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Interview no. 1610

Rod Champney

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Rod Champney

Interviewer: Cesar Villarreal

Project: Farah Oral History Project

Location: n/a

Date of Interview: May 21, 2010

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Transcript No.: 1610

Transcriber / Summary: Alejandra Garcia

Rod Champney worked for Farah for about 10 years as a pilot and an engineer. His father had established himself in El Paso, Texas during World War II and his mother was born in El Paso. Champney, born in 1946, graduated from Burgess High School and then The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) with a degree in physics. It was while he attended UTEP when he accepted a position at Farah to fly one of two Lear jets owned by the company in 1968. As a pilot, Champney recalled a close relationship to Willy Farah because he was a former pilot during World War II, and at times he served as Willy's co-pilot. Due to Mr. Farah's belief of flying being only a hobby, Champney also worked at Farah's workshop making circuit boards and manufacturing them for their sewing machines. Champney explained that Farah had a good reputation among the El Paso community because it employed people and had great benefits. These benefits included free medical care, pharmacy services, and free eyeglasses. During the strike at Farah, Champney recalled how the Catholic Church tried to portray Farah as any other apparel shop with similar conditions, but Champney described Farah as clean and open environment. After the strike at Farah, employees received better wages, but many of the benefits were lost. Champney described that the reason for Farah's decline was due to inventory management, rather than the strike. Champney left Farah on August of 1977 to work at Hewitt-Packard. Champney believes that Farah was a company that offered many people with opportunities.

Length of interview 35 minutes

Length of Transcript n/a