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Interview no. 55

James Day

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: James Day
INTERVIEWER:
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BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Speech given to the Westerners Club entitled "Black Beans and Dry Bones," on the Texas Meir Expedition into México in 1843; experiences, capture, and execution of some of the members.

50 minutes (1 7/8 tape speed); 16 pages.

(Speech given to the El Paso Corral of the Westerners Club entitled "Black Beans and Dry Bones," by James Day on December 12, 1970.)

The Mier Expedition is something that's intrigued me for over a decade now. Tonight I want to talk to you a little bit about the two biggest symbols of the expedition: the black bean, the biggest single event that stands out concerning the Mier Expedition, and then the goose quills, consisting of a little interplay between Sam Houston & Thomas Jefferson Green. If you'll bear with me, we'll have a little fun with the Mier boys.

Rancho Salado, México, was not much of a village in 1843. Many Mexicans even thought that the small adobe enclosure in the northwestern part of the state of San Luis Potosí provided less than adequate facilities for human habitation; but to the men involved with the Texas Mier Expedition, the rancho was downright obnoxious. For them it came to represent the humiliation of capture, the hope of freedom, and the despair of death. There, on a spring day in 1843, seventeen Texan braggadocios were shot to death by Mexican muskets, victims of President Santa Anna's famous decimation order and the black bean lottery of death. How they got to that forsaken place, the bizarre way in which they died, and the lore that has attached itself to their dried bones is a subject worthy of the human imagination.

All of it did not begin in the year 1842, but the active parts did. In the spring of that year General Rafael Vásquez led his Mexican troops into San Antonio, where they took the town and held it almost two days before retreating to the Río Grande. Since no love was lost between these Anglo-Americans in Texas and the Mexicans, the attack was not to be taken lightly. In town after town, Texans bustled round their courthouse square vowing vengeance on the cowardly Mexican foe. Yet, somehow, during that summer, the region between the Nueces and the Río Grande was comparatively quiet. They had a few skirmishes, but nothing you could sink your teeth into or squirt blood out of; and perhaps Texas

President Sam Houston thought his peace policy was paying off. As things transpired, the trouble came to a head when General Adrian Woll, a Frenchman leading Mexican troops, once again picked on San Antonio in the fall of 1842. This time they did some fighting. On Salado Creek near San Antonio, Nicholas Dawson and his La Grange followers were massacred by Woll's troops, who proceeded to take San Antonio in spite of the Texan resistance. After a few days of plundering, Woll, like Vasquez, moved south to México, taking with him the entire district court of San Antonio. This insult was too much for the Texans, so they increased their bustling and bragging and added just a touch of doing.

At the helm of state, Houston ordered out the volunteers on October 3, 1842, commanding them to march on México. By November, 750 men were at San Antonio, only to find that their commander, General Alexander Somerville was not ready to move. Later, some of Somerville's men decided that he was a "perfect old Grannie," and they refused to follow his orders, but at San Antonio they were just beginning to learn. Add to the general's ineptness the fact that Houston had given him two sets of orders, one to invade México and the other to keep the peace, and a picture of the chaos begins to come to mind. Somerville delayed departure from San Antonio until mid-November, when the rain bogged the earth and the cold weather froze the men. They reached the Río Grande at Laredo on December 8, and then moved a little way downstream before Somerville decided to disband the force on December 19. They were to counter-march to Gonzáles to be disbanded. At that time the general commanded 498 men, but the number soon diminished by 189.

The remaining men, just over 300 of them, had sworn to conquer México, and they intended to do it. They formed themselves into six companies, elected, in accordance with American frontier custom, Colonel William S. Fisher as their commander, and set up a navy of six barges commanded by Thomas Jefferson Green.

On December 25, they attacked the town of Mier in the state of Tamaulipas, and on December 26, after a battle of about 20 hours, 248 bragging Texans surrendered to Mexican General Pedro Ampudia. Thus began almost 20 months of imprisonment which found them marching across the prestine wastes of México to Perote Castle, their eventual home. While the Meir men were guests of Santa Anna, their home was truly a castle. He finally released those who remained, only 110 in number, in mid-September, 1844.

From Mier to Perote was along way, and much happened in between. Marched to the mouth of the Río Grande, the Texans went generally west to Monterrey, then south to Saltillo and San Luis Potosí. From Matamoros to Monterrey, the prisoners were guarded by 500 infantrymen and 1000 cavalrymen, commanded by General Antonio Canales. But at Monterrey the guard was changed. The new group was only 300 strong, but it was a proud Mexican unit known as the "Red Caps." Colonel Manuel Barragán was the commander, and he felt reasonably secure since the Texans were miles away from their homeland. Barragán and his Red Caps took the prisoners to Saltillo, a city they left on February 7, 1943, going toward San Luis Potosí. On the evening of the 10th, after four days of walking, the motley group arrived at Rancho Salado, 125 miles south of Saltillo.

Rancho Salado was only one building that encompassed the square. The outside was one continuous wall, except for the gate, and inside a series of doors opened into the apartments used by the few inhabitants. Water from the well was blackish, and the outside of the wall extended upward from a large, sterile, sandy valley. Vegetation dared not exist in that place. Into this square, the Texans were forced, and then they were herded into the corral to be bedded down like cattle.

Now any group of 300 with enough audacity to invade an enemy nation was not going to take such treatment without a fight. Twice before Salado they

had talked about making a break from their guards, but they were divided, and the attempts came to naught. Now they had had enough. Under cover of darkness and in the confines of the corral, plans were made for escape. Captain Ewen Cameron, from the highlands of Scotland, was chosen to lead, and he effectively silenced all opposition. In the early dawn, as the Red Caps were eating and drawing rations for the day's march, Cameron loudly called out "Now, boys, we go it!" or some such words, and as he did, he broke into the square. Samuel H. Walker of Texas Ranger fame was by his side and the other Texans were close behind. Red Caps lost their weapons and their breakfast as they scattered for cover. Some regrouped to make a show of a fight, but the Texans were victorious that day. Taking guns, ammunition, food, and money from Barragán's treasure chest, they moved rapidly along the road to Saltillo. That which the Texans called "The Battle of the Rescue" was a whopping success.

Then, about sundown on the evening of the 13th, they made a blunder that proved fatal for some and harmful to all. Fearing that a force would be sent from Saltillo, the leaders turned from the road and went into the mountains where they became cold, hungry, and thirsty, and suffered from exposure. Some died before the Mexican troops completed the process of recapture, and only four out of the entire group made their way back to Texas. By February 24, Texans numbering 134 had been taken into custody, and they were immediately moved to Saltillo. The group had made a big circle in a three week period, only now all of them were in bad shape physically. One of the men, William P. Stapp, noted that, "Their eyes were sunk into the very beds of their sockets, and they were either a congregation from the asylum or a representation of the newly-risen dead."

While they were at Saltillo, Santa Anna had ordered that all of the Texans be shot, but the Mexican governor, Francisco Mexía, refused to obey. Instead,

the prisoners left Saltillo on March 22, and on March 25, 176 Texans once again marched into Rancho Salado. Perhaps there was a conspiracy among the diarists of the expedition, but almost all of them mention the small whirlwind that blew up just as they entered the quadrangle. They unanimously agreed that it was an ill omen; the weather was giving them a supernatural tip.

They were perceptive enough to see other tips since the walls of the hacienda bristled with Mexican guns held by Mexican soldiers. Inside they found Colonel Domingo Huerta, one of Santa Anna's personal henchmen, who was not at all in a suspenseful mood. He herded the Texans into a military formation, and for their benefit, read the Mexican president's latest order concerning their disposition. Since Governor Mexía had refused to execute all of them, Huerta was to perform a decimation. That is, one out of 10 was to die by shooting and those select 17 were to be chosen by lottery. Since frijoles have always been in abundance in México, the bean was selected as the object of the lottery. Into an earthen crock, gray or brown in color, Huerta placed 17 black beans and 159 white ones. Those who drew black were to die.

It was a game that much interested the Texans, those swaggering braggards from the north who were forced to reap the rewards of their brashness. With Mexican officers near the crock and soldiers manning the walls and gate, the Texans approached the cylindrical object with a great degree of uncertainty. When Huerta read the order aloud to them a "thrill of horror" passed through their bodies, and that thrill had not subsided by the time they stepped forth to make a selection. Since the prisoners were tied together in twos by the wrist, most of them had to visit the jar twice. Captain Cameron, drawing first, picked a white bean and lived that day. As he passed the officer nearby, Cameron and each Texan afterwards handed the bean to the official. Thus passed the lottery until all beans were accounted for. William P. Stapp, one of the

participants, published one of the first books on the expedition, in which he stated that about three-fourths of the beans were taken from the jar before the seventeenth black one came out. That means that 25 percent of the prisoners were not required to actually draw.

With completion of the lottery, the 17 condemned men were given a few minutes to write a letter, eat a meal, make peace with their creator, and then they were led outside the quadrangle to be lined up against a wall and shot. The best evidence is that the firing took place in two groups of nine and eight, and that the mass of the Texans could hear the shots and the muffled cries of death. The following morning, as 159 Texans marched past the bodies of their dead comrades, they registered their vows of vengeance against the assassins. A month later, after they spotted another whirlwind at Huehuetoca, Ewen Cameron was shot and his bones were left to bleach on the plains of México.

The two whirlwinds at Salado and Huehuetoca were the only two mentioned on the entire expedition. Just as they symbolized trouble to the prisoners, they also marked myriad of stories that emanated from the black bean drawing. Divergence in the accounts occurred almost immediately after the drawing as books by Thomas W. Bell, William Preston Stapp, and Thomas Jefferson Green made their appearance. Stapp and Bell were at the drawing, but Green was not. Both of the writers witnessing the event agreed that the crock was held well above the heads of the intended victims and that it was given a healthy shaking after each Texan removed his hand. The bean was then handed to a Mexican officer who made a note as to its color. None of the beans were allowed to disappear, so none of them can possibly be on Texas soil.

Stapp made mention of the behavior of the Mexican officers. Some, he wrote, shed tears profusely as a result of their deep concern, while others "leaned forward over the crock, to catch a first glimpse of the decree it uttered, as though

they had heavy wagers upon the result." At this point religious differences enter the picture. A Catholic priest had been with the group since Saltillo, and at proper time he was called upon to offer extreme absolution. Only two of the 17 Texans availed themselves of his services. Both Stapp and Bell mention Robert Dunham, who is reported to have refused the priest before kneeling to offer his own prayer. Bell noted that "the priest himself" prevented Dunham from praying. Stapp stressed the fact that Dunham was a "good Protestant." Bell also noted that Colonel William M. Eastland said to his brother-in-law, "Tell my wife I die in the faith in which I lived." Thus Bell, who actually witnessed the episode, was the first to quote those who died. He certainly was not the last.

One of Stapp's stories is worth repeating. It has to do with James L. Shepherd, a man undistinguished except for this quirk of fate. Shepherd, it seems, was missing the morning after the shooting. The Mexicans, upon counting corpses, found only 16 bodies. Shepherd had been wounded in the first volley, and when he fell, he pretended to be dead. The corpses were not inspected. Under cover of night, Shepherd slipped away to Saltillo, where he was recognized, led to the public square, and shot again--this time for keeps. But this man just would not stay dead. Decades later historian Justin H. Smith is said to have stumbled upon the "truth." When Shepherd got to Saltillo, so Smith says, he was taken in by a religious order whose members protected him until his wound healed, and then they helped him to the north bank of the Río Grande.

Thomas Jefferson Green had an axe to grind in writing his history of the Mier Expedition. He sought to denounce Sam Houston, to place all of the blame on the Texas chief of state; however, in doing so, he told a jolly good tale, one good enough to become the standard account of the expedition. Yet, Green was not present at the bean drawing because he was with the advance party of

officers which had been whisked away to Perote. Green admitted this, but stated that he got his "facts" from those who were there, and that their words were carefully preserved in his diary.

Green made mention of the manly dignity and firmness of the scene, noting that the "black beans failed to depress" and the "white beans failed to elate." Even the humorists who quipped, "Boys, this beats raffling all to pieces," and "This is the tallest gambling scrape I ever was in," could not change the mood. Two brothers present, Robert and William Beard, made offers reminiscent of Damon and Phinnias of Roman history [fourth century B.C.] whose close friendship saved them both. Robert Beard was sick. As William brought him a cup of water, Robert said (and Green quoted), "Brother, if you draw a black bean, I'll take your place; I want to die." William anguishingly replied, "No! I will keep my own place. I am stronger and better able to die than you." History records that both drew white beans but died shortly thereafter anyway.

All of the black beaners were brave, according to Green. To James D. Cocke is attributed the words, "Boys, I told you so; I never failed to draw a prize." He concluded that they only robbed him of 40 years, then he dashed off a "sensible and dignified letter" to Waddy Thompson, drew off his pantaloons and handed them to his comrades, and died in his underclothes. When Henry Whaling drew his [black] bean, he had "as bright a look as ever lighted a man's countenance." He concluded: "Well, they don't make much off me, anyhow, for I know I have killed 25 of the yellow bellies." Whaling then demanded his last meal, ate heartily, smoked a cigar, and shortly thereafter was shot dead. Something supernatural was in this man Whaling; it was as though Providence had taken a special care in prolonging his existence. As the Mexican soldiers fired at him, he gritted his teeth and defied them in terms of withering reproach. They shot him 15 times, according to Green, but Whaling would not die. Finally, one Mexican

soldier placed a gun to his head and blew his brains against the wall. Green wrote that the scene was so violent that one of the Mexican guards fainted.

George Washington Trahern, another participant, was an old man when he was interviewed in California. He, too, had a vivid recollection of Whaling; and, like Green, Trahern quoted a conversation. He wrote:

There was a little fellow by the name of Henry Whaling. They let us all go out and see the boys that they shot. Most of the boys wouldn't eat, of course, condemned that way; but this little fellow Henry Whaling was one of those jolly fellows, was one of the number, and he belonged to our company, and was an active fellow full of hell and jolly as could be. Says I, 'Good-bye, Henry old boy. I am mighty sorry.' He says, 'Wash, it is all right; we'll all go the same way. This is only the beginning.' And he says, 'I'm going to take a good square meal. It's the last I'll get.' They had some good mutton stew and et ceteras, and beans. 'I'm going to take a good square meal and satisfy myself for once; I've been hungry for a long time.

Well, they just took them out and shot them--just mangled them, and stripped them, and they just let them lay outside in the street there, like so many hogs.

Green's verbalizing was impressive, but it does not hold a candle to that of another Mier man, William A. A. (Bigfoot) Wallace. With the passage of time, Wallace has become a legend, mainly because he has had a corps of good publicity men. However, at the time of the events of 1842-1844, he was little noticed by his contemporaries. In half a dozen books and diaries, only two give him mention, and that was when he was released from Perote on August 22, 1844, three weeks before the main body of prisoners were given freedom. Wallace's memoirs were first given orally to John C. Duval in 1867, over two decades after the Mier Expedition took place. He had two things going for him to make him inaccurate and expansive. One was the verbal transference and the other was time. Duval, his biographer, was plainly more interested in telling a good story than in relating the facts, so no wonder can be attached to the fact that a dramatic scene like the black bean lottery would be presented out of proportion.

Ignoring the fact that the beans were well-mixed, the Wallace-Duval account cited Cameron as noting that the black beans had been placed in the crock last and were still on top. Cameron drew white, and as he stepped back he whispered sage advice to his fellow officers when he said, "Dig deep, boys." They did so, says Wallace, and all drew white except Eastland. Wallace's own drawing came toward the last, because his name started with "W," and the list was alphabetical. He had counted twenty-four white beans in succession, so he thought his chances were slim of drawing white. He said he carefully fingered the beans because he had noticed that the white ones were just a little smaller than the black ones. He made his choice and it was a right one for him; or, as he related, "I should not be here to tell my story." Stapp's testimony that only seventy-five percent of the men had to draw raises the question as to whether Wallace actively participated, but counter evidence is found in that fact that two of the men executed, Wing and Whaling, would have drawn after Wallace, if the list had been alphabetical.

After getting through his ordeal, Wallace, in telling the story, was concerned mainly with two persons: an Irish friend he called Pat W. whose humor caused even the Mexican officers to rejoice that he had drawn life, and one of the Mexicans. This was, in Wallace's words, a "swarthy baboon-visaged chap" who "looked as if he had subsisted all his life on a short allowance of pepper and cigarritos." He had a mean countenance, but his speaking accents were sweet as he jested with those drawing for their lives. As he did this, he had a "devilish grin on his baboon face" that showed the pleasure he received from the game. Big-foot took a real disliking for this one, so much so that he concocted a diabolical punishment for the chap. Duval wrote for Big-foot:

I am not one of a revengeful disposition, but if that Mexican had ever fallen into my power, his chances of living to a 'good old age' would have been miserably slim, and I could have recognized him among ten thousand, for his weazen features and his diabolical grin were indelibly impressed upon my memory. I'll tell you how I would have served him. I would

have bought a bushel of black beans, cooked them about half done in a big pot, and made him sit down and eat until he bursted. I'd have given him a dose that would have stretched his little tawny hide as tight as a bass-drum. He should have had his fill of black beans for once, to a certainty.

Imagination, not historical accuracy, is what makes Duval's book on Big-foot Wallace great.

That same quality entered into the Mier experiences of another Texan who carried a name well-known on the Mexican frontier. This was Benjamin C. Boone, a descendant of the famed Daniel Boone family. Ben Boone in later years dictated his memoirs to A. J. Sowell and claimed to have participated in the "Battle of the Rescue" and the black bean drawing. He even claimed that he preserved the white bean he drew that March day in 1843, a prize he valued so highly that his family had preserved it in a ball of yarn as late as 1937. The fact is that Boone fell sick at Hacienda Salado prior to the break, thus was unable to participate. He was moved on to México City and was nowhere near Salado when the beans were drawn. His account proves to be that of an old man basking in reflected glory.

One of the major events of this expedition was the Texan's pillage of Laredo on December 8 and 9, 1842, which produced three important results. One was the denunciation of the Mier men by Texan President Sam Houston, another was the break at Hacienda Salado on February 11, 1843, and a third was T. Jefferson Green's escape from Perote Castle on the night of July 2, 1843. With the Texan invasion of Mier, Sam Houston was on the spot; he was forced to take a stand on the legality of the invasion. Houston had to decide whether or not the invasion was official Texan policy. He chose to renounce the Mier adventurers as men who went without orders and thereby placed themselves outside the protection of the rules of War. In doing this in a letter dated January 24, 1843, he threw them entirely on the mercy of Santa Anna, a man who had proved many

times that he had little. Houston's policy may have been the correct one so far as the survival of the fledgling Republic of Texas was concerned, but for those captured at Mier it spelled disaster. Very few, if any, ever forgave him.

Houston's real trouble with the Mier Expedition began when Green escaped from Perote in July, 1843. He was in Texas by the end of that summer and soon was elected to the Texas House of Representatives, with the avowed purpose of publicizing the condition of the Mier men still in prison. By August, 1845, he had produced his book entitled Journal of the Texan Expedition Against Mier, and Harper's of New York had published it. It is filled with wit and humor, has some facts in it, and gives Green credit--but no blame--for the fortunes of the Mier men. Green's super-ego shines through like a Mexican silver peso reflecting in the sun. All blame is fixed on the "malicious, vindictive, cold-blooded" Sam Houston, who found his name unfavorably recorded on the book's pages no fewer than 117 times. In particular, Houston was denounced for his repudiation of the Mier men and for the decimation at Salado. Houston had caused them to be falsely executed as robbers and marauders upon México.

In 1845 Green made a bid to be elected to the United States Congress from the Western District of Texas. In the campaign he heaped so much abuse on Houston that "the Raven" was forced to answer. This he did in December at the Methodist Church in Houston, and in the speech he made mention of Green, stating that Green's outrages at Laredo caused Santa Anna to kill the seventeen. Houston next saw fit to publish a letter in the Houston Morning Star concerning the Mier Expedition. In the January 10, 1846, issue, he broadsided Green by stating that when the Texans plundered Laredo, "Thomas Jefferson Green was the first man who broke open a house and incited the men to outrage." Green had done this, Houston contended, even though he had no official standing. Houston singled out no one else for criticism, concluding that the world had come to know that "I obtained

the release of the Mier prisoners."

This tournament of goose-quills adjourned for a time as Houston was elected United States Senator from Texas and Green went east to marry a wealthy widow and then west to serve in the California Senate and become a Major General in the California militia. He was one of the founding fathers of the University of California. One the morning of August 1, 1854, Houston asked the Senate to meet an hour early so he could make a few remarks. His talk was titled, when published, Speech of Hon. Sam Houston of Texas In the Senate of the United States, on Texas Affairs - Thomas Jefferson Green (August 1, 1854). He mentioned Green's book on the Mier Expedition and thought certainly that the Library of Congress would want to rid itself of its copy and commit it to "some of the sewers of the city." He referred to Green as "T. Jefferson Dog Green," and pictured him as a man who "took his sword and went with the army. He had no command. He was not even a soldier in the ranks. He was a loafer and follower of the army."

Green was again painted as the leader of the sacking of Laredo, but Houston had gained time to fill in details since his last attack. With all the persuasive powers at his command--and they were substantial--Houston heaped abuse upon his opponent.

Green was the first individual to encourage the insubordinate and irregular followers of the army to break down the doors and violate the sanctity of habitations; to strip women; to commit every outrage appalling to humanity and infamous to a soldier. His cry was 'Rake them down, boys; rake them down.' That was the conduct of the author of this book; and it can be corroborated by gentlemen of high character who were present. Why, sir, this man even robbed them of their children's tiny dresses. Was that all he did? No, sir. But I will now show you some further instances of the malignity of this creature. The occurrences to which I have referred are shadowed forth in his volume, and justified. I have alluded to his dastardly cowardice, his utter want of chivalry or humanity and of manly kindness, when he could forget the condition of feeble children and affrighted women. Ah, sir, he could carry terror and dismay to children and to women, but was there manhood in that? Was it not dastardly? He was a man of most puissant cowardice.

The Mier Expedition was labeled as a filibuster and Green and William S. Fisher were given the total responsibility for it. Houston stated that they "seduced 261 gallant men to return to México, take the flag of Texas, organize themselves without authority, and march upon México, to filibuster, rob, steal, pilfer, as they had done at Laredo."

Green did not have access to the Senate floor as did Houston, but he did the next best thing for his cause. He had money, and with some of it he printed a reply, 67 pages in length, which was placed on the desk of each Senator on the morning of February 15, 1855. In reference to the sacking of Laredo, Green stated that he did not leave camp that day, and the whole army knew it. He went on to explain that he was among the most active in getting the pillagers to return the articles, even though some of those doing the taking "are known to be among General Houston's warmest friends." Green again reverted to his argument that the pillage happened because of broken promises and lack of leadership by Houston and Somerville. In alluding to the sobriquet "Dog," Green stated that he had never heard it applied to himself, but he said that one Texan had uttered it on several occasions. That was Senator Houston himself, who during his drunken orgies was often heard to say, "I am the big dog of Texas--the master cur of the tan yard." That, Green believed, was the only political truth this political charlatan was ever guilty of. Green stated that he had been kind to Houston in his book, that he could have recorded, "his vulgar blackguardism, his vile debaucheries; his universal mendacity, his numerous penuries; his personal swindles; his official peculations; his annexatious coquetry; his want of faith, and treason to political parties; his hypocrisy, impiety, and opium eating; his desertion of western Texas, and leaving it open to the Mexican enemy; his dastardly cowardice; his dirty polygamy and desertion of his former wives, with his pagan brutality to some of them and their young."

Houston felt obliged [to reply] and he did so briefly. He apologized for mentioning Green's name in the Senate, but gave the following advice: "I would not advise any decent and respectable person to touch him with a 15-foot pole, unless he had gloves upon his hands of double thickness; and then he should cast away the pole to avoid the influence of the contaminating shock."

With that, public debate about the pillage of Laredo was ended, a full 12 years after the fact. By then the victims of the act probably thought little about it because they were busy pursuing their own affairs; but Houston and Green were quite concerned. Green had set out to hang a barb in Houston's hide by using a rasp upon the hide of a rhinoceros, and he was successful to the point of rousing Houston's ire. But when all the words were spoken and all the lines written, that was all he could do, because most of the people of Texas--the Mier men excluded--never lost faith in the hero of San Jacinto.

Sixteen sets of bones in a shallow grave at Hacienda Salado--forgotten by their countrymen and hated by their foes! Buried March 26, 1843. Only the fighting between México and Texas was not over. As 1845 worried to a close, a new struggle was in the making, one which brought the might of the United States into the fray. When war was finally declared between the United States and México, Texans rallied to the cause in large numbers and with great glee. Many of these men had served on the Mier Expedition and some still remembered the Texan bones at Salado. One of them was John Dusenberry, a participant in the black bean drawing. He fought in the Mexican War with Major Walter P. Lane's unit of _____ Division. In May, 1848, they were at Hacienda Salado where they rounded up the alcalde to force open the graves. It was completed in rapid fire order as the bones were tied compactly in sets, placed in four wooden boxes, and loaded on mules. Thereafter they literally rattled around México with Dusenberry in charge. Finally he got them to the east coast at Tampico, sailed

for Galveston, and arrived at La Grange in late June. On June 29 he relinquished the remains to the Fayette County officials at La Grange. The four boxes with their contents were stored in the Courthouse until September, when the bones were buried alongside those of Dawson's men on a hill overlooking the Colorado River. As if their bizarre death and gruesome transference were not enough, Sam Houston was present for the ceremonies. He had already denied his guilt concerning their death and had placed all of the blame on T. Jefferson (Dog) Green. History does not record what Houston felt that day.

The decimated Mier men had to wait a long time, three-quarters of a century, before they got a fitting monument. In the meantime, their grave was broken into and some of the bones were scattered, and there was a time when ownership of the earth that covered them was disputed. In spite of claims to the contrary, one is more likely to find today an elbow from one of the bodies than he is to see a bean drawn on that fateful day in March, 1843.

Thank you.