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## Interview no. 678

William C. Herndon

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: William C. Herndon  
INTERVIEWER: Rebecca Craver  
PROJECT: History of the University  
DATE OF INTERVIEW: February 22, 1984  
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BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Student of Texas Western College 1950-1954; joined the UTEP faculty in 1972 as chair of the Chemistry Department.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Biographical information; recollections of campus life, including students, professors, and social life.

Length of interview: 1 hour      Length of transcript: 27 pages

William C. Herndon  
by Rebecca Craver  
February 22, 1984

C: First I want to tie you down to some dates. Tell me what years you were a student and then when you joined the faculty here.

H: I was a student from September 1, 1950 to August 31, 1954, and then of course I came back to the faculty July 15, 1972. Is that specific enough?

C: Yeah. No, that's fine. What did you do, briefly, between 1954 and 1972?

H: Well, from 1954 to '58 I was a graduate student at Rice University. From '58 to '61 I was a chemist in Stamford, Connecticut, and in 1961 I went to be assistant professor of Chemistry at the University of Mississippi at Oxford. Then I was associate professor at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Florida, and then in 1966 I went to Texas Tech as a full professor. Then in 1972 I came here as chairman of the Department of Chemistry. And I graduated from Boys Town, Nebraska. You probably knew that, didn't you?

C: Somebody had told me that.

H: And I went to Iowa State University for a semester and flunked out on a football scholarship. And then I came here. The coach at Boys Town knew the coach here very well, and he got me a freshman scholarship here so I came in August of 1950.

C: Who was this coach here?

H: Oh, his name was Brundelin (?). And he was a very nice person. I remember the first year I think we got beat 65 to nothing by Texas Tech. That was the only game that I played in.

C: What did you play? What position?

H: I was a halfback and the, you know, fifth stringer. And then I made, oh, many, many Fs the first year I was at UTEP. It was Texas Western then, of course. And then after the first year I

made As from then on, but those Fs kept me out of Men of Mines and Alpha Chi. I think they had rules that you couldn't have any Fs and be in any of these honor societies. The president then was, what was his name? Elkins, who went to the University of Maryland later as Chancellor. And one of the rules of the University was at that time that you had to have two semesters of Physical Education to get a degree, and I never took Physical Education because of taking football at first. And so when I got ready to graduate I was shy an hour of education--Physical Education--and Elkins waived it and just said, you know, "Forget about it."

C: That's because he was a football player.

H: Oh, I don't know. I might have done something he just wanted to get rid of me for. And when I came to El Paso I lived with my... well, the circumstances under which I [came], I was born in El Paso and I went to Crockett Grade School. Then I had some problems at Crockett and so they transferred me to Rusk. And in those days when you had problems you always were transferred to a different school, and psychologically that was supposed to be very good for you. Then I went to Austin Junior High, and I think it was seventh and eighth grade or seventh, eighth and ninth, I'm not sure exactly what grades they had. But I got into a lot of trouble and I spent a year in the state school at Gatesville, and then went to Boys Town and finished high school there, and then came back to El Paso to go to college.

When I came back I lived with my grandmother. My grandmother was a teacher at Bowie High School for about, oh, 30 years, before that at Aoy. And in fact when the new Bowie High School opened

about eight or nine years ago, she was honored as the oldest living teacher of Bowie High School at that time. She was about 90 then and crippled, but she certainly went back to that ceremony.

C: Her name?

H: Her name was Lois Maston. And her assistant at Bowie was Wilta Scruggs, and Mr. Scruggs, who taught in the Chemistry Department, had been one of my teachers. When I was a kid we used to go up the valley to the Scruggs' house and fish in the canals and that sort of thing on Saturdays. The way you got up the valley was you took the Fort Bliss streetcar downtown and transferred to the country club bus and took that, and then we walked about half a mile to get to the Scruggs' house. When I came back to El Paso in 1950, I lived with my grandmother in her house on Memphis Street, two blocks from Austin. And the way you got to school for an eight o'clock class is, you know, you took the streetcar downtown and then transferred to a bus. The bus went up Oregon and it stopped right at the corner of Oregon and College. And then you ran down the street to get to class on time, because that bus left just, you know, like 15 minutes to eight. And if you missed it, you had to run up the hill to get to class, run up Oregon.

C: Did you ever have a car?

H: Never had a car. And the second year I decided I would ride my bike to school, and so I rode over Scenic Drive. And, you know, I would pump up Scenic Drive and then it was downhill all the way to the school. Then going back was very easy because you just got to the top of Scenic Drive and you coasted all the way back

down to Memphis Street where my grandmother lived. I lived with her the whole time till I graduated from college.

My uncle was a student here and my aunt was a student here. My uncle graduated about 1942. His name is Frank Maston. He was a track star, ran the mile. And in those days the way you ran the mile is you usually walked for the first three quarters of it, sort of. You would jog and then you ran like hell, you know, the last hundred yards. My aunt graduated from College of Mines and she was a schoolteacher at Lamar and then at San Elizario, and then she left and went to San Diego, where she still teaches. My uncle taught at...oh, I don't remember the school he taught at in El Paso, and then he moved to Midland and taught there, and then he was a superintendent of schools in \_\_\_\_\_ in east Texas. When my grandmother retired from Bowie High School, she went there and worked another five years, past the age of 65, for him, and then she came back and she was the librarian at Radford until she was about 78 years old. She couldn't afford to [retire] because the retirement pay was only about \$70 dollars a month, and that wasn't a whole lot of money. Then my uncle Frank Maston left \_\_\_\_\_ and moved to Silver City, and he was a professor of Education at Western New Mexico University for a while, and then he moved to San Diego in the school system there. And both my aunt and uncle, my grandmother's son and daughter, have been in San Diego since that time.

My mother died in 1933 and my father disappeared in the Depression, so my grandmother was the person that raised my brother and myself. My brother is a very successful entrepreneur in El Paso.

C: What other faculty members here today were undergraduates of Texas Western?

H: I think Harold Alexander in Chemistry got his degree at Texas Western, and Mr. Scruggs in Chemistry also got his degree here. Both of them went to the University of Texas at Austin for graduate degrees, I think, and there are others. John Bryant in Physics, I think. Alan Dean, maybe. I'm not sure of those, but they're all El Pasoans.

C: A & M, didn't he?

H: They're all El Pasoans anyway. I'm not sure if they actually got their degrees [here]. Other El Pasoans that I know are Judith Goggin, but she of course went to Bryn Mawr and then to Berkeley. And let's see, Norma Hernandez was an undergraduate here and later Dean of the College of Education. Norma and I...I think this is true. You know, it's a hell of a long time ago. But when I was in eighth grade at Austin Junior High School, we used to go over there to play tennis. And Norma was learning how to play tennis and we used to play together, and she became an athlete later in high school after I left and went to Boys Town.

I can't really think, there are others though; there are several I think who were undergraduates here. But I just can't think of their names offhand.

C: Let's come back to this football scholarship. Did they give you money, did they give you free room and board?

H: No, it was just tuition, and I was essentially a walk-on, you know. They didn't really want me, but I was available. They had to have somebody to practice against, and I was one of those people. That was the last time, the freshman year was the last

time I played football, and it had quite a bit to do with, I think, the poor grades that I made in the first year, although part of it also was that at Boys Town there was no college parallel course. You had a trade, learned how to do something, and I learned how to be baker.

C: Oh really?

H: And so there were a lot of academic subjects missing. But the college accepted everybody in those days, you know. Sometimes you had deficiencies to make up but still it was a very democratic place, I think.

C: Well, you must have done a lot of playing your freshman year to make all those Fs. What was the social life?

H: Well, there wasn't a whole lot of social life if you don't have a car. I don't think I ever had a date until I was a junior or senior in college. There were fraternities and sororities on the campus, but it seemed you didn't mix with the people who didn't belong to the fraternities, who didn't belong to the sororities. I met a really beautiful Mexican American girl named Gonzalez, I think, my sophomore year. We never actually went out but I went to her house several times and to parties. And her uncles and brothers would warn me, you know, to watch my step, and so I finally decided that that romance wasn't going anywhere.

And I knew another Mexican American girl, her name was Salazar. I can't remember what her first name was, unfortunately. Wish I could meet her again. She'd gone to El Paso High and she lived in one of those little houses in the streets right below El Paso High, north of Montana, and it was a lot of fun going to... we'd go to parties. But there was always a chaperone of some

type and we never actually went out by ourselves. We went several times, but always in a group or always with a chaperone. And then I met another girl, I can't remember her name. She had been the Maid of Cotton one year.

C: Did you meet her in class?

H: Yeah, in class. I think we were taking a French class together and I asked her out. And of course since I didn't have a car, I had to go and get her and then we had to walk. She lived on Copper or Gold Street, up near the mountain on the east side. I had to walk to her house, it was about a mile and a half, and then I got her and then we walked to the bus stop and took the bus downtown for our first date, and we ate in a restaurant downtown. It was right across from the library at that time, down the street from the YMCA on Oregon, and it was a very famous Mexican restaurant. You went down some steps. It was called La Tapatia, I think. And then after eating, we walked to the bridge and crossed and went to The Lobby and danced, and then we walked back and caught the streetcar. And I don't think she felt that was a real hot date. But we did go out a couple of more times. Her name was Shirley something. But that, you know, if you didn't have a car that's what you had to do.

C: Did you ever go to any dances on campus?

H: There were some dances on campus and I did go to some. In fact, I served as an escort in the Sun Carnival thing. The ball used to be held at Christmastime--maybe it was New Year's Eve, it could have been--and I was an escort twice. I had to of course borrow my uncle's tuxedo and it was a really old-fashioned tuxedo made in the early '30s. It may have belonged to his

father. The pants came up to your neck, practically, and it was double breasted. But you know, it was serviceable, and that was a lot of fun, actually.

The social life on campus sort of revolved around the Student Union. There was a pool hall. Everybody played bridge and there were just continual bridge games going on all the time. Nobody studied. It was just bridge, you know, all the time. And then of course everybody left the campus at 5 o'clock, you know. You got on the bus or the streetcar and went home. I did my studying on Saturday. I would usually mow the lawn or do some yard work Saturday morning, and then Saturday afternoon I'd sit out on our porch and inside the house I'd have the radio turned to the Metropolitan Opera and I'd study. In the summertime, I would take my books and I'd go to the Grandview pool and go swimming and read.

Then my sophomore year I was really deficient in Chemistry because I'd flunked Freshman Chemistry, so I was behind and my sophomore year I had to take Analytical Chemistry in the summertime. Well, that turned out to be a really interesting experience because it was taught by a man named Mr. Pierce. Mr. Pierce later became a stockbroker and quit teaching, but he was a very good teacher of Analytical Chemistry. The class had about 15, 20 students and several of them were returning veterans from the Korean War, and most of the students were pretty good students. To take Analytical Chemistry in the summertime meant six or seven hours of lab every day, lectures every day for about seven or eight weeks. And what we did is, we'd work in the lab all afternoon till 5 or 6 or 7 at night and then most of us would,

in a group, we would get in somebody's car and we'd drive to the bridge and walk across and we'd go to a place called Johnny's Bar, I think it was. It was the first bar on your left when you crossed the bridge into Juarez. The proprietor there would let us spread our books out and order a steak. The steak cost 95 cents, you know, and a beer, and we'd sit there and study and ask each other questions. We did that two or three nights a week. And then if it was a weekend, it was Friday night, say, then after we had studied until 11 or 12 then we'd all go to the Lobby or to the Chinese Palace and dance and try to meet some women.

C: Were all these places on Juarez Avenue?

H: Yeah. They were all there on Juarez Avenue. There was the Waikiki #1 and #2; the Blue Moon Bar; the Caverns of Music, which were like caves that you go down into. Right close to the bridge was the Tivoli, which had a very good dance floor and a big long mahogany bar, and so we would study and eat and drink and talk until about 11, and then it was time to go make the rounds of all of these clubs. And we used to, or some of us, of course I'd never do this, would hide a bottle in their coat and so you would order one drink and then you would top it up with the bottle. That was against the law, of course; you weren't supposed to do that.

There were several of the ex-G.I.s [who] actually lived with performers in the clubs. A lot of the students, especially the ex-G.I.s, lived in Juarez, would have a room or an apartment. It was much cheaper to live over there than it was to live in El Paso, and some of them were living with some of the Mexican girls. I remember we used to have a weekend called the Snow Festival. Everybody would go up to Ruidoso for the weekend and

rent cabins and go skiing and sledding and all that sort of thing. I remember two of my friends who took two Mexican girls with them to Ruidoso in their car and got arrested for doing that, because they were illegal aliens, you see.

C: Yeah. Were they painting the "M" on the mountain?

H: You had to go and help paint the "M" every year.

C: Everybody went?

H: Everybody volunteered, sort of. I think the fraternities really organized it, but people went and you did it once a year and carried the buckets of lime up and spread it all around.

C: Whereabouts was this?

H: The "M" actually faced away from the University. It was on the, when you get right to Scenic Drive it was on the east side of the little ridge that comes down. So it didn't face the University but it certainly faced the larger part of town. And the only other letter on the mountain at that time was the "A."

C: For Austin High?

H: For Austin High, and the "E" and the "C" and the "B" and the "Z" and whatever all came later. And funny thing too; you know, living on the east side of the mountain, I never even knew there was a thunderbird on the west side.

C: No?

H: And no one ever told me that so then I never saw it or never looked to see it.

C: Probably never went out that far.

H: Well, we went up the valley.

So, there were a couple of times several of us got in the car, in someone's car, and drove to Arizona State. It was, I

think, called...oh, I forget now, the Tempe State University or Tempe State College, I think it was called at that time. We drove over there and spent the weekend for a football game. Then one other time I remember driving to New Mexico to Albuquerque for a game with New Mexico, and we stayed in a fraternity house at New Mexico--I don't remember which one--and had a good time, went to a dance and a party. There used to be actually a lot of going back and forth between New Mexico A & M, as it was called then, and Texas Western. That doesn't seem to occur so much anymore.

C: Were they having the big bonfires when you were there?

H: I don't remember.

C: Now, you came the year after they changed the name to Texas Western.

H: Texas Western.

C: So they were painting the green line on campus?

H: No. That actually, I think, started a little later, but I don't recall that. It may have. As a matter of fact, I think there was a line, there was a line painted. It was up where the Geology building is now. Yes, so there was, yes. It was in between the Biology-Chemistry building, which is now the Psychology building, and the Geology building, which was an Engineering building at that time.

C: But it was the engineers basically that did that?

H: That did it, yes. And on one side of the line it said "Peedoggies" and on the other side it said...who knows what, I forget. And of course in those days every scientist and Engineering major had a big slide rule which you wore attached to your belt, see, and you

could tell the people who were really smart because they had these slide rules attached to their belt. And there was a standard math course that all engineers and scientists took. It was called 801 Math. It was an eight-hour course, lasted two semesters. It was like a pre-calculus now and that course was taught by the Math Department as a whole. Math and Physics were combined.

The chairman of Math and Physics was a man named Dr. Knapp, whose son still lives here in El Paso as a real estate man. Dr. Knapp did not, however, teach the freshman math course but he taught the first semester of Calculus. At 8 o'clock class, at precisely 8 o'clock, he locked the door and you couldn't enter after that point. So if you were late, you might stretch out near the door so you could hear what he was saying, see, and have your ear to the crack of the door. And if you were late too many times he sent you a note informing you that the next time you were late was your last time, because the university had rules in those days. If you missed a certain number of times, I think it was three or four times, you were automatically given an "F". You know, you weren't dropped from the course, you got an "F" in the course. You were only allowed a certain number of classes to be missed.

Classes were held on Saturday, you know, and so classes were either Monday, Wednesday, Friday or Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday. If there was an afternoon football game you might have classes right up to the time of the game. I remember attending one football game in the old stadium where we played. It was Arizona State we were playing and the wind was blowing about 70 or 80 miles an hour.

The Texas Western player kicked off and the ball went up in the air and then landed behind where he'd kicked off. The team that had the wind would score a touchdown, and so the game finally ended, I think, 28 to 28. The quarter you had the wind, you scored two touchdowns. Or we lost by one point, something like that. It was 28 to 27, and UTEP lost because we missed the last extra point. So the wind used to blow very hard. Doesn't blow that hard any more.

C: What other professor do you remember?

H: Well, I had several outstanding professors. Eugene Porter in History. The scientists in those days, we took French and German, and two years of English, and Speech and Drama, and Music. And the degree, my degree, was in Chemistry with a minor in Mathematics. But I had all the usual courses that a liberal arts major would have. And Dr. Porter, I had several courses, actually, from him. I took one summer just to be taking a course. I took a course in Russian History. He had been in the Second World War with the Army in Moscow and so he taught the course with a lot of personal anecdotes. I do remember that he was quite irreligious, I think, and so he would make comments about religions. He was talking about a group of people who were called Doukhobors, I think. They're people that came from Russia and lived in Canada, and to protest tax laws and this sort of thing they used to take off all their clothes and go parading around the streets. And he described this group and then he said, "Their religious beliefs are very much Protestant, just like the Baptists." So some woman in the class wrote a letter to the President of the University saying that Dr. Porter had defamed the Baptists,

said that they were walking around naked. The next time the class met (I think he had received a note from the president), he repeated all of this and said, "Go tell on me again if you want to."

Then I took a course in Chinese History from him. The way he taught history, he felt that the geography of the country was a very important part of the history of the country. So the first time you came to class he gave you a blank map of Russia, say, and you were supposed to fill in all the rivers, towns, mountain ranges, provinces and so on. And of course everybody failed the test. Then he didn't say anything, he just took them all up. The next time you came to class he handed you the blank map again, and he continued to do this. You had to take the test until you could draw a map of the country letter perfect.

Then another excellent teacher, I think, was...I took classes with both Dr. Quinn and Mrs. Quinn. Dr. Quinn taught Geology and Mrs. Quinn was in Sociology, and they were good teachers. I took courses from both of them.

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I took Philosophy from Dr. Roth. He was a Rabbi and I guess something like an adjunct professor. But he was really an excellent teacher and a very scholarly person. I took my English, seems to me that there was an English teacher, Mrs. Patterson, but I can't...

C: Mrs. Patterson is a Math teacher.

H: Oh, you're right, yeah. Well, I don't remember who the people are. Oh, I had Eamon, Mr. Eamon for English, and I had him for a sophomore course in poetry. Later when I came back to UTEP he

was still on the faculty. I don't know if he still is now; maybe. And a good friend that I had at that time was the librarian.

C: Baxter Polk?

H: Baxter Polk. And he paid me some money for working in the library. By the way, Dr. Porter also, after I got to know him, he then asked me to be his assistant. When he gave lectures I would show the slides for him and arrange the projector and all this sort of thing and so on. I went to a lot of women's clubs meetings and church meetings where he gave talks on Russia and on China. Let's see, Baxter Polk's brother was the Superintendent of Schools in El Paso. He was first principal of Bowie High School and then he was assistant superintendent and finally superintendent.

C: That's who Polk school's named after?

H: Yeah. And my grandmother and the Polks were very good friends, and so Baxter sort of helped me out a little bit. And I always sort of resented when people say bad things about Baxter Polk, and I think he was an excellent person.

C: He's going to come when they open the new library.

H: Oh he is? Good. And also I think another aspect of this campus that people are always criticizing is the library that existed in the center of the campus. I think it's a great building, and I think it's one of the most unusual buildings on campus. In fact, when we had visitors from Germany or from Europe or from the east coast or west coast, they always make comments about the building, ask who the architect was. It's not in the style of many of the other buildings on campus but it has touches of Bhutan architecture in the little rows of window at the top, for example, that sort of thing. Which if you look at pictures of

buildings in Bhutan, especially modern buildings, you'll see that sort of thing.

I felt that the creation of the new library as a super-big square Bhutan building was one of the worst architectural mistakes we ever made. I thought it was ridiculous to hire an architect for several hundred thousand dollars and not let them come up with their own ideas about what kind of building to have on campus, or that we didn't have to accept what they came up with if we didn't like it. But we didn't allow them any latitude at all and look what we got. It looks like a prison. It looks like a building in the prison up at La Tuna with its little towers, guard towers, in each corner and so on. Hope the president gets to hear that.

C: He probably will.

H: I protested, I was on that committee, the library planning committee, and I protested loudly, but to no avail. The decision to tell the architects what to do.

C: Well, what made you interested in Chemistry?

H: Well, of course in Chemistry, well, I was interested in high school, and just always felt like I always wanted to be a chemist. The chemists in the Chemistry Department at that time were Dr. W.W. Lake. Mrs. Lake still lives in El Paso. Dr. Lake had his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago and was a distinguished chemist. He never published a lot of research, but he did practical work in the city and he had some mining interest in Mexico, which I think he lost in the late thirties. Then there was Dr. Hancock, Jessie Hancock, and he may have come to UTEP just a few years before I did as a student and later on was chairman of the Chemistry Department. Then when I returned to El Paso as chairman of the department, he was still a professor in the department, but he died that year, in 1972.

And there was a chemist named Dr. Dehan(?) who had his Ph.D. from Colorado. He was a young chemist. I think this may have been his [first] year at UTEP, and he left after three or four years and started a chemical business.

There have been other people in the department. Well, a very famous teacher in the Chemistry Department was Mr. Ball, and Mr. Ball was not only the Analytical Qualitative Analysis teacher, he was also the tennis coach. He had his son used to play father-son tennis all the time. There was a joke that if you played tennis you could probably get an "A" in Qualitative Analysis. Qualitative Analysis was the first sophomore course and it was an Analytical Chemistry course you had to take. There was a lot of Analytical Chemistry in the curriculum because it was connected with Metallurgy, and one could get a degree in Metallurgy and Chemistry.

One of my teachers in Metallurgy was Dr. Redland, Joe Redland. He [is] still living. He attended a ceremony last year that President Monroe had.

C: He lives in Elephant Butte from what I understand.

H: There are other teachers that I'm sure I'll think of their names later. Great History teachers, of course. There was Dr. Strickland, who had the reputation of a great teacher. And I guess that's about it. If I think of some others I'll come and tell you about them.

C: Now, pranks and hazing and jokes. What did you participate in?

H: I don't remember any of that.

C: Yes you do.

H: No. I heard a lot of stories but...

C: Would you like to share some of the ones you heard?

H: Well, it's so long ago, but I think I was in the Geology course. We met at 8 o'clock when they captured the alligator and brought it up and placed it in Dr. Quinn's office, but I really don't remember. You know, I remember little details of that incident and it may be that I'm just recalling what somebody told me.

C: Who have you heard is responsible for bringing that alligator up there?

H: I don't know, I really don't, and I can't remember any names of that time. But I do remember that Dr. Quinn had bought some tombstones.

C: Why?

H: You know, he just had them stored in the basement of the Geology building. And he had chiseled on it, you know, his name, with the date left out. And those stones were stolen and placed in front of the Union one day with a little mound in front of it, you see. That was, I think, in 1951, but I don't remember exactly when it occurred. So I was really a very serious student so I didn't take part in any of these things.

In the spring of 1951, one of the reasons I made such poor grades is that I had a friend--and I can't even remember his name now, he was an ex-G.I.--who had a Porsche, a sports car. He decided that he wanted to race it in the Panamerican Road Race, and this was a road race that went from Mexico City to Juarez. So we practiced for about a month. We drove that route twice and then we actually took part in the race and that. So, I remember going in...I was taking a History course from Porter at the time. I remember going in and telling him that I would like to take a

month off.

C: (Laughter) I'll be.

H: And he looked at my grades, you know, and said, "Oh, go ahead, it doesn't make any difference." And he gave me an "F" in the course, so... But I also remember I was taking an Education course at that time called Educational Psychology and I received a "B" and never even took the final exam, so there was a big difference between the quality of standards in some courses.

Well, I don't really remember. There weren't a whole lot of pranks. The students in the sciences and the engineers were pretty serious students, you know. There was the Saint Patrick's Day celebration, of course. That still exists now.

C: You didn't participate in that?

H: No. I took an ore analysis course which was held in the mine shaft which is behind the Geology building now. When you went in there it was so hot, all the furnaces there for smelting ores, for smelting platinum and gold samples, and when you went in you just took off your clothes and shirt and stripped down to your underpants, you know. And of course no girls could take that course, and at least no girls ever did take the course. Most of the Chemistry majors were men and most of the engineers were men. If you were, just like Mrs. Duke says, well, if you were a girl you majored in Biology. That's a proper, that was a proper major for a woman at that time.

A lot of the students who majored in Chemistry went to medical school. Students who graduated with me that went to medical school that I remember the names of were Sherot(?) Anderson. He was from northeast El Paso. He went to Rusk and then Austin and

then to El Paso. I think he had polio when he was a child but he seemed to have been completely recovered as a young man in college. He and I kept in touch. I was at Rice University as a graduate student and he was a medical school student at Galveston, and then we fell out of touch. Later on, I met him in Washington. In 1975-76 I was the head of a section at the National Science Foundation in Washington and he was there as a representative of the French government. After getting his M.D., later in life he had become a physician who flew in the South Sea islands, from island to island, and he actually was what they called a replacement physician. A French physician on the islands of Tahiti, say, are there for nine months and then they get a three month vacation in France, and he is the person who would take their place. He's crippled now and paralyzed maybe below the waist, but he flies his own plane and at least at that time still seemed to have a very active life.

There was a Chemistry major named Bobby McMasters and I think he went to Dallas and then went to Columbia, and I think he's a professor at Columbia University now. Leonard Goldberg, Lenny I think went to Galveston also. Travis Bennett I think graduated in the class of '54 and I believe he came back to El Paso to practice. There was a really good football player who had gone to Texas A & M and played and been a really good football player and then he came back to El Paso to get his pre-med requirements out of the way. I think he got them all done about 1954-55 and he went off to medical school, and then he returned to El Paso. I know him but I can't remember his name right now.

C: Well, I know you're looking at it from a different perspective

now because you're here on the faculty, but could you compare the way the campus was in the fifties, the attitudes?

H: Well, it was very small, you know, I don't think there were over 2,000 students in 1950. But there was still a feeling on the campus, I think, that the school was the place where you could really get a start, you know; that when you finished you were able to go out and compete on a national level and go to medical school, go to graduate school, or start a business or whatever. Even in those days, I would say probably 15 or 20 percent of the students were Mexican American, and there was quite a bit of agitation when Chi Omega sorority, see, admitted the first Mexican American girl into the sorority. In those days we talked a lot about integration, and El Paso had one of its first Mexican mayors about that time. And I think there was a court case in 1949 when a black student was admitted to Texas Western College, and that was the first black person in Texas to go to an all-white, formerly all-white, school. I think most of us considered ourselves liberals, and at least the people I knew did. And I was especially, I think, active because I'd grown up in Boys Town, which was a very egalitarian type of place. I used to argue with people and take part in demonstrations. Even at that time I knew...well, I know quite well two people who had left El Paso and gone on. I knew John Ritchie, who later received some fame as a writer, and I also knew Salazar who became a reporter and was killed in Los Angeles several years ago during the riots, I think.

And you know, the opportunity was there. Any person from El Paso, no matter whether you went to Bowie or...of course

Austin was the elite school in those days. But Bowie or Jefferson or Austin or El Paso High, it didn't really make any difference; Ysleta, you know. You knew you could go to UTEP and get a good education. I think the level of instruction, although I think maybe we have a better quality of faculty now, the teacher to student ratio is, I think, much lower than it was then and I think the level of instruction now, the quality of instruction, is much decreased from 1950 to '54. The standards that we have are just not as high as they were then. I would very much like to get back to the old standards of back to basics. The school didn't really start to grow until the late fifties and sixties and it was a small place. The Union at that time was only a little bit of the Union that exists on the west side now, and the gathering place, really, was right in front of the ballroom. There were lots of chairs and tables out there to play bridge at, and that was where people met.

One of the things I liked to do at that time was I would...I think her name was Woods, a woman who ran a bridge club and tournament down on Montana someplace. Sometimes it met at the Cortez Hotel once a week, and you know, you would meet and play duplicate bridge. And Jacobi was a very famous bridge player. His son was stationed in the Army here in El Paso during the early fifties and I played bridge with him many times. I think the name of that woman was Wood, but I know that other El Pasoans will remember her because she was quite famous for running the bridge games and every once in a while we'd hold it at the Cortez Hotel. The Cortez in those days was always full of people with cowboy hats on and cowboy boots and was considered quite an elegant hotel,

I think. My grandmother's favorite restaurant was the Florida Club in Juarez, which still exists.

And we would get on the Fort Bliss streetcar. The Fort Bliss streetcar ran...you know, the El Paso Times had an article a couple of years ago describing the route of the streetcar and they were wrong about the route. I remember, I rode the Fort Bliss streetcar every day of my life, two or three times. When I was a student at Crockett, the grade school let out an hour or so before the high school at 2:30 or 3:00 or something like that, and my grandmother, to keep an eye on me, required me to get on the streetcar and go down to Cotton and then wait on the steps of Bowie High School until she got out, see. And so I know exactly what the route was. It went from a turn around at the Fort Boulevard exit to Fort Bliss, diagonally to Fort Boulevard, and then it went to Copia Street, and it went down Copia, ( which was a dirt street until it got to one block below Memphis, I think that's Altura). Then Copia intersected the paved street at that point and it went down past Crockett until it got to Alta Vista, and then it zig-zagged two or three times going past the Austin Park Christian Church on Montana, and then it went down to Five Points or down Yandell, downtown and down past the post office, and made a turn there. And there used to be streetcars, of course, that went to Five Points itself, and there was one that went up Piedras, and there was even a streetcar that went up Mesa, you know.

C: How far did it go?

H: Oh, I don't remember.

C: What was the fare?

H: Well, the fare after the Second World War was three cents for kids, six cents for adults, and it may have gotten a little bit more expensive maybe in the fifties, but not much more. I think it was still six cents.

C: When did they tear out the tracks?

H: After I left town.

C: Is that right?

H: Now, to go to Juarez, of course what you did is you took the Fort Bliss streetcar downtown and then transferred to the Juarez streetcar, and that streetcar was still running when I returned to El Paso in 1972. It ran a circular route, you know, through downtown Juarez and El Paso, very convenient when we took visitors to Juarez. And of course it stopped right in front of the Florida Club restaurant. Later on, when my grandmother would want to go to the restaurant, we'd take a taxi and the people at the restaurant would be waiting to help her out of the taxi when we got there. They were always very nice. I still go back there to eat every once in a while and they still know who I am.

Many of my grandmother's students at Bowie, of course, became shakers and movers in El Paso on a low level, worked at the City Hall and became policemen and became dogcatchers, whatever. And I remember the second year I was back in El Paso in 1951, we wanted to turn the garage in the back of our lot into a little apartment for me to live in, and so I drew up plans. I had taken engineering drawing in high school for several years and so I drew up plans and took them downtown. I couldn't get anybody to approve them until my grandmother called up, called up one of her students, and then I was immediately admitted the next time that

I went in and everything was smoothed over. And of course she spoke Spanish, and we always had a gardener that would come about every three weeks, and there was a maid. But that doesn't happen so much anymore, I don't think; at least not at my salary it doesn't.

C: Were there no other pranks? You can't remember panty raids or...?

H: No. They didn't have anything like that when I was here, I don't think. If they did, I would have... Now, they had those at Rice when I went there as a graduate student. So they must have existed here, but I didn't know.

C: Since you were an off-campus man.

H: [I] didn't really take part in all that. Our usual Saturday nights, if you had a date, you went for dinner, you know. If you really wanted to impress a girl, you took her to Juarez for dinner and you went to The Tivoli--that would be the first-class place--or The Lobby, and that was another really [nice place]. And they had a dinner show, you know.

C: You mean Las Vegas Style?

H: Yes. There would be entertainers and dancers, jugglers, singers, instrument players, you know. So that. And a big evening, you know, might cost you \$7.00 or \$8.00 dollars for drinks and dinner and everything for two people. When I was a junior and senior in college, I met a girl at Austin High School who was a senior and met her at a party of a girl who lived across the street from me on Memphis Street. And he later was the vice president of El Paso National Bank, her father was, and I can't remember their names right now. Oh, Bianchi was their name, Barbara Bianchi. Mr.

Bianchi was also the president of Providence Hospital during the fifties. So anyway, Barbara introduced to me to this other girl. Her name was Robin Tuetig, and so we went out several times. Then about the fifth time I had gone out with her, her mother called me aside, you know, and said, "Bill, you know, you've been going to Juarez and all this sort of thing. I want you to be careful." And I said, "Oh, we always are." And she says, "Well, you have to realize that Robin's only 13 years old." And I, you know, my chin dropped. It turned out that she was. She was senior in high school, had an I.Q. of about 180.

C: I'll be darned!

H: And I thought, you know, she didn't look 13 to me.

C: Whatever happened to her? Do you know?

H: Even though she was really smart as a whip, you know, what she wanted to do was be a country music singer. I think she got in the business and had some small success. Another person that I knew quite well was the person who is now Mimi Gladstein and a professor of English. Mimi went to the University of Oklahoma and of course she used to come back to El Paso every summer. We were together in a couple of...one of the things they did in El Paso then is they had a combination music-drama festival every summer. Dr. Thornstein(?) was the guy who ran it. And one summer, it may have been the summer of 1952, say, they put on five or six musicals, and they would run for a week, and then the second one. And if you took that course and participated you were in the chorus in one musical, you might have a part in another, and then on the third one you helped make sets, and on the fourth you sold tickets or something like this. And Mimi took part in that

and so did I, and Mimi introduced me to another Jewish girl who is a very good friend of Mimi's. I went out with that girl, oh many, many times, and I was really in love with her. At least a couple of times I was invited to their house in Kern Place to have dinner, but the food was so strange, you know, I thought, "Oh, this is really terrible," you know. It was like bagels and lox and cream cheese, you know, that awful stuff. Which I think is wonderful...

C: Now.

H: Right. But it wasn't that. But it was other things that were just as strange.

But when I returned to El Paso in 1972 and met Mimi again, the way I met her is I was down at the YMCA playing handball one Saturday afternoon and I met a guy named Jay Gladstein. We played a couple of games and then we made a date to meet again the next week. The next time we met Jay said, "You know, my wife knows you." And he told me what Mimi's maiden name was and I realized I did know her. Then we got in touch and have, you know, been friends since that time. And this other girl is still one of Mimi's friends and I met her again about five years ago. She is now into astrology and, you know, all this sort of thing.

C: What would you say, then, the attitude towards Jewish students was in the fifties?

H: Oh it was..there were the elite.

C: They were.

H: I thought, yeah.