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## Interview no. 1603

Bill Lawson

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## THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Bill Lawson

Interviewer: Kristine Navarro

Project: Farah Oral History Project

Location: El Paso, TX

Date of Interview: May 21, 2010

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Transcript No.: 1603

Transcriber / Summary: Patrick Driscoll

Bill Lawson was the Military Sales Director for the West Coast and Pacific Rim for Farah; he was born in El Centro, CA; he mentions that there was no prejudice where he grew up; his father worked for Chevrolet Garage; he reveals that Farah was his only job for over twenty eight years, required him to travel constantly. Mr. Lawson recounts his time in sales for Farah; he mentions the stress his travel had on his wife, worked on commission so his pay was unpredictable; describes how items that became very popular in a short time could create supply and demand issues, he explains how leisure suit popularity caused Farah to produce the suit to meet demand but that the suit fell out of popularity very quickly; he describes the loyalty and friendship of Farah customers, he mentions that customers attended personal events. Mr. Lawson explains that he started as a salesman at Farah in 1960 working in southern CA and Yuma, AZ; he reveals that he developed a good relationship with the military bases in his area, when Farah created a military division he was appointed as the sales representative; mentions relationship with other employees at Farah; discloses reason for leaving Farah; says he still misses working and still keeps in contact with many former customers. He then describes Willie Farah's management of Farah, says he gave him his job and was always respectful and honest to him; recalls his job interview with Willie Farah, reveals he had limited education but Mr. Farah picked him anyway; recalls his last meeting with Willie Farah; recounts his sales figures during his time at Farah; says he still visited Mr. Farah's wife Betty after his death, reveals his anger that he was the only salesman to go to their funerals. Mr. Lawson states that Farah's no return policy hurt business when there was an issue with corduroy pants, says that the popularity of a new line helped reduce the fallout from the no return policy; he reveals that Farah sales to the military for Vietnamese refugees helped sell off their surplus; he mentions that he took his second wife on one of his sales trip overseas to show her the stress of the job; he details one of his sales trips to Fort Greely, AK in hazardous winter conditions. Mr. Lawson shares one last thought on Willie Farah as a man who always had time for him, Mr. Farah earned his loyalty.

Length of interview 48 minutes

Length of Transcript n/a