

Oral History Interview

with

BOLLY AND PAULINE BOYKIN

August 20, 1972
Portales, New Mexico

By Jean M. Burroughs

For the Eastern New Mexico University Library
Oral History Project

BURROUGHS: This is Mrs. John Burroughs, I'm visiting in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Bolly Boykin. Today is Sunday, August 20, 1972. Bolly, were your grandparents in Roosevelt County?

BOYKIN : Yes, they came here in '98.

BURROUGHS: In 1898.

BOYKIN : 1889.

BURROUGHS: Who were they?

BOYKIN : My grandfather Turner was a, from, Young County, Texas.

BURROUGHS: What was his first name?

BOYKIN : Sam.

BURROUGHS: Sam Turner?

BOYKIN : Yes, and my grandfather Boykin came from, where is that place called. . .

BURROUGHS: From Texas, though? Both of them came. . .

BOYKIN : They came from Texas, yes.

BURROUGHS: In 1889? Where did they come in Roosevelt County?

BOYKIN : Portales. Oh, they settled out here at Dora, you know, just east of Dora, where that old lake is. And that big tree back there, that's where my granddaddy's homestead was. My father's homestead was in the . . . place out here.

BURROUGHS: Oh.

BOYKIN : See, Adron, my uncle out there, lives in the old Seth Morrison place.

BURROUGHS: Where is that located? The Seth Morrison place.

BOYKIN : It's out on, towards the golf course on the left hand side. . . right hand side of the road going out, in that big two story house, with a red roof.

BURROUGHS: Now where did the grandfather, I mean the other side of the family homestead? You said they both came.

BOYKIN : Yes, they, my grandfather Boykin homesteaded out there at Dora.

BURROUGHS: The same place.

BOYKIN : Yes, where that lake was. When it would rain and that lake would fill up. . .

BURROUGHS: Yes, and it does still.

BOYKIN : And they drilled a hand dug well there. And I see it's got a windmill on it now, but they used to have to draw the water.

BURROUGHS: Did they use just a rope and pulley to draw the water up?

BOYKIN : Yes.

BURROUGHS: How many acres did they claim?

BOYKIN : 160. But later on, you know, you could file on 640 acres.

BURROUGHS: And they finally got that much land?

BOYKIN : No. I did, though. Pauline and I filed. We lived out a claim over at, south of Buchanan(?) 14 miles.

BURROUGHS: Well, what did your grandfathers do, both of them, other than farm and live out their claim? Did they ever move to town?

BOYKIN : No. Yes, my granddaddy Boykin did, but he ran sheep when he first came out here, and he wasn't very popular with the cattlemen. The boys, they didn't like sheep either, so they went to punching cows. That was quite a deal.

BURROUGHS: Who were your parents? Will you name them, give first names and if possible when they were born?

BOYKIN : William Hinten (?) Boykin.

BURROUGHS: You don't know your mother's name?

BOYKIN : Yes, Sara Elizabeth.

BOYKIN(P): He was trying to think where his daddy was born?

BOYKIN : Trying. . .

BURROUGHS: Sara Elizabeth Turner?

BOYKIN : Yes.

BURROUGHS: You don't remember when they were born?

BOYKIN : They was born in Young County.

BURROUGHS: In Texas?

BOYKIN : My mother's people were, they came out here when Adron and Alfred were the only ones born here.

BURROUGHS: Well, now were your parents with your grandparents when they came in 1898?

BOYKIN : Yes.

BURROUGHS: They were. How old were they, do you suppose?

BOYKIN : Well, my mother and dad. . .

BOYKIN(P): (Indistinct).

BURROUGHS: How old were your parents when they came with your grandparents in 1898? Were they just children or were they teenagers?

BOYKIN : I think that my mother was born in Young County, too. I don't know if Adron and Alfred were born here.

BURROUGHS: After they came, after 1898?

BOYKIN : And there was eleven children. Let's see, my mother and dad and [Lela's] dad. She was 68 when she died.

BOYKIN(P): I mean when she came here. She wasn't born here, but you don't know how old she was.

BURROUGHS: Bolly, then you mean that you had, your people had been in Roosevelt County for three generations?

BOYKIN : I believe that's right.

BURROUGHS: Jim Warnica's people have been here for three generations, and you are the only two that I have found so far that can go back that far. That's real interesting. Tell me something more about your parents. How did they meet and where did they marry?

BOYKIN : I wasn't born then, I don't know.

BURROUGHS: (Laugh) Now, Bolly! Did they tell you after you were born, did they remember to tell you.

BOYKIN : Yes. My daddy used to run a meat market here. . .

BURROUGHS: Where was it located? Was it on the square?

BOYKIN : Well, it was over there where that old John Deere place used to be, there by the news office.

BURROUGHS: Was it his own place of business?

BOYKIN : Yes.

BURROUGHS: What was the name of it?

BOYKIN : Tom and Bill's. He had my aunt's husband in there, his name was Tom Carraway (?).

BURROUGHS: And that was a meat market?

BOYKIN : Yes. There used to be a lot of cattle stealing around this country, you know.

BURROUGHS: I have heard about it some. What do you know?

BOYKIN : (Laugh) I know that they had the women trained to tack open the gate.

BURROUGHS: What do you mean by that?

BOYKIN : I mean they bring the cows in and put them in a pen, and if they see somebody coming, they open the gate.

BURROUGHS: Oh, the wife would run out and open the gate right quick?

BOYKIN(P): They swear they just walked in there accidentally, you know.

BURROUGHS: That's a good. . .

BOYKIN : Old Buttermilk Smith, he worried a lot about it.

BURROUGHS: I've heard about him. I'd like to know a little bit more about him.

- BOYKIN : One time he was riding down the road with a fellow and he argued with everybody, you know, just for meanness, but that fellow got mad and he said, "You get off that horse and I'm going to beat the 'hell' out of you." He said, "They had a better offer than that this morning, the fellow offered to take me on.(?)"
- BURROUGHS: Was Buttermilk Smith a contemporary of your dad?
- BOYKIN : No, he was just a friend.
- BURROUGHS: I know, but he was living about the time that your dad was living?
- BOYKIN : Yes.
- BURROUGHS: After your dad had the meat market, what else did he do?
- BOYKIN : He and my mother separated, and he goes off down in Texas, to Dalhart, to Channing first, and got a job on a big ranch as a foreman.
- BURROUGHS: Did your mother stay here in Portales?
- BOYKIN : Yes.
- BURROUGHS: How many children were there then?
- BOYKIN : There was two girls and a boy, that was me, and one of the girls was young. My dad had some iodine in there to doctor his tooth with and he sat it down by the stove, and she scooted over there and got that and drank it, and it killed her.
- BURROUGHS: Oh.
- BOYKIN : You couldn't do anything, no doctors or nothing.
- BURROUGHS: Were you living out in the country then?
- BOYKIN : We were living out there where Henry Beebes's place was then. I was just about four years old and I can remember that.

BURROUGHS: Every bit of it?

BOYKIN : A little bit.

BURROUGHS: You had two little sisters then? And you were the oldest?

BOYKIN : No, Estelle is older than I am, and I was in between the sisters.

BURROUGHS: And then the baby that died?

BOYKIN : Yes.

BURROUGHS: What did your mother do to make a living?

BOYKIN : She sewed.

BURROUGHS: She still lived out there on the claim, then?

BOYKIN : No, no, she came here in to Joyce Pruitt's and she sewed for them for several years, and then she married Mr. A. J. Goodwin.

BOYKIN(P): She was an alteration lady.

BOYKIN : Alteration lady.

BURROUGHS: What kind of store was that? Many people have mentioned it.

BOYKIN : A grocery store, hardware store and a dry good store. They were separated, of course.

BURROUGHS: But, it was all under one management?

BOYKIN : Yes.

BURROUGHS: Your mother did the alterations?

BOYKIN : Yes, she did. She made us a pretty good living.

BURROUGHS: Bolly, what did you do going to school? What school did you go to?

BOYKIN : I went to this one over here, the old Central Building they tore down. We thought that was a good school, that was a good one.

BURROUGHS: It was a good school. It just got outmoded. I know, from knowing you personally, that you must have had lots of adventures as a school boy. Can you recall any of those?

BOYKIN : Yes. One time I was out at Floyd, at their basketball game. Portales was playing and I was playing, and he called a foul that I thought wasn't just right. That Mr. Shock (?), and I said "Oh, that's right Mr. Shock used to teach out here." He said, "Now Bolly, you know, you saw that foul."

BURROUGHS: Was that J.R. Shock?

BOYKIN : Yes, I believe it was.

BURROUGHS: He was a principal out there, I think. How old were you then?

BOYKIN : I was about 17, I guess.

BURROUGHS: You weren't in Central grade, you were in high school then, weren't you?

BOYKIN : Yes.

BURROUGHS: Who were your classmates?

BOYKIN : Lee Johnson, Mike Lindsey, George and Oscar McCormick and Clint. . .

BURROUGHS: Clint who?

BOYKIN : Fairly. The girls were. . . I wasn't interested in girls then, or I would know them all.

BURROUGHS: (Laugh) You don't remember any of them?

BOYKIN : Mary Elizabeth was one and. . .

BURROUGHS: Mary Elizabeth who?

BOYKIN : (Indistinct) Dorothy Ham(?) and my sister was one of them.

BURROUGHS: What was the year of your high school senior graduation?

BOYKIN : Let's see. . . 1921, I believe.

BURROUGHS: That was before the new high school building was built.

BOYKIN : Oh, yes.

BURROUGHS: Was the school. . .

BOYKIN : I helped build that building there on the summer before I went to Oregon. I graduated that year, that they built this building down here.

BURROUGHS: Can you relate some of the experiences there, and where they got the money and the material, and who worked on it?

BOYKIN : Lee Gossen(?) and I were the main men on there. I was rolling the brick up there and Mr. Slaten was mixing the mortar, Leon's dad.

BURROUGHS: Willis Slaten?

BOYKIN : Yes. He was mixing the mud and I had to roll the brick and there, and Audie Tipton(?) was driving the mule to pull it up on that thing. I never did get to go to that school. I wanted to real bad, but I. . .

BURROUGHS: After you had worked on it? And you worked all summer?

BOYKIN : Yes. And I didn't spend a dime for nothing.

BURROUGHS: What were your wages per hour?

BOYKIN : We were getting about 50 or 60 cents.

BURROUGHS: For manual labor?

BOYKIN : Yes.

BURROUGHS: How much did you earn?

BOYKIN : When I got through and counted it all up, the money I had saved over the years, I had 25 hundred dollars.

BURROUGHS: Golly, that was a . . .

BOYKIN : My mother asked me, "What are you going to do with that money?" I said, "I am going to take it to Oregon with me." She said, "You're not going to do that, you're not going to take all that money up there." I did, though.

BURROUGHS: Why did you go to Oregon?

BOYKIN : Humphrey moved up there. He used to run a hardware store here.

BURROUGHS: What was his full name?

BOYKIN : M.D. Humphrey. M.D.A. Everybody knows him as an old timer. and he used to have in his store. . . it was in the Boothe building, and Sledge's were right across the street. He used to be in with Sledge, and then Sledge was just a little bit. . . they got crossways, so he just moved across the street. They kept writing me to come up there. You see they would read all of these things about where I was playing football in high school, and all that stuff. Now-a-days I probably couldn't make the team.

BURROUGHS: Bolly, you were such a big boy, weren't you?

BOYKIN : No, I just weighed 161 pounds when I went to Oregon.

BURROUGHS: How tall were you?

BOYKIN : 6 feet and 2 inches.

BURROUGHS: (Indistinct)

BOYKIN : (Indistinct) coach. The coach, yes, he told me he couldn't give me a suit. I said, "Why can't you?" He said, "Well in the first place I don't have one big enough, I mean, small enough."

BURROUGHS: Small enough? And you were 6 feet 2 inches?

BOYKIN : But I just weighed 161 pounds.

BURROUGHS: You were skinny.

BOYKIN : I stood around there and I told him, "Mr. Hubbard, you give me a suit and I'll kick off for you in the first game." He looked at me and he said, "Well, 'by God' Tex, I'll just do that." And he did and I kicked off for him.

BURROUGHS: So you really went to Oregon to play football?

BOYKIN : Yes.

BURROUGHS: What was the name of the school?

BOYKIN : A & M.

BURROUGHS: The Oregon A & M?

BOYKIN : State.

BURROUGHS: What year was that?

BOYKIN : 1922.

BURROUGHS: Did you graduate?

BOYKIN : No. No, I didn't graduate.

BURROUGHS: You just stayed long enough to play a little football?

BOYKIN : No, I stayed there. . .

BOYKIN(P): Tell her the years you went to college and never graduated.

BOYKIN : I went to the University of New Mexico and I went to New Mexico State.

BURROUGHS: Playing football all of the time?

BOYKIN : Trying to.

BURROUGHS: I guess you did pretty well.

BOYKIN(P): How many years did you go to college all together? Eleven?

BOYKIN : Eleven.

BURROUGHS: Eleven years.

BOYKIN(P): Just to play football.

BOYKIN : That's the only way I knew how to make a living.

BURROUGHS: Did they give you tuition to play, like they do now?

BOYKIN : Yes, and they paid me 160 dollars a month, besides.

BURROUGHS: That was in 1922?

BOYKIN : Yes, 1923 and 1924. I got this shoulder broken in 1925.

BURROUGHS: If you got your way paid, what did you do with that 25 hundred dollars?

BOYKIN : I saved it.

BURROUGHS: You just kept it?

BOYKIN : I knew I wasn't going to do that always. I was an S.A.E.

BURROUGHS: At the University?

BOYKIN : Yes.

BURROUGHS: Oregon A & M?

BOYKIN : Oregon State. They used to call it A & M.

BURROUGHS: Tell something about your experiences playing football in New Mexico, at these two Universities. That was in the early. . . still in the 1920's?

BOYKIN : Yes. I played here when I was a Senior in high school, and New Mexico State.

BURROUGHS: Las Cruces?

BOYKIN : Yes. I made the team when I was a Senior in high school, and then I came back here and worked that summer and saved that money--I had been saving money for a long time--and then I went up to Oregon.

BURROUGHS: Would you comment on the difference in football now and then?

BOYKIN : Sure would. They've got the best equipment now they've ever had in the country. If I would have had that kind of equipment, no one could have caught me.

BURROUGHS: What do you mean, shoes?

BOYKIN : Oh, shoes and everything. They were light and real good. Our suits weighed fourteen pounds, and just think about my weighing 161. And Paul Snyder weighed 190, and he could out run me (he was my roommate), on an old saw dust field. (The saw dust was that deep.) He was stronger than I was, but when I got him on that track, I just left him back there.

BURROUGHS: (Laugh) Oh, you did?

BOYKIN : Yes. And he never did like that, but I never did like him out-running me on that football field. Every evening we'd line up and run a hundred yards, everybody. He and I would be first and second everytime, we just came in that way. He'd say, "Come on, Boykin." But I couldn't come on.

BOYKIN(P): Don't you think these Portales people would be more interested in the football you played in your earlier days, when you played Clovis. . .