

Oral History Interview

with

DOUGLAS B. STONE

August 24, 1972
Portales, New Mexico

By Mrs. Jean M. Burroughs

For the Eastern New Mexico University Library
Oral History Project

BURROUGHS: This is Mrs. John Burroughs. Today is August 24, 1972. I'm visiting in the beautiful office of Mr. Douglas Stone, President of the Portales National Bank. Mr. Stone, and I'll call you Doug because I've certainly known you for a long time. Let's start with some mention of your grandparents, do you know any of the facts of their lives?

STONE: My grandparents died when I was a baby or even before I was born and I know very little about them. My grandfather Stone was born in Limestone County, Texas. His name was McCager, McCager Stone. His parents brought him to what is now known as Brownwood, Texas. There was of course no city there. The Comanche Indians chased them back to which is Limestone County, Texas. They tried it the next year and came to home in west Texas for many years.

BURROUGHS: That's interesting to know about the Indians. Jim Warnica's grandparents had several altercations with Indians too, when

they moved west.

STONE: Then my grandfather, McCager moved to what is now Plainview. He established not really a ranch because in New Mexico this was the land of free grass. What is now Portales Springs was springs and a big lake. He established a camp there where his cattle roamed and were taken care of by his young sons, including my father.

BURROUGHS: What was your father's name?

STONE: My father's name was James P. Stone. The early life was very interesting. . . [Indistinct]. . .

BURROUGHS: That was down at Portales Springs?

STONE: Yes. There were no stores and no towns, the nearest post office was Tulia, Texas. Twice a year my father and his brother went to Las Vegas, New Mexico for supplies in a wagon, which Las Vegas was the end of the railway.

BURROUGHS: Can you tell me about what year that was when your father was making these trips.?

STONE: It was about 1890. My father died in 1913 and I remember very little about him. Some of the stories of the recollection of his early life was one about his younger brother, I had the pleasure of visiting with in Arkansas, before his death,

BURROUGHS: What was his name?

STONE: His name was Andrew. I asked him about their early life and their experiences. One of the stories he tells me: There is

an early settler named Sid Boykin. He and my father and Uncle Andrew were great friends. They were young men. The D Z Ranch was a historical ranch in eastern New Mexico. It consisted of 400 thousand acres, and it was owned by Jim Newman from Sweetwater, Texas. It was free grass and the only land they owned was 320 acres at the headquarters. I asked my Uncle Andrew, "Well, how could they keep other ranches from coming in?" He said, "It was very simple. Jim Newman had a foreman who was a gunfighter and anyone who put any cattle on that 400 thousand acres, owned by the Federal Government, he would be murdered." One story my Uncle Andrew told me was he and my father and Sid Boykin were doing some work by Portales Springs and the ranch, I said, was owned by Jim Newman and there was another cattleman named Dote^{AK} Good in the Portales Springs area, ^{who} which was a great enemy of Jim Newman. So one morning my father and his brother and Sid Boykin were there, and Jim Newman rode by on his horse. And ✓ about a mile away was Dote^{AK} Good working on a fence. Jim Newman ✓ said, "Isn't that Dote Good?" My father and the others said yes. He pulled his gun out and he said, "I might as well finish this dispute right now." My Uncle Andrew said Sid Boykin was quite a talker, they were all young men. Sid Boykin said to Mr. Newman, "Mr. Newman, it wouldn't be fair to us for you to go down there." He said, "Why not?" He

✓ said, "Mr. Newman, if you go down there and Dote Good kills you, we're going to go kill him and then we'd be tried for murder, ✓ and if you go down there and kill Dote Good, we'll have to testify you, our good friend, in court." Mr. Newman said, "I never thought about it that way, and he said I'll do it some ✓ other time." Sooner or later Dote Good drifted away and it never came to a showdown.

BURROUGHS: I have heard about a gun fight out there. Actually, a fight where they hid behind those cliffs and shot at each other all day and then somebody put some food out to revive them after their fight and I understand one man died. There was a mysterious element in the food.

STONE: There probably was.

BURROUGHS: Do you know anything about that?

STONE: No, I can't recall it.

BURROUGHS: There are many stories told about Portales Springs. How long did your father stay down there?

STONE: My father established the ranch later. It was on the Texas side, east of Rogers. His west fence was the Texas line and he was ranching there at the time of his death in 1913. We all lived in Portales, we've always lived here. My mother would take the children and go out to the ranch in the summertime.

BURROUGHS: You lived here in the town?

STONE: I was born in Portales. All of us were. . .

BURROUGHS: Do you want to give that date?

STONE: I was born in Portales, a mile from where we're sitting, in 1910. And I love living in my hometown, I have many warm memories.

BURROUGHS: Doug, where was your home? You said it was a mile from the location. . .

STONE: It was where is now north Main. My father was a rancher and he had some native grass acreage there so when they came in from the ranch they would have a place to stay over night. Many of the ranchers lived in Portales and had such an acreage.

BURROUGHS: How many children were in your family?

STONE: There were four of us and three of us living.

BURROUGHS: Would you name them?

STONE: Yes, my sister, Gladys, my older sister, is Mrs. Ralph Well, she lives in Albany, Georgia. My next older sister is Roma, Mrs. Dudley Hay and she lives in Fresno, California. I had a brother that died fifty odd years ago, I can't remember him.

BURROUGHS: So, you are the only son in the family now?

STONE: Yes.

BURROUGHS: Tell me something about your early childhood in Portales.

STONE: It seems like a long time ago, Jean. Portales was a placid village in those days.

BURROUGHS: About how many people, do you recall?

STONE: I'd say 25 hundred people. And it was a very quiet place. We had few of the advantages we have today. We had no swimming pool, we had no organized athletics. Picture shows weren't permitted on Sunday. We led a very quiet, yet rich life.

BURROUGHS: I'm sure you did. Children always find things to do. Who were your friends?

STONE: Many of them still live here today. Jay Thompson who lives here, he and I were in the first grade. Gordon King Greaves lived across the street. Later Wayne Stratton. Mrs. Joyce Compton, Juanita Hancock and I went through every grade in school. It's surprising how many of them still live in the county.

BURROUGHS: Can you account for that?

STONE: Yes. It's a good place to live and communication and transportation was very limited and we just had no desire to move like they do today. We didn't have the advantages of going off to college like they do now. They just located here.

BURROUGHS: That was a good life and they stayed and inherited their parents business or land.

STONE: That's right. They carried on a tradition.

- BURROUGHS: That has made stability in this community that we don't find in many . . .
- STONE: Yes, it's interesting being in the bank here. I've been here thirty-seven years as ^{As} cashier and President and I am dealing with fourth generations. It is wonderful to watch the children grow up and pretty soon they are men and then deal with their children and as a banker it's a great help because you know their background and their reputatation and their ways of doing things, it's a great help to me and it's a great help to them because I can serve them [?] stately and better.
- BURROUGHS: You act as father confessor, I expect to lots of young people.
- STONE: Perhaps, not very much.
- BURROUGHS: Can you ^{comment} compliment on your schooling. I know at that time there was only one school in Portales but who was your teacher, and do you recall anything of your grade school?
- STONE: Very much, I went to school at what is now L.L. Brown grade school. My first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth rooms are still standing in the unit building . . . [Interruption]
- BURROUGHS: The original school?
- STONE: The original school. L.L. Brown is a patron saint of education in Portales. The school is named for him which pleases me very much. I have wonderful memories of all of my schooling. After my senior in high school I attended New Mexico Military Institute. I graduated from high school and junior college then

S.M.U. and Dallas.

BURROUGHS: And that's your schooling? Miss Estelle Johnston was a teacher there. Did she ever teach you?

STONE: No, but she had a younger brother Henry Johnston who was in my class always and an older brother Phil, a great athlete in Portales. Estelle is an old, old friend of mine, as are all of her brothers and sisters. A very fine person.

BURROUGHS: She told me something very funny about L.L. Brown and the incident of sending the school children down that fire escape tube on the outside. . .

STONE: Yes, I remember that very well.

BURROUGHS: . . . without opening the. . .

STONE: Exit.

BURROUGHS: Were you going down the. . .

STONE: I did many times but I don't remember that. L.L. Brown was the most wonderful person. I remember an incident in the seventh grade. All of the school board had a child in the seventh grade. My mother, Dr. McDonald's father, Jim Goodlow's father and another one or so. And as children do, we thought we were a little special and L.L. Brown was so smart and knew people that he picked an excuse and he got all of the boys of the school board and gave us all a tremendous licking. We of course never told our parents. So we decided quickly that we weren't very important, and that was just what we needed.

BURROUGHS: You had no special privileges then?

STONE: We certainly didn't. If we would have told our parents, we would have gotten another one when we got home.

BURROUGHS: Was your father or mother on the school board?

STONE: My mother. My father died in 1913.

BURROUGHS: What year was this??

STONE: It must have been in the twenties as I remember.

BURROUGHS: It's unusual for a woman to serve in that capacity because to this day we don't have. . .

STONE: She was the only lady that ever served on the school board, and I was very proud of her, she was a very outstanding person.

BURROUGHS: I know that she was quite a community leader. Can you comment on how she happened to serve and the circumstances leading to a woman being appointed?

STONE: She had been president of the Woman's Club, she was very interested in her church, the Methodist Church lights never went on that she wasn't there. There was a move to build on a new high school which was the high school for many years and has since been torn down. There was a ticket ran to build a new high school, and she served many years. This high school cost 80 thousand dollars, it was a tremendous building in those days. It was the only high school gym, there was only one other high school gym in the state, it was very small compared to now. It just looked like the building was so big, that we never would

use it. And the tremendous amount at that time, 80 thousand dollars. My mother, herself was a teacher before she married my father. She was so desirous of a good school and that was kind of the platform she ran on, the only woman that served. . .

BURROUGHS: That was a ticket to build the school? A bond issue?

STONE: Yes. You had to vote an 80 thousand dollar bond issue. You know, schooling in Roosevelt County is very interesting. Today there are only four school districts. When I was a lad, fifty years ago, there were over a hundred school districts. There were more people in the country in 1906 than there are now. The homesteaders came in and there was a family on every 320 acres. Transportation was poor so they had to have a school near by and a little community. And there were over a hundred school districts.

BURROUGHS: That's the same way with the post office.

STONE: Right. And then in later years transportation got better and there were fewer people and the places got bigger, with fewer people there was less need for the . . . and there was consolidation and the acting school buses .

BURROUGHS: There was a recent consolidation of the last two schools, I don't mean the last two but the last outstanding rural schools, Causey and Dora. They held out for so long.

STONE: Yes, it is very sad for a community to lose their schools because it does great damage to their community. But land is

getting so expensive and it takes so much to farm or ranch, unless the father has enough land and enough equipment and backing for the sons; they leave and go elsewhere. The people are staying on and aren't having any more children.

BURROUGHS: Can you tell me something of the history of the Portales National Bank?

STONE: My father was an early banker. He had banks at Texico, Portales, Ft. Sumner, Elida and an interest in one in Canyon, Texas. The Portales bank was located where the old Portales News-Tribune was before they built the new building. Shortly before his death he had trouble getting proper management. One by one he sold all of it except the one at Elida, he was very fortunate to have a very good manager, Mr. A.A. Beeman. He owned that at the time of his death and my mother continued with her stockholding. When I finished school I worked in the bank in Los Angeles for three and a half years. At that time Portales had only one bank and the rural area was getting smaller! . .

BURROUGHS: That was the First National, then?

STONE: Right. I came back and we took steps to move the bank to Portales in which has been a great thing for the bank and I think a great thing for our former customers.

BURROUGHS: What was the date you moved to Portales?

STONE: We moved in August 12, 1935. We had a tremendous growth and if we would have stayed at Elida, we wouldn't have had enough

funds to service our customers. With our fine growth and available funds we have been able to serve them well in Portales and the entire county. It has been a wonderful experience for me to be in this bank for thirty-seven years, since 1935 and watch the growth from 250 thousand dollar resources to 13 million resources, there are a lot of rewarding experiences.

BURROUGHS: Was the name of the bank the Elida National??

STONE: The First National Bank of Elida.

BURROUGHS: Then it was changed to the Portales National??

STONE: Right. At one time, many many years ago, probably sixty-five years ago, there were two banks in Elida and one at Kenna. One by one they emerged with the bank that is now the Portales National Bank.

BURROUGHS: That was to accommodate the ranchers down there?

STONE: And many farmers.

BURROUGHS: More people then. What was the population of Elida in those days?

STONE: I would say it got as high as a thousand people at one time. It was a great trade area. Kenna was a very flourishing town. One time they shipped more cattle out of Kenna on the railroad than any other point on the Santa Fe Railway. They had lawyers and doctors and a hotel, a bank.

BURROUGHS: Now when you go through . . .

- STONE: You can't buy a gallon of gasoline. That's just what has happened to all of the small communities. Good roads, good cars the need for large supply points.
- BURROUGHS: Don't you feel somewhat ^{sym} ~~em~~pathetic with the people who had to leave their homes and their acreage and move and put their children in another school because of that?
- STONE: Very much.
- BURROUGHS: I feel that it is a hardship on them.
- STONE: Community spirit is what has made America great. The ability to go to school where you live and to trade where you live. It's like supply and demand you have to have volume to make it practical.
- BURROUGHS: Yes, life has to be practical or else we still wouldn't be here.
- STONE: After about twenty years ago Kenna had a one teacher school, elementary school, a wonderful teacher.
- BURROUGHS: Who was that, do you recall?
- STONE: I believe her name was Mrs. S^outherd and no one said it was the most expensive school in the state of New Mexico, no one said anything about it until she retired. The Kenna school board came to Elida and said the teacher has retired and we think it is time we joined you, if we could. And the Elida schools said they would sure try to make room for you and you will be welcome. It was in a very nice way and at the Kenna suggestion we didn't try to force them in any way.