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Interview no. 5

J. Frank Dobie

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: J. Frank Dobie (1888-1964)
INTERVIEWER: Mildred Keyser
PROJECT: _____
DATE OF INTERVIEW: Probably 1960
TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted
TAPE NO.: 5
TRANSCRIPT NO.: 5
TRANSCRIBER: Rebecca Craver

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Author of numerous books on Texas and the Southwest

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Discussion of his life, his attitudes toward his own writings and how they have changed, his audience, bookstores.

Length of Interview: 1 hour Length of Transcript 21 pages

J. Frank Dobie (1888 - 1964)
Interviewed By Mildred B. Keyser
No date - Probably 1960

K: Well, you can tell I'm not an expert at this business, can't you?

D: Yeah, but please don't feel hurried.

K: Well, you don't make me feel hurried and I appreciate that.

D: Look. I'll move these things. [sounds of shuffling papers on a table or desk] I never had enough tables 'cept once in my life.

K: Where was that?

D: That was when I was working, writing, out in a cabin from Del Rio on Devil's Lake. It was a summer cabin for some public utility outfit. Big old dining room full of tables. It was in the wintertime and I used all those tables. I was writing The Longhorns and I'd put chapter, chapter, chapter. I could circulate. I had plenty of chairs.

K: You played musical chairs?

D: Yeah.

K: That was wonderful. I have difficulty. Course I use the card system and that has its pitfalls too. Is this mesquite?

D: No. Oh, I don't know.

K: It has thorns that long.

D: No. This is one of those thorny bushes. This wasn't a tree; was a bush, wasn't it?

K: It was a bush although some of them grew higher than my head.

D: Well, I can't tell which one it is. Might be paloverde or [?].

K: Oh, I've heard of that. Well mesquite looks more like japonica with the smaller leaf then?

D: Well, it looks like a pepper tree somewhat. You know what a pepper tree

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is?

K: Yes, that has the lacy

D: Yeah. I'll show you mesquite directly. There's one across the street here.

K: Oh good. I'd like to see one.

D: There's plenty of scrub mesquite out there near El Paso, off in the sand dunes. They hold those dunes together, those roots do. Particularly across the river. On the Mexico side they call those sand dunes the medianos. You go right through 'em when you're going to Chihuahua City from Juarez. Scrub mesquite, mostly roots. That holds the sand. That's when you see those mounds. Some stranger used to say, "It's a hell of a country where you have to dig for wood and climb for water." (Laughter) You dig for wood with those mesquites and climb for water by going up some canyon 'til maybe way up at the head of it you find a little seep spring. 'Course the water disappears if there is any--usually there isn't any--but it disappears from flowing down in that sandy country.

K: Oh, yes, it would seep down into the ground. Only at the top can you find it. That's some kind of country. I have had a time with Texas though. I had no idea. You know your Vaquero of the Brush Country. I enjoyed that so much. I didn't know what you were talking about for sure because I had never in my life seen brush country.

D: You've seen it now, some of it.

K: Yes, I've seen it. I came through it. I came down by Del Rio and Bracketville.

D: You were in the heart of it in Bracketville. No, Bracketville is not the heart of it. It's still on the edge, the western edge because the brush isn't very high there. But if you went from Bracketville to Eagle Pass

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and went down that way.

K: I must have missed quite a bit of it then. We came on up through Uvalde and then around by ? and down to Beeville.

D: Oh, then you were all right. You saw it. You went right through it.

K: I realize, of course, that I'm handicapped in writing about this country by not knowing.

D: But you could see how say coming from Sanderson to Del Rio you gradually came into bush country and by the time you got to Uvalde you were in tree country. A lot of trees, not only along the streams but on the ground between the streams. Some pretty big mesquites in that country.

K: And then coming on down on into Beeville, these trees grow wild don't they, these huge trees that you see?

D: Oh, yes. Certainly.

K: Are those the live oaks?

D: Lots of live oaks. Evergreen. There's a live oak right there, a great tree, in our neighbor's yard. We have plenty of them right back of the house.

K: Oh, so that's a live oak.

D: Those straight trunks are elms, red elms, but there aren't those down in the brush country. There're no red elms down there.

K: No. I didn't remember seeing anything like that.

D: The oaks aren't everywhere in the brush country either. Whole counties there without any oaks.

K: You know in seeing this country, you know I've found myself revising some of the things I wrote in the paper. Now I spoke about the unshaded country. Well, it's not unshaded. Of course where I live there's no shade for hundreds of miles, but this part of Texas is different.

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D: Oh, yeah. All the way ...well, I won't say from Sanderson...but on west of Sanderson, take from ? all the way to El Paso through that Sierra Blanca country: Jackrabbits carry parasols for shade. Aren't any bushes for 'em to get under.

K: (Laughs) Oh, there's lots of jackrabbits. I saw lots of roadrunners, paisano birds, you call 'em and quail. We left El Paso at four o'clock in the morning.

D: Did you see quail this side, near El Paso?

K: We have quail sometime in our backyard.

D: Blue quail?

K: Well, there're between a brown and a grey.

D: Well, there're two kinds of quail in that country. There's your bob whites and scale quail or blue quail. They have a top knot on 'em, the blue quail.

K: That's how I'm sure they're quail. They do have a little top knot. That must be the blue quail. They are friendly little birds. They don't really. They come in close. They come over the fence and into the back yard and the children have fed them.

D: You're on the edge of town?

K: We're on the edge of the Fort Bliss desert where there's nothing much there. Well, sir, I talked to Dr. Boatwright day before yesterday when I first got in town and he talked about the paper. He began by saying if you want to talk about Mr. Dobie's style, go back to ?? and all the best British classic writers and I will certainly do that. And then the next point he made was that with a Master's thesis, you must choose because it would be impossible to cover everything ever written. So I thought that probably the first thing I would like to know was what you would prefer,

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what you think is the best that should be handled in this case.

D: You mean the best of what I've written?

K: Yes.

D: Oh, I don't know. Different people, of course have different opinions. My friend Charlie Ellenick...he's a very lively Americanist, he's a book dealer in New York... always contended that my best book was my first one, Vaquero of the Brush Country.

K: That is good. I enjoyed it.

D: I was fresher then than I am now and a very notable collector of Texas books, ? Van Dale of Amarillo, a good friend of mine, he said Flavor of Texas was the best. He's partial to it. A great many people -- I don't say a great many but -- a considerable number of people have written me and told me that they consider Tongues of the Monte my best book.

K: Do they?

D: Yes. I think particularly a man, I call him a friend, he's a friend in Pennsylvania, likes Mexico. Frank Wardlaw, director of the University of Texas Press, of whose mind I have the greatest respect, says The Mustangs is best.

K: Oh, I enjoyed The Mustangs.

D: John ? Allen who wrote Southwest, was reared in the brush country and others say Longhorns is best. Some people say Coronado's Children's the best. It's the only one they've read.

K: Well, the only one they've read! (Laughter) It was undoubtedly the most popular, wasn't it?

D: Oh, it's been the most popular. I have, oh, maybe 2,000 letters upstairs about it and the great majority of those letters are from treasure

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hunters, not from literary people at all.

K: Well, it is a book with a very wide appeal. What do you consider to be the main bulk of your audience?

D: Well, it's hard for me to say. It's all over the country, from New York to Los Angeles or what we call westerners.

K: Interested in western novels?

D: Yeah. Denver or Kansas City or so on. Well, my books are well known to those western readers and writers but I don't know that the majority of readers at all are westerners in taste. I rather hope they aren't. More books sell in New York than anywhere else, you know. Mine are in the same category. More books of mine sell in New York than they do in Texas.

K: Really?

D: Yes.

K: Well, I have talked to people all through the state and I find the general consensus of opinion is that everybody reads them in Texas. And in the rest of the country it is your better educated.

D: Yeah. Well, I don't intend to be a national figure in the way that Robert Frost is or... .

K: Oh, I think that you are, but the people who are looking for wild west are not among your audience.

D: That's right. But when I say New York, you misunderstand me. After all Houston, the biggest city in Texas, doesn't have a big book store. A salesman for New York publisher--after all all of the big publishing houses 'cept two are in New York--could skip Houston and won't be killed.

K: They send out to other places.

D: Well, they don't read. Now I suspect the higher percentage of people who do read in Houston read my books than in New York, say, but percentage of

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the population of readers is so much higher in the East than it is in Houston.

K: Is that right? Surely the Houston people aren't all watching television?

D: Well that's what they're doing.

K: Oh.

D: I used to know a cow man that'd judge a town by the shipping pens, cattle. That was before cattle were carried in trucks. I judge a town somewhat by its bookstores. There isn't a good second hand bookstore in Houston. No. The bookstores in Galveston are to other stores what one of these little fix-it shops on the edge of any town is to the department stores.

K: Well, that's surprising really. Do you think the Southwest is headed toward more interest in literature and in fine writing?

D: I don't know that fine writing is the word. Well, I presume it is. I presume the process of evolution will bring the Southwest a higher degree of literacy ... literacy in the sense of reading. Now when I came to Austin in 1914 and on to the period of the Great Depression in 1929 and 30, we had the best second hand bookstore here in the state. That was Gammels? Bookstore. We have a pretty good second hand bookstore now, but it's not a *Texas and western books*. It's a literature.

K: Old classics, more or less?

D: Yeah, more or less. Some of 'em less. But books that that specialists read. As for current books, why you take the cooperative bookstore. It's owned by ...It's supposed to be owned by the university students...It's recently enlarged itself and they put the book department upstairs. They sell swimming suits and tennis racquets and things like that downstairs on the main floor.

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K: Isn't that awful?

D: Well, it tells you what pays most.

K: Well, you come over to Texas Western. We've got our bookstore on the first floor. We've got our books on the first floor.

D: Do you have any books besides textbooks?

K: Oh, yes. Lot of books. They have your books. They have all kinds of books. You know, I finally recalled your...(telephone rings) Do you need to answer that?

D: No. Somebody else will answer it.

K: That Walter P. Webb, you he was. Dr. Past used his book.

D: Excuse me, will you?

(Brief interruption)

K: We were talking about: Dr. Past used Walter P. Webb's book The Great Plains as a sort of introduction to the course in Southwest Literature.

D: That's good introduction all right.

K: I thought it was. We've enjoyed Dr. Past. He's a man with a lot of bounce, lot of interest in his subject.

D: Webb's Great Plains is an interpretation of the land.

K: Yes, the land and its effect on the way civilization developed. I thought it was very interesting. But now to come back to this paper. What do you think then, if we approach it from the other way, that since I can't treat everything? I intend to read as much as I can.

D: Only treat what interests you.

K: Oh but it all does.

D: But there are degrees and since you can't cover everything, cover what you would rather cover. That way you'll be more interesting. I never

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have been able to include everything I'd like to include in a book. Always have surfaces. At the same time I recognize the wisdom of a saying or phrase Robert Lewis Stevenson used "the art of omission." And I think the art of omission is the most difficult of arts.

K: I wouldn't be surprised. I found that I have things stacked up around that I had to choose among even in such a short thing as this.

D: Yes. Well, how long is a Master's thesis supposed to be?

K: I think an average is a hundred pages.

D: Oh, well, what you sent me was a hundred pages nearly, wasn't it? thirty, forty pages?

K: Thirty, thirty-five?

D: What was that? A memo-graph? I took it you didn't want that back. I just kept it with your letter.

K: No. We were each given three or four copies of it and each member of the class was given a copy so that we could read it beforehand and not have to read it in class.

D: Oh, I see. And criticize it.

K: So that will form the nucleus. Now is there anything you recall in that that you would prefer to have forgotten, left out?

D: No. I wouldn't put it that way. I recall the introduction seemed to me a little too flowery. Of course, you told me you're a poet.

K: Well, that's what I love to do is write poetry. I have written considerable.

D: Well, I used to read poetry a great deal and still like it.

K: It shows in your work definitely.

D: But I was so absorbed in poetry at one time that the fibers in my mind got, uh flabby.

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K: Oh, you think it does that? I don't read as much as I used to. I have little children. I have two, one five and one ten. They keep me away from a lot of things I'd like to do, even poetry.

D: I know. When I went away to World War I, I went into field artillery. Now in public school I had liked arithmetic, done all right in algebra, liked it. At the college I quit mathematics and I think I busted the course in mathematics, I'm not sure. I was absorbed in poetry, the romantic poets in particular--Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Byron. And was in love. Married in 1916. You'll meet the lady I married. And then I went in the field artillery and had to study logarithms, geometry. Firing data is a very complex subject. You have to take so many factors into consideration in figuring firing data. Trajectory, the wind, the temperature, and all. Well I think my mind began to --it never had had any fibers but the latent fibers began to harden with that experience. I know it was good for me.

K: My husband has been a tank man. He's been with armored force.

D: Course I've seen plenty of artillerymen that didn't have any imagination. They were just sort of mathematical ciphers themselves.

K: They were good artillerymen?

D: They were good machines, yes. Now to get back on your introduction. Your introduction I think the central idea of it is all right.

K: Well good.

D: I think your central idea is good. At one time I thought the finest thing I could do in the way of writing would be to make the phenomenal drive through the Southwest more interesting to people.

K: Well, you have done that.

D: And that was your idea in the beginning, in your introduction, yes.

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K: Make people see it, be more aware of it.

D: Yes. I still think it's desirable, a great desideratum to have all these factors in life -- the places and the fauna and the flora -- have significance through the accretions of art and literature and legend and song.

K: As you described it in the English countryside.

D: Yeah, that's right. I took the skylark as an example in A Texan in England

K: Oh I enjoyed that book very much too. Well, but I think you have gone beyond that.

D: Well, I have.

K: Definitely. In becoming a force in how people think.

D: Yes. I used to consider a Texas. Now I consider myself a citizen of the world who lives in Texas.

K: That's much better. That's a much better description of you. I was going to ask among the questions I had in mind what you preferred to be called and I believe you've answered my question before I got it out.

D: Well, I don't want to be limited that way.

K: You aren't limited. Mr. Jackson said that the new book might be autobiographical?

D: No, it isn't.

K: Oh, he'll be disappointed. What is it or may I ask?

D: Well, it's a mere anthology of tales. It's a collection, a selection of I won't say the best narratives, but some of the best narratives out of my other books.

K: That will be interesting.

D: But I do want to write an autobiography. It's so hard to be honest, you

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know.

K: It must be.

D: About yourself. About anything else. It's a whole lot easier not to think than to think and it's a great deal easier not to be honest than to be honest because you get to thinking about what is truth and you don't blame J. Pilate for leaving.

K: No, you don't. He was up against the final answer to, the final question to which there is no universal answer.

D: Yes. No categorical answer.

K: I had originally included talk of Christ before Pilate in my paper and I mentioned it in my review of The Mustangs as leading up to your wrestle with truth, shall we say. (smiles) And then I didn't include it finally.

D: Well, now take The Mustangs, when I wrote that book this country was in the horrible depression of McCarthyism and I was writing about freedom as well as about wild horses. I made them a symbol of freedom.

K: I hope the freedom we all want isn't going to be as short-lived as that of the horses.

D: Yes. But McCarthyism isn't dead by a great deal.

K: No, I don't think it'll ever be in a country where everybody flaps their jaws without thinking. If there were more thinking and less talking. But I'm interested in this new book. It sounds as though it will be something which you do the best.

D: Well, I got would have gotten those selections together [except that] a former pupil of mine of whom I'm very fond, took "Life and Literature of the Southwest" I suppose in the 20s, 30 years ago, has kept up with me and has collected all of my writings. He made the selections. And then I looked 'em over. I didn't agree with several of 'em and cut out a few

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and put in others. And then I had to rewrite myself. As long as I have a chance to change something of my own, well, I keep hammering away. Nothing ever seems finished. And I didn't know I was gonna' have to spend so much time rewriting Dobie but I did.

K: Do you think you feel different at this time or think differently?

D: Oh, I think differently. But it wasn't so much that. I think I know a little bit more about the art of writing now than I did. Particularly on selections on Coronado's Children I changed. I didn't have to change much on the selections out of The Mustangs. There're several horse stories in this.

K: Oh, they're beautifully written. I wouldn't want a word changed.

D: Well, I can see words that should be changed. (chuckles)

K: I do the same thing. I tinker over and over and over until it sounds the way I want it to sound.

D: That's right.

K: And then you come back to it and it doesn't sound the way you thought it did. A little later your senses develop a little more.

D: I don't think any serious writer can afford to not revise.

K: No, I don't think so. Some claim they don't.

D: Yeah, they claim they don't. Byron claimed it hadn't lept until he was through. As a matter of fact, he revised plenty.

K: Well, I...I wouldn't criticize Byron but I think there were times when he should have leaped back. Goes on and on. Of course, they're beautiful but ... they....

D: I guess it was...somebody said that Shakespeare never blotted a line and Ben Johnson said "Would to God he'd blotted a thousand."

(General laughter)

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K: Oh, Shakespeare. I've been enjoying him all over again recently.

D: He never gets old to me.

K: I have just taken the graduate readings course, which of course takes you from Beowulf right on down and it's only a taste of each thing, but we had to read books like Vanity Fair in a week and be able to comment on it. It was quite a job. Now there are a couple of questions I would like to ask you. Dr. Boatwright spoke so highly of a speech you made recently at Houston.

D: Yeah. Life of a Writer in the Southwest.

K: He wondered if that had been published or if you knew when it would be?

D: No. I might be published if I finish it. It'd be published for Christmas.

K: And that would be a limited publication?

D: Well, I suppose so. Well I think I'd give it to some magazine, but not as long. Just part of it. I have only one copy of it. If you want to look at it well, I'll loan it to you.

K: Oh, well, now, I would ... I would be very nervous about having it if it's an only copy.

D: Well, it won't hurt you to be nervous.

K: (Laughs) I could take a pill, I guess. I don't have any, but...(laughs nervously)

D: You don't look very nervous to me.

K: I'm not very nervous really. Well, there's that one that Dr. Boatwright seemed to think expressed some of your feelings about things.

D: Well, it does.

K: Very well, your more recent attitudes. Mr. Jackson showed me a book. It's not a volume, it's not a volume, you told me it's not a volume. It must be a pamphlet. "As the Moving Finger".

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D: "[As the Moving Finger]....Writ."

K: Well, what magazine was that published in?

D: Well, it was published in Southwest Review. I'll give you a copy of that.

K: Fine. I would surely appreciate that. Is that the one that covers your time at Southwest?

D: No.

K: Well, which one is that. There must be a third one I haven't... .

D: There was no reprinting of that. But it was two installments, autobiographical narratives or descriptions...sketches of life at Southwestern. Came out in Southwest Review.

K: Well, then I'll be able to get hold of it. It apparently ... I must of missed it somehow in the review of periodical literature.

D: Well, I may have some pull sheets from it. I'll look directly. I'll give you the dates anyhow before you leave here.

K: I'd surely appreciate that. I did comb the review of periodical literature and I don't recall.. .

D: Did Jackson tell you about the "Plot of Verde", about the ranch?

K: Yes. He has a copy of that.

D: Have you seen that?

K: That's the one I gave the wrong title to. Oh, that was such a stupid thing.

D: Oh, yes, yes. That's right. I remember now. (chuckles)

K: I'm sure that's was decided you that I was completely unprecise. That was a funny thing. I work with these cards. And I had kept putting down Southwest Review, Spring of '53, but I hadn't put the title. And finally one night ,you know, about 11 o'clock I thought, "I don't have the title" so I thought it was it was a "piece of land." Well, I should never have

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written it down.

D: But having written it down well then that became it.

K: I remember thinking at the time I must go back and check this. But it was written down. It was in my notes. And I was so sorry. I wanted to ask you if I do quote from biographers of yours, is there any one whom you feel does tell the truth, does have his facts straight? The "Dogie Calves" incidentally came from Wertenberger.

D: Well, I imagine it was about right. I don't remember. I know it's something in that book. Greene Paten, Heartland.

K: Yes. Let's see, The Heartland. Well, he said not only that you financed your way with dogie calves but...

D: Oh, well, that wasn't true. I seen how you got that.

K: He said even just from one cow and I got to thinking afterwards my goodness, I should have realized that he was more or less kidding or something.

D: No. He wasn't kidding. He didn't know anything about cattle. He knew...I guess I told him maybe...that I was the oldest in the family and I got the hogs' share of the dogies.

K: Oh, I see. I used to get dogie lambs when my brother raised sheep.

D: Uh huh. And raised 'em. But then Papa helped me buy a yearling steer. And I think the last year at college, why I sold out. He sold out for me everything I had in the way of cattle. [slight interruption in tape quality] I didn't dream so much as I did the other years. Or maybe it was the year I went off to Columbia. I don't remember. I hadn't saved much from teaching. I never put myself through college with my cattle at all.

K: It's surprising how easy it is to make those blunders.

D: Well, particularly if you didn't know anything about ranching as Greene

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doesn't know anything about ranching. And particularly if you are a professional journalist without a discipline. Half of the journalists, oh ninety percent of the journalists lack discipline.

K: They write too much and too fast.

D: That's right. They don't have intellectual integrity, most of them. But you can explain and modify until the thing itself evaporates. Matthew Arnold said, "Explanations are tedious." That's particularly true if you're explaining to your wife some things. It's true in writing. Explanations are tedious. I think the best parts of my books are not the explanations. I can see how the opening chapters of The Longhorns and The Mustangs would be tedious to people. All those facts fascinate me.

K: Well, those books needed them. The background, to go back. It was what was needed. It may have been tedious for you to write, but I don't find it

D: It wasn't so tedious to write, but I think some explanations would be tedious to readers, is what I'm thinking of.

K: Well, I think you come back to your selection of readers. Now the readers who are interested in that sort of thing, in knowing what really happened, but as I say the people who want something about the wild west, with emphasis on the wild, would quit certainly by the second chapter.

Interruption: Mrs. Dobie brings in a Mr. Scarborough and a Mr. Taylor who want books autographed. Mr. Dobie invites them to sit down and explains that "Mrs. Keyser is writing an MA thesis on me and she wants me to write it for her." One of the men says to Mrs. Keyser, kidding, "Is he cutting out the profanity?" Mrs. Keyser says, "He hasn't said a word of profanity."

Dobie

D: I don't like to write on title pages. This is what is called technically the bastard title page and I don't mind writing on it. That's what printers call it. [general laughter] And some people call it the half title page. You know there are two ways of spelling Scarborough. [talk about the family name Scarborough]

D: You know every time I go to a funeral I think about how much better I could do than one of these preachers always promising you mansions in heaven and you don't know a thing about.

[talk of funerals, Walter P. Webb's funeral, and article from May 21, 1960 Saturday Review. Mr. Scarborough leaves.]

K: He's a lively individual.

D: I saw him at a funeral yesterday.

K: Do you mind if I look these things over and see if there's anything I especially want to ask?

D: Well, sure. You look them over. I'll be getting ... I think the end of a college education is to give people a just sense of values. William James used to say the end of a college education is to help you size up a man. Well, that's all right. Maybe I've been a little more precise. If the majority of the people had a just sense of values we'd be in Utopia. And this Smiley is a demi-god.

K: I never met him, of course.

D: Or a very light-headed person. The Austin-American had an interview with him, published on the front page the other day. He said there are two main problems of the university. One is to keep the population of the

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university down by selective admissions tests. The other is to get our share of PhDs. He didn't say anything about a share of intellects, informed intellects, or thinkers. In other words he's concerned with the brand and not with the animal.

K: I like that. The brand.

D: Well, some people don't know how to judge a horse or a cow or a sheep or a goat except by its brand or tag. A great many academicians don't know at all how to judge a teacher. I've seen these professors of English -- I used to be one of them -- the majority of the Sanhedrins was never concerned with man's intellect, intellectual activity. As a matter of fact they distrusted intellectual activity. Keep the old hen setting. But let him have a certain number of papers in the publication of the Modern Language Association or some other boneyard.

K: Well, the business of education, I've been in it for twelve years. I teach the smaller ones. How to teach anybody how to teach, absolutely I don't know how it can be done because they say how to do it in the education courses. You get in there faced with forty children and there's no relation.

D: Paper sent a reporter out to me the other day on express my ideas on education.

K: I heard about it. (chuckles)

D: And here's one letter I received. From Austin, Texas: Dear Mr. Dobie. Who was it said, "Those who can, do. Those who can't, teach. And those who can't teach, teach teachers." Pour it on them. Another admirer. Parenthesis. A teacher without a name for obvious reasons.

K: Oh, I like that.

D: Well, I received one or two on just the opposite.

Dobie

K: Well, as you have said, education teachers have to keep their jobs, make their money. Do you ever think we'll solve the integration problem?

D: Integration problem? No. We should have kept slavery. Then it would have been solved. All of the cross breeding was proceeding faster under the slavery system.

K: I believe it was. Wasn't prohibited then.

D: Wasn't prohibited. There wasn't anything said about marriage. But the southern gentlemen were doing their duty to eradicate the race problem.

K: [chuckles] They had a good head start too when they

D: You know there was a novel written on that subject, too, three or four years ago. I read it in paperback.

K: You hear about the fusses they're getting into about it. Of course, I'm from the Far West and there, there was no civil war, there was no slavery. There is no opinion. And people from there have difficulty understanding either side of it.

D: Well, El Paso doesn't have any color line in the public schools.

K: We have very few colored people.

D: Well, that's right.

K: You hardly. The most place you see them is on the army post. Of course, the army is completely integrated and you see them in the officers' clubs and everywhere like that. They have the same clubs. Well, sir, I have certainly enjoyed

D: Well now, have you gotten all you want?

K: I have answers to all the questions I had in mind.

D: Did I send you that. And you do have "A Plot of Earth?"

K: I have read it repeatedly in the Southwest Review.

D: Yeah. Here's "As the Moving Finger Writ." I'll give you that.

Dobie

K: Oh, fine. Thank you.

D: This one doesn't have much philosophy of life in it, but I'll give you that. Now this, do you have that?

K: No. I've never seen that at all.

D: Most of this is in the new introduction to the revised edition of Guide to Life and Literature of the Southwest. I left my old introduction in and changed my mind, but I decided maybe I was just as wise when I wrote the first edition. The first printing of the book was when I did so much revising and enlarging and so I didn't know whether to smother my old self or just let it go on. So I left the old introduction in and put in a new one. And most of this is in the new one, but there might be a few things, so I'll give you this.

End of interview

NO. 5 DOBIE NO RELEASE FORM

UnRESTRICTED

reclassified 12/2/86 R.C.
Dobie is deceased.

NO 21

NO 4

MinutesSubjects

- 35 -- 38 Discussion of speech Dobie made in Houston and of magazine articles he has written.
- 38 -- 40 Comments on biographers.

(TAPE II, SIDE I)

- 0 -- 15 Comments on profession of journalism; [interruption -- visitors: mention of article of Dobie's in Saturday Review].
- 15 -- 21 His views on college education.
- 21 -- 30 Comments on race relations and integration; conclusion -- presents interviewer with copies of personal papers.

MinutesSubjects

1

(TAPE I, SIDE I)

- 0 -- 8 Background discussion -- characteristics of the Western countryside (vegetation, animal life).
- 8 -- 12 Discussion of his "best" books (according to the opinions of various friends and critics).
- 12 -- 16 His audience -- what type of reader he appeals to and what parts of the country.
- 16 -- 19 Comments on bookstores -- how the quality of bookstores affects book sales.
- 19 -- 26 Discussion of interviewer's master's thesis; Dobie's interest in poetry; his experiences training as an artilleryman for World War I.
- 26 -- 29 His purpose or goal in his writings; discussion of new book he is preparing.
- 29 -- 35 The Mustangs -- symbolism it contains relating to freedom; his attitudes toward his own writings and how they have changed; revision of writings.