

MRS. BURROUGHS: Just a real herd of them. Well now, that was not against the law to kill antelopes then?

MR. SLATEN: Oh, no, back then, no, you didn't have to have a permit or anything back in those days. And you know, there is still a lot of antelope now down around Milnesand.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Is that right?

MR. SLATEN: Yeah, still there. I used to go hunting down there quite a lot in the last four or five years.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Well now, there was a buffalo herd in Roosevelt County. I think at the time this Buffalo Jones had it, it was confined. But did you ever see buffalo mixing with your cattle or antelope?

MR. SLATEN: Yeah, back in those days every now and then there would be some buffalo come through our pasture.

MRS. BURROUGHS: And those were just wild?

MR. SLATEN: They were wild. They would be passing through coming sometimes from Texas going back towards the mountains.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Now did they stay around Portales Springs any?

MR. SLATEN: Yeah, they used to come through up here.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Because at that time I think there was still water flowing in the springs.

MR. SLATEN: Yeah. I remember one time my dad harnessed up the two mules and we got in the wagon and we didn't know where we was going, but he wanted to go over there into the pasture and he saw those buffalos clear from the house. And we went over there and there was seven of them. Seven buffalo. And when they would get into your pasture they would tear your fence down.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Yes, W. O. Dunlap said they just walk right through the fence.

MR. SLATEN: They could just knock a fence down easy, they sure would. We had to go find where they got in and fix that fence back up.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Well, weren't they pretty risky to be around and didn't you have to stay on your horse at a respectful distance?

MR. SLATEN: Well, we stayed in the wagon and we would get up about a hundred yards of them and they would stand there and look at us, you know. But if we came up closer, they'd take off. They would go to leaving.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Tell me about some of those wagon trips into town that you used to take.

MR. SLATEN: We would get up and leave about five o'clock in the morning, early, and we would get in town here along about five o'clock in the afternoon. It was twenty-five miles from where we lived to Portales.

MRS. BURROUGHS: And almost twelve hours.

MR. SLATEN: That's right. And it was all sandy and no paving or anything back in those days.

MRS. BURROUGHS: You're just pulling through the prairie then.

MR. SLATEN: Right, uh-huh. And we would bring in a load of corn sometimes, then a load of capped corn or maize. Dad would sell that and then we would go to the grocery store and buy flour and sugar and lard. Different things like that, you know.

MRS. BURROUGHS: What grocery did you trade?

MR. SLATEN: Joyce Cook and Company.

MRS. BURROUGHS: That was the main one at that time.

- MR. SLATEN: That was the old main grocery. They were located right on the corner there where Wacker's is now. That's where they were.
- MRS. BURROUGHS: What else did you buy? Flour, sugar, and lard. That wouldn't supplement a family's diet, plus the meat that you raised. What else did you buy?
- MR. SLATEN: Well, mostly here in Portales, that is all we bought. See, we had the store down there at Richland, was only about two miles from us, and Ed Hobbs ran that store then. That is Chester Hobbs' father. And later on he moved to Portales and put in the Chevrolet place. He had the Chevrolet...Anyway, Ed Hobbs had that store and you could buy, oh...
- MRS. BURROUGHS: Canned fruits and vegetables.
- MR. SLATEN: Canned foods and groceries and all that.
- MRS. SLATEN: Well, excuse me for interrupting but didn't your mother can most of...You raised all of the vegetables you needed. You never bought canned vegetables or things like that you know. She canned everything.
- MR. SLATEN: We had a big garden and I used to take a mule and just a plow and plow on each side of the rows, whenever I was a kid.
- MRS. SLATEN: They made their butter, you see, churned their cream for their own butter, and they had their own milk and their eggs, and their vegetables, and their meat, and so forth.
- MR. SLATEN: And we had a big cellar out there, too, Jean, that we kept a lot of stuff down there in the cellar.
- MRS. BURROUGHS: Such as?

MR. SLATEN: Our canned goods. When mother would put it up in fruit jars we would put it down in the cellar. We had racks all in there.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Can you comment on some of those canning sessions? How did you go about it? You must have had such a quantity to put up for a big family. Tell me how your mother managed, what she did.

MR. SLATEN: We had a big old pot out there in the yard close to the windmill that she would cook stuff in it, you know, then put it in the fruit jars after she got through.

MRS. BURROUGHS: She would boil it outside in a big pot?

MR. SLATEN: In a big old cast iron pot, yeah.

MRS. BURROUGHS: That was before we had pressure cookers then.

MR. SLATEN: Right, right. We didn't have pressure cookers back then.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Wouldn't you say that was the open kettle method?

MRS. SLATEN: I think it would be. Didn't you have an old cast iron range, too, in the house?

MR. SLATEN: Yes, we had a big old cast iron range out there in that shed.

MRS. SLATEN: Now, what would you burn in it?

MR. SLATEN: We burned wood, mesquite.

MRS. SLATEN: Well, did you ever burn cow chips? We've always...

MRS. BURROUGHS: Most everybody did.

MR. SLATEN: We burned cow chips, too.

MRS. SLATEN: Okay, and the children picked those up, did they?

MR. SLATEN: Yeah. Woody and I used to on every Saturday when school was out. We would get our wagon and go pick up cow chips.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Children then helped immeasurably in the family responsibilities, didn't they?

MR. SLATEN: Oh, yeah. We had things to do and dad expected us to do it too, and we did.

MRS. BURROUGHS: You are sounding like you have had experience.

MRS. SLATEN: You ran a plow and a (indistinct). What age were you?

MR. SLATEN: Oh, I did that when I was about seven or eight, nine years old.

MRS. SLATEN: With a big team of horses.

MR. SLATEN: Right. Four heads of horses.

MRS. BURROUGHS: That is amazing. It is when I think about my grandson sitting in front of the T.V. at age seven with no responsibilities.

MRS. SLATEN: Right.

MR. SLATEN: My dad was born in Decatur, Alabama, in 1878, February 7th. And my mother was born in Kingman, Kansas, 1888--she was ten years younger than dad--February 6th. And they came here in 1905.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Their birthdays were close together. Well, they certainly made a great success of their family and business. You mentioned that they came to Portales in 1927. What business did your father go in then?

MR. SLATEN: He went in with Howard Davidson. He was a broom corn buyer. They put in a big coal yard, and grain--they bought grain and everything. It's...Right down there by Worley Mills is where it was located.

MRS. BURROUGHS: The coal yard and the grain. Was he still farming and bringing his grain in to sale or did he sell his farm?

MR. SLATEN: No, he sold the farm about twenty years later after we moved to town.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Well now, can you tell me about how he got coal here and how it was distributed and the kind of stoves you used. You know those days...We just don't have coal stoves anymore.

MR. SLATEN: Well, we opened our business down there, The Slaten Brothers, on that corner in 1932, February 11th, 1932. No, I am wrong, 1940. We have been there thirty-two years on that corner. Woody and I opened our store... and back in those days everybody had what they called the big pot-bellied stove in there to keep warm. We didn't have gas.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Just one stove in the building then.

MR. SLATEN: Yes, just one big old stove and we burned coal. Dad used to get his coal and it would come by truck from up in Colorado. All the coal would come from up in Colorado.

MRS. BURROUGHS: It was mined up there.

MR. SLATEN: Yes, it was mined up there close to Dawson. That is where it nearly all come from.

MRS. SLATEN: Leon, I remember you telling about unloading the coal off of the railroad tracks.

MR. SLATEN: Yeah, used to on Saturdays, why old Chuck Goodlow and I would go down there and unload a complete carload of coal.

MRS. SLATEN: Well, it came by train too, then.

MR. SLATEN: Yes, it came by rail then.

MRS. BURROUGHS: I think Mr. Dean, Clifford Dean, was telling about the coal that came in on the railroad and how people would come and pick up around the tracks.

MR. SLATEN: What we would do...We would have, from the warehouse over to the railway car, why dad had a big slab of wood that would lay

down, so we would fill up a wheelbarrow full of coal, roll it in and dump it, and then go back and scoop up another load and roll it in. It took all day to unload a whole car-load of it.

MRS. BURROUGHS: I imagine. Hand labor.

MR. SLATEN: You bet. And whenever we got through that night, we would look like negroes. We sure did, we looked like negroes.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Well, anybody would. Now how old were you when you did this?

MR. SLATEN: Oh, I was about fifteen or sixteen.

MRS. BURROUGHS: So you were a big boy that could take care of...

MRS. SLATEN: You were in high school then?

MR. SLATEN: Oh yeah, I was in high school then here in Portales.

MRS. BURROUGHS: You mentioned Goodlow. Now they were a family who used to live here.

MR. SLATEN: Yeah, they lived on Main Street right over here about a block down.

MRS. BURROUGHS: And where did they come from?

MR. SLATEN: The Goodlow's? You know, I just don't know, but Mr. Goodlow, Charlie Goodlow was his name, they had lived here in Portales a long time. Then later on they moved out into Arizona.

MRS. SLATEN: Well, Mrs. Goodlow was a Tinsly.

MR. SLATEN: Yes, she was a Tinsly, Lena Tinsly.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Kin to Bill Tinsly. Yes, I knew that and it is too bad that some of these people who were the early day citizens have moved and we don't hear much of them anymore. Now Bernice, when did you come into the picture?

MRS. SLATEN: Well, I moved to New Mexico when I married. I was a Kansas girl living in Winsfield, Kansas - and Leon came to our denominational college, the Methodist college, to go to school, Southwestern College. So that was the way that I met Leon was...

MRS. BURROUGHS: In Kansas.

MRS. SLATEN: Right, by him being in Winfield. We were married in Witchita and then came to Portales the same year which was in 1932. At that time Leon did not have a job and it was not uncommon for young married people to live with their in-laws for awhile.

MRS. BURROUGHS: They all did, yes they did.

MRS. SLATEN: Until they could get on their feet so to speak, and get started.

MR. SLATEN: We stayed with mother and dad.

MRS. SLATEN: We lived with Mr. and Mrs. Slaten for six weeks or two months before Leon got his first job at the dry goods ...Stools Dry Good Store.

MRS. BURROUGHS: What was that name?

MR. SLATEN: Stools Dry Good Store.

MRS. BURROUGHS: I've never heard of that mentioned.

MR. SLATEN: It was located right there...

MRS. SLATEN: Skinner's, about where Skinner's is.

MRS. BURROUGHS: What was Mr. Stools first name.

MR. SLATEN: I can't think. Bernice and I got our first apartment, where we lived was over the garage of Dr. Hensly's. That is where we lived.

MRS. BURROUGHS: I think that was a honeymoon spot. Many young couples stayed there.

MR. SLATEN: Right, yeah. That is where we stayed.

MRS. SLATEN: And what was your- our salary that we lived on?

MR. SLATEN: Sixty dollars a month.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Now that was in 1932?

MR. SLATEN: Right.

MRS. BURROUGHS: That was right in the middle of the depression.

MRS. SLATEN: It surly was, sure was.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Did you work any?

MRS. SLATEN: I worked for awhile for Crockett Sparks in the abstract office...

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MRS. BURROUGHS: I see. But usually a wife was not supposed to work if her husband had a job because she was considered depriving the bread winner of a family. So it isn't...We don't think that way today. Many wives work, but they didn't during the depression.

MRS. SLATEN: No, not back then.

MRS. BURROUGHS: When were your children born, Bernice?

MRS. SLATEN: Well, W.D. was born in 1936 down here at Doc Hensley's hospital. Doc Hensley was the doctor who delivered W.D. And then in about 1940 was it, that we moved to Austin, Texas?

MR. SLATEN: 1941.

MRS. SLATEN: 1941, we moved to Austin, Texas, and we were there for about two or three years. Janet was born in Austin in 1944.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Then you (moved) back to Portales?

MRS. SLATEN: Yes, she was only a few months old when we moved back to Portales. We joined his brother in business here.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Now that was the Slaten Auto Supply. Is that the name of the business at first?

MR. SLATEN: Yeah.

MRS. SLATEN: Slaten Brothers Auto Supply and Electrical Appliances, I think was the way...

MR. SLATEN: Yeah, Slaten Brother's Home and Auto.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Then didn't you have a Texico Station, too, for awhile?

MR. SLATEN: Yeah, I did behind me there. I had that Texico station for awhile, and I had a boy running it for me. But we started out in business here in 1932. Orville, my older brother, and I started out in the old Phillips 66 down the street there on First Street - no, Second Street. In 1937, Woody and I bought out the old Iron Service Station that Leonard Western had for years.

MRS. BURROUGHS: I see, and that later became the Texico?

MRS. SLATEN: No, that...

MR. SLATEN: No, that was the one right across from the Home Federal, used to be the Portales National Bank there.

MRS. SLATEN: Now it is the new arts and crafts...located there.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Oh! There was a service station there?

MRS. SLATEN: Yes, for years.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Well, the only time that I remember was there was a bus station there and a series of barber shops.

MRS. SLATEN: Yes, this was prior to that...quite some time.

MR. SLATEN: That was the old building I was in, the bus station.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Well, there have been many changes on that corner, haven't there. Would you like to comment on your recent closing out of the Slaten Brother's business?

MR. SLATEN: Yeah, we started in September of having our quitting business sale. And we sold the first week, every major appliance we had in the store because I had cut it all down to just at cost. And I put the regular retail price on it and then sold it down at cost. We moved every Frigidiare we had in the store except one range, and we sold it later. But we had thirty-two major appliances that we moved in one week.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Well, that was encouraging.

MR. SLATEN: Yeah, and we kept on and I had twenty-five percent off everything in the store to start with, and then thirty-three and a third, and then fifty percent off. Then finally I put it down to sixty percent on all tires off and on all our small appliances and home and auto supplies that we had in the store. And we sold practically everything except just a few items. I moved the rest of it and Mr. Richard Griffith out there bought it from me.

MRS. BURROUGHS: What are you going to do with that building now?

MR. SLATEN: Well, I'm on a deal to lease it to a couple of guys if they can get the money together.

MRS. BURROUGHS: That is what everybody hangs on. Are you looking forward to a life of retirement? What are you doing to fill the time?

MR. SLATEN: Yeah, yeah. Oh, I'm just taking it easy.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Does he help you, Bernice?

MR. SLATEN: Yes, I help Bernice do this and that.

MRS. SLATEN: Yes, it is kind of a novelty to him to run the vacuum sweeper.

MR. SLATEN: I always set the table, vacuum clean the rugs, yeah.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Well, you sound like a happy retired man.

MR. SLATEN: I do, I'm enjoying myself.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Are there any comments you would like to make about life in Portales in general and the changes you've seen and what you foresee in the future for the business and the development of the community.

MR. SLATEN: Well, I...When I started out in the business here years ago,.. business is much better now than it was then because there are more people in town and you just do a better business now. And too, you make a little better profit than you did back then. I think Portales is going to be a fair little town and I think it will be good from now on. I have enjoyed doing business - I've been on that old corner down there thirty-two years and I enjoyed it.

MRS. BURROUGHS: Do you release all of these statements, Leon, for the Oral History Program at Eastern New Mexico University?

MR. SLATEN: Yes, I do.

MRS. BURROUGHS: And you, Bernice? You are willing for the tapes to be listened to?

MRS. SLATEN: Yes.

MRS. BURROUGHS: I think they will be very interesting, particularly some of the boyhood experiences in days that will never be like that again. I thank you so much and you were a real pleasure to visit with.

MR. SLATEN: Thank you, Jean.