

INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL WALLIS

by David K. Dunaway

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Early days in New Mexico – Taos – his new book, En Divinia Luz – life in Santa Fe: meeting Thornton Wilder – least-known corners of Route 66 – “avoid the cities” – 66 and the Lincoln Highway – different alignments – Dennis Casebier and Ted Drewes – 66 as “Cliff Notes” – unusual stories: Paul Heeler, dancing along 66 – Wanda Queenan – Grapes of Wrath actors – sidewalk highway – “in” versus “near” route 66 – Shoe Tree Trading Post – characters (Oklahoma) – Harley and Annabelle Russell – Frankoma Pottery – inter-generational families on 66 – Tulsa Historical Society – Beryl Ford photo collection – museums (Illinois), collectors (Missouri) – Emily Priddy at the Tulsa Globe – collectors and collections along the Route: Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California

DAVID DUNAWAY: I worked right across the way, living just behind the Tres Piedras, the Three Rocks Café, and working at Taos Photographic in Governor Bent's house – our paths may have crossed at that time.

MICHAEL WALLIS: My first summer in New Mexico, I didn't have a car up there in Taos. I walked. Every other day I walked from the Wurlitzer Foundation to the post office, which was of course a big gathering place for everyone to get their mail. I carried a huge sycamore stick to literally beat dogs off of me. They finally learned. They were savage. I love animals, but these dogs were after my ass, and I just had to whack them a few times. Here I am again, an idealistic writer. I would go for maybe four or five days at a time, nobody bothered me – it was a great little house.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Do you know the work of John Nichols, then?

MICHAEL WALLIS: Oh, sure.

DAVID DUNAWAY: He's a good friend and still lives up there.

MICHAEL WALLIS: I was just telling somebody yesterday, who was wanting to know more about New Mexico, at a little reception we had, about The Milagro Beanfield War. This man – Steve Gerkin – is captivated now by the enchantment of New Mexico. And he just heard of this book of mine called En Divina Luz – about the penitentes, I don't know if you're familiar with it?

DAVID DUNAWAY: I don't know that one.

MICHAEL WALLIS: UNM published it. And I did it with a photographer, a curious guy named Curt Variabedian. It's an inventory of all the moradas, and we are very careful not to identify the location. On the cover is the most famous morada, the upper morada at Abiquiu over O'Keefe's house. Whether or not you know it, you've seen pictures. But this was the first book that the Romanos gave their blessing too – the modern ones. I met with Charlie Carillo and all these guys and – it was just amazing. And one of them wrote the foreword, and one of them wrote the afterword, and then I wrote a very personal – not first person – essay explaining the penitentes. Because I was always drawn to that particular aspect of the culture.

Like a lot of young American white writers, I did my Hemingway thing. In fact, I was doing my Hemingway thing then – drinking, fighting, fornicating – you know, playing the role. You know what I'm saying.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Yes.

MICHAEL WALLIS: But fortunately, I was able to also meet some of these terrific old wisdom-keepers that you find in New Mexico. Not necessarily even writers, although I became friends with people like Frank Waters. I was living over a physical therapist's studio on Federal Place in Santa Fe, with an old magician – not literally a magician, but an old wonderful Santa Fe character, Al Leclare. He'd been married fourteen times. He was the most amazing bizarre character. And I paid fifty dollars a month rent, which I could somehow come up with.

Downtown Santa Fe, right? And I'd go to and look for little magazines and stuff, usually just blanket rejections.

Then I'd go by La Fonda, and there was this writer there who was quite a bit older than me, in his forties, and his name was Steve Peters. He and I had nothing in common except he was trying to write. But he wrote a lot of Western and pulp stuff and cowboy stuff. He wrote a funny little book called Headless in Taos about Arthur Manby.

So one day, on my little trips, from my PO to La Fonda to the old cantina, I came in to and have a couple of pops and some chile con queso and Steve came over. He said, "Wallis, I'm glad you're here. One of those old guys, the kind you like, is checked into the hotel. I met him yesterday, nice old guy, and he wants to meet you – he's an old writer. And here he comes now." So I got up and he said, "Michael Wallis, this is Thornton Wilder."

I was just choking. This is three years before Wilder died, and I literally spent five days with Wilder. That was really where I got my Master's or Ph.D., on the streets of Santa Fe. It was a glorious time, as you know.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Well, we'll continue this over lunch. Let me give you an orientation. I have set myself the ambitious task of trying to lay a groundwork for serious scholarship on Route 66. And in doing that over the last three years, I've sent queries to about 650 libraries between Chicago and LA, got back over 500 responses, went to visit them, and have developed, as I said on the telephone, a 300-page database of unusual collections along the road

The next step in this process is that the National Park Service has asked me to go ahead and talk to the people who know where the skeletons lie; who know where the collections and collectors are; who know who ought to be interviewed first in doing oral histories. Eventually this interview will be transcribed and given to the National Park Service, and then used for me in my research and as the basis for a research collection. I hope I have your permission to use it in these ways.

MICHAEL WALLIS: Of course you can. You can always use it.

DAVID DUNAWAY: What in your opinion are the least-known and least-visited corners of Route 66?

MICHAEL WALLIS: Let me start with a broad stroke first. I always see, when you mention Route 66, a map in my mind. I'm looking at the road right now, and I'm up here, and I see all eight states. Generally, people – the general public, travelers, but even Route 66 aficionados and so-called road warriors or roadies or whatever. Some of them, but definitely the general public and the traveling public – tend to overlook the eastern half of Route 66, to a large extent. And I don't know how much detail you want me to go into; a lot of this is just common sense.

If you look on the surface at least of the state of Illinois and Missouri and that little Kansas bit and down into eastern Oklahoma, it doesn't have the obvious sizzle and glitz and sex appeal of the great Southwest and California. It doesn't have the open skies, the cobalt blue sky, the geographic features, the neon – both the man-made and the natural elements that make the road particularly nice for many of us through the great Southwest: going out of Texas, going across northern New Mexico, and that whole journey. So I think there's been a great deal in general overlooked on eastern Route 66.

Some people, have, and I'm guilty of this too – told people who aren't that familiar with traveling Route 66, when they ask casually, "How should I do this?"

I would tend to tell them, "Avoid the cities." And there's still a great deal of that. Get around the cities; and Route 66 is more the real thing, if you will, out in a rural setting, or in the small towns, or in the small ranch or farm hamlets or whatever and so forth.

And in a way that's a mistake to tell people that, because the urban experience of Route 66 is missed, and it's definitely part of the whole package. However, I do qualify that by always telling them – the obvious again, which you'll know – if you do want to do big city, or one of the larger cities, the natural would be Albuquerque, because of the central corridor, and you do those couple dozen miles, and it's so great, because you get everything from coming out of Tijeras Canyon and getting the fairgrounds and the University and Nob Hill and the financial district and Downtown and the whole town all the way up Nine-Mile Hill.

But usually I'm dealing with people who don't have a great deal of time, and they really want to get a taste and touch of 66. Some people don't even go into downtown Chicago. (The Burghoff just closed last week – it was a great old place.)

People used to, on the Lincoln Highway, put their wheels in the Atlantic – or their flippers or their old curtains, this is in the 'teens – and then they would have to put their wheels in the Pacific, and there are great photos of that. I'm not so sure that so many people traveling Route 66 do that literal touching, of going – I always tell people that we always say Lake Michigan to the Pacific, or the Art Institute to whatever. I think broadly that a lot of the good urban places of Route 66 are missed.

Also you have those different alignments. I'll tell you one in particular, the original alignment of 66 in Saint Louis, which has been called various things through the years – Highway 100, Manchester Road is the main name of it – and that's the road I grew up on, that alignment of 66. And it's signed now, but alignments like that, which were so important, generally get neglected.

And then you have the problem of, when you're traveling, of which alignment should I take – the newest alignment, or da da da – and some people are quite literally disciples, maybe a Jim Ross or somebody, and they really want to do all these alignments. And if you've got all the time in the world, that's fine. People are always asking me how long, what kind of budget or time should I have? And – not to be snide – I say, "It's a lifetime." But then I get practical with them and say what kind of time do you have to do episodes of 66.

Okay, so eastern 66, a lot of urban misses, I really think. Los Angeles – god, those alignments coming out, like Pasadena down through Hollywood, how many people really do that? Or how many people really even go down Foothill Boulevard? Go to Monrovia? I just think a lot of that is missed. I think there's a bit of detouring generally there, and some good misses in the Mojave. Are you familiar with – what's his name – at Goffs?

DAVID DUNAWAY: Dennis Casebier.

MICHAEL WALLIS: Yes. Kind of an odd guy.

DAVID DUNAWAY: He's one of the other interviews I'm doing.

MICHAEL WALLIS: I don't think he's getting flippant with people. You really have to want to go there. This isn't Ted Drewes, he's not going to give you a cup of custard there. So there are

those type of places that are missed – they're just missed by the general traveler. Not you or me, going out, doing a project or something: Mr. and Mrs. America, or a couple from France, or something.

This is true of any subject. Because of what we have all done, all this plethora of books, which I think is terrific, the more the merrier, everybody's got a different take through it – but there's a lot of redundancy. And sort of a stereotype.

You've got to have an Angel Delgadillo; you've got to have the late Lillian Redman; and I think you know me well enough, I adore these people, I loved Lillian Redman, but. There are so many other interesting people out there, as you well know from your oral history program, and some of the simplest people – or seemingly simplest, and again, I don't mean that as a pejorative word – are some of the best.

So I think there's a need to do exactly what you're doing, and that's break new ground, and plow again, and bring up with the plow blade more people and more places. Because I think there are a lot of little individual places that are being missed. People tend to do Route 66 kind of like "Cliff's Notes," and you've got to be able to sit down with that whole big volume and really enjoy it, you know? It's not the internet. And that's the whole point. How much time do you have? That's what it's all about. That's the message of our Pixar movie, Cars: Time is valuable. You don't miss Nascar. Speed isn't everything. It's great that you're a race car – but enjoy the other moments. Smell the roses.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Since we're talking about people, maybe you could – and I know this will be a hard question to answer – pick five to a dozen people that you feel have not been interviewed that we should really go out of our way to speak with. Not the Angel Delgadillos of the road.

MICHAEL WALLIS: Oh, I know what you're saying. The Angels that have been missed. I'm just thinking off the top of my head.

I'll give you an example. I came across a man who I'm afraid now might be dead. When I got to him, he was at Elk City in a nursing home. His wife was dead. Paul Heeler, I think it is. He was a young farmer in Western Oklahoma and his land came up by Route 66. He had married his sweetheart—they came out and settled there, a real pioneer story. Paul was farming this land in the '20s and '30s and he finally became a home builder, but when they were a young married couple they watched in the early '30s the paving of Route 66. He had wonderful stories about that. He would talk about the men being out there and the mule teams and the graters and men naked from the waist up with their muscles glistening—he wasn't poetic, but you got these images. How, little by little, they are paving this road, and he said it was the most exciting thing in their life.

Everyday he'd come home and bathe and then he'd get his young wife and they'd get their wind-up Victrola and they'd get their friends and they'd all drive down to where the road ends in an intersection. And they would wind their Victrolas and they would dance on the road. And they'd dance all the way to Texas, eventually, on Route 66.

For me, those are the kind of stories that I just treasure—things right out of the heart. If I sat here long enough I could probably think of 100 Paul Heelers that have been missed.

To give you a more specific example: Wanda Queenan. First of all, just her name merits her being talked to. When I first met her, she was still at the Trading Post. If you get with her

long enough she has some amazing stories about that aspect of the road, dealing directly with the Indians and the tourists. She is very good.

There are people back in Missouri and Illinois who tend to get overlooked. There are farmers, there are old retired waitresses who have never been reached. The trouble is we're playing this time game here. This is true in anything, you're trying to get to people before they pass away. So many of them have!

At the Midpoint Café in Adrian, Texas, one day I met a old, old man—withered, bowlegged – he had a saddle face. He had forever been a pilot along Route 66, a crop duster. He had great stories, this airborne guy on Route 66. I met an old State Trooper in Arcadia, Oklahoma—I know he's dead. Those people are tucked away like little nuggets. Someone needs to get to those who've not been formally interviewed.

At the festival in San Bernardino I met this woman, I can't remember her name, who was Tom Joad's little sister in *Grapes of Wrath* [Shirley Mills]. She now lives on Route 66 in Monrovia. She is a total delight, her stories of the filming of the movie and how seriously they took it. John Ford instilled in them, that this is a great honor we have portraying these people, and they felt a duty. She remembers how they had to be surreptitious because there was so much controversy in Steinbeck's novel. Really rich stuff. Do you know Jim Conkle? Conkle knows her extremely well. She is very vital and eager, a total delight. I think that's a very valuable lead. She and [Darryl] Hickman are the last surviving members from that cast. Hickman was one of the little boys in the movie.

DAVID DUNAWAY: How about here in Oklahoma?

MICHAEL WALLIS: I don't think that many people have taken, whatever you want to call it, the sidewalk highway, the scotch highway, the ribbon road, those one-lane alignments coming out of Vinita down towards Afton. I think that's overlooked a lot. I make it a point to take people down there. It's such an unusual situation.

A lot of people, I think, overlook the Museum in Baxter Springs. It's a very good museum. I've had people over there from the Smithsonian and all over the place and they're blown away by the museum. We can get back to museums.

I think a lot of the mining history has been overlooked in the whole tri-state area. A lot of the Native American history over there with the Neosho tribe has not been panned to its fullest.

Oddly enough, I don't think enough people when they get to Claremore take the time to go up a short distance to the Will Rogers Memorial. What a loss that is, because it's a wonderful place. Will Rogers was a very credible, important part of that whole tapestry. Not only buried there, they have wonderful archival material. This is the Will Rogers Highway, a very important place. People tend not to use the road as a means of getting there to other places.

I always tell people, it's a Route 66 attraction if it's near Route 66 too. People used Route 66 to go to the Grand Canyon, to Las Vegas, to the Hoover Dam. You don't want to get too far out, but it's ok to get off the road a little bit; you don't have to stay right on it. You can eat at a café or stay or go visit or talk, do this or that off the road when you're going through.

Tulsa has generally – and I chastised it in The Mother Road – like a lot of cities, not until as of late appreciated Route 66. Now that's changing. There are some wonderful things to find along the old and new street alignments in Tulsa and a lot of that is being changed now. The road between Tulsa and Oklahoma City is pretty well traveled and not much is missed.

In all these instances, whether you're in Illinois or Oklahoma, it's always worthwhile to keep periodically going out because lo and behold something will dissolve, or close, or someone will die: but by God, there's always something new popping up.

An example of that: as you approach Stroud, Oklahoma and you're getting ready to lick your lips at the Rock Café, on the left-hand side of the road going up this incline is a place where people started, and this has happened in other places in the country, putting a pair of shoes in a tree. This tree is filled with shoes: the Shoe Tree. Pretty soon another little Chinese elm becomes a side-bar and it's filled with baby booties. Now about a year ago, all of a sudden, somebody put up a tin building and they call it the Shoe Tree Trading Post. They sell snuff and three-two beer. It's a check-in place for the hunters and you can buy Ritz crackers and sardines. That's how things develop along the road. Somebody put a pair of shoes in the tree and now we have somebody making a living off that idea. Who knows where that might go, it might dissolve. A lot of those get missed on the road.

When people travel through this part of the country, they tend to the Interstate much to their advantage here and they follow the round state Route 66 signs and they just bypass Tulsa. They come right down 44, cross the Arkansas River and go down, get on the turnpike, go down New Sapulpa road and take 66 from there. They miss the whole urban experience in Tulsa by going in that back way, which was the original way to go. All of that is missed. They miss this inventory of art deco architecture in Tulsa.

DAVID DUNAWAY: We've lost Lucille Hammond, of course. Are there any other signal characters in Oklahoma that we really ought to be talking with?

MICHAEL WALLIS: Before they die? Well, there are all kinds of characters. I thought of two that are relatively young characters. I've helped create a lot of characters.

Harley and Annabelle Russell live in Erick, Oklahoma very close to the intersection of Sheb Wooley Boulevard and Roger Miller Boulevard. They have now created the Roger Miller Museum there, and it's going really well. Roger is important because of "King of the Road." Sheb Wooley gave us "One Eyed, One Armed, Flying Purple People Eater." They were their two native sons.

As a side note: When my book came out in 1990, at my first signing in Santa Fe, Roger Miller was the first guy in line with an arm full of books because he just loved Route 66.

So we're back in his home town, and I'm out with the Pixar crew when we first started developing the movie *Cars*. I have John Lassater, the creative head, and all these writers and directors. We pull in and I said, "Let's go down here. I want to investigate this building." A fading sign caught my eye that said "City Meat Market." Then a new sign that said "Old Curiosity Shop." There were two old screen doors with red advertisement on it. I said, "Let's go in here. This smells good to me." I pushed open the door in this big room that had been a store for years, and it was filled with all kinds of interesting things.

In the back is this man with reddish hair and a beard and sparkling blue eyes: Harley Russell. He was holding his guitar and he looked up at me and said, "Michael Wallis, I have been waiting my whole life for you to walk in the door." That was the beginning and we stayed there for two hours and he just started singing these songs to us.

Then we met Annabelle, who he described to us as this sexual maniac. I meet this lovely ethereal woman who looks like she came out of a Maxwell Parish painting. She had this

beautiful lyrical voice. I started talking about Erick, and now tour buses, especially the English, stop there.

They are very self-effacing – they’re very clever: “You’ll hate our music.” They’re troubadours. He won’t sell anything from the store except her wonderful little artwork and they entertain and they’re just great. I just treasure people like that because he was an old rock ‘n roller and he came home. He had Roger Miller’s guitars, and they would wear their red-neck tuxedos which are red white overalls, barefoot. Those are wonderful people. That’s an element that is not just “Paul the road dancer” or “the old guy or gal that can give you some historical references.” This is a whole kind of cultural resource.

DAVID DUNAWAY: It’s Route 66 performed. I’m fascinated by that story and will look them up. But I’m still kind of nosing around for Route 66 remembered.

MICHAEL WALLIS: I tend to think of older people, that’s the trouble. The Wheelers that have Frankoma Pottery. It is still a highly-sought collectible. There are cafes I can remember as a kid where you could go in, and it was really high cotton to be served on this pottery. People still collect that pottery. It’s down on that old alignment [in Sapulpa] on the left. I don’t think that family has been fully plumbed at all. I think that is an important aspect of the road.

There are other examples in and out of Oklahoma of the generational families: the Turillis up in Meramec Caverns. Turillis are a good examples of that. Back to the Delgadillos. Angel Delgadillo – one of his sweet daughters, a very bright young woman, has come in and she’s assuming that barbershop. Angel’s still a big part of it. Juan Delgadillo died. His sons have come in. They’re also clowns. Nobody can be Juan Delgadillo, no one can be Angel Delgadillo – but no one can be David Dunaway or Michael Wallis or Joe Schmo.

So I don’t think they’re trying to assume that identity, but they’re carrying on that tradition. And that’s important. It’s too bad Lucille died. Did you know Lucille? She was – you’ll never hear this from her friends, but she was a mean gal. God, she was a tough cookie. Don’t let anybody fool you – she was a bootlegger. That’s how she made her money. But, God bless her, she was a survivor.

Unfortunately, her daughter chose not to carry the business on, but now that’s being resurrected other ways. So, I think we have other examples of that here, generational places that have been forgotten – or not, again, to use that word, plumbed to its fullest. Even though they might be in their twenties or thirties, they have within them, and physically, an archive of information and oral history and tradition that they can get out there.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Good. I’ll think about that some more. I wish there were some like the Bonos, along Foothill Boulevard, people of that sort. Do you know anyone who knows, that can remember Route 66, in the urban LA Basin for example?

MICHAEL WALLIS: Some people. I would refer you, for sure, to Conkle, and to Glenn Duncan. Do you know Glenn Duncan? Oh, you must meet Glenn Duncan. He’s out there. Conkle’ll get you in touch with him. You know these books that they’re putting out now, this press? They’re sort of see-through color, it’s mostly photos, historical, of a guide to Albuquerque. Do you know of any? I don’t have any right around here. They do them in all the cities and states and places. Duncan just published one, a complete guide to 66 in California, and he’s a preservationist, and they work together, mostly on that wonderful Aztec Hotel, which is

really an amazing place. Glenn Duncan of Pasadena, and Jim Conkle will be able to give you specific people that can do exactly that.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Excellent. I actually held a workshop to train his citizen-historians, as I call them.

MICHAEL WALLIS: Was this in Victorville?

DAVID DUNAWAY: Actually, at the Aztec.

MICHAEL WALLIS: Oh. Did you meet the owner?

DAVID DUNAWAY: Yes.

MICHAEL WALLIS: And that work they're uncovering? Oh my god!

DAVID DUNAWAY: It is very impressive.

MICHAEL WALLIS: Well, the elderly actress [Shirley Mills] doesn't live too far from there, just a few blocks away.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Okay, good. The next category that we're looking at are institutions. You mentioned archives. If you were to start out now, and try and write another book on 66, more directly linearly historical, for example, where would you go for your sources? What libraries and institutions, historical societies?

MICHAEL WALLIS: Well, I would go to any number of state historical associations. I mentioned to you on the phone the other day, the Oklahoma Historical Association, Oklahoma City. They've just unveiled this new history center and that interpretation is good, quite good. That's a good resource for information. Some of it's obvious, like the incarnation of 66 in the '30s, but all aspects of the road. Missouri Historical Society I think is good. I'm thinking just of Route 66 stuff.

I'm not too sure about Illinois, nor Kansas. Not Texas. I'm thinking now of New Mexico, something specifically on Route 66, you could probably find some Santa Fe. I have a lot of respect for the Northern Arizona University. I can find specific material in Saint Louis at the historical society, which is in the last five years moving closer to diversity. I know they have material about the road in that part of the country, the building of the Chain of Rocks Bridge, and so forth. I don't know that much about the museum resources in Springfield, Illinois. The Greene County Museum down in Springfield, Missouri, I think is pretty good.

The Tulsa Historical Society here – Clayton Baum is the director – they'd like to get more involved in 66, but what we have here, and thankfully they've taken possession of, is a very important resource called the Beryl Ford Collection. It's a man's name, a private citizen who amassed the greatest collection of photography in this part of the country. He has a whole section just called "auto wrecks on Route 66."

DAVID DUNAWAY: Where is this now housed?

MICHAEL WALLIS: It's being archived now with the Tulsa Historical Society. It was about to disappear. He had warehouses just full of stuff; he doesn't even know what he had. And it was interesting. Bob Blackburn, whom I like very much, was sent to get it and bring it down to Oklahoma City, and then the Tulsa World, the newspaper, and the Downtown Rotary Club rallied, and they pulled together this sum of money, and they bought it because they want to keep it here. So, that's being developed right now, and the Beryl Ford photo collection is quite good. It's photos of oil fields, and architecture, and ranching, and so forth, but there are some specific Route 66 pictures in there.

I'm thinking on different levels here. As you know, in every state, there's at least one, sometimes two, like in Kansas, Route 66 Associations. And then they've helped form these – and they go by different names – Halls of Fame, or Route 66 museums. Now there's that newest museum that's developed up in Illinois, and there are some smaller town museums also scattered in there which are very good. I still haven't seen, by the way, the new Lincoln museum that's adjacent to the museum in Springfield. So you've got a mix of specific Route 66 museums all along the road that are either run by the association or the state, as is the case in Oklahoma with the Lincoln, and their rival down the road in Elk City, which calls itself the National – you know, that whole thing.

I'm thinking of different categories. Then you have just county museums, and I know you've done some of these, like the Lincoln County Museum in Chandler, Oklahoma, which I think has some material in there – I don't even know what's all in there – but I know there's a lot of material that's very good. There's a little smattering of specific material inside the Round Barn, tucked away, that old Butch has.

Old Butch is a guy that runs around barns. He's an interesting character, by the way. He'd be worth an interview. He grew up there. He was an orphan boy left on the road, and the gas station guy next door to the barn and his wife raised Butch as their son. He was afraid of the barn, because everybody in town told him the devil lived there, and there were witches, and he could hear the branches scraping on the roof, and now he's so proud 'cause he runs the barn. Really great highway stuff.

There's a whole smattering of these county museums and little city museums, some of which have Route 66 material. The Trews, at the Devil's Rope Museum. The California museum out in Victorville, and so forth. So you have the state historical societies, and I've pretty much told you what I think of this; you have different city museums; historical societies; and then you have the Route 66 Associations and their material. David Knudson on National Federation – I don't think they have a vast amount of material. Or do you know?

DAVID DUNAWAY: I've visited him, and he's never mentioned it. He seems more organizationally oriented.

MICHAEL WALLIS: Organizationally oriented is right. I don't even know what's fully down at UNM.

DAVID DUNAWAY: The Special Collections Division has a lot of material, not very well organized, not highly prioritized. But there's a new head and he's very interested in assembling that material. Or what about Chicago? I've written the Chicago Historical Society and they wrote back and said, "We don't have anything on Route 66," and I don't believe them.

MICHAEL WALLIS: Yeah. I don't know if I do either. I once gave a big address up at the Newberry Library – did you write them?

DAVID DUNAWAY: I haven't heard from them.

MICHAEL WALLIS: Seemed to me they have a fair amount of material. That was years ago, I gave a talk. Yeah, I don't know if I'd believe them either, but I can't give you any concrete contradictions. I don't know.

DAVID DUNAWAY: I know the Springfield resources, but are there any others you could point to in Illinois?

MICHAEL WALLIS: Illinois. Well, I assume you know a lot of the individual Route 66 people in Illinois, or know of them, but do you know the Wiesses? Not to deflect your question, but I guess I would refer you to John and Lenore Weiss, for sure. They seem to be quite gung-ho, seem to be, I know they are. We've been impressed with the Illinois Association. A lot of the associations seem to care more about "fun runs," and that's all good and fine and dandy, but they've really done some great preservation up in Illinois. Also, I think the signage is the best of the states, how they've marked the road.

There are just little pockets of commercial archeology along the way, like this old guy (this horrible old racist) Bill Shea in Springfield, old petroleum material. You know, there are places like that along the way. I don't know of any other than the state association. But then, there are some individuals – for instance, Shellee Graham, in Saint Louis, has a tremendous amount of material, because she focused on the Coral Court, and other material. Very specific things like that. And then they've recreated those Coral Court units at the Museum of Transportation.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Lovely. Maybe that's what we ought to go to next, the specific individuals and the collectors and what kind of collections they have. Let's do it geographically, starting up with that Chicago area. You've mentioned the Wiesses of Frankfurt. Let's just take it all the way out to California.

MICHAEL WALLIS: Jeff Meyer has a lot of the material. A lot of these people are just amateur, whatever you want to call them, but Jeff Meyer is always going to places. I remember when he found a really nice boxed Route 66 game.

Then you have this distinction of kitsch. Reproduction and authentic material. An authentic shield and a reproduction shield, then material that's collected that just pertains to automobiles, not exactly Route 66 but tied to petroleum products, signage, pumps, cans. So you have collectors like that. Almost anyone in that association, we have John and Lenore Weiss. John will know where all the other individual collectors are, but Jeff Meyer is great up there.

Sue Waldmire, the ex-wife of Buzz Waldmire, who is the brother of Bob Waldmire. They have all that wonderful stuff. That's a great story—it's very specific. The story really starts on Route 66 in Amarillo in WWII. Some of the businesses have very specific memorabilia and material to that business, how it developed.

Ernie Edwards is another one who has a lot of material. I don't know what's happened to anything that Tom Teague might have had. His widow is soon to remarry; I don't know the whole story on that, and I don't know what all Tom had. Do you know anything about his resources?

DAVID DUNAWAY: I have interviews that I have been transferring. He gave me those before he died, and I have been going through them consistently, and he had a set of those magazines that he edited which were superb and lots of valuable clues and hints in there. He had a great deal of material, and I don't know what's happened to it. I hope it's gone to the historical society that he directed.

MICHAEL WALLIS: I hope so too. I have no reason to believe it hasn't. Again in Missouri, there's an organization called Friends of the Mother Road. A young woman here in Tulsa named Emily Priddy, she and her husband work for the *Tulsa World*: she's a reporter. They moved here about a year ago from Illinois, they're totally into Route 66. She's trying to revive neon traditions, she's quite gung-ho. She'll drive all night long to get to a council meeting in Albuquerque to speak up, and then drive back all night to go to work. She's got that great energy. She's in her late 20s and very bright. I think you should probably talk to her. She has a connection to that group, and they were doing a lot of preservation projects in Missouri and Illinois and all over. I'm sure I can get you her phone number.

Again, Missouri: Ted and Dotty Drewes I'm sure have a lot of deep archival material going back to Ted's father on that specific business. The museum in Lebanon I haven't seen fully functional, but it's supposed to be quite good. Always a good contact and a worthwhile oral history is Ramona Lieman, who is the owner of the Monger Moss Motel in Lebanon. Lebanon is really picking up on this whole road culture thing.

There's a fellow in Springfield who you probably know, Skip Curtis.

DAVID DUNAWAY: I've already interviewed him. How about the St. Louis area? Is there anyone there who really knows the road or has a private collection?

MICHAEL WALLIS: Shellee Graham. She can tell you about a man who had the most amazing collection of Coral Court materials I have ever seen. He had furniture, he had all kinds of thing. I have a few things. I have glass bricks and bathroom tiles and linen. This guy had everything. He consumed his home. He lived with his mother and he collected tree frogs. He was really very odd. He loved the Coral Court. I think this fella and his mother died. Shellee would know about a lot of that.

Shellee can be overly self-effacing and humble. She is a very sweet woman and a pretty good photographer. She would be a good St. Louis resource. She and Jim Ross are affiliated romantically.

This is your good St. Louis resource: Esley Hamilton, an architectural historian with the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation. That would be in Clayton, Missouri, which is the county seat of St. Louis County. Esley was very helpful to me when I was doing some work there in St. Louis. Shellee Graham knows him if you can't track him down.

There's a pretty interesting interpretation in the museum out at Times Beach, Missouri, at the Route 66 State Park, under the Department of Natural Resources out of Jeff[erson] City, Missouri. That's a pretty good little place there in covering Missouri.

Robert Gehl: he lives in an area in far west St. Louis County called Wildwood. Very close to that original alignment: Manchester Road on Route 66. Gehl is in business, in sales, and has two kids and a wife. He is very well connected to Route 66 and he's a fastidious guy too. He might have a lot of collected material but he's also a wealth of knowledge of resources. He's very diligent. He's an officer in the Missouri Route 66 association.

Do you know Tommy Pike? He's a sweet guy. They would be able to connect you to Robert Gehl. He's a good source. He grew up in St. Louis as I did. He sent me for Christmas an authenticated piece of the wooden floor of the St. Louis Cardinal dugout at Bush Stadium which they just tore down to build a new stadium. He's very thoughtful. I think between Robert Gehl, Esley Hamilton, and Shellee Graham, they are three really good St. Louis resources.

As you're approaching Rolla, Missouri, headed down state just past St. James, the original route is a frontage road. There was a place there, and I don't know if he's still open, called Route 66 Motors had a lot of material there. It's kind of like Shay's gas station in Illinois. It might be worthwhile to check it out. I can't remember his name.

Have you ever examined or talked to any of the colleges or universities in St. Louis?

DAVID DUNAWAY: In Springfield, I know there is a small collection at something called Evangeline University and I'm working with David Richards with the Special Collections to gather more information there.

MICHAEL WALLIS: In that area you have got those guys like Tommy Pike and Glenda and Skip Curtis. I think I've covered Missouri. Of course there's a museum in Galena. I can't think of any one specific other than the one in Galena that would be much help to you as a resource.

Riverton, I'm sure you've been to the old Riverton Store there. Dean Walker has a museum in Baxter. Out of that museum are a lot of homemade historians. Right down the road is the whole Mickey Mantle connection. His dad was a miner and worked in those mines, and there has been some attempt to preserve that old Mantle shotgun house there in Commerce. That's a real part of that story. He signed with the Yankees behind that backstop there in St. Louis.

Miami, Oklahoma, has a pretty good public library. And there's a small college there. The theatre is the big thing there, the Coleman.

Charles Banks Wilson is one of the prominent artists to come out of that country. He painted all of his great portraits of all of these great people, like Will Rogers, and was a wonderful historian. So many people he painted, and all those portraits hang in the Capital in Oklahoma City. He owns to this day the small building on the corner right across from the Coleman where I believe Mr. John Steinbeck visited him and looked out on the road from there. He painted there. He's someone who's not been used at all about Route 66. Great artist, still living over in the Battenville, Arkansas area. He has a daughter, still drives. I was on a panel with him at Oklahoma State University at Tulsa for a big poets and writers conference with Angie Dubose and some other people.

There's a woman who I just saw this weekend at a reception who is resurrecting with her ex-husband an old gas station garage in Afton, Oklahoma right down from the old Buffalo Ranch. Her name is Laurel Cane. She's also a good friend of the young woman, Emily Priddy. Laurel lives in Tulsa, but she goes often up to that business in Afton where she's created a hospitality center. Her ex-husband has a vintage car collection. He welcomes people in there. She sells a few things but doesn't do it for commercial enterprise; she's just really into the road.

She has possibly one of the best Route 66 postcard collections I know of. That is here at Tulsa and last year she had a very good show of these cards at the University of Tulsa through the head of the art department. She's incredibly obese and I fear for her. She has a difficult time because of that. She is very respected.

In Chelsea, Oklahoma, are some remnants and descendants of Will Rogers, his cousins. Chelsea is the town Will Rogers used to go to a lot because his sister lived there. Different towns claim this, but I believe it was Chelsea where he came into the railroad station one night to send a telegram and the young telegrapher was strumming the guitar and singing and he said, "You got some pipes on you, you ought to get to Hollywood."

The young man was Gene Autry.

Chelsea is part of the Rogers County history. It's named after Will's father. Will was part Cherokee. One cousin of his who is still alive is in the Rodeo Hall of Fame; probably the best rodeo announcer of all time and also a state senator. That name will come to me. The people there would be worth visiting with.

Foyil, Oklahoma, was the hometown of Andy Payne. It's off the road but it's considered a Route 66 attraction. Ed Galloway is a wonderful story that has not been fully plumbed. This old artist who made beautiful violins and beautiful furniture. He came from Sand Springs, Oklahoma, right down the river here. He did the Totem Pole Park and it has been beautifully restored.

In Foyil, Andy Payne's widow still lives, and Jim Ross knows her, because Jim and some people wrote about her – there's a little book about the Bunion Derby that Jim helped with. She would be worthwhile – and should be interviewed. I can't tell you her given name.

I almost have that Chelsea name. In Claremore, which of course is again like Commerce, Mickey Mantle Boulevard, and Will Rogers Boulevard, and all this and that – and you have Western Oklahoma and Roger Miller and all this – it's interesting how they do that – but in Claremore, dominated by the name Rogers, of course, you have the Will Rogers Memorial.

Have you ever been there? And met Joe Carter, and his lovely wife who's now the official director, Michelle. They have some curators there. They have a lot of great material and film and other material, and I just find it a charming place. Near it is Rogers State College: it was a military college, and there are descriptions of those cadets coming out for the Bunion Derby and so forth. I'm not sure what kind of material they would have in their library or archives or whatever, but Rogers State College is physically adjacent to the Will Rogers Memorial.

Also, there's material around there, even via the public library. I'm now part of the National Literary Landmarks Program – it's a program where they put up a standardized beautiful bronzed plaque, which they sell through the Library of Congress, and Friends of the Libraries of the USA and in each of the states. In Oklahoma, I'm heading this up with some other folks. We choose a place, like Hemingway's home in Key West, or the Algonquin Hotel. Here, we started this some years ago, with the first inductees Wayne Guthrie and Angie Debeau. We just did John Barryman, the novelist and poet, who comes from McAllister.

We're doing Sequoyah for the centennial this year, 2006; for the centennial we're doing Will Rogers. One of their landmarks was Lynn Riggs, who kind of fits into the whole Route 66 thing – a playwright – wrote one of his plays called "Green Grow the Lilacs," which Rogers and Hammerstein in 1943 made into Oklahoma, the big Broadway hit. Riggs was a native son of Rogers County, from Claremore, and he also spent a lot of time in Santa Fe. He started as Witter Bynner's secretary, and I think they were lovers, but he spent a lot of time in Santa Fe, and

Claremore, and New York. The Lynn Riggs award is in the Claremore Public Library, and they have a lot of material.

The Rogers County Historical Society is a pretty good historical society too. There's also a kind of funny museum there, called the JM Davis Gun Museum, right on Route 66. I don't have to tell you what the museum's all about – it's about weaponry – but they have a lot of weapons that belonged to infamous – or famous – people.

I do a lot of stuff with the History channel, and last year we did one of the history detective shows based on a gun that was alleged to be Pretty Boy Floyd's – and we used the Davis Gun Museum as a source for checking this thing out. So some of that – right on the road – some of the outlaw, cowboy-and-Indian history, comes out of the Davis Gun Museum. (They've been having problems of late with some sort of misappropriation of funds.)

Claremore is a pretty big town, and all the places I've mentioned are, I think, very important there.

Catoosa. The Blue Whale. That family was still around. Thelma Davis died about three years ago. She was given the Blue Whale by her husband. Her children are around in that area, and that's such an iconic manmade place on the road. Right across the road from the Blue Whale is the building that was Chief Wolf Robe's trading post. Chief Wolf Robe was an Acoma Indian who's very famous on Route 66, and he maintained a business on Eleventh Street in Tulsa, which is pictured in the original Oklahoma chapter in my book, called the Trading Post.

It was also a US post office, and later became known as the Browsersy, and unfortunately, the University of Tulsa has now made it into a grassy lot. Chief Wolf Robe – and I discuss him in my book – this ring is his last piece of turquoise. This bear claw is his design. This was done by an apprentice of his. It is now a garage, but the trading post was a wonderful place. So that was a significant spot right there.

Tulsa, as I told you, was pretty well neglected in a lot of the histories, but that's changed. There's a business on Eleventh Street called Lyon's Indian Store. It's in the façade that was saved from the art deco warehouse market. When Home Depot, just behind it, bought that property, we petitioned them, and we were able to save that façade. That's an important spot. That was the McDulley(?) Ballpark for many years, where Babe Ruth played exhibition games, Jack Dempsey fought – and was also used as a concentration camp for blacks during the Tulsa race riot in 1921, as other buildings were in Tulsa. That horrible episode. And then it became sort of a jazz club, and then it became known as the Warehouse Market, and now there's a pizza place in half of it and Lyon's Indian Store, one of the oldest businesses in Tulsa, and Larry Lyons is the owner and the fourth, fifth generation.

That's the Browsersy that was at the corner on page 100 of my Route 66 book, where Wolf Robe had his trading post, and now that's torn down, but then he moved out across from the Blue Whale. His full name was Chief Wolf Robe Hunt, a full-blooded Acoma Indian, skilled painter and silversmith. And that's significant in that there's an historical sign there, that was the old Star Mail Route, between St. Louis and California, and that whole area was founded right after the Civil War.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Tell me more, if we could just digress for a moment, about that mail route. It was a US mail route?

MICHAEL WALLIS: It was a US mail route, it was called the Star Mail Route, and I can't tell you too much about it. The Pony Express was very brief, you know, it was only a year or so, and

that went out of Saint Joseph West. By the way, back up in Kansas, Dean Walker – a story that’s always been up there is the spook light, or the ghost light, and Dean would go on and on about it. Didn’t his wife or he come to one of your workshops?

DAVID DUNAWAY: His wife came to one in Springfield that the Pikes organized.

MICHAEL WALLIS: She’d be a good resource too. Here in Tulsa, Leeanne Zeigler is the Executive Director of the Tulsa Foundation for Architecture, and I’m on their board. It’s an organization designed to protect and enhance the built environment and preserve this inventory of buildings here, whether they’re art deco or territorial or whatever. And it’s a very good organization. And we have formed good archives, and there’s grant money – we got a grant from Michael Taylor for the preservation of the Meadow Gold sign, which was a big deal. Leanne’s email is laz@tulsaarchitecture.com. Use my name, if indeed you do contact her. She has great archival information, building plans, and so forth, on buildings both on and off Route 66. There were some wonderful architects here: Barry Burn, Frank Lloyd Wright, Bruce Goff. It was the terra cotta capital of the world.

There’s a good good grassroots and academic historian here, named Guy Logsdon. Dr. Guy Logsdon, but never call him doctor. He’s a downhome fella. He’s about 70 now. And Guy, who was the chief librarian for many years at the University of Tulsa, and then taught history, is sort of an unofficial liaison between Bob Blackburn and the Oklahoma Historical Society and the Tulsa Historical Society. He’s retired from teaching now, and has written many books about music, principally western and cowboy music, and is in my opinion one of the experts – to use that word – on Woody Guthrie. He wrote a wonderful book called The Whorehouse Bells Are Ringing.

He’s also an expert on a man that I met when I was eight years old, named William Boyd, better known as Hopalong Cassidy, who was also discovered on Route 66 in Creek County in a drugstore. Guy Logsdon is a storyteller, and he’s great, and he and I have done a lot of joint presentations together, from the Smithsonian to several universities, and he’ll play Guthrie music, and he’s married to a woman from Okemah. Obviously I don’t have to tell you the Woody Guthrie connections to Oklahoma, to Route 66, to the Dust Bowl, etc.

And so Guy Logsdon, in Tulsa, would be very worthwhile. And he has a lot in his own possession of material to do with the subject – Bob Wills and Western Swing; KVOO Radio, the Voice of Oklahoma, founded by Bill Skelly, the big oilman, in Bristow, OK, on Route 66, and brought to Tulsa by a big transmitter out on Eleventh Street on Route 66; “Take me Back to Tulsa”; and “San Antonio Rose.”

Just FYI – the executive director right now of the Tulsa Historical Society is a man named Clayton Vaughn, a former television anchor who retired from that distinguished career, and now heads up the museum in that new building on Peoria. I don’t think he has a lot of direct material, but I think he might be useful in terms of the Beryl Ford collection and Guy Logsdon and just as a resource.

There’s some further things to develop in Tulsa, but they’re on the horizon, and I don’t think we should talk about them now, because too much pie in the sky. I’m trying to just find concrete things.

There’s a grassroots historian who is quite good, who lives over in West Tulsa. And I think he could be found through the Southwest Tulsa Chamber of Commerce, and his name is David Breed. And David’s quite knowledgeable about Route 66 and about history in general in

this area – and he’s the type of guy who would give tours of the places that you and I like. He would take you to the foundation of the Black/White Café where you can still see the door that says black and then white – the racial doors. He could take you to where Ma Barker and his boys lived, their old house that a lot of people don’t know about. He could take you to where the Ku Klux Klan used to have their meetings. He does those kind of little wonderful places that I love.

Going down the road, I mentioned Frankoma Pottery. Sapulpa is the county seat of Creek County. I can’t give you a specific name, but the Creek County Historical Society probably has a pretty good archive, and some pretty dedicated volunteers and people right in the town of Sapulpa, which is also a Main Street Town.

In Chandler, besides the Lincoln County Museum, later this month they’re going to open up the National Guard Armory, which is right on the arm of the road there, and that’s more and more becoming a big resource center, and I think maybe they’re going to have an office, or a branch, of the Oklahoma Route 66 Association there.

There’s a woman who lives in Clinton who really knows where all the skeletons and all the history, and she’s very knowledgeable, and very bright, and very approachable, and she has good connections to the museum across the street. Her name is Sally Ferrell, and her husband is Don – so you know them? They lost their daughter in the Oklahoma bombing. She’s a very good hustler – so you already know about her.

Jim Ross – have you ever been to Jim’s home near Arcadia?

Oklahoma City. I don’t think the schools of higher learning there – I’m not sure how much they would have, I’m not sure how specific the University of Oklahoma is. Nor, really, is there much over at the main OSU campus in Stillwater. My best specific name I can give you there, and it’s a starting name, but he’s a really good guy, is Bob Blackburn, Director of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

If I skip a town, it’s just because I can’t come up with anyone.

El Reno, at the old fort, that’s starting to breathe again up there. That’s a very interesting place, because it’s way layered back, way pre-66. Of course it was a cavalry post, and it was an active fort through World War II. I don’t know if you’ve ever been to the cemetery – there are young German and Italian soldiers buried there, separated by a rock wall. There are troopers buried there, and Indian scouts, and people who died in smallpox epidemics from the frontier days, and then over this wall you see these young Bavarian corporals and Italian soldiers who died because it was a prisoner-of-war camp in World War II.

There’s a lot that’s been written about those things and published that can really easily be found in the Chronicles of Oklahoma, the historical journal of the Oklahoma Historical Society. That’s a really important place historically. There’s a sort of a ranger type person there, and some docents, and there’s a Native American woman there, and she’s very knowledgeable. It’s very easy to find. Of course, the new federal prison down the way on 66 is where Timothy McVeigh was incarcerated before he was taken off. El Reno’s kind of an interesting town, a big old railroad town. Fort Reno is loaded with material.

Clinton, of course, is the Oklahoma Route 66 Museum, which I helped establish with Bob Blackburn ten years ago. I’ve seen several directors go through there, and the woman who’s there now is a little bit of a Nervous Nelly – but she’s okay, and she’s really well-meaning, and she’s very diligent – Pat Smith, and I’m sure you’re familiar with that museum and know that story.

No, they don't have a lot of resources. And I like that little museum. I also think it happens to be one of the best gift shops on Route 66. Damn, I wish you could've met Gladys Cuthbert.

DAVID DUNAWAY: The Cuthbert papers are at the museum.

MICHAEL WALLIS: Yeah. Gladys was really great. And the Nichols family – the last one's Pop Hicks. That was a real institution. And Doc Mason now has extreme Alzheimer's. The Tradewinds Motel is now gone. A former Oklahoma governor – I'm not sure where you'd track him down, he's here, I think he's in Oklahoma City – a young guy, in his fifties, named David Walter, is still very active in Democratic politics. He came from Canute. Might be interesting to talk to a former governor who grew up on Route 66. So many towns – Stafford, the astronaut came from Elk City, they have a little museum for him there. And you get some Miss Americas, and all this stuff scattered up and down the road.

Elk City, of course, is the old town museum complex there: the so-called National Route 66 Museum, which is kind of a home-made place. I gave them a bunch of my t-shirts, and they made a map of Oklahoma. I think it's a charming place, it's certainly – I mean, in a way, the Oklahoma museum has more of a feel of – but Wanda Queenan is there in Elk City and some of the volunteers and folks.

My resources are pretty well dried up in Sayre. Of course, you know that courthouse appeared in the *Grapes of Wrath*.

DAVID DUNAWAY: I think that area in western Oklahoma is not very well documented for Route 66, and I sense that it's only the Chamber of Commerce sorts that are interested in it. I haven't found any grassroots historians in that part.

MICHAEL WALLIS: Well, in Sayre, speaking of grassroots, there's the Short Grass Museum, but I think it's mostly all ranching history. There's a tremendous model railroad collection, but it's purely something I have people go to because it's fun and the guy loves to talk about trains. I don't know if this is still running, but just down the road from the big intersection you can see the back of the county courthouse. It was the Route 66 boarding house. And I can't even think of the names, but that was pretty interesting, and they have pretty interesting stories about the Canadian River flooding.

But, you're right. I'm not sure who's involved, but the Roger Miller Museum might be a real breakthrough. But I'm not sure how it will broaden out – obviously the mission is to chronicle this guy's life, but who knows what else they might have? Hurley and Annabelle are strictly for yucks, but we've covered them. Erick is also very famous, because they produced the Lassarter Boys – not related to John Lassater at Pixar, although he met them – we were there one day, watching the trials for the championship for the riding lawnmower races. Unbelievable. You can find everything on Route 66, from a giant cross to a Blue Whale to lawnmower races.

Texola is an interesting town, nestled on the border, but I don't think there's anybody there who could be of any help to you.

Shamrock. I'm not sure who is all left there. You know they did the resurrection of the tower and the U-Drop Inn. There was a man there who could be found – he ran a motel just down the road a bit past the big intersection there, and his name is Richard Smith. I'm in some videos with him, and he's terribly hard to understand – he has the worst, or the best, Texan

drawl. He is such a sweetheart, and he is really into the history there, and about the German prisoners-of-war and the Irish and the road and so forth.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Is it the Shamrock Inn?

MICHAEL WALLIS: No, no. It's there on the old alignment going right through Shamrock, about four blocks west of the U-Drop Inn. There's some semblance of the historical society around there, too, but it's been years since I talked to those people. Of course, a little bit farther west, you get into Delbert Trew country. Delbert knows everybody. You should get people in Alanreed.

DAVID DUNAWAY: I interviewed Delbert at some length, and I'm going to interview him tomorrow again.

MICHAEL WALLIS: Two things that I think are really good to talk about with Delbert Trew. One is Alanreed. It's like McLean, it's like some of the other Route 66 towns, even Tucumcari, where you have that Espanada Boulevard effect, but in Alanreed it's a little bit different. It's like there's an alignment back here, and then there's an alignment that feels like the service road. On that service road alignment, and I remember it very well because I saw it in all its glory, was the Regal Reptile. And it's pictured in my book, in the original section, it's the opening shot by Terence Moore, of the Texas chapter.

There's nothing there now. Nothing. I have pieces of this sign. Delbert has a great deal of this material, including that metal serpent, at the Devil's Rope Museum. I would class this, from my memory and inventory, as the definitive snake farm of Route 66. Thank god all those creatures are free. They had raccoons and possums that were dyed pink and blue – unbelievable things. That was very common on the road then. Can you imagine PETA today? They'd be having a field day.

But get Delbert to tell you about the old woman there. They had this concrete there, and it was called the Den of Death, and I have no idea how often every week she went in there, and it was just teeming with bull snakes and racers and all kinds of snakes, and people would pick their kids up and look in there and then she'd dump a box of baby chicks in. You know how many minds have been scarred by this journey?

That is a really interesting place, and I've found there through the years contraband piles of petrified wood – and I liberated quite a bit of it, and I rationalized in my mind that it was all destroyed, gone, and those snake people stole it from Arizona, so I just took it back to the people.

Anyway. The Regal Reptile Ranch. It's a funny little place. Also, Delbert can tell you a lot about his memories of Glenrio and the Ehresmans(?), which I remember very well too. I have a lot of their canceled checks. And I can remember Homer Ehresman(?), he ran that business. They fed Okies. They fed highway workers, paving the road. When I was a Marine hitchhiking in the Sixties, I'd go in there with a seabag in Glenrio at midnight and it'd look like two in the afternoon.

There were trucks and babies nursing and GIs and tourists and cattle trucks and you'd go across the line there, and not only do you get the time difference, you'd get the booze. So those Texans would come over there to get a hit. But Delbert would go in there and get pie from Mrs. Ehresman, and I think he and his dad would split a pie every time they'd go in there. He has some charming stories about Glenrio, that's really good stuff.

The Julianosk(?) title thing was so good; I've got into that more now, with my research, because I spent a little bit of time up at Old Tascosa, up there where the Boys Ranch is now. That's a good little sidebar trip off Route 66 up there.

Amarillo. You're familiar with the old business route there – Amarillo Boulevard and Sixth Street and the businesses and the whole Big Texan history and Stanley Marsh III. Has anybody interviewed him?

DAVID DUNAWAY: I did an interview – of a sort – with him.

MICHAEL WALLIS: I understand, I think. He is a piece of work. He had a little party for Suzanne and me when our book came out, out at Toad Hall, his ranch – and there were literally, in this wonderful ranch house, there were peacocks and guinea fowl running in and out, and there were cowboys and cowgirls running around with lassos, and a great deal of strong drink and so forth. It was mayhem, and he said, "This would be the ideal place. Why don't you come here and I'll set you up and you can write here." And I said, "I can't think of a worse place in the world." He's a very interesting guy. The Chamber of Commerce woman down in Vega.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Joanne Hartwell?

MICHAEL WALLIS: No. Isn't Joanne gone?

DAVID DUNAWAY: I heard she moved away and then moved back.

MICHAEL WALLIS: She's good. But there's a little more officious type woman who's very active in Route 66 circles and would be very helpful. I can't think of her name. But she was connected with the Chamber there, and the court, at the county seat.

Joanne is a delightful woman who made that great ugly crust pie which is very famous at the Midpoint Café. And Fran Houser can help find those old cowboys and maybe the dust – what did we call them? Crop duster! All those cafes have the Liars Table. Pop Hicks had the greatest Liars Table. Talk about oral history. You could go in there and fill up tape recorder after tape recorder right there. Oh god, it was just amazing. But the Midpoint Café is very interesting, and Fran's kind of an old-time proprietress of the road.

Glenrio. I told you about Delbert there. I like Glenrio, very much. San Jon – the couple old-timers I knew there are gone, dead. Tucumcari, you know pretty well. They have a more active chamber there now, and the Quay County Historical Society, and I'm sure you've met or are aware of some of the more famous proprietors there, like Mike Callens of Teepee Curios and the Bakkes, the sweet couple who've been back and forth and are now back running the Blue Swallow. They're good people.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Do you know if anyone in that part of the world has a collection of anything?

MICHAEL WALLIS: In eastern New Mexico? Not off hand. I would refer you to Mike Callens.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Yes, I've interviewed him.

MICHAEL WALLIS: Mike can be – not gruff, but he’s sort of a “the glass is half-empty” type of guy. But that’s just his way. I haven’t asked them or the Chamber people about collections. What is that fellow’s name? Hispanic, at Santa Rosa, who’s associated with the New Mexico Route 66 Association – he’s the president now, of the Association. Kind of a grassroots historian type, but I can’t think of his name.

Joseph Campos, who is second generation of Joseph’s Restaurant, which I don’t care for very much, but it’s okay. He’s a sweet guy – very politician. He’s the mayor and the state rep of the Campos family. He would be very helpful as far as an official type in Santa Rosa. And then this fellow who’s now the president of the New Mexico Association – he’s pretty low key. Down near the courthouse, before you get to the Pecos River, and there’s the Great Comet Drive-In over there, is an old stone building that was a bank building, and it was robbed – in fact, there’s some pockmarks from the bullets – and it’s called the Lake Country Café, or Diner, or something, now. It’s very, very good. And the people that run that – it’s really good food, it’s almost elegant.

And then right across the street is a big stone historic building that was a warehouse. Now Joseph, they have plans to do different things. A lot of this is pie in the sky. But Santa Rosa’s a pretty important town. I would try to find people there to talk to about the Blue Hole. I think the Blue Hole is incredible. I mean, it’s watered conquistadors, Apaches, Okies, hippies – now all the divers come there. I think that’s really interesting, this little oasis.

Ron Chavez was the last big owner of the Club Café, and then just suddenly disappeared – the family. By the way, Joseph Campos has the rights, or bought that. The last I heard about Chavez, and I actually saw him, at a little bookstore or something in Taos, and he was doing tour guide information up there. Ron Chavez – I quote him a lot in my book. He started out as a bootblack outside the door there, and ended up owning the Club Café, and he had that sourdough starter that was fifty years old. I can remember when the Club Café was “enh,” and I can remember it when it really was a great place. That was a big part of the road history there in Santa Rosa. But again, you’ve got that layers of history right there. As you go back, it’s Billy the Kid country right down the road, on the Pecos, Puerta de Luna, it’s all on the old alignment.

Going up, Anton Chico is sort of in a little time warp, and I can’t give you a specific name there. It’s a pretty closed Hispanic place. There’s the old mercantile store there, a very old church, and then you go up and make the swing through the Pecos. That’s an alignment of the road, actually, that goes right by the Pecos ruins and the old Buddy Fogelson [Forked Lightning] Ranch, where Greer Garson lived when she was his wife, right down through Pecos, that’s a part of Route 66 that nobody’s done anything on, that old alignment there, that old original alignment.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Goes from Romeroville up to Pecos?

MICHAEL WALLIS: By the Pecos ruins, and it comes down near Glorietta, up through right into Santa Fe, and it goes by Bobcat Bite, which has the best green chile cheeseburger in the world. Bobcat Bite, right out there on the old Las Vegas Highway, which is a.k.a. Route 66. I have been in the Bobcat Bite, and on one side of me was the Governor, and on the other side of me was a drywaller who drove a hundred miles out of his way to have lunch. That’s a great joint.

But back out there on Pecos, the Lightning Fork Ranch, Buddy Fogelson and Greer Garson. Mike Taylor should know all about that, because Taylor, I think in his past life, was out at Pecos, as an interpreter, but those people are very good out there, at the Pecos ruin. That old

alignment, up through Santa Fe, I don't think has gotten proper attention. And it's so important because that's the blendings with the Santa Fe Trail and Pecos Trail and going down Water Street – Billy the Kid was in jail on Water Street, right before they shipped him down to the La Mesilla.

I mean, I could go on and on with the history, even in Santa Fe. The old alignment goes down Cerillos, and La Bajada, and now we're getting into the Camino Real. There's been some defacing and graffiti and defacing going up on the stone down there by at La Bajada – Michael Taylor's kind of concerned about it. That whole thing has never been properly looked at down there, in Santo Domingo, with the old alignment coming down Fourth Street into Albuquerque.

Bernalillo. I think that's all really ripe. I don't have to tell you about Albuquerque. You get along with David Kammer? He's a sweetheart. David's great. I go out to him in Tijeras Canyon and I learn something new every time. He's a wonderful guy. And you know all those other folks down there. You know – what is his name – the city's architectural historian.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Edgar Bowles.

MICHAEL WALLIS: Yeah, he's a great guy. I can't think of anybody that would be helpful specifically, past there. I'm sure you talked to and done things with Elmo Baca? Elmo Baca is really good people. He's in Santa Fe. When I first met him, he was doing a little preservation work in Gallup. He's the one who really turned around Las Vegas, and now I think he's in the Palace of Governors. I think he might be the head of State Preservation and everything – he's way up there. He is a great resource. He knows everything about New Mexico people. He can put you in the right hands there. You know, I've looked in the state archives there at Santa Fe. A lot of material, but I've never really looked in there for Route 66. Elmo, and the other people I knew, are gone from Gallup.

In Arizona – well, I know a lot of individuals out there, like Joe and Aggie's Café, and stuff like that, but as far as resources – one person for sure, and one of my favorite towns, is Winslow. And in Winslow is the Old Trails Museum. You know that museum? Janice –

DAVID DUNAWAY: Griffith. I've interviewed her.

MICHAEL WALLIS: She's a great font of material and cowboy stuff. Good, you got here. And you've been to the restored La Posada.

DAVID DUNAWAY: I held a history workshop there a few months ago.

MICHAEL WALLIS: Good attendance?

DAVID DUNAWAY: Good attendance.

MICHAEL WALLIS: Oh, great. Isn't that a wonderful place? It's just great. Do you know a lot of people out in Flag?

DAVID DUNAWAY: A few. I've met the Mangans; and Sean Evans, who works at the library, is very good.

MICHAEL WALLIS: Williams? Williams, Arizona?

DAVID DUNAWAY: I don't know contacts there. I've interviewed Doug Wells, the publisher of the newspaper.

MICHAEL WALLIS: Well, there was a business there called Twisters.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Yes, and I've interviewed Dave Paquette.

MICHAEL WALLIS: Dave used to be a deputy sheriff out there, and he used to retrieve bodies from the bottom of the Grand Canyon. Unbelievable stories. Did you talk to the people that own La Posada?

DAVID DUNAWAY: Yes.

MICHAEL WALLIS: Wonderful artists. It's very interesting, I think. Down in Kingman, you talked to the people down there at the Powerhouse? Do you have a relationship with the Taylors, Route 66 Magazine?

DAVID DUNAWAY: A little bit, yes. They've moved to Laughlin.

MICHAEL WALLIS: Laughlin, yes. It's a horrible place. Call Sandy Taylor. I don't know if they'd be much help to you. Paul's awfully cynical. I'm just being honest with you. And then you talked about Casebier, you got him. There was a wonderful little old lady, such a firebrand, in Needles. Maggie McShane. She's dead.

DAVID DUNAWAY: I interviewed her.

MICHAEL WALLIS: Good! I liked her, very much.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Anybody in Kingman, other than – well, the Taylors are gone. Topock?

MICHAEL WALLIS: No, nobody interesting. I could introduce you to some hard-core druggies and dopers, but. Needles, no – Casebier. And I've already told you about the guys that I would rely on – Conkle is not that knowledgeable, but he's a real peppy guy, and sometimes he's a big talker; but if you press him, he can be helpful to you. And for sure, Glenn Duncan, whom I told you about, in Pasadena. He can be very helpful for all of California.

DAVID DUNAWAY: What about that San Bernardino area? Is there anybody there? Victorville?

MICHAEL WALLIS: That's all Conkle country too. I just was inducted in September into that big Cruising Hall of Fame, joining the Beach Boys and everybody else – we had five hundred and fifty thousand people. Now, the San Bernardino Chamber, they're very big into Route 66, so if you get to the right people there. San Bernardino is such a great, real car town. And have you

been to the old Teepee Inn, that kid and his parents have done such a terrific job, they're so proud of it. We talked about the Aztec, and I told you about the old actress.

DAVID DUNAWAY: What about those people in the original Route 66 Association, and not the one that Jim Conkle –

MICHAEL WALLIS: Dan Harlow. He's a schoolteacher. Trying to think of some of their names. They kind of drifted out. Harlow, if you can find him, he might be worth talking to. A lot of those original people – a gal named Joanne, and her husband, originally from St. Louis – they were very big in the California association. They've kind of dropped out, unfortunately. What's that guy's name, that doctor? Calls himself Doctor 66. Does it ring a bell?

DAVID DUNAWAY: It does.

MICHAEL WALLIS: He's very controversial. I saw him in September. Most people tell me that – well, but you've talked to those people in Barstow, at the resurrected Harvey House? It's a good museum. Barstow. It's called the Route 66 Mother Road Museum. It was in the Casa del Desierto, which was an early Harvey House, 1911, and it was all rebuilt, so it ties in the road history and the railroad history, and those people are pretty turned on down there and know a lot about the road and have a lot of material about the road in California. Very important place.

Don't forget that in San Bernardino, besides the old McDonalds history and so forth, is the restored California Theater. Will Rogers, I think, gave his last performance there.

I think that's about it, pulling it out of my head.

DAVID DUNAWAY: What about the LA Basin? Who do you think of there?

MICHAEL WALLIS: I really can't. I definitely would go to Glenn Duncan. Oh, I'll tell you who else. There was a workshop at the Aztec, pre-Route 66 festival in September, and Mike and Kaisa were there, and some BLM people, and people from the Arroyo Seco, first freeway, one-time alignment of 66, National Scenic Byway, that young woman. You could just google that. Mike has that whole guest list. There was a woman there, I'm going to see her later this week, doing a dissertation from MIT on Route 66.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Yes, I've talked to her – Anne.

MICHAEL WALLIS: But there was also the Director of the Neon Museum in LA, and Johnny Meiers was there too.

DAVID DUNAWAY: I can check with them. This actually raises the last question – I mean, we've been here way longer than I anticipated – but, scholars of Route 66.

MICHAEL WALLIS: First and foremost is Arthur Krim [Cambridge]. I've been with him many times. He is quite brilliant, and he is one of the founders of the Society for Commercial Archeology, and as far as scholarly – Arthur Krim is incredibly important. Some other people that I would consider scholars – Dave Kammer. I can't name too many more that are what I

would call scholars. I know a professor at OSU-Stillwater, a professor of architecture, but it's too narrow. As far as really more general with knowledge of 66 – I can't give you too many more.

DAVID DUNAWAY: What about that woman who was Quinta Scott's –

MICHAEL WALLIS: Susan Kelley.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Do you know her?

MICHAEL WALLIS: I don't really know her, no, and I don't even know where she is. Do you know – these aren't scholars, but I wrote the forward for their book, it was for the Museum of New Mexico, and I think it's a lovely book, nice portraits – Jane Bernard and Polly [Brown, American Route 66: Home on the Road, 2003]. Thinking of different schools, and museums. I'll keep thinking about that one as well.