still in the learning stage.

Texas governors served only two year terms, and Connally had barely squeaked into office in 1962 with three hard fought campaigns in the primary, the run-off and the general election.



*In honor of
President John F. Kennedy
and
Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson*

*The State Democratic Executive Committee
requests the pleasure of your company
at the*

Texas Welcome Dinner

*on Friday evening the twenty-second of November
One thousand nine hundred and sixty-three
at half after seven o'clock
at the Municipal Auditorium
in the City of Austin*



*Contribution card enclosed
Optional dress*

*Mr. Eugene M. Locke, Chairman
Mr. Alfred Nepley, Vice-Chairman
Mr. Frank G. Erwin, Jr., Secretary*

Above: Invitation to attend formal dinner for President and Mrs. Kennedy on evening of November 22, 1963. Right: Upper telegram from Governor and Mrs. Connally inviting Gene and Lucille Hendryx to a private cocktail party for President Kennedy and Vice President

CLASS OF SERVICE This is a fast message unless its deferred character is indicated by the proper symbol.	<h1 style="margin: 0;">WESTERN UNION</h1> <h2 style="margin: 0;">TELEGRAM</h2> <p style="margin: 0; font-size: small;">W. P. MARSHALL, President</p>	SYMBOLS DL = Day Letter NL = Night Letter LT = International Letter Telegram	
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			The time shown in the date line on domestic telegrams is LOCAL TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is LOCAL TIME at point of destination.
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NOV 8 63 0800

OCCAS40 D AUY224 AUZ6 AUZ6 LL PD AUSTIN TEX 7 =
 THE HON AND MRS GENE HENDRYX = PD BOX 779 ALPINE TEX =
 THE GOVERNOR OF TEXAS AND MRS CONNALLY REQUEST THE PLEASURE
 =OF YOUR COMPANY AT A RECEPTION HONORING THE PRESIDENT OF
 THE =UNITED STATES AND MRS KENNEDY AND THE VICE PRESIDENT
 OF THE =UNITED STATES AND MRS JOHNSON ON FRIDAY EVENING
 THE TWENTY-SECOND =OF NOVEMBER FROM SIX O'CLOCK UNTIL HALF
 AFTER SIX O'CLOCK AT =THE EXECUTIVE MANSION IN THE CITY OF
 AUSTIN. BLACK TIE =
 UNSIGNED =843A CST NOV 8.

THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE

CLASS OF SERVICE This is a fast message unless its deferred character is indicated by the proper symbol.	<h1 style="margin: 0;">WESTERN UNION</h1> <h2 style="margin: 0;">TELEGRAM</h2> <p style="margin: 0; font-size: small;">W. P. MARSHALL, President</p>	SYMBOLS DL = Day Letter NL = Night Letter LT = International Letter Telegram	
			(33)
			The time shown in the date line on domestic telegrams is LOCAL TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is LOCAL TIME at point of destination.
			AU034

(D EPA122) DL PD=ALPINE TEX 19 1002A CST=
 OREA GUFFIN, ENROLLING RM TEXAS HOUSE OF REP=
 DLR DO NOT PHONE AUSTIN TEX=
 REGRET LUCILLE AND I CAN NOT ATTEND PRESIDENT'S DINNER.
 STATION MANAGER ON VACATION REQUIRES THAT I WORK 5:30 AM
 TO 2PM SHIFT DAILY, NO AIRLINE SERVICE FOR QUICK FLIGHT.
 MY CAMPAIGNING NEXT FALL ON BEHALF OF DEMOCRATIC TICKET
 WILL POSSIBLY BE OF GREATER SERVICE TO DEMOCRATIC PARTY
 THAN MY ATTENDANCE AT DINNER=
 GENE HENDRYX=

THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE

Johnson and their wives. Lower telegram from Gene Hendryx explaining that his work schedule prevented him from attending both events.

He knew that he had to raise 90% of his campaign funds before the end of 1963. He and all other Texas politicians knew when Kennedy barnstormed the state, he would clean out the major political coffers, leaving Connally and all other Texas politicians high and dry. So nobody in Texas politics was wild about Kennedy visiting until they had a chance at their own money raising-events.

After a lot of pressure, a lot of planning, and a lot of meetings, Connally agreed to set up the November expedition. But he forced the Kennedys to pay a price: They had to share the money raised during the trip with the state Democratic Party in Texas which Connally had complete control over.

I knew November 22 was going to be a long day because Phil Wayne, the popular KVLV program director was on a well-deserved vacation, so I was pulling his shift on the air as well as my own. Lucille and I were supposed to be in Austin that evening for a private reception for President and Mrs. Kennedy at the governor's mansion, followed by the big fund raising dinner. In fact, Nellie Connally had, in a hand written note, asked Lucille to remind Gene to wear a tux. Because of the work schedule at KVLV, we were unable to attend.

I finished broadcasting the 12:30 News and had played perhaps one record when five bells rang out on the Associated Press teletype, signifying a bulletin of the highest priority. The President had been shot in Dallas. I began broadcasting the bulletins as fast as they cleared the teletype and also monitored ABC. Then around one o'clock I broadcast the words that shocked the world: "The President is dead."

Every American alive on that day remembers exactly where they were when those words were spoken over thousands of radio and TV stations around the country. The Alpine Public

Schools piped KVLFF over their PA system, and to this day people come up to me and tell me about hearing my voice deliver that fateful message. They tell me what grade they were in, who their teacher was, and they remember clearly everything in their lives at that moment.

I canceled all regular programming on KVLFF for the remainder of the day—a cancellation that would remain in effect for three more days because of events piling up on one another connected to the assassination. KVLFF had a large library of sacred music which we began playing almost immediately, interspersed with news bulletins and network bulletins. I had it all to myself with Phil Wayne out of town, and it had been that way since 5:30 that morning when KVLFF prepared for the broadcast day.

Not only were we dealing with the President's assassination and all the facets and rumors thereof, but also the shooting of Governor Connally who was near death at Parkland Hospital. He was a personal as well as political friend of mine, and this added to the turmoil of covering the presidential story.

I had lost all track of time and had forgotten there was such a thing as food. Around eight o'clock that night I surrendered the mike to one of the part time announcers, and Keesey Kimball literally dragged me out to the ranch where Lucille and the boys had been taken by Mary Ellen, Keesey's wife. I was still in a daze as the Kimball's barbecued steaks for everyone.

Saturday and Sunday weren't much different at KVLFF with more news bulletins, more sacred music and then the shooting of Lee Harvey Oswald. It seemed as though some never ending heinous affliction had struck at the heart of America.

Dr. Harlan Ford, Dean of Sul Ross College, announced a memorial service for the late President in the college main auditorium and asked me to be the speaker. The auditorium was

packed; people were standing in the halls and outside the open doors on each side of the auditorium. It was as if they wanted to share their grief with others, to reach out to be near someone, anyone, who had known the President or the Governor. I don't remember what I said during the speech other than the statement "We shall not forget and we will not forgive." A couple of days later a local minister scolded me for saying "We will not forgive."

I wonder sometimes if America has forgiven this taking of her innocence, her deflowering so to speak. Never again would America be able to tell other nations, "Be like us." Although I served in public office a few more years, the thrill was gone. Any ideas I may have entertained about a life of public service ended that 22nd day of November, 1963.

The Five Texas Giants

Broadcast January 23, 1973

THE LAST of the Texas Giants is dead. For those of you who never took the time, never had the time, or perhaps never really cared too much for history, you might be interested in this short analysis of the Texas Giants.

This unasked for, unrehearsed brief lesson of history is of my own doing—my own analysis of the Giants who have come out of Texas to leave their footprints forever embedded on the pages of history of the United States of America.

I claim no credentials or license as a historian, other than having spent my entire life studying history as a hobby, particularly political history and the men who made that history in this nation. This is about five of those men, men whom I choose to call the Texas Giants.

The first giant of the Lone Star State was Sam Houston, the magnificent barbarian who led Texas to independence, served as President of the Republic of Texas, then led her into the Union. Sam Houston's history is the best known. As a United States Senator from Texas following entry into the Union, he twice refused consideration as the Democratic nominee for President of the United States. Always popular in the Eastern United States,

this giant of a man spent his life working for the interests of his beloved Texas. The mark he made on the history of America compares with the leadership provided by George Washington.

The second Texas Giant, little known in this generation, was referred to by his biographers as The Last Democrat. Joseph Weldon Bailey of Gainsville, Texas, was considered by many as the greatest orator in history. For more than a quarter of a century he was considered one of the most brilliant men in government.

As a member of the United States Congress, he refused to accept the Speakership of the House and instead went to the United States Senate where he was chosen Democratic leader. From his position of power in the senate, he fought long and hard against the programs of a fellow Democrat, Woodrow Wilson.

His dislike for Wilson no doubt stemmed from Texas politics. During that era, the Jim Hogg political machine was in high stride in Texas, and its leader was Col. House, the Texan who was closer to Woodrow Wilson than any other man. The Jim Hogg machine fought Joe Bailey for many years and at each election attempted to eliminate him from the political scene. Joe Weldon Bailey had a national following and was offered the democratic nomination for President by key political leaders across the United States, with his main support coming from New York, of all places.

Bailey refused to consider the nomination, saying he preferred his position of leadership in the United States Senate.

This man's political career ended in scandal, when he was accused of accepting a large amount of money in the Waters-Pierce Oil Case. Although the charges were never proven, his image was tarnished to such an extent in Texas that he no longer was

able to muster the huge following which had been his. After leaving the United States Senate, he later ran for governor of Texas and went down to defeat in a three-way race between himself, former Speaker of the Texas House Thomason of El Paso, and Pat Neff.

He later died while addressing a jury for his law practice at Gainsville. Although his stature diminished following his political downfall, no other man wielded as much power during the quarter of a century he dominated the United States Congress. More children were named for Joe Weldon Bailey than any other man in Texas history up to that time, including Sam Houston.

During the years Joe Weldon Bailey's power was on the wane, another Texan was climbing the ladder to join the ranks of the giants who strode across the pages of American history. He was John Nance Garner who came out of Uvalde to serve in the Texas Legislature and wound up in the United States Congress. There he became Speaker of the House and later served two terms as Vice President of the United States.

A figure of national stature, his downfall came at the hands of Franklin Roosevelt when Garner opposed Roosevelt's nomination to a third term. Backed by the powerful Hearst Newspapers and other similar interests, Garner was beaten back. Franklin Roosevelt was the only man in or out of government who took the measure of John Nance Garner. Mr. Garner retired from public life and returned to Uvalde where he lived another quarter of a century, never again returning to Washington or the national political scene. But during his active years, he dominated the Congress of the United States and left his mark in history.

As Garner's career came to a close, another Texan, Sam Rayburn

of Bonham, emerged on the national scene. After having served in the Texas Legislature, Rayburn went to Congress where he worked his way up to Speaker of the House, a position he held longer than any man in history. Twice offered the Vice Presidential nomination, Rayburn refused, saying he preferred the legislative branch of government where he was complete master of the House for more than a quarter of a century. He died while still in office, and one of the most historic pictures in history was made at his funeral. Seated side by side were two former Presidents, the incumbent President, and the future President of the United States.

Mr. Rayburn's young colleague from Johnson City, Texas, had already served several terms in the Senate, had established himself as the most adroit majority leader in history of the senate, and had moved on to the Vice Presidency. Lyndon Johnson became President upon the death of President John Kennedy, then was reelected President by the biggest majority ever received by a candidate. His life and his history are well known—from his infancy to his death—a Texas Giant in America.

With Lyndon Johnson's death yesterday, Texas has five giants in American history, and for the first time since the death of Sam Houston, Texas is without a giant on the national scene. At the present time, no giant seems in the making, a person who can capture the national image of the country. Perhaps there is some young growing politician who will someday step onto the national scene with the impact of his five predecessors.

One of the prerequisites of becoming a giant seems to be a youthful start. All five of the Texas giants embarked on their political careers while they were very young men, which gave them time to rise above their colleagues and move on to the head of the flock. One other thing all five of these giants had in

common—they never forgot where they came from.

Sam Houston, Joe Weldon Bailey, John Nance Garner, Sam Rayburn, Lyndon Baines Johnson—you don't have to agree or disagree with their philosophies or their accomplishments, but you do know one thing—they are all Texas Giants.

Jim Casner

Broadcast 1989

JIM CASNER came to Alpine in 1914 after having undergone a cure for tuberculosis for about four years in New Mexico. In 1915 he opened an automobile agency in Alpine and until 1981 there was always a Casner Motor Company in Alpine.

Although Jim Casner was best known for the automobile business he established, he also became involved in several other enterprises including the processing of candelilla wax, farming, ranching and other ventures. He experimented with lechugilla and various other cactus plants, in an effort to establish their medical value, even building a plant east of town to carry out research.

In 1963 Mr. Casner won the Ben Franklin Award from the *Saturday Evening Post* and the National Automobile Association as the Outstanding Automobile Dealer in America. I passed a resolution through the Texas Legislature sighting his long list of accomplishments when that presentation was made.

Jim Casner was one of the best story tellers I ever heard. He had an excellent memory and could regale people for hours. His stories weren't dirty stories; they were real life events that appealed to people you knew, and they applied to people you knew.

Jim Casner just had a way of dressing them up and making those everyday events into a hilarious adventure.

One time we left El Paso about noon on what should have been a three and a half hour drive to Alpine. We arrived twelve hours later simply because Jim Casner kept me in stitches all the way and I couldn't average over thirty miles an hour driving and at the same time listen to Jim Casner's hilarious stories. He was a great mimic and could impersonate Senator Berkeley right down to his cigar smoke.

Jim Casner was a "lunger," a term applied to those with tuberculosis. He left his father's ranch in Llano county where he was born in 1886 and went to New Mexico to a sanitarium. He entered into various business ventures while in New Mexico and in 1914 showed up in Alpine where he bought the Ford dealership.

In 1919 Casner disposed of the Ford agency and acquired the dealership for several makes of cars including Buick, Dodge, Hudson and Essex under the dealership of Casner Motor company, a name that was the most prominent in the automobile business in West Texas for sixty years.

Although Jim Casner was highly successful in business, very few worthwhile community projects missed his attention or his pocket book. He did much more for Big Bend Park than ever given credit for, including traveling 40,000 miles at his own expense throughout Texas, getting his fellow automobile dealers to introduce him to their senators and representatives as well as local newspaper editors. Through these connections he was able to put together a strong statewide network of support for the prospective park.

A man of great optimism and vision, he lost his socks during the Depression but never gave up. Ten years after the Depression

ended he was back on top again, looking for new fields to conquer. He enjoyed life to the fullest and lived a long one, passing away at age ninety-four.

Jim Casner helped pioneer modern business in West Texas and most certainly left his mark on the Big Bend country. Not bad for a “lunger” not expected to live beyond the age of twenty-one.

Chamber of Commerce Speech

Speech by Gene Hendryx given to Alpine Chamber of Commerce Annual Banquet in January 1968, recorded and later broadcast on KVLV.

CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE banquets in nearly all communities are an optimistic venture. Generally, these banquets such as this one tonight, are held shortly after the first of the year, when we all look forward to a good year. The administration of most chambers change at this time of year, and just as with the change of any administration in a free society, we look forward with anticipation to new projects and new ways to enliven and improve the business communities in our cities and towns. This year, 1968, should be an excellent year for the Big Bend Country of Texas; we have so many things now underway or on the verge of getting underway that those who live in this area and who put forth an effort should be able to do a banner year in business.

Three months from now, Hemisfair in San Antonio gets underway, and for the next six months, and after that, travelers through our area should increase by a huge percentage.

Some of them will travel to San Antonio and come through

this area enroute, while others will go to San Antonio by other routes and plan to come back through this area as they return home.

Big Bend National Park will have an excellent display at Hemisfair which will be viewed by hundreds of thousands of people, and many of them from other states will come this way in order to take a look at this vast jewel of the desert. What all of us out here need to be doing right now is figuring out ways and means of getting these people to spend a day and night or three days or a week, visiting in the Davis Mountain–Big Bend Country. Because we happen to be located on a highway over which many of them will travel does not necessarily mean they will stop here, unless they have some reason to want to be here.

The entrances to our communities and the main thoroughfares should be spotless and inviting, and business firms on these highways could go a long way in cooperating to make the tourist want to stop over. If everyone would see that his property and the area that fronts his property is neat and inviting, and store fronts and window displays are attractive, this would help a great deal in enticing the traveler to pause in our area. These people traveling to and from Hemisfair have money to spend—that's why they're traveling—they aren't going there looking for bargains. And how much if any of that money rubs off out here in the Big Bend Country depends on how much effort we put forth to attract it.

We have other important attractions which will add greatly to the number of travelers in this area in 1968. Indian Lodge was not completed until the end of the past tourist season, and with the coming of the tourist season this year and the amount of publicity that is being generated for Davis Mountains State Park, we'll have thousands of additional people in this area

just because of that one particular project.

Two weeks ago, National Geographic came out with their thirty page spread, in color, on Big Bend National Park. This great publicity feature will be read by hundreds of thousands of people, and this particular magazine is one that you don't just read and throw away. People who take National Geographic keep them around for a long, long time. This thirty page feature is perhaps the greatest coup yet to benefit travel to Big Bend. Mrs. Johnson's trip to Big Bend is still generating publicity; in fact, that's what brought on the feature in National Geographic.

The Texas Tourist Development Agency has brought three different writers' tours to this area, the most recent being only two months ago. Unprecedented publicity, which did not cost this area one penny, is being generated throughout America as a result of these tourist and travel writers being brought by the state of Texas to this area.

Land acquisition has begun in the Guadalupe Mountains National Park in Culberson and Hudspeth Counties, and although it will be sometime before the park is fully developed, the more hearty of the travelers who like to camp out will be permitted into certain areas of the park this year. This has already received a lot of national attention, adding still another attraction to our area as a whole.

In the near future, I expect the State Parks and Wildlife Department to enter into an agreement with perhaps the University of Texas or SMU for a complete archeological study of Fort Leaton near Presidio. We expect to spend around \$50,000 on this study to make certain that before the Fort is restored, we will know all that is possible concerning the Fort, not only about the white civilization which existed there but also the Indian civilization prior to the coming of the Spaniards.

This study will take upward to two years, and then thanks to the seventy five million dollar bond issue passed in November by the people of Texas, Fort Leaton along with other sites will be restored and operated by the Parks and Wildlife Department for the benefit of the public, which means again that we are adding still another tourist attraction to our area of Texas.

In Jeff Davis County, the McDonald Observatory Complex will be completed this year, which in itself is one of the most outstanding attractions for visitors in this state. The new dome will house a complete walkway where the visitor may watch what is going on without interfering with the studies being made by some of the world's most outstanding astronomers. If plans continue as they are, the first astronauts who land on the moon will be in communication with McDonald through an arrangement with NASA. Just as now when astronauts are in communication with Perth, Australia and other tracking stations, those who go to the moon will be in communication with the complex at McDonald. Thus the tourist who comes to this area can stand in the middle of Davis Mountain State Park and on one side see old Fort Davis, the beginning of civilization in this area, and on the other side the tourist can look up and see the astronomy complex at McDonald communicating with the moon. From the days of the Indian warriors to man's conquest of the moon, with a state park right smack dab in the middle—now how many tourists in the world can be in that position?

Moving on down U.S. Highway 90 at Langtry, the Texas Highway Department this summer will complete construction of the \$125,000.00 tourist information center which will be operated in conjunction with the Judge Roy Bean Museum. From that information center, hundreds of thousands of pieces of literature will be distributed to travelers informing them of what

they can see and do out here in the Western part of the state. Just below Langtry you already have the Pecos River Bridge, still another attraction tourists talk about.

And then with the completion of Amistad Dam, you have a body of water larger than Falcon, an outstanding recreational feature which many people will want to see, where fisherman will have a literal paradise and where one of the largest tourist complexes in America will be built. The United States government through the National Park Service is constructing the Amistad National Recreational area which is different from a national park, and this national recreational area, complete with a tower which will exceed the one under construction at Hemisfair, will be second to none.

We in West Texas are sitting right in the middle of the Southwest's greatest attractions. I have made a proposal in Austin, but it would have to originate out here in the western part of the State, that U.S. Highway 90 which now dead-ends at Van Horn, be continued on to Carlsbad, New Mexico, over what is now State Highway 54. Look at what you would have for the tourist; look at the tourist package which could be put together. Carlsbad Caverns National Park, then on down to Guadalupe Mountains National Park, on into this area to Big Bend, Fort Leaton, Davis Mountain State Park, Old Fort Davis, McDonald Observatory, Judge Roy Bean Museum, and Amistad Dam and National Recreation area, all served by one highway, a highway that can be sold to the public as the national parks highway, with more attractions than any other similar area in the nation. This isn't some goofy dream. These facilities are realities, and I hope each commissioners court on this highway will petition the Texas Highway Department to use their influence with the National Highway Designation Committee to change

Highway 54 to U.S. 90 from Van Horn to Carlsbad. A lot of people in West Texas stand to make a lot of money, and I don't know about you but I intend to be in on it. If you who live in West Texas don't capitalize on it, others will come in who will. I intend to make some of that money because it's coming and we have just as many brains as somebody from Dallas or Houston or someplace else. The people who live out here now and who do not become more affluent cannot blame anybody but themselves. All they've got to do is use a little business judgment and then get up off their duff and get after it. Offer what travelers want, and they'll buy it.

I've learned a great deal in the Legislature and I'm still learning, but if I didn't learn anything else, I learned that the American people are on the go. They're going where there are things to do and see, and the Good Lord was kind enough to put those things out here and the federal government and the state government have had the foresight to act on what the Good Lord provided. Great natural resources surpass anything made by man, and now we have an additional natural resource. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is history.

For too long people operated under the theory that history was only for the scholars and for the classroom, but history has now developed into a great recreational pursuit. We now view history as still another natural resource, and we have passed laws formally stating that fact.

Contrary to what some people may think, this is not a new concept although the program of identifying and reconstructing historic sites as a natural resource and as a recreational resource may be unique. Historical significance provided the impetus for the establishment of our first state park and many of our present state and federal parks owe their existence to the

facts of history, either natural or man-made. This is the attitude of the federal government as shown in the traditional responsibility of maintaining and managing certain national sites such as Independence Hall and Mount Vernon. As a result of legislation passed in Texas recently, history is now an integral part of our state program to accelerate the preservation and development of Texas' natural and recreational resources, and it is in this vein that we intend to restore and maintain Fort Ben Leaton. The justification of history as a resource is not limited to the traditional focus of a reason for establishing a park as a place to picnic, play ball, hike or swim. History is itself a form of recreation. I could cite statistics from private as well as government agencies explaining why history has grown in favor as a recreational pursuit. They tell of an ever increasing number of leisure hours, of a growing, restless population, of more and more money being spent for recreation. All this boils down to the fact that we Americans are looking for new avenues for filling our spare time.

The best documentation is our own experience. Mount Vernon, Colonial Williamsburg, Independence Hall—the crowds of visitors speak for themselves.

Already many of Texas' significant historical areas are falling into ruins, forgotten by many but yearned for by many who desire and enjoy the exploration of Texas historical heritage. State officials, after some prodding, now recognize this, so the state has reexamined the entire outdoor recreational tragedy. Other states, faced with similar problems, have already acted. New York has two programs underway totaling six hundred million dollars. California has a hundred fifty million dollar program underway. I haven't seen anything those Yankees or prune pickers have that we don't have better and more of.

California has exploited its great Mission Trails, yet we have missions in Texas which were established two hundred years before those in California, but nobody knows about them.

I chaired the committee that made this study and as a result, we established by law a new division within the Parks and Wildlife Department to acquire and preserve historic forts and missions in Texas. This new division will share equal authority with other divisions within the Parks and Wildlife Department and will work with historians, archaeologists and other qualified persons. We are planning now for the future while some of these historical resources remain. The expansion of cities, industry, super highways, reservoirs and other intrusions are fast absorbing the famed wide open spaces. We are going to meet this challenge in Texas and make money out of it besides. We know that history is a form of recreation and we know people will pay to see it. No person who is ignorant of the past is fit to be entrusted with the control of the present, and no people who are indifferent to their past need have any hope that their future will be great. With this thesis in mind, Texas will be developed and the cities and towns of this state, the business community of this state, stand to gain greatly if they decide to do so. Those who don't can sit by the wayside and cuss, and those who do can ring the cash register.

You and I happen to live in an area where the cash register will ring the longest and loudest, and its up to you and me as to whether we punch that register. I intend to punch one.

Ten Thousandth Broadcast

Broadcast 1974

ON THIS the ten thousandth broadcast of the 12:30 News, some people ask, “What’s so important about the 10,000th Broadcast?” That takes a little over twenty-seven years to accomplish, and several radio stations in the United States have been on the air for over twenty-seven years.

That is true, but not many of them are still broadcasting any of the programs they carried twenty-seven years ago. When a radio station feels public opinion is changing, in most instances, the radio station changes its format and kicks off the regular programs. For instance, when rock came in about twenty years ago, many stations kicked off their news broadcasts, church programs and everything else and went solid rock. When country-western started really knocking everybody over just a few years ago, those same stations were switching their formats to country-western and ridding themselves of their rock image.

It takes ten thousand days to do ten thousand 12:30 News broadcasts and that’s what this program is about. Today I’m going to mention some of the characters, or individuals if you choose, who were around ten thousand days ago. Many of those individuals have passed on, but they left a mark here of their

independent ways. During the course of this recitation I hope not to step on the toes of any descendants of these individuals. I would like to describe them so that the audience would have some feeling about the character of some of the pioneers of this county.

KVLF first had studios in the Holland Hotel, which was the center of everything, not only for Alpine but for a vast area of West Texas. It was at the hotel that I met many of the characters at the time. To name a few, there was Boog Barnett, Dud Barker, Jiggs Terry, M.L. Hopson, John Young and Jim Crow. All sorts of people had business in the Holland Hotel at one time or another, and if you stood in the lobby long enough, you'd find who ever you were looking for.

Lots of other characters were around the hotel too—Gene Benson, Earl McElroy, Gene Cartledge—they all congregated there because that's where everybody congregated. Each of these individuals, in their own colorful way, added to or contributed something to the Big Bend Country.

Their tremendous independence, that almost bordered on arrogance, still influences the lives of those who came after. Yet these people were not arrogant. They would give anyone the shirt off their back, but they walked their own pathways. Let's take a look at Boog Barnett for instance. Boog was a sometimes law officer, sometimes cowboy, sometimes cattle trader, sometimes camp cook and nearly all the time damn near drunk. Boog operated in a world in which sometimes it was difficult to know which side of the law he was really on at any given moment. The milk of human kindness could literally pour from him on some occasions, and on another occasions, this man, who stood no more than five foot four inches in spite of his high heeled boots and ten gallon hat, would offer to fight a

Supplement to the ALPINE AVALANCHE

ALPINE SALUTES

RADIO

KVLF

Voice of the Big Bend Country

on it's 10,000th Broadcast

of the 12:30 News

Today, June 27, 1974



GENE HENDRYX

One of the first 12:30 News Broadcasts -- 1947



GENE HENDRYX The 12:30 News today, June 27, 1974.



Gene Hendryx, KVLF's first 12:30 News anchor, stands with the station's first 12:30 News anchor, Gene Hendryx, and the station's first 12:30 News anchor, Gene Hendryx.

Alpine Avalanche salutes KVLF.

man twice his size, and sometimes did. He once told me the story of his brother Graham, and another fellow, who made a trip to Rankin, and of his brother being machine gunned down because of an alleged attempted robbery.

One time Boog was a camp cook down on the Rio Grande, and late in the evening a man came riding into camp looking for something to eat. In true western fashion, Boog set out a big plate of pinto beans and what ever else they had in camp. This fellow was Wally Sublett, and Wally wasn't known for his diplomacy. And after he had a few bites of those beans he made the remark they were about the worst beans he had ever eaten. He continued to harass the camp cook with similar remarks about the beans and finally Boog reached out, refilled Sublett's plate clear to the brim with more frijoles, jabbed a six shooter up against Sublett's ear, cocked the six shooter, gave Sublett a lecture on what Boog thought of him and then ordered Sublett to eat every bean on his plate or get his blankety blank head blown off. Sublett ate the plate clean and later was heard to remark that he'd never had better tasting beans in his life.

Two old gentlemen who occupied a couple of chairs in the hotel lobby for a number of years were Dud Barker and Jiggs Terry. Dud Barker was one of the toughest Texas Rangers ever to come up the pike and later was sheriff of Pecos County for a number of years. My college roommate at the time was little Jack Montgomery, who was later killed in a car wreck. Little Jack worked the night shift as the desk clerk for the Holland Hotel and his shift ended at six each morning. I always went down to the coffee shop at 5:30 and waited for Little Jack, and then we'd have breakfast. Dud Barker was always there and we would visit and he would retell stories from the past. I was writing a few magazine articles at the time, so I checked out a couple

of Dud's stories and found they were true, and after we had known each other for some time, he told me that many Texas Rangers had sold stories about their life in the Ranger service. He didn't approve of it because he thought this was capitalizing on the Rangers' reputation which he thought very highly of. He told me that on his death he was going to leave me all the magazine articles and newspaper clippings about his life as a peace officer, but all that material was burned and a lot of history went up in smoke with the loss of that very valuable material. One of the stories I checked on, which was true, concerned a lawyer who was defending a murderer Dud Barker had arrested in Pecos County. During the trial, this Fort Worth lawyer attempted to show up Dud Barker as a country bumpkin and throughout the trial the lawyer continued to make disparaging remarks against Barker. When the jury brought in its verdict, and the lawyer came down stairs from the court room, Barker was waiting for him at the foot of the stairs, about mid-afternoon. Dud then proceeded to give the lawyer a lecture on Barker's low opinion of the legal beagle, then whipped out his six shooter and told the man that when the sun went down that evening, the lawyer had better be out of Pecos County. Well, the lawyer didn't even wait for the evening train; he headed straight for the livery stable, rented a rig, and was well on his way long before the sun set for the day.

Another time, four real hard cases sent word into Fort Stockton they were coming in after the sheriff. Barker by then had a reputation as being one of the toughest lawmen in the West, and these four hard cases apparently felt if they killed the Fort Stockton Sheriff, it would enhance their reputation for their wildness. The four rode into town, and as they approached the courthouse square, all the men, women and children in sight

ran for cover. Off to one side of the courthouse square sat a lone figure with his hat pulled down low over his eyes, leaning back in a chair against a tree taking his midday siesta. The four hard cases approached the courthouse door with guns drawn, and in a split second, all four lay dead. Dud Barker, the guy who was supposedly taking a siesta with his hat pulled down over his eyes to block the west Texas sun, had gunned down his prospective assailants before they knew what hit them.

Jiggs Terry was a colorful old gentleman who occupied a chair in the hotel lobby for about as long as anyone remembers. He used to roll cigarettes and surround himself with a haze of smoke. In addition to loving old time fiddle music, he could recall many early day events. If my memory is correct, Jiggs told me he came to this county in a covered wagon back in either 1904 or 1907 and Otis Kimball's father was in the group, and these were among the old timers who helped to carve a civilization out of the wilderness.

Jim Crow owned a pool hall just west of the Hotel in those days, and Jim was one of the old outlaw football players who went from college to college in the twenties and thirtys. I believe Jim played at Texas Tech, West Texas State, and Sul Ross before those things were regulated on eligibility. At any rate, Jim was known to imbibe occasionally, and along about sun down he was generally well on his way. At the time, Dr. R. M. Hawkins was President of Sul Ross, and although I had a great deal of respect for the man, Dr. Hawkins was a pompous individual. When he came to town, one of the members of his administration would get out and open the car door for him, open the door of the coffee shop, and pull back his chair for him to be seated. He generally came to town in the late evening and bought his supply of cigars for the following day. One evening he came

into the hotel, and Jim Crow walked in about the same time, or rather weaved in, from a week's fishing trip on the river. He staggered over to Dr. Hawkins, draped his big bear-like arm around Hawkins shoulder, and told him how the college ought to really be run. Dr. Hawkins was somewhat deflated.

You hear a lot today about the liberated woman. In those days, KVLV broadcast a fifteen minute live organ program from the First Baptist Church each afternoon at 3:45. Various ladies in the community played the organ, usually Mrs. C.G. Morrison, Mrs. Paul Vogt and a couple of others. It was my duty each afternoon to take the remote equipment to the Church, hook it up, wait for the program to finish, then return the equipment to KVLV. The station manager introduced the program from the studio and one day he didn't show up for work. It came time for the organ program and there was nobody to put the program on the air. Elaine Parker was the station secretary so I called her into the control room, showed her what switches to throw, and wrote down the introduction she was to use in announcing the program. I went on to the Church with the equipment, where Mrs. Morrison had a little radio sitting on the organ she listened to for her introduction. When the time came, here came this woman's voice, "We take you now to the First Baptist Church in Alpine for fifteen minutes of uninterrupted organ music featuring Mrs. C.G. Morrison at the organ." Wham! Down came the cover on the organ key board, Mrs. Morrison grabbed her purse and as she started out of the church she hollered, "I won't be introduced by any damn woman." Of course the KVLV microphone broadcast the whole thing.

Marvin Kay and I went to El Paso each summer in those days and broadcast the Southwestern Semi Pro Baseball Tournament at Dudley Field, which the Alpine Cowboys always won.

Everybody in Alpine would take off and go to the games. Half the grandstand would be filled with Alpine people. Marvin used to broadcast all the names of the people there, and once Charlie and Mary Virginia Stringfellow and Tommie Terry came in together. Marvin and I made it up and after the game recreated, for Charles's benefit, Marvin's description of Charlie climbing the steps at Dudley Field. We really had him believing it for awhile until we finally broke up laughing. Ray McNiel was the manager of the Cowboy team and one night after the Cowboys had won the tournament, Ray went over to Juarez to make arrangements for the team to eat at Lobby Number Two or some such place. When he arrived with the team, along with the batboys and equipment managers, he had over thirty people and when he had seated them, some character came over and demanded that Ray pay him two dollars a head for everybody seated there. This of course wasn't in the deal. Ray was to pay only for the food and drinks, and he refused to pay the cover charge. So, the Juarez gendarmes were called out and proceeded to take Ray McNiel to the local bastille. George Baines, who at the time was president of the First National Bank, was down the street in another restaurant and then, as now I suppose, when somebody gets in trouble, they send for the banker. John Dow Harris came running down the street and told Mr. Baines that Ray McNiel was in the Juarez jail. Baines let out a big laugh and said that would be a wonderful experience for McNiel, that he himself on occasion had occupied a cell in that very jail, and he thought everyone ought to have that experience.

In the early days KVLFF broadcast a program called the "Town Hall of the Air," which was a grilling of local officials including the county judge, the mayor, the president of the Chamber of Commerce, and anyone else within reach. The two

inquisitors, and I use that term loosely, were John Newell and Fred Williams, and either of them could teach the modern day Johnny Carsons and Dick Cavetts a thing or two about insulting guests. One night the subject got off on some highway construction and a crack was made about George Kempen, the resident highway engineer who wasn't there to defend himself. It was a rather rough remark, so the next morning I went to the highway department office to apologize to Mr. Kempen for what had been said about him on KVLF. I'd never met the man, so I walked into the office and introduced myself, and before I could say another word Kempen came out of his chair and said, "I know what you're doing out here. That damn Johnny Newell sent you, and you can tell them all to go to hell." That ended the interview and the conversation and as I left the highway department office, I thought, that must be the meanest man I ever met. Little did I know that within less than two years he would become my father-in-law.

Another rare individual was the late Senator Benjamin F. Berkeley, who at one time or another was a medical doctor, banker, mayor, businessman, rancher, and state senator, and the old gentleman was always a source of marvelous stories.

Cap C.D. Wood, the Spanish-American War veteran who was living at Glenn Springs when Pancho Villa raided there, also told of many thrilling experiences. The old West Pointer had been all over the world during his military days and was one of the original founders of the candallia wax business in the area.

There were, of course, many other individuals who stood out in the crowd. R.S. Carnes, John Gentry, Dr. Joel Wright, Louie Forchheimer, Billy Morrison, Louie Starnes, Clay Holland, Lou Spencer—you could go on and on naming them. Of course, there was Jim Casner regaling people with his stories.

Most of these people are gone now, but their attitude toward life remains. Those who came after them, for the most part, adopted the independent, casual attitude which is prevalent in most mountain areas.

A few come here and try to remake the church they attend into an image of themselves, or they want to take charge of everything in the community overnight, but those individuals are mostly talk and no work, and people catch on to them. It's almost as if the mountains which surround Alpine laugh back at people, and say, "You really are not all that important, are you?" The people look at the mountains and realize that no, we really are not.

This is Gene Hendryx reporting, and that's the Ten Thousandth Edition of the 12:30 News.

Anna D. and Miss Margaret

Broadcast 1991

A NNA D. is celebrating her one hundredth birthday today. You heard it right—she is marking a century today, most of which she has spent right here in Alpine. Can you imagine anyone having lived almost the entire twentieth century, plus a decade from the preceding one? And she is just as alert as ever! For those of you out there in radioland who do not know who we're discussing, you've truly missed knowing one of God's great creatures.

I first met Anna D. Linn in the summer of 1946 in the registration office of Sul Ross College. World War II had ended and colleges were filling up with veterans under the GI Bill. We took our military discharge and high school diploma to the registrar's office and they signed us up.

I don't know about other branches of service, but the Marine Corps had your combat record on the back of the discharge. I handed the papers to one of the young ladies and told her I wanted to enroll as a freshman at Sul Ross. She looked over the discharge, then walked over and handed it to a kindly gray-haired lady who turned out to be Anna D. Linn.

Miss Linn looked at the discharge, read the campaign record

on the back, and began “ooing and aahing” and remarking about such a brave military record. I happened to know that several hundred thousand marines had a record just as good and some better than mine. I finally said, “Yes, ma’am, that record and a nickel will buy a cup of coffee.” Well, Miss Linn swelled up to her entire height of five foot two and said, “Mr. Hendryx, I would be honored to buy you a cup of coffee at anytime.” From that moment on, Anna D. and I were friends.

Anna D. was born in Victoria a hundred years ago into a distinguished historic family. Her grandparents and great grandparents had been colonists of the Martin de Leon Colony in 1824. Her grandfather Linn had fought in the Irish Rebellion in 1798 and escaped to this country.

Her father owned Texas’ second oldest newspaper, the *Victoria Advocate* and served in the Texas Senate. He was a friend of Archer Parr, the founder of the Parr political dynasty that dominated South Texas politics for three quarters of a century. The two served together in the Texas Senate before the turn of the century. Miss Linn has often told me political stories she remembers as a small girl in Victoria.

Anna D.’s maternal grandfather, Andrew Jackson West, owned an eight-section ranch which encompassed Mt. Ord. In 1900 Anna D. and her three sisters came out for a visit, and when her father died suddenly in Victoria, Mrs. Linn moved to Alpine with her four daughters, Margaret, Anna D., Josephine, and Augusta. Augusta’s name was immediately shortened to Gussie, the name she was known by the remainder of her life. The four daughters were enrolled in the Alpine school system where they all graduated, Anna D. in 1910. Their high school English teacher was J. Frank Dobie.

On an earlier program a few years ago I talked about Margaret

Linn and her ladies' foundation garment shop. Like Anna D., Margaret was a spinster. She loved to joke and considered herself to be some sort of match maker. Linn's Shop was one of my advertising accounts during the 1940s, and Miss Margaret was always trying to promote a date between me and one of her college girl clerks.

Margaret was an enthusiastic person, fun to converse with, and always optimistic. George Baines, President of First National Bank, was always scolding Margaret for buying more goods than she could sell, but that never dampened her rosy attitude.

Eventually the department stores swallowed up specialty shops such as Margaret's but she never looked back; she simply went to work behind the counter at one of the department stores.

Maragret Linn died in 1975 at the age of eighty-five, after a long, useful life.

Alpine Normal School, predecessor of Sul Ross Normal, was opened in 1910, the year Anna D. graduated from high school. Anna D. enrolled in Alpine Normal and received her certification as a teacher. She taught from 1911 till 1913 in Uvalde County, then returned to Alpine for a seven year hitch as an elementary teacher. School Superintendent E.R. Bantley went to serve in World War I and Anna D., along with Eleanor Bennet, served as co-superintendents of Alpine schools. When the superintendent returned from the war, Anna D. moved to McAllen to teach commercial subjects.

The legislature created Sul Ross in 1917. In 1922 Anna D. was asked to serve as Registrar and Secretary to the President, thus beginning a professional career that lasted forty years, until 1962 when the Jim Hogg law called for her retirement at age seventy.

In addition to serving in many administrative capacities as

well as teaching English, she earned the Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees.

Included among organizations she helped found at Sul Ross are Schem Literary Society, Alpha Chi Honor Society, Kappa Delta Pi, and the longtime Catholic campus ministry, the Newman Club.

She was just as active off campus in the Pilot Club, Daughters of the Republic of Texas, and the Catholic Women's Study Club.

A few years ago, perhaps when she retired, I can't remember the year, Anna D. was elected Sul Ross Homecoming Queen. I was broadcasting the Sul Ross football game that night and it was a great thrill and a great privilege for me to reminisce on the air what this great lady had accomplished and the lives she had touched in almost a century of service to mankind.

Happy Birthday, Anna D.

Kokernot – 1987

HERBERT would have enjoyed his memorial service yesterday at Paisano. As a matter of fact, I'm not so sure he wasn't there. Looking at it objectively, he might have even made the arrangements.

We gathered Sunday afternoon from all across the country to venerate our friendship with a man who may be the last of his kind.

A soft summer rain was falling as we gathered under the open-air tabernacle; former baseball players, ministers, ranchers and ranch hands, business people, folks from all walks of life, hundred of them from all across America.

It was a great joy to watch the rain puddle, to hear it tinkle on the tabernacle's metal roof.

Then, just as the service was about to commence, dozens of Hereford cows and calves, lowing gently, came from the surrounding encampment area and gathered at the open sides of the tabernacle. It was as if they too wanted to commemorate the life of this famous cattleman. At that moment we all felt the presence of Herbert, smiling, acknowledging his family and friends, the wonderful slow rain, the fat cattle. It was as if he was saying "This is the way it's supposed to end."

I don't know that a great many people paid a whole lot of attention to Herbert Kokernot until 1950. Until that time he had supported a number of worthwhile projects but they were for the most part enterprises close to his heart such as the Big Bend Livestock show, the American Legion, construction of Kokernot Field and the sponsorship of the Alpine Cowboys. He told me many times of his father, whom he admired over all others, coming to visit him, and HLK Jr. taking his dad out to see the new ballpark he had just completed. At that time Kokernot Field had a wooden fence, and HLK Sr. said to HLK Jr., "If you're going to put the Kokernot name on anything, son, make sure it's something we're never ashamed of."

Herbert said that remark, coming from his dad, cut him like a knife, and he decided then and there that Kokernot Field would become one of the finest baseball parks in America. Over the next decade he spent hundred of thousands of dollars at Kokernot Field, on everything from a rock fence to one of the country's finest lighting systems. He wanted to be certain his dad would have approved of the facility bearing the Kokernot name, even though HLK Sr. died in 1949.

But Kokernot Field was not what brought the public's attention to Herbert Kokernot Jr. In February 1950, Johnny Clanton, cashier of the First National Bank, shot himself to death. Herbert Kokernot was chairman of the bank's board of directors and controlled the majority of the stock.

Johnny Clanton was a popular figure around town and a jolly well met fellow who contributed to and worked in a half dozen worthwhile community organizations. His suicide could have been caused by only one reason. When the bank auditors finished, First National Bank had a shortage of about a quarter of a million dollars.

Herbert Kokernot came to KVLf and said, “Please put on the radio that I personally guarantee every penny in the bank. Tell the folks that I will cover every nickel.” We did what Herbert asked and three days later he returned to Alpine from San Antonio on the Sunset Limited with a satchel containing not only a quarter of a million dollars to cover the embezzled funds but an additional hundred thousand cash just in case it was needed.

Not one single depositor withdrew their account. A serious run on the bank would have wreaked havoc, but Herbert Kokernot’s word was good enough for the people of West Texas. From then on, West Texans took Herbert serious.

KVLf took him serious as far back as 1946. When the FCC granted a license to build the 250 watt radio station, Jack Hawkins and Barney Hubbs of Pecos, the two principals in developing the station, attempted to buy two and a half acres of land at the edge of the 06 ranch from Herbert to be used as a transmitter site. Neither Herbert nor any other rancher with land close to Alpine would sell an acre regardless of price. But Herbert did want a radio station in Alpine and he agreed to lease the land for ten years. Later he was to build Kokernot Field in the same area of the ranch, which was followed later by what is now Little League Park, Carpenter Addition, Kokernot Municipal Park, Alpine High School, tennis courts and other such facilities. But in 1946, it was all 06 ranch and the KVLf transmitter site was the pasture where 06 registered bulls were kept. Their feed troughs and water troughs, built out of the same rock Kokernot Field would later feature, are still standing behind the KVLf building. With KVLf operating on a dollar-a-year lease on his land, Herbert took a personal interest in the station, and that’s how we became acquainted.

In 1949 the radio studios and transmitter facilities were



Raising of KVLFF tower on O6 Ranch as registered Herford bulls look on, 1946.

combined and remain in the location today, although in a much larger and modern building.

Also in December of 1949, I finished work on a master's degree at Sul Ross and moved to Pecos as commercial manager of the Cactus Network, a four station network headquartered at the flagship station KIUN in Pecos. Other network stations were Odessa, Monahans and Alpine, all owned by Hawkins and Hubbs.

Four months later, Jack Hawkins and Barney Hubbs asked me to take over the Alpine station and either put a stop to its heavy losses or shut it down, and they didn't care which. The next morning I signed the Alpine station on the air and before the day was over, I was the only person on the payroll.

Herbert Kokernot was a friend of some of those ex-employees who hung around town a couple of weeks stirring up trouble.

On the surface Herbert befriended them, but in his own quiet way he let me know that he understood the shake-up at KVLF. He had enough business judgment, as did most people, to realize somebody at KVLF had better cut the mustard or else Alpine would be without a radio station.

For the next thirty-seven years, Herbert and I shared a friendship that lasted until his death in 1987. He was involved daily in the development of Kokernot Field, a stone's throw from KVLF, so we were in daily contact until the Alpine Cowboys ceased to exist in 1961. In addition, we traveled together on baseball road trips to Colorado, Wichita, Kansas, and all over the state of Texas. He was a very private man, but when others were not present he would recall anecdotes from his youth. I suppose we talked about recording those stories a hundred times, but as is the case in other things, we never got around to it. And if he were telling of some saga from the past and another person came on the scene, he would stop the subject at once.

Wherever the Alpine Cowboys played, the media was fascinated by this rich Texan and often referred to him as a rich Texas oilman. He reached the point where newsmen were not welcome and he dumped the chore of dealing with them on me.

The Cowboys for a number of years played in a Fourth of July tournament in Grand Junction, Colorado, facing and defeating top semipro teams from throughout the Rocky Mountains. The Cowboys never lost a game in the years they played in Grand Junction.

The media covering that tournament always described Herbert as a rich Texas oilman, and it infuriated him. On one occasion he asked me to call a press conference, which I did, and he went into detail about being a cowman, telling them that he raised cattle, that he never owned a barrel of oil in his life

and never intended to.

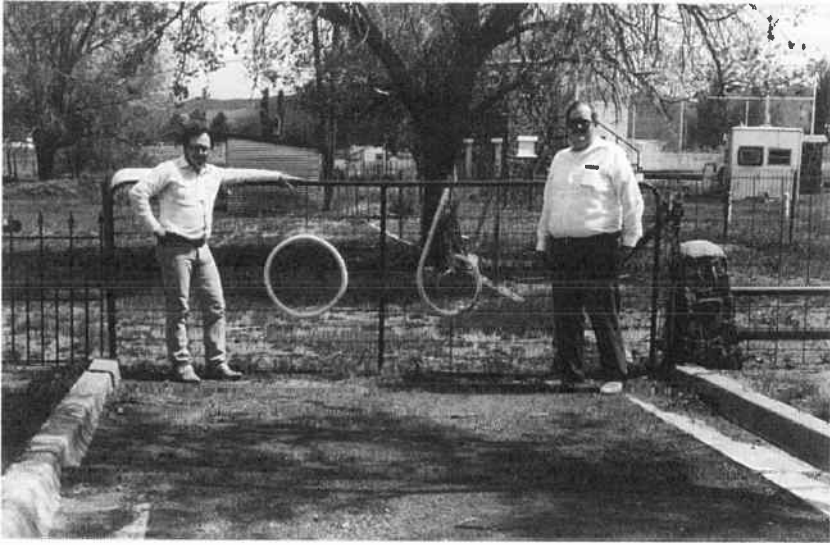
We used to tease each other during those trips and whenever I wanted to get a rise out of him I'd say, "Well, here comes that rich Texas oilman."

Herbert's house in town was on North 8th street, just around the corner from my home on North 9th. In 1956 I ran for county commissioner against a very popular man, Lee Smith. Lee's father had held the job many years before. At least four different candidates had tried to unseat Lee over the years, but all bit the dust. On the afternoon of the democratic primary, a very hot July afternoon, Herbert and I were sitting in his kitchen having a bull session about the possible outcome of the election when Gib Bell and Junior Gray walked in. Both men had spent the day encouraging their friends to vote for me. As a matter of fact, Junior spent some of his money buying beer as an enticement.

Gib Bell remarked that a certain rancher was at the coffee shop of the Holland Hotel, offering five to one odds on the incumbent commissioner. Herbert was a county commissioner in Jeff Davis County and held the record as the longest serving commissioner in Texas, so he knew more than a little about those matters.

He reached for his money clip, peeled off a thousand dollars and told Gib to place the bet and if he could get more covered, come on back for more money. I had known Herbert long enough not to be surprised because he always carried a couple of thousand cash.

Gib returned later and said he got the thousand covered, but the odds had now dropped to an even bet. The oddsmaker in the coffee shop apparently lost heart when someone showed up to answer his challenge and then offered to cover more if the man wanted to put his money where his mouth was.



KVLF's Jerry Sotello and Ray Hendryx at 06 Ranch gate—entrance to radio antenna site. In years past this was gate to the 06 Ranch bull pasture.

I think Herbert was nearly as pleased as I was when the vote totals that night showed I won.

Another happy day for him was when the Sul Ross Baseball team defeated the University of Texas at Billy Dish Field in Austin in an eleven inning game. Flop Parsons played in that game, and he well remembers the celebration Herbert put on in Austin that night.

During those years Herbert used to talk to me about the acreage around Kokernot Field and what he wanted to do with it. When I bought control of KVLF in the early fifties, he sold me the land we had been leasing for a dollar a year, because as he said at the time, he wanted that entire portion of the 06 developed into a recreation area for the people of Alpine, and KVLF harmonized with such a concept.

From time to time I would mention to various members of the city council Herbert's hope of donating the land for a vast recreational area that would tie together Kokernot Field, Kokernot Lodge and the municipal golf course. At that time the golf course consisted of nine sand greens connected by weed patches used as fairways. There were no tee boxes. Mark Herring, Vic Molinar and a few others created the beautiful nine hole course Alpine enjoys today.

But the entire southwestern United States was devastated by a prolonged drought during most of the 1950s, and city officials had all they could say grace over trying to cope with Alpine's perennial water shortage, let alone plan for some maybe park down the unforeseeable road of the future. It's ironic that in later years Herbert Kokernot would also solve the city's water shortage, but that came about in a future decade.

In 1966 Dorothy McBride was elected to the city council and I told her about Herbert's recreational intentions. Dorothy took right to the subject and we walked through the area several times to give her some idea of the outlay of the land. I've never known why Herbert wanted me as the go-between with the city unless he thought the council might rebuff his idea, but he would not deal directly with the city at that point in time. Then one evening in the latter part of the 1960s he called me and said he was ready to transfer the land to the city. I called Mrs. McBride, and she started the ball rolling on what is now Kokernot Municipal Park, and the huge recreational area Herbert conceived is one of the finest assets any city anywhere can claim.

The only fly in the entire ointment came because the City of Alpine did not properly supervise the construction of the swimming pool. Their excuse is the pool cost more than expected, but the pool never cost the city a dime. I went to the Chairman

of the Parks and Wildlife Department, Will Odum, and got the grant to pay for the entire swimming pool project. All the city had to do was oversee the construction. I carried lots of water for the Parks and Wildlife Department during my legislative career and had no qualms about asking for the grant. The city simply failed to hire a competent engineer to oversee the project. The pool leaked when the city accepted it from the contractor and it still leaks after all these years. Be that as it may, Herbert's dream became reality.

Dorothy McBride must have made an impression on Herbert with her commitment to the park because later during her administration as mayor, he deeded to the city the water rights of the Musquiz water field on the 06 ranch, solving the age old municipal water problem.

I observed later when he donated Kokernot Field along with the land where the present high school is located to the Alpine School District, he used Red Patillo as a go-between with the school system. Perhaps he was adverse to dealing directly with a governmental body. Or perhaps his treatment at the hands of Sul Ross State University is the reason.

During the early 1950s Herbert decided that instead of bringing in college players from throughout the United States, he would sponsor a baseball team at Sul Ross and those players talented enough could stay over during summer months and play for the Alpine Cowboys.

He made the necessary arrangements with Sul Ross, providing not only full scholarships for each player, but paying all allied expenses as well as uniforms, equipment, travel, letter jackets and the hundred and one other things it takes to have a successful program. During the fifteen or twenty year period he sponsored baseball, some of the top athletes in America wore

the scarlet and grey of Old Sully. Two national collegiate championships along with dozens of other honors descended on Sul Ross in what was recognized as one of the most successful college baseball programs in the United States.

And then one day the program came to an abrupt halt with no warning, no nothing. I've seen some shabby treatment in my time in the business community and in the world of politics and government but never as shabbily as Sul Ross treated their baseball sponsor.

Each day Monday through Saturday I broadcast the 12:30 News. It was a local institution. It's where people in radioland find out who is in the hospital, who died, who won the election, what's what and who's who. One day about 12:15 Sul Ross brought out a story which was a terse announcement that Sul Ross was dropping baseball. No explanation, no nothing, just that announcement.

Listening to the 12:30 News was a daily must on the 06, everybody and everything including the peacocks got quiet at 12:30 and stayed quiet till the 12:30 News was over, no matter if it lasted its allotted twenty minutes or ran overtime until one o'clock. We simply broadcast all the local news we had on any given day and when we ran out of news, the broadcast ended. I know that's not the way the pros do it, but that's the way I did it, and the folks out here in the Big Bend Country seemed to like it.

So the short announcement ending baseball was broadcast. I aired the remainder of the news and started to go to lunch. In walked Herbert Kokernot, white as a sheet, his hands shaking. He asked if he could see the baseball story which I handed him.

It tore him up. The man was totally flabbergasted. He said he had no idea Sul Ross was thinking about abolishing baseball. No one at the college had ever broached the subject, but here

was the official announcement from the President himself. And they didn't give him the courtesy of even a phone call. They announced it on the 12:30 News at a time they knew he was glued to the radio. He never got over it. We've no idea of what he might have done financially for Sul Ross in later years. He had told me and others of his plans to build a women's dormitory to be named after his mother, but that of course never came to pass. I've often wondered over the years how much Sul Ross has lost because of the discourteous stupidity of a few individuals.

Years later, when Bob Richardson was President of Sul Ross, he made a yeoman's effort at healing the wound by restoring Kokernot Field to its former spectacular attractiveness and reinstating baseball at Sul Ross on a non-scholarship basis. Herbert recognized Bob's efforts and remarked that it was a shame Bob hadn't been President all these years because the college would have gained a great deal. But, the damage had been done, and nothing under the sun would make up for the shameful way Herbert felt he had been treated.

Thousands of words have been written about the rich cattleman from Alpine, from *Sports Illustrated* to Charles Kuralt on CBS. Hundreds of baseball purists descend on Alpine each year to look over the magnificent edifice he built to honor baseball. We at KVLF watch the tourists with their cameras taking pictures of the Home of the Cowboys.

Hopefully, when he stepped up to the plate in front of the Great Umpire in the Sky, he was able to clear the fences with a home run.



Lucille Hendryx, 1928-1989. She entertained a generation of youngsters on her daily radio show, "Aunt Lucy's Story Time."

Aunt Lucy

Broadcast 1989

MY WIFE AND I were driving into El Paso and switched on the car radio to KHEY, El Paso's top rated radio station at the time. We've often marveled about why we happened to tune the station in at that exact moment. The announcer was telling a story about something which had been a feature on KVLF for many years.

He was talking about his early childhood and I'm paraphrasing now: "During my preschool years we always had the local radio station on, and after lunch a lady would read a story on the radio. The program was called 'Aunt Lucy's Story Time.' It came on every day and that's what I listened to as I lay down for a nap." He talked some more about the program, and Lucille and I grinned.

Aunt Lucy was my wife Lucille, and the El Paso announcer was David Forchheimer, an Alpine boy who had become the top radio personality in El Paso and later would attain top ratings in Philadelphia and the San Francisco Bay area. He used a *nom-de-plume* on the air, Bob Young. As a young boy he hung out at KVLF in Alpine where his family operated Forchheimer's Department Store, at that time the finest in the area.

David loved radio and received his early day training at KVLFF, but that's another story for another day.

When our first son was born, Lucille started buying all sorts of children's books and reading them to Ray, a practice she continued later for his siblings. Sometimes I would do the reading, but most of the time it was Lucille, particularly around nap time.

One day she suggested that she might like to read those children's stories on the radio for about fifteen minutes daily, around one o'clock when mothers were trying to get their children to settle down for a nap.

I thought it was about the goofiest idea I'd heard and gave the reasons. Nobody wanted to listen at one o'clock—they were either taking a nap or had gone back to work. Once you start a program, you can't turn it off like you would a faucet. Programs are scheduled daily; you can't miss one just because you might want to play bridge that day. You have asthma. What about the days you can't get out of the house? I expect several other reasons were given in addition to those, and that ended the matter, I thought.

A few weeks later she showed up at KVLFF with a list of sponsors, all signed at premium rates, for fifteen minutes a day Monday through Friday. I looked over the list of sponsors and they weren't the ones you had to go collect from: Dick Rogers signed for First National Bank, Dr. Tom Coats, Baker Jewelers of Marfa. I've forgotten some of them but it was an impressive list, and they were all willing to pay a talent fee to Lucille for doing the program.

Besides that, she had gone behind my back and made arrangements with the program director to tape record several programs at once just in case she wasn't available for a week or two.

I surrendered.

“Aunt Lucy’s Story Time” became one of the most popular programs on KVLB and was soon copied by other stations. All the children in the area knew Aunt Lucy and soon most of the adults started calling her that too. Her health finally did make it impossible for her to continue, but for a decade a generation of children grew up listening to “Aunt Lucy’s Story Time.”

Government Town

Broadcast 1991

A LOT of speculation is taking place in Alpine about how well the local economy has held up and even expanded while other West Texas towns are languishing behind. And now that the census bureau has released the figures from last year's federal census, the Chamber of Commerce, the City, and other groups are busy patting themselves on the back because Alpine not only did not lose population as happened in most other towns in the area, but some growth occurred during the last decade.

I hate to burst anybody's balloon, but the Chamber of Commerce, the City and other local boosters didn't have anything to do with beefing up the economy or expanding the population. What has happened to bring about this new prosperity is that Alpine has become a government town. Government is now the main business in Alpine, and it continues to expand and to increase every year, regardless of which political party is in power or who occupies the White House or the governor's mansion. Regardless of who is mayor, county judge, school board head, hospital board chairman or dog catcher. More government offices, and more government employees in the offices already

here have caused the steady growth in both the population and the economy.

Thirty years ago you remember when you could name the government offices on one hand. We had a Post Office, a Courthouse, a City Hall, a metal barn for the Highway Department and a twenty-two bed hospital with less than thirty employees. And of course, Central School, Centennial School and Alpine High School, and there was Sul Ross up on the hill with between six and seven hundred students.

Today our courthouse has doubled in size, and the former part-time elected officials have become full-time elected officials with full time secretaries. Instead of Jim Skinner's one jailer, we have them by the bushel.

The City of Alpine use to struggle along with three full time employees in the city office, one policeman and a night watchman, and a couple of maintenance people who looked after a few paved streets along with the water and sewer system. And before I forget, we had a meter maid who looked after the parking meters which adorned all of Alpine's downtown streets. Needless to say this has all changed with the city taking on more and more responsibilities including parks, a swimming pool, little league and soccer fields. All these additional programs cost money, and all these things increase the size of city government. And now with a city sales tax that didn't exist thirty years ago, the City of Alpine is spending about five times as much money.

Up until Peyton Cain retired as school superintendent, the total school administration consisted of the superintendent and Kathryn Stucke as secretary. The three school principals were full-time teachers and one of their students answered the phone. Today the school administration and the office complex it occupies cost about as much as the entire faculty in Cain's era.

The hospital has expanded so many times its hard to remember. They now have more offices than patient rooms, and although the patient load is no larger than when the hospital opened, the number of employees in seven times over. And this doesn't count the number of consultants and services the hospital farms out. It's big business, very big business.

Sul Ross has a regular little city up on the hill with a budget that moved from less than half a million dollars thirty years ago to twelve to fourteen million dollars today. That's part of government, and it all costs money.

Then take a look at the myriad state and federal offices we now have that weren't here a decade or so ago. And look at the number of buildings these agencies lease. They lease at least seven buildings, not including the ones they own. Look in the phone book under the State of Texas and under the U.S. Government. You might get a shock when you learn how many state and federal offices have sprouted up in Alpine. We have about twelve federal and fifteen state offices, not counting Sul Ross. And how about the local government acceleration? Local entities' budgets have increased at a far more rapid pace than the feds.

During the 1940s I took a philosophy course at Sul Ross taught by the Dean of the College, Dr. T. H. Ethridge. Sometimes when he was lecturing he would switch from English to Greek or Latin to see how many of us were napping. Anyway, Dr. Ethridge said the Federal Government in Washington was no better and no worse than the State Government in Austin, and the State Government in Austin was no better and no worse than the local government entities here in Alpine. It has taken me almost fifty years before I acquiesced with Dr. Ethridge's statement.

If you remove the government employees from Alpine who work for a local, state or federal agency, you won't have much of

a population left. And we haven't even gotten into the various government programs that funnel additional millions of dollars into Alpine.

Big Bend National Park claims they enhance the economy in this county to the tune of thirty-three million dollars a year. What about the impact of Black Gap Game Preserve, Elephant Mountain Game Preserve, nearby Fort Davis National Historic Site, Davis Mountains State Park, McDonald Observatory, Barton Warnock Visitor Center, Big Bend Ranch, Fort Leaton, Guadalupe Mountains National Park and Balmorhea State Park?

How about the monthly social security checks, S.S.I., government retirement checks and benefits, veterans benefits, all the freebies from the agriculture department, food stamps, medicare, medicaid, public housing and subsidized apartment complexes, federal land bank, and SBA loans? The list goes on and on. And how about the millions of federal dollars REA has poured into the Rio Grande Electric Co-op and Big Bend Telephone Company?

I know of one city block in Alpine that contains seven single family residences. Twelve adults live in that block and they receive a total of seventeen checks each month from various federal, state and local governments. And not one dime of the money is giveaway; they all earn every penny or have earned it in the past and now receive checks from various government retirement programs.

I know it's galling to a lot of people to admit that Alpine is a government town. Some people will never admit it, especially some of the major beneficiaries of government benevolence. They would rather brag about what a rugged individual they are.

But the facts are there. Check it out for yourself.

The Chiliheads

Broadcast 1985

THE FIRST International Chili Championship ever held took place in Terlingua in 1967. It really started out as a lark, under the auspices of the Dallas based Chili Appreciation Society International, founded by renowned columnist Frank Tolbert of the Dallas Morning News.

David Witts had bought up a lot of acreage in the south end of Brewster County, including the ghost town of Terlingua. His partner was world champion race car driver Carol Shelby.

Wick Fowler was an Austin-based newsman who had been a war correspondent in World War II. Wick's hobby was chili. He ate it, he cooked it, he wrote about it and even marketed the stuff commercially in two different varieties. Some guy in California had challenged Wick to a no-holds-barred showdown to determine which of the two was the greatest chili cook in the world.

Frank Tolbert thought it would be great fun to have such a contest in the most isolated spot in Texas—Terlingua. His Chili Appreciation Society International got with Witts and they decided to hold the event on the front porch of the abandoned store building in the ghost town. The challenger from California

turned sick and couldn't make the trip. Meanwhile a novelist from Mt. Kisko, New York, had been writing articles about his abilities as a chili cook, claiming to stew up the best bowl of red in the world. That's how H. Allen Smith got invited to challenge Wick Fowler.

Five hundred people from around the United States were invited and that meant sleeping on the ground. Witts and Shelby didn't want that big a gaggle of people stumbling around in the dark among the open mine shafts at Terlingua, so it was decided everyone would sleep at Terlingua Ranch headquarters, on the ground.

Wick Fowler's buddies in the capitol press corps decided they too wanted to come, so they conned some lobbyist into chartering a large aircraft and conned me into securing enough bedrolls for all of them and out they came.

We had a big barbecue and some beer the night before the cook-off and a great time swapping yarns. This was a first trip west of the Pecos for most of the press corps and the isolation and great distances held them in awe. Most everybody had had a long day and were tired out by dark. The November desert night was cold, so it didn't take a great deal of encouragement to get people into their bedrolls and asleep.

During the wee hours of the morning two crooked cowboys created their share of excitement by riding their horses through the sleeping area. How and why no one was hurt is still a mystery because the bedrolls were side by side and head to foot, filled with dozens of sleeping party goers. The horses apparently had a great deal more intelligence than their riders; otherwise, they would have stepped on and perhaps crushed the bedroll occupants. Someone finally convinced the potted horsemen to ride elsewhere, but the incident left an indelible memory on

those who were awakened by a horse standing over their prone body.

Transporting the capitol press corps to Terlingua for the cook-off required the services of all of us who were in our own cars. Jumbo Atwell, Dean of the Texas Legislature and a renowned chili aficionado, went along for the ride and a lot of colorful conversation. The distance between ranch headquarters and the site of the contest was some thirty to forty miles, mostly over rough ranch roads. Jumbo and I entertained the news people with stories and yarns, mostly about practical jokes we had pulled in the legislature, and many of those anecdotes started popping up in the *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, the *Austin American Statesman*, the *Dallas Morning News* and other papers a few days later. I'm sure Jumbo and I would have shown more discretion had we known our narrations would be spread across Texas in print. Jumbo was known in the legislature as the world's oldest teenager, and I had known most of the press corps professionally for many years so some of our more colorful stories weren't reported.

I succeeded in getting the great race car driver, Carol Shelby, to drive my new Pontiac part of the trip and that was thrill enough for me.

When we arrived in the ghost town of Terlingua a throng of some three thousand people had gathered, none of them invited, and most of them well on their way to a huge drunk. Witts and Shelby, owners of Terlingua, were upset, worried about their liability. Shelby would have called the event off at that point if he had his way. He remarked that he was going to sell his interest because of the potential lawsuits. The possibility of things getting out of hand was very real, and there wasn't a policeman within a hundred miles, all the way to Alpine. The party was suppose to be private, on private property, so there

had been no reason for police.

An effort was made to keep the uninvited guests away from the store, an impossible task which got nowhere. Some enterprising beer distributor had a truck load of beer he was selling at twice the going rate, so the crowd didn't face an alcohol shortage.

After some clowning around on the store porch by the two participants, both Fowler and Smith were declared winners, and the official party was over.

I never attended another chili cook-off and from what I've heard, none of the other guests invited to the original event returned.

According to police reports, the cook-off became known for its dopeheads rather than chiliheads, and it was dubbed the "boracho grande," the big drunk. Dozens of Highway Patrol along with Texas Rangers were called in for crowd control and to handle the pot smokers.

I understand that in more recent years some effort is being put forth to cut down on the nudity and fistfights, but for awhile you heard more about the baring of flesh than the flavor of chili. The wet T-shirt contest outdrew the cooking contest.

Now that the south end of Brewster County has tamed, in fact now occupied by several thousand residents, the booze-drenched bash may become what its originators aimed for in the beginning, a Saturday afternoon lark in the November desert.

Mama's Rooster

Broadcast 1952

I'VE BEEN WANTING to tell you about an anecdote that occurred when I was growing up involving a Rhode Island Red Rooster which belonged to my mother, but before we get into that I need to depict life in rural America during the early 1930s as I knew it.

Rural people had many things in common, the first of which was money. None of them had any, and chances of accumulating any were slim to none. Other matters common to rural families were houses. They were what was termed boxed houses in that era and they sat a couple of feet off the ground on blocks or heavy cedar posts. Some were enclosed around the bottom with lattice work but most were not. The area beneath the house was an excellent storage space for lawn mowers, rakes, hoes, fishing poles, my brother's hidden tobacco and whatever.

It was also the residence of the family dog. From his or her location beneath the house, the dog could see, hear and smell in all four directions, and in the blink of an eye could pounce on man or animal, quite an effective location for a watch dog. I could tell you a dozen stories about the white Spitz underneath the Hendryx house and his ferocious defense thereof. Suffice it

to say that neither man nor beast approached that household until it was certain the white blur of fur underneath was under control of a member of the Hendryx family.

Rural families kept only one dog; there weren't enough table scraps for two.

Rural families also maintained a cat whose sole purpose on earth was to serve as a mouser around the hay barn or wherever all the livestock feed was kept. The cat and the dog maintained an unfriendly truce, and one dare not trespass on the other's territory. The cat's daily menu consisted of the mice it could catch and a warm coffee can of milk after the evening's milking.

Rural families had one or two milk cows who produced enough for the family needs plus a little to be bottled and delivered door to door. Sometimes the bottles were Mason fruit jars. A flock of chickens was always located next to the cowpen and one or two pigs were kept in the same general area.

Adjacent to the cowpens would be a large mound of manure from both the cow and chicken pens which was put to good use on the lawn, garden, fruit trees and hayfield.

Rural families maintained a family garden tended by all members of the tribe. Located between the house and outbuildings, the garden sustained the family, the church pastor's family and several Radio Flyer wagon loads of vegetables which were sold house to house.

In the fall, one entire week was set aside for canning unlimited amounts of green beans, tomatoes, squash, beets, turnips and greens, peas, okra, carrots, and other vegetables. These, coupled with the calf and hog which awaited slaughter, provided rural America with the world's healthiest diet. Some of America's poorest were America's best fed, by the sweat of their brow and God's generosity to those who till the soil.

Most important of all the outbuildings was the privy which occupied a prominent place on the landscape.

There is a pecking order in rural neighborhoods, controlled by the chickens but enforced by humans. It has to do with roosters. Everybody had roosters. They were necessary to fertilize eggs of the laying hens. When a rooster was dethroned by a younger bird he became the main ingredient in a wonderful Sunday chicken stew. Bragging rights went to the family who had the meanest rooster, the one that could lick any challenger. These rooster fights occurred without the use of metal spurs, each bird fought with the natural spur the Good Lord gave him. You might say these were nonprofessional fights but they were bloody and they were vicious.

One of our hens hatched a rooster that was a born killer from the day he broke out of the egg shell. He tried to kill all other chicks in his brood. As he grew he took on all the roosters on the place 'til he reached the top, where he became Numero Uno.

Then he fought the neighborhood roosters, White Leghorns, Brown Leghorns, Buff Plymouth Rocks, Domineckers, you name all the breeds in our neighborhood and that Rhode Island Red whipped them. He also attacked any human being who dared enter the chicken pen, including the family dog who retreated to his defensive bulwark under the house. He was the fightingest, meanest rooster I ever saw.

At that point the guiding hand of Mama took over. She had us build a small pen to hold the red devil, then she waited.

During that period in American history, peddlers worked the rural lanes of the countryside with their horse-pulled trailers loaded with housewives' dreams including pots and pans, bolts of colorful cloth, linoleum—you name it and an itinerate peddler had it.

Mama wanted new linoleum for her kitchen. She knew which peddler had a game rooster he liked to pit against domestic roosters along his route, and sure enough he showed up one hot summer day. Mama went on and on about a certain linoleum rug but every few minutes pointed out that she had no money, which was the gospel truth.

When the peddler had decided he wasn't going to make a sale and began reloading his goods, Mama allowed as how we had a family rooster which was the backbone of our chicken operation and she knew it would cause trouble in the family, among the kids and her husband and all, if any harm came to that rooster. She wanted that linoleum so bad she was willing to risk offending the rest of the family by fighting her Rhode Island Red against his champion game rooster.

I've heard it spread pretty thick in my day, all the way from the courthouse to the White House, but I've never seen Mama equaled in the way she suckered that peddler.

That red devil became a legend. The peddler begged her to pull it off his game rooster before the demon killed his champion. Mama got her kitchen floor covered with new linoleum and all because a smart country peddler took the bait of a rural Texas housewife one summer afternoon.

The following Sunday a Rhode Island Red rooster, so mean he couldn't be in contact with human or animal, was a great chicken stew.

I've never forgotten Mama's rooster.

Ice Storm

Broadcast 1981

ON a bright and sunny 12th day of December an isolated mountain storm hit the Davis Mountains, dumping ice and snow that broke trees, crushed power lines and caused a great deal of havoc. Within hours, almost out of nowhere, dozens of trucks and crews of workmen descended on the towns in the Davis Mountains. The next day Gene Hendryx broadcast what he and other area residents had witnessed:

ICE STORM

It was two weeks before Christmas
And all through the town
People were buying
Gifts by the pound.

Editorial writers had vented their spleen
Chastising the city with words that were mean.

Raindrops were falling
A very rare scene



Gene Hendryx clearing entrance after snow storm.

That would later turn mountains
And gamma grass green.

The children they played on their way to school
In puddles of water and shimmering pools

But the gremlins came gliding
God's wrath they bore
They froze all the rain
And dropped temperatures.

Power lines crackled
With accumulated ice
Tree limbs were broken
And things weren't too nice.

City and county moved the debris
Helped by the men from Alpine TV.

But then came the hard hats
Without even a flicker
They patched up the lines
In their tall cherry pickers.

People were grateful for what the hard hats had done
All but a handful of sore-headed ones.

The town's back to normal
Skies have turned blue
And we're very proud
of WTU.

Adios

AS THIS MANUSCRIPT is being prepared for the publisher, two of my grandsons are working part time at KVLB while attending Sul Ross. Long-time listeners stop to tell me it reminds them of my son Ray's debut as an announcer in 1967 and how remarkable it is to have three generations in radio.

Erie Williams used to delight in telling me that Ray was a better announcer than I. I never told him, but nothing could have made me prouder. I've also not told listeners that my grandsons are actually fourth generation broadcasters, not third.

My father, dubbed the "yodeling truck driver," entertained people on outlaw radio stations in South Texas during the late 1920s and early 1930s. He sang and yodeled on several unlicensed radio stations while he made his rounds driving a lumber truck. He would drive with his right hand on the wheel, left arm resting on the door frame, singing all the blue yodels so popular in that era. He had numerous followers who claimed they couldn't tell the difference between him and Jimmy Rogers.

In addition to his yodeling routine, he could talk with the best Jewish and Irish brogues I've ever heard, and he told ethnic jokes along with his musical renditions. Ethnic stories were much

in style in that period, in the movies, on stage, network radio, even in the pulpit. My dad knew hundreds of jokes, and he could mimic anyone.

Uvalde had an outlaw station owned by John Burns, just as Cas Edwards operated one in Alpine a few hours daily. They had few sources of program material other than a girl playing a piano, so almost any act that was clean was automatically broadcast.

In 1934 Congress passed the Federal Communications Act, and their first move was to knock all unlicensed radio stations off the air. FCC restrictions were so costly that few of the unlicensed stations were ever heard again. Demand for amateur performers such as my dad was ended immediately. Professionals such as Red River Dave and Adolph Hofner, out of San Antonio, filled in on the few licensed stations in existence, so thereafter my dad stuck to truck driving and farming. I've always felt some of the joy went out of his life when he could no longer entertain. A nickname bestowed upon him during his years as an entertainer, "Abie," stayed with him the rest of his days. So you see, I'm not the first Hendryx to ever face a microphone.

Interviewing celebrities ranging from President Eisenhower to Elizabeth Taylor has been part of my responsibilities, but the best interviews came from talking with ordinary citizens who have accomplished some extraordinary deed while leading their daily lives—people such as Lou Reid and Hattie Grace Elliot, Dave Allen and Pete Gallego.

I recall very well an interview with Jane Coats when she talked about coming to Texas as a teenage bride at the end of World War II. She made up her mind to be a real Texan instead of a New England transplant, and as a result, has led a happy, useful

life as a wife, mother, and civic worker for the past fifty years. There are hundreds of similar stories out there in radioland if someone will tap into them.

Among other honors I've had was the privilege of serving three years on the board of directors and four years as an officer of the Texas Association of Broadcasters including the office of President. I was the youngest person to serve as President of the organization which represents 771 radio and television stations across the state, and I also came from the smallest town.

When properly used, radio is the most effective of all media for community service. Since its inception, KVLFF has worked diligently to fulfill its public service and the multiplicity of awards accumulated by the station confirms how well it has implemented that responsibility.

During KVLFF's years on the air it has been blessed with some outstanding employees. Between Sherman Newsom and Jack Powell, the equipment was kept up to FCC standards during their thirty or so years.

Pat Powell and Janice Harvey understood the intricacies of program logs as well as any office staff in the country. Vic Torres has been directing Spanish programming for so long he can't remember when he wasn't. Elvie Williams, June Graham and Wayne Peters have seen that the books have been balanced and kept the tax man from our doors these past fifty years.

As to the announcing staff, it has always been my belief that radio stations are much better if they train their own. For years Gene Craft, President of the Texas State Network, attempted to sign KVLFF as a member of the network, based on their ability to deliver Texas news. KVLFF said no. A few years later Craft was asked at a meeting of the Texas Association of Broadcasters why he had never signed Alpine and he ruefully answered,

“Because they probably have the two best announcers in the state and they don’t need us.” He was, of course, referring to Phil Wayne Ebersberger and Sam Wade, both trained at KVLF.

Phil and Sam made a great broadcast team. One would broadcast the news from the studio while the other announced the opening, middle commercial, and close from the control room. The name “control room” means just what it says. That room controls the entire station. An announcer in the studio can not turn the studio mike on or off—it can only be done in the control room.

One day Sam was seated in the studio broadcasting a fifteen minute news broadcast with Phil operating the control room, when all of a sudden there was Phil standing over Sam. The studio red light showed the studio mike was very much live. Phil undid Sam’s tie (we still wore ties in those days), then he unbuttoned and removed Sam’s shirt, followed by the same treatment with his trousers. All Sam could do was continue broadcasting the news. Phil not only left the studio, leaving Sam sitting in front of a live mike in his underwear, he left the building and went home, carrying Sam’s clothing with him. At some point in time the station suffered a couple of minutes of dead air as Sam dashed from the studio to the control room and slipped a record on a turntable for a musical interlude, while frantically making a phone call for someone to bring him some clothes.

In those days Alpine still had telephone operators and if Phil had tipped them off not to take any calls from KVLF, Sam may have been sitting there yet in his underwear.

Speaking of telephone operators, they were all wonderful to KVLF, assisting us in every way possible. Those of you unfortunate enough to have never heard a local operator say “number please” have missed a great part of American heritage.

When I stepped aside and turned the reigns over to Ray, there was more to it than my failing health. Automation, computers, fax machines, copiers, satellites, and all sorts of newfangled equipment had entered the industry, equipment I knew nothing about and cared even less about their uses. I've known for fifty years that a radio station in a small town cannot survive unless the boss is a jack-of-all-trades. He may not be the best at any one thing, but he or she had better know how to do a little of everything in the station. I was not prepared to learn and understand the tremendous amount of new technology available to an ever changing industry.

Ray understands that a successful radio station must serve the community. That means doing more than running a glorified juke box. You present to your listeners what's happening in the community, honestly, fairly, evenhandedly. Sometimes you ruffle feathers—that goes with the territory.

A news reporter is not supposed to be the best loved person in town. The best reporters I know enjoy the affectionate regard of an exceedingly small group, but they refuse to be swayed by local officials into reporting only what the official wants the public to know. A good reporter is not going to be swayed by what his or her advertisers think. I don't cotton to muckrakers whose only joy is to spread poisoned thoughts and hate, but a good reporter must have convictions, a backbone—come hell or high water—friends, advertisers, listeners, readers or what have you. I hope KVLB has reflected that attitude throughout the years.

Today, after broadcasting in “the last frontier” for nearly half a century, radio is as bewitching as it was when I was a child, searching for all those little people hiding somewhere in that radio.

A few years ago, the head of Madison Avenue's largest advertising agency said if radio had been invented after television instead of the other way around, radio would be the media making the big bucks. After all, radio is still the only media requiring the use of your imagination. And just imagine! I have been privileged to spend my entire adult life living that childhood dream.

“**GENE HENDRYX** of Alpine got the nod as master of ceremonies at the Fort Davis dedication which will climax the three-day visit by Lady Bird Johnson

Hendryx is one of the few master of ceremonies who pleases everybody. A good example of this was an occasion when he had to introduce U.S. Senator Ralph Yarborough, Democrat, and U.S. Rep. Ed Foreman, Republican, on the same program. Both agreed Hendryx did well with his introduction—probably the first time they ever agreed on anything.”

—*San Angelo Standard Times*, April 1966



“**ONE OF WEST TEXAS’ BEST-KNOWN** masters of ceremony will be toastmaster at President McNiel’s inaugural luncheon honoring out of town and other invited guests. He is Gene Hendryx, owner of Radio Station KVLK. He’s famous for getting programs started on time, stopped on time, and without foul-ups in the middle. A fast-thinking ad-libber, he keeps the show moving, and if something goes wrong with the schedule when Hendryx is in charge, those in the audience never know it.

His chore here is but one of three this week. He averages about sixty assignments a year, and so far as anyone knows, he hasn’t stumbled yet. Hendryx has been faced with delays, outright absences of program participants, failure of public address systems, and numerous other ‘gremlins,’ but so far he has remained unruffled.

Hendryx just may be ‘unruffleable.’”

—*Sul Ross Skyline*

“HENDRYX is as down home in his sizable office as he is on the air.”

—*San Diego Tribune*, California, 1987



“KVLf has won about every award given to a radio station including the Texas Association of Broadcasters Award for the best locally produced news broadcast in Texas, not once, but several times.

Gene Hendryx points out that while they do four or five editorials a year, he feels it is their job to collect news and report it, not tell people what to think.

KVLf is not in the wilderness as when it first started, but still fulfills its obligation to bring the ‘Last Frontier’ together.”

—*Texas Historian*, 1983



“THE FINANCIAL RESOURCES of KVLf did not keep pace with the effective service of the station to the community. By early 1950 the station was on the verge of bankruptcy. The owners called upon Gene Hendryx, a recent Sul Ross graduate, to return to Alpine to manage the station, and within a few months he had the station on a financially paying basis. In the mid 1950s he purchased controlling interest.

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of KVLf, Senator Bentsen, Senator Tower, Governor Briscoe, Attorney General Hill and a host of other high officials joined Her Honor Dorothy McBride labeling February 17, 1974 as KVLf Day. Some fifty civic, social and religious organizations from Brewster, Jeff Davis, Presidio and Terrell Counties joined to honor KVLf. This all gives evidence of the great service the station has rendered over the years.”

—*Alpine, Texas, Then and Now*
by Dr. Clifford Casey

“**GENE HENDRYX** joined the Marines at age fifteen and participated in action against the Japanese in the Solomon Islands, Guam and Iwo Jima. He is the President of Big Bend Broadcasters in Alpine, Texas.”

—*The Battle at Iwo Jima and the Men Who Fought There*
by Philip A. St. John, Ph.D.



“**AFTER HE BECAME MANAGER** of KVLF, Gene Hendryx did well. He paid off the accumulated debts, earned the respect of the community, started making money for the station, and in a few years bought controlling interest.

Hendryx did a lot for the Big Bend area. His efforts brought about the designation of the spectacularly beautiful Guadalupe Peak area as a national park. An ex-student of Sul Ross State University, he is fiercely loyal to the school.

He has lost none of his Marine combative spirit with the passing of years complicated by heart attacks and degenerative arthritis of the spine. He remains a steadfast and loyal person, true to his friends, and dangerous and generally unforgiving to his enemies. He is widely known and respected.

The entire Big Bend area is a paradise for those who love unspoiled, rugged nature. Radio is important because there is no local satisfactory television reception.

—“The Voice of the Last Frontier is still
the Voice of the Last Frontier.”
The Talking Wind, A History of Frontier Broadcasting
by Jack Hawkins



*Gene and Nancy Hendryx in their home in Alpine, Texas, 1996.
Photo courtesy of Lee Sleeper.*