

**Interview with Jake Fortenberry, Bea Fortenberry,
And Linda Drake
September 29, 2007**

Paved 66, two lanes, in 1937—Adrian had no public graded roads then—family farmed wheat, milo, cattle—Adrian schools at that time—cars on the road, Model As and Ts—their stretch of road on 66 famous for mud—mud like bread dough—Adrian businesses—Vega businesses—most everybody farmed hard red winter wheat, milo, no hay at that time—description of where old road used to run—when road was dirt, happy to drive to NM where it was paved—Oldham County is dry—people went to Glenrio to get beer and take it back—a still 4 miles west of Adrian, at a stagecoach weight station—stills were common—no police, just a local sheriff in Vega—when Europeans come they like the open road—I-40 construction affected the vitality of Adrian—population dwindled—still all ranch country, not much oil—present status of Adrian—Adrian during WWII—tourism in last 10 years has helped the town—businesses now dependent on tourism—Rock Allen Red, a hobo on the railroad—Gronkey service station on old 66—the Bent Door had a basement, dancing, café, service station; a very lively place—in the 40s—had a fire—dances at peoples houses, the old school house, gymnasium—Adrian used to be all white, now a few Latinos—no blacks or Indians—the Chapman café—Chapman was a bootlegger—many tourists in the 40s—wages at 50 cents a day—train crew ate there—elevator bought in 70s, that’s when the rails were taken out—“pass of the railroad was a blow”—used to get mail by train, twice a day—drove cattle to Boise, loaded them on the train and sent them to Kansas City—Boise on old Route 66—boarding house in Adrian, the school teacher stayed there—meals 25 cents a day—20s-30s still the wild west—his father found water on his property by using a fortune-teller—doesn’t see much change coming to Adrian, small farms aren’t coming back—will continue being ranch country

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- David Dunaway: Could you tell me your and where you were born?
- Jr. B. Fortenberry: I'm Jake Fortenberry. I was born in Fullick(?) County, out in the country in 1923. I moved to Adrian 1927 when I was four.
- DD: So when you came out here when you were four, and there was this new road opening up. Do you remember anything about the building of the road when you were a little kid do you?
- JF: No. I was aware when they paved 66. It was dirt road until 1937. They paved it two lanes that year. We lived 16 miles southwest of Adrian. In the country there were no public graded roads out there; no county roads at the time. In fact, we had to move the fences from the section line to grant ride of way for them to build and grade the county road. We were 45 miles northwest of Hereford, our trading center. About once a summer, dad would take the old Model T truck and go to Hereford and buy groceries. It was 45 miles just across the country. And that was our early beginnings.
- DD: Were you ranchers?
- JF: Farmers. His dad came in there and bought a section of land. It was on the Oldham Desmith County Line. They bought in '26 I guess, broke half of it out and farmed it. The other half was grass and part of belonged to cow crop. That's where he raised the family on that section of land.
- DD: What did you farm?
- JF: Wheat and Milo and Cattle. We did our farming with horses. I remember some long sleepy days.
- DD: Could you describe your schooling?
- JF: I began the first grade in the basement of the Methodist Church at Adrian. Went the first year there and the old school was overcrowded. It had no room for the first graders. So in 1930, they built a new brick building and I continued school there, graduating in 1940.
- DD: Now Adrian didn't have a high school did it?
- JF: Yes it did. I believe in about 1932 or '33, they didn't have a high school. Noran Crieghts(?) attended Vega. He's an old timer there. Then I began school in '29 and I thought they had old metal grates then. I'm not sure.

DD: So you were in Adrian attending school in 1929?

JF: Yes sir.

DD: Then Route 66 must of run right by your schoolhouse. Is that right?

JF: Just about 3 blocks, 2 or 3.

DD: Would you take 66 to get to school?

JF: No sir. We came from the south. Actually we had to ride the bus. We came in probably 10 or 11 miles north. Then hit 66 four miles west of Adrian.

DD: I know I'm asking you to go way back to when you were riding that school bus, but can you remember what the traffic was like right about then when you were getting on to school? Were there a lot of cars on road in those days?

JF: No, there were very scarce. Our first trading center was Hereford then later on we started trading in Amarillo. We would make the trip about once a summer coming into Amarillo. It's a long drive.

DD: And you were bringing your goods to market?

JF: No sir. We just came to shop. No our goods were marketed in Adrian. Crème, we shipped on the railroad to Trinidad, Colorado. We traded eggs and butter to the store there. That was our living. We raised the garden.

DD: So way back to the school bus again. You'd hit 66 about 4 miles outside of Adrian, and then preceding west, would it be?

JF: No east.

DD: We're there any cars at all on that unpaved road?

JF: Oh yes there were a few cars.

DD: What kind of cars were they?

JF: Well Model A's and Model T's. We came there and mother came up in 27 driving a 1927 Baby Overland.

DD: They don't make those any more I don't think. So it would be your bus and a few cars making there way across?

JF: A few cars.

DD: And these were mainly headed west? Or were west and east traffic about the same?

JF: I suppose about the same.

DD: Were there any farmers using that road for going to market or bringing stuff?

JF: Yes, they used it to deliver grain to the elevators. In fact, 4 miles west of Adrian they was a Groakie Elevator, a grain elevator on the railroad track. I bought it and used until they tore it down, until the railroad left. Inside the building were the scales and your wagon and horses. You dropped the grain out the bottom, right in the office, right on the scales.

DD: There were still a lot of horses and carriages that were in those days?

JF: Most of the horses and a few wagons I don't remember seeing. I don't remember seeing the boogie and such growing up.

DD: You said that you remember the paving of Route 66? Could you describe what that looked like? How did they do it?

JF: I don't remember that. The reason I know when it happened in '36, and one of the boys, who was a senior next year, drove a truck in the pavement. That's the way I associate the time, but as far as seeing the work and how they did it, I don't know.

DD: I was just wondering how they paved it.

JF: I surely don't know.

DD: What kind of condition was the road in back when you'd be on a school bus going into Adrian?

JF: Well there was this dirt road...

DD: Holes? Or was it pretty graded?

JF: Oh it was graded but it'd be muddy.

DD: Texas is famous for mud on this stretch on Route 66. This good old boy told me a little while ago, that he heard stories that some of the ranchers would go out and wet down the road. Then sort of stand off to one side

and let the tourists stop in their Model A's and Model T's and while they would make a little nickel or dime pulling them out. Ever heard any about that?

JF: No, I wasn't aware of that.

DD: There was a stretch called the Jericho Gap, maybe you'd know that out in the east side. Oh it was really bad. Somebody told me the mud was like bread dough. And it would just stick to the tires and you couldn't get any traction.

JF: We have one stretch of country road out there that is like that now. It's really, really sticky.

DD: Now what was in Adrian at that time? Again as early as you can remember, could you describe what Adrian looked like?

JF: Well the earliest I remember of course the school, the Methodist church, 2 blacksmiths shops, and 2 stores. At that time there was no motel or anything, but the Adrian mercantile had 2 or 3 little one room buildings right next to it were you could spend the night. And that's about all I remember being there.

DD: No café?

JF: Yes, we had one. Ethel Chapman ran one. In fact, Bee worked for here some. That was the only café at that time

DD: This is way before tourists I'm thinking? So it was just people who were struggling to make their way west, trying to get across. What kind of people were they? Do you remember, again going back to when you were a child?

JF: The people who were traveling? I have no idea.

DD: You didn't run into many?

JF: No

DD: Ok. Now Bea do you remember what the travelers were like when you started out?

B Fortenberry: No, I don't. I didn't come till '40. I came the later part of '40. I lived across the river at Channing. My dad worked for the XIT and later the Matadors. Then they moved across the river. So I didn't start school till 1940.

DD: Do you remember Vega those days as well?

JF: Yes.

DD: Could you describe what Vega was like? What they had there?

JF: Vega was a little ahead of Adrian. They're school had a gymnasium. It was half underground. It was quite a cracker-box, but we thought that it was great. It had 2 or 3 oil jobbers I guess, garages. That's about as far as I know about them, probably a granule even back then.

DD: Wasn't there an ice factory there?

JF: I don't know if there was a factory or not. There could have been. I don't remember it.

DD: I interviewed Dot Levet from there and she remembers there being an ice company. Was Vega bigger than Adrian?

JF: Yes, county seat. It was probably 3 times as large as Adrian.

DD: What kind of work did people do in Vega and Adrian?

JF: They were mostly farmers. Ranchers were the country people.

DD: And again, farming wheat? Is that hard wheat?

JF: Yes, hard red winter wheat, that and Milo grains. No hay at that time. In fact there was a number of years later before we found out you could graze cattle on winter wheat. It was good for them.

DD: I bet it was. Getting back again to these really early days and I have to say it is an honor to talk to somebody who can remember the 1920's on Route 66. There is not a lot of people that can. That is why I was asking what it was like when building it, but of course you were four years old and not that into construction at that point I have to imagine. But still you managed to get there in the 20's and there are so few that we know from that period. Was this just a regular road or were people cautious when people were driving on it that this road went all the way?

JF: It was just the only road out there. Are you acquainted with Croaky(?) and Stuckey's west of Adrian?

DD: No.

JF: It's 4 miles back there. Well we came in 5 miles west of Adrian on the bus and hit the road and came picked up Croakies. Then had to cross the track and go back a mile to pick up Spandy's(?) and back. The road was on the south side of the railroad. It came to Adrian and turned a square corner with 2 blocks north and went back east on the north side of the tracks. That is the way it went into Vega then. Even still between Adrian and Vega, you still see off to the right the old concrete bridges were 66.

DD: When did you get the feeling that things were changing on that highway?

JF: I don't know a big change. Of course when they paved it, the traffic picked up. We lived on the dirt there and it went west. We were so happy to get to New Mexico cause they did have a paved road. It was very narrow and built very high. If you came off the side of that, it was bad, but at least it was paved. There were very few if any service stations. The local mercantile sold gasoline with a barrel. They had to pump it for the store. People fixed their own flats and had lots of them. They would pump the tires up by hand. We didn't know it was bad.

DD: Now do you remember Glenrio in those days?

JF: Very little about it. I just know people went there because they sold beer over there in Texas and it was dry, and Oldham County is dry. So a lot of people went to the Rio.

DD: So were there bars in Glenrio?

JF: Yes.

DD: You could take it away and take it back?

JF: Yes. You could drink it on the premises.

DD: How did they enforce that dry county? Did they make sure that nobody had anything?

JF: Well yes. I suppose you could buy it and bring it there and use it, but as far as producing it, they were on the look out for stills.

DD: Did people have stills?

JF: Oh yes. One was just 4 miles west of Adrian, just off in the brakes(?). The fellow who lived there took us and showed us to this place and said there was a still here. It was also a stagecoach weigh station.

DD: Was that common? Did you know that people had their stills?

JF: Well, they were aware of who was boot-leggin and who wasn't.

DD: And the police were aware too?

LD: They didn't have any.

JF: They had a local sheriff in Vega.

DD: And that was it? Were there any problems with the people coming through? Maybe you need the police for that?

JF: No. There was no supervision there. It was just open road.

DD: That is what the Europeans like about this part of the country, the open roads. They don't have any open road there. So it is a very different experience for people coming through here then.

JF: At the time when they put in Interstate-40 that went around the town, I believe we had 5 service stations and 2 or 3 café's. Mostly all closed up now, we got ½ a station now I'd say. It's Quick-stop.

DD: Is the barbeque place closed?

JF: No, there open.

DD: Do you remember the day they closed down the 66 and sent the traffic over to the Interstate?

JF: No I don't recall it officially.

DD: There must have been a change in Adrian when they did that.

JF: Well yes there was. All these 5 service stations along the road soon closed up. They couldn't make a living.

DD: What else closed down?

JF: Well one of the café's; we still had one. Well I guess we had 2, Clara ran one down there. The old mercantile handled anything you needed and it just dwindled in business. The owners got old and retired. They sold it out. Edmond(?) dealers closed up. There was just not that much business.

DD: Did people start moving away from Adrian then?

JF: Yes, the population has dwindled. If people couldn't make a living, they'd go somewhere else. Later days, many of the farms consolidated. Big ones bought out the small ones, and then they left. There is not much call for the young people to return to Adrian. They would go off to school and not come back because there wasn't much opportunity there.

From Adrian north, is still all ranch country, the cowboys, and the south is primarily farming.

DD: What about oil? Didn't you have oil in that part of the world?

JF: In 1916 or something, they drilled an oil well southwest of Adrian about 2 miles. But it didn't produce anything they said. I was reading that in the Oldham County book.

DD: So you have always lived south of Adrian right, in that farm?

JF: Yes, I was raised 16 miles south. Then I married and rented a farm 8 miles out. I lived there 50 years. When it sold, we moved into Adrian and built a home 10 years ago.

DD: Well that's after 66 of course. Is Adrian still losing population?

JF: I'd say it's about static right now, about 150.

DD: And you have a high school?

JF: Oh yes. We wouldn't have except the new school laws allow folks to transfer if their school is not measuring up. They can transfer where they want to. Adrian school sends a school bus to Hereford every day and picks up about 70 people. Without the ones that transferred in, we couldn't have a high school.

BF: They send one to Vega too.

JF: Yes, and then one out to the country.

BF: They have a strict school.

JF: Very good school

DD: Glad to hear it's still there.

BF: You'd get a paddle.

DD: That probably hasn't changed too much since the early days. What kind of changes have you noticed in Adrian over the years? I'm sure it was a big loss when 66 shut down more or less

JF: Yes it was. Around WWII, I had just graduated from a school of 40. All the young men were going to war. The rationing was pretty severe. You couldn't buy tires. Farmers had certificates to buy tires for what they had to have, same with gasoline and sugar. You heard about the guy that crawled under the bed to get his spare tire. You could go around a can of gasoline around a hundred pounds of sugar(?). They weren't hoarding.

DD: So your market town was Hereford? Where you go for your groceries?

JF: We did originally in Hereford, then in Adrian.

DD: When you go into Adrian, there must have been a time in the 50's or 60's when you begin to notice tourists coming through. Do you remember any of those?

JF: None in particular, but I know the traffic had picked up in all in '40 when I left school. Then I was gone to California for 2 or 3 years. It had picked up a lot in that time.

DD: What kind of traffic was it at that point now that it had been paved? What kinds of cars were being driven?

JF: Fords and Chevrolets. Quite a number of them were late model cars.

DD: Do you remember those big trucks piled high with stuff on them, furniture, none of that?

JF: We had seen some of that but it's is not a big remembrance.

DD: I'm wondering after WWII, I think a lot of people came back sort of towards Oklahoma, which would mean they would have to drive through Adrian. Did you notice any of that traffic, the Dust Bowlers returning?

JF: No.

DD: Were there wrecks or accidents along your part of 66?

JF: Well of course there were some, but not note worth. I don't recall anything. They weren't traveling at a high rate of speed mostly.

DD: So the road closed and Adrian began to decline, was it pretty much the same until the road closed?

JF: No it was about static until the close of 66.

DD: Did you lose any friends who left town because they couldn't make a living?

JF: Yes, some people who ran garages and things had to go somewhere else.

DD: Where did they go? Do you remember?

JF: No, I don't know.

DD: I was just curious to see how that closing affected these towns and what kinds of affects it had on people. By the time you moved back 10 years ago getting into the modern period, were you beginning to notice people coming back to Adrian for Route 66?

JF: You mean the tourists? Yes, and from that time till now it has greatly increased.

DD: Isn't it funny how the street you just use to get to school and buy groceries is for some people like a famous destination resort?

JF: Yes, I wonder why.

DD: Why do you think? What's your opinion?

JF: Somebody in Europe had greatly publicized Route 66. There is an enormous amount of interest in it from people in Europe. They fly into Chicago and rent motorcycles or buses or cars and travel the Route. Somebody glamorized it really effectively.

DD: Was it glamorous in your day?

JF: Why no, it was just a road to town.

DD: Do you remember the first time you met someone who seemed to think it was glamorous to live on Route 66?

JF: No

DD: That would be awhile ago. I am surprised you don't have any tales of travelers, because everybody I have talked to today remembers a tourist come into town and looking at them kind of like they have gotten out of the zoo or something.

JF: Well, I have a story about our Ag teacher, Bob Wood. He had applied for the job and came in Adrian from the east up on the hill coming down.

BF: Coming from Lubbock

JF: He said his wife said, "Let's don't even stop."

BF: And she began crying.

JF: But they took the job and made their full life there. They built their home and he was the Ag teacher for 30 something years. A lot of people, that do come to Adrian, stay.

DD: What do they like about it?

JF: I don't know, just the friendly easy, going atmosphere I guess.

DD: Well I guess we are about done here. I really appreciate you remembering of these times so long and far away. I asked this fellow that I was interviewing just a minute ago and I'll ask you the same question, "Why should people in Texas care about Route 66?"

JF: Well in our particular town, the Mid-Point Café that people remember, that is just life blood. It wouldn't be known anywhere except for the 66 heritage.

DD: So it's economic?

JF: Yes sir.

DD: What about culture and history? Do you think it is important in that way?

JF: I don't know about that. Of course we have some history but not many people know it.

DD: Are there any people that you know that are particularly interested in Route 66 or is it just these passing tourists?

JF: The passing tourists as far as I know except the ones who make a living off the road.

DD: Are the businesses in Adrian dependent on these Route 66 tourists?

JF: Yes that one is. In fact, the café and then there's a little grocery store, and quick stop across the road, service station. It wouldn't be in business except for the traffic on I-40.

DD: How about that hotel or motel which is next door to the Mid-Point? Are they still open?

JF: No, the fella came out from California about 15 years ago and built that, Fabulous 40. Well he only built half of it. It prospered and did well as long as he was alive. He passed away and he wife surviving is old and their daughter is impaired. They just closed it and live there.

DD: Was there a time when that was full?

JF: Yes, winter storms or something like that. In fact, it would fill up. We'd open the churches or the Adrian Elevator, which is now a community center, and people would bed down there in snow storms.

DD: You get a fair number of snow storms don't you?

JF: Well we have a few worth remembering.

DD: Did they have to shut down Route 66 in those days?

JF: Well it still does sometimes. We volunteered for the volunteer ambulance service for 10 years. We've seen a lot of wrecks. There are a lot more wrecks than there was then, but I guess cause there are more people and the speeds are greater.

DD: Well I am going to I ask you a last question here. If you had your life to over again, would you do it over near Adrian, Texas?

JF: I don't know any place I'd rather be. When we retired from the farm, we had to do something. We looked in Amarillo at the developments around everywhere and the prospects of building a home. But we said we still got the farm out there so we built in Adrian and we've never regretted it. It's home.

DD: That's great. Thank you very much.
(Pause)

DD: You were telling me about a sloan house in Adrian?

JF: Yes, the mercantile grocery store did their own slaughtering about couple miles southwest of town, out in draw there. They had a little house where they went out and did their slaughtering. They brought the beef in and hung it and processed it and be-tailed it right there at the place.

DD: Where there any other unusual businesses in town? Or characters?

JF: Oh yes we had some characters. We had Rock Allen Red, a hobo on the railroad. He'd come through Adrian and stop stay a day or two. That was just the name I only ever knew, Rock Allen Red, but we all knew him when we saw him.

DD: He was riding the Rock Allen line? Are there any other local figures from local history?

JF: No not that I could name. Some of the cowboys, they had quite a name.

DD: Well then Linda I'm going to turn it over to you and let you interview your uncle.

Linda Drake: Ok. Thank you. A few years ago I had the opportunity to go out with some people that were researching Route 66. We went out into the pasture and we walked across Boydston's property and stopped there were the foundation of the old Gronkey station is. Do you remember that?

JF: I remember that station. This was down on old 66. There was a little station there that Hugh Quinton ran. I remember that a little bit and I have been to the remains of it quite a few times.

LD: That must have been the one that we saw. We'd drive a little ways and then stop and walk. You could see where the railroad and the Route 66 went across the bridge there. Do you remember when the Bent Door was built?

JF: I remember it, yes but I don't think I can put a date to it. My brother Roy was out of school and he had a truck. Bobby Harris hired him to go to Dalhart and pick up this stuff from the old air base up there. That's what the Bent Door was. It was a racing tower at Dalhart. So it would have been probably early fifties when it was built. It was a very prosperous place and lively place. It had that basement down below where they'd dance and café and service station up above. It was a good business till it burned out, The station burned.

LD: I understand it was a 24 hour business.

DD: When did it burn down?

BF: The café didn't burn

JF: No the café didn't but the station did.

BF: Let's see, you were just home from the army.

JF: So that would been '40 and '46 I guess.

DD: Where would go here music and things like that?

BF: You made your own; quite few musicians in the 80's.

DD: Did you have dances?

BF: Oh yeah.

DD: Where were they held?

BF: Somebody's house.

JF: Various homes. I remember attending one in the old school house. They held dances there quite regularly; never have in the new one. We built a gymnasium in '38 and for a while we did have skating there, roller skates, but they closed that down.

BF: Jake played basketball on dirt floor when he played.

JF: Yep on dirt court. We had a football team as far back as 1936 I remember until up about 1944. The student body dwindled until they just didn't have enough men to do it.

DD: Was everybody an Anglo in Adrian?

JF: They were at that time.

DD: Has that changed any?

JF: We have a few Latino's there.

DD: African Americans?

JF: No.

DD: Native Americans?

JF: No, just people.

LD: Aunt B, what café did you say you worked at?

BF: I worked for Chapman's but I worked at the on the east end of town, the one that fell down. I worked there overnight and stayed all night with

Jake. Chapman's had one on Route 66 right? The corner there? I didn't work at that one.

JF: It burned and they built across, you know where the old Texaco building is beside the inn? That was Chap's Garage and café. B worked there.

BF: He was boot-legger right?

JF: Yes!

BF: He went south for a little while.

LD: What years did you work there?

BF: I guess probably '42 maybe, '43.

JF: '44 or '45. No, you're right, '42 '43.

LD: Did y'all have a lot of tourists?

BF: Quite a few. We stayed open all night. I worked for .50 cents a day and got a hamburger at lunch.

JF: But that is more money than we made driving a tractor. Wages were 50 cents a day, daylight to dark, room and board.

BF: He started out cooking and they didn't like his cooking.

JF: But that's another story.

DD: I would like to just catch up. We're talking about Chapman's?

BF: Chapman's.

DD: How big of a place was Chapman's? How many would you seat?

BF: 15, maybe. It was really small.

JF: It was small.

BF: We fed the railroad men quite a bit, the train men. We used to have a railroad and I think that hurt Adrian a lot.

JF: I know it did.

BF: But the train crew would eat there when they came by.

DD: Do you remember when the train closed down?

BF: I don't know what year, but yes I remember it.

JF: We bought the elevator probably late 70's, early 70's. Then when they took the rails out, the grain business went bad. You had to truck it in, truck it out. Pass of the railroad was a blow.

BF: I got our mail from the train. They would drop it off when they came through.

JF: Twice a day we had mail service from the train. And we used to ship our cattle on the rails. We had shipping pens there and shipping pens down at Boise. Where we lived, where dad lived, we drove our cattle about 3 miles off the cap and down to Boise. We would load them up on the cars there and send them to Kansas City.

LD: Now wasn't Boise on the old Route 66? The original?

JF: Yes.

DD: How do you spell that?

JF: B-o-i-s-e.

BF: The old loading shoots are still there. You know the man that had the goats? That was the loading shoot. When I lived down on the ranch the drove the cattle to town and everyone had to stay in school and be quiet because they drove those through town and loading them.

DD: Why did everybody have to stay in school and be quiet?

BF: Well you didn't want to scare those cattle. Those cattle hadn't ever seen a person before when you brought them into town. It probably took about 20 cowboys to get them up there to those pens. There used to be big pens there, but they're gone now.

DD: This is Adrian?

BF: This is Adrian. I lived out on the ranch. I lived out in booney's. I had to board into town. They had run a bus out on the ranch country now but I had to board in Adrian to go to school.

DD: And how did you get to the ranch?

BF: They'd come after me but they just had one vehicle. We didn't have a car. In Adrian, I grew up without a car.

DD: With horses though?

BF: Oh I rode a horse maybe twice to town when it was bad. I turn him loose at the gate and walk.

LD: B, where did you board?

BF: It used be a boarding house in Adrian. Jack didn't tell you that? It was right where the ambulance house is.

JF: It was right beside the Lovelace Oil building and it burned. And Aunt Lynda's business burned with it.

BF: It was a two-story house and the school teacher stayed there. I stayed there. Ms. Glenn had a crippled husband. They cooked and I think the meals were like 25 cents a day. It was really good meals though. We thought they were good, family style. They would just put it on the table and you just got what you wanted. It was Glenn's boarding house. She was kin to the Browns somehow. Adrian a long time ago had a bank. Jack didn't tell you it had a bank, but I didn't ever see the bank.

JF: Well they had a bank and a brick factory and had a paper there for a while.

BF: And a lumber yard. You know where the old post office was?

JF: Two lumber yards.

BF: That was a lumber yard. That has been so long now. We had the post office in the front of it for a while. That was the lumber yard.

JF: Where the old Adrian mercantile building is, it was a rooming house at the time. Across the street east of it, was a saloon. Henry Krice, he was a young man. He came into the saloon and some desperado there half drunk was making him dance. He was shooting the floor beside him. Henry said he was pretty scared.

BF: It was a wild west back there.

DD: That would have been in the 30's?

JF: Earlier; 30's or late 20's I'd say. Cause I remember the town from 30's on and that saloon was gone then.

DD: That is kind of hard to believe that in our own lifetime you have cowboys shooting through the floors.

JF: Well we had a range of disputes and I guess J.P. Collier owned most of Adrian, well a lot of it, the country around there. He was at a hodge with another fella, Boss Jackson. This is the story I hear, then one day Boss Jackson caught J.P. out of town over on the west part. He said we would have killed him but all he had with him was a pair of wire pliers. So there were some feelings.

BF: They had a big cement watering tank for horses up by the bank. Jake dug that up, mostly by himself and moved it to the farm museum. So now it is down there and we pump water in it.

LD: The farm museum is right there on Route 66 diagonally across from the Mid-Point café. It was the water tank and the wind mill.

JF: The Rock Allen Railroad had the windmill there to pump water for their trains. They had one at every train station, about every 13 miles and a watering station. They had one in Adrian. Then early 60's I guess that was abandoned. Well when we go the museum started, we said "Where was this well, we'd like to find it." So we used all the metal detectors and by every means, and we couldn't find it. But then there was this Mexican kid there, He's 60 years old at the time but he grew up there. He said, "People don't think I know anything, but I know where that well was." Oh well good come show us.

So he drove out there and he looked all around, and put a stick in the ground. He said, "Right there." Well we found the base of the old tank and dug down to it. A pipeline came out of it. So we followed the pipeline going towards this stake. We got out there about near Eaton, and we found an anchor leg for a windmill covered up. We moved the other side and there was another one; across we found all four of them. So we knew the well had to be where it was. There was a good big Elm tree right there. So we dug the tree up and pulled it out, then here was this open hole right below it. It was exactly over it. So we cleaned the old well out and put a tower over it for tourists. Since we were pumping the water, there was no use wasting it so we had a community garden.

DD: Oh that's in Adrian. I have missed that as I have driven by. Where is it in relation to the Mid-Point?

JF: It's just a block east, right there on the 66.

BF: Or it's straight across from the post office. We need to get a sign for the water tank. We need to get some kind of historical marker for that.

DD: You must have seen a lot of tourists coming into the post office. Did they ever come into the post office?

BF: Yes they did.

DD: How would you know they were tourists?

BF: They wanted you to stamp a piece of paper with Adrian on it, because they were from Adrian, Michigan. There used to be 13 Adrian's. I don't know how many there are now. Yeah we had lots of tourists.

DD: Could you tell by the way they dressed?

BF: Probably because they all wore shorts. And the men, you don't see too many men out there with shorts on. When our builder built our house he lived in Amarillo. He came out with his shorts on in the café and he said, "I knew I was going to get laughed at." I think men wear shorts now but back then you didn't see that.

DD: Anymore questions?

LD: That's all I can think of. Can y'all think of anything to add?

JF: No.

BF: We had ice. The mercantile sold ice. They had a little house and they had to come down Roland to get the ice. They kept it in sawdust.

JF: we had the mercantile had a little building back side of it, which is now a garage. There they kept pipe and hardware stuff to big to put inside, and also coal. You would just pull your trailer up there and open the window and scoop the coal out. Burnt, it heated the building with the coal. There's no natural gas made into this day. We use propane but no natural gas.

BF: Tell them how your dad found his windmill. I thought that was interesting.

JF: In 1926, he bought a section of land there. It straddled old Desmith county lines. He had a well drilled, or had a well driller with him, he drew the well on the east side, but there was no water there. There was a fortune-teller in Edmondson. He had heard what she could do, so went to see her, that's 60-70 miles. She went into her trance like thing and said, "Well, I see your place and where you have been drilling up there, go southwest from there about 400 yards. You will find 3 rocks there. One of them looks like it has been there for a purpose." Then he came back and he found 2 rocks. He found this one, which was the county marker. She said,

“You move that rock and drill there, and you will get water.” So he did. It is a weak well but that’s what we lived with all our lives. But that is the story behind that location.

DD: The magic of finding water in the west.

JF: That was spooky. When she first went there, she drew a picture on a dusty car door. She said, “Right here is where you drilled, go back this way about 400 yards and find these rocks.”

DD: Well that is amazing. What do you think is the future for small town on Route 66 like Adrian?

JF: I don’t see anything to improve its status much. The farming has been deferred to government programs. People had to leave, they couldn’t farm. I don’t foresee a time when it will ever be small farms again. The ranch country will continue being ranch country. There’s nothing there to draw people really; just the ones that have always been there and their families and their interests there. That about all it’s going to hold, unless you could come up with a new industry for Adrian.

DD: Route 66, that’s about it. Well thank you again. I’m just going to get your permission to transcribe this and deposit it in archives to help preserve the history of this part of Texas. Do we have your permission to do that?

JF: Sure

BF: Yes.

DD: You too Linda?

LD: Yes.