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Interview with  
Dr. H. F. Elliot  
January 4, 1972

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Interviewer: Dr. A. Ray Stephens  
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Oral History Collection

Dr. H. F. Elliot

Interviewer: Dr. A. Ray Stephens

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Dr. Stephens: This is an interview with Dr. H. F. Elliot, Rockport, Texas, January 4, 1972. Dr. Elliot, would you tell me something of your background in medicine and how you chose to practice in Aransas County?

Dr. Elliot: I was born in Ames, Iowa, in Story County, August 25, 1925. I went to school at Ames, Iowa, to Ames High School, and then attended Iowa State College at Ames, Iowa, for two years pre-medical school, and then finally graduated from the College of Osteopathic Medicine and Surgery at Des Moines, Iowa, in 1947 with a degree D.O.. I came to Corpus Christi, Texas, to get out of the cold weather in Iowa, and interned for one year, during which time I married a local Texas girl from Gregory, Texas, and we decided we would open our practice in Rockport in Aransas County. And I opened my office here to practice on July 15, 1948.

Dr. Stephens: How did you choose Aransas County?

Dr. Elliot: Well, I had never really lived in a small town of this size. Ames, Iowa, is a fairly good size college town,

and I just decided that I would like to practice in a small town. And especially since all the tourists came to Rockport. Well, then I decided I might as well live here all year-round.

Stephens: I see. Can you tell me something of the medical history of the county, the general health of the people, since you've been here, and, also, the hospitals and clinics that have operated in the county?

Elliot: Well, as far as the medical history of the county I don't know an awful lot about it. I've been here just a small twenty some years, but at that time when I came here there was one other doctor. He had been here all of one month at the time, and he is still practicing here now. And there were no hospitals here. The nearest hospital was in Aransas Pass, and I took my patients to that hospital to practice. And as far as general health in this area, of course, we had our usual share of removing fish hooks and that sort of thing and emergency cases of all kinds from fractures and all kinds of major accidents including airplane accidents, everything else. But I imagine the major factor in the wintertime, of course, we have more chronic diseases with older people coming here from the north. And we have a great deal of people in the

summertime from all over Texas coming who are suffering from allergic conditions more than anything else because of our prevailing southeast breeze over the water with a very low pollen count.

Stephens: What would you consider the major reason people seek medical attention?

Elliot: Well, as I say, in the wintertime there's chronic ailments.

Stephens: Such as?

Elliot: Older people with vascular diseases, hypertension, and so on. And, of course, in the summertime it used to be more accidental type practice than anything else.

Stephens: Accidental, you mean like . . .

Elliot: Well, accidents and so on. The type practice I had, really, in the past. And when the oil fields were drilled we had a lot of oil field industrial type accidents.

Stephens: Do you have any tuberculosis cases in this area?

Elliot: We've had our good share. Of course, I believe the incidence of tuberculosis is very high in our particular area. One of the highest spots in the nation is in Robstown and in Corpus Christi and in Aransas County.

Stephens: How do you account for that?

Elliot: Well, I don't know how you would account for it. It just so happens that Robstown has the highest population per capita of tubercular patients.

Stephens: Is this persons coming from out of state or is it the Mexican-American population or who makes up the tubercular cases?

Elliot: Mexican-American mostly. By the same token, the Leonard Wood Foundation for Leprosy has its highest ratio of leprosy cases, also, in Robstown and Corpus Christi and in this surrounding area. In fact, they have a field worked stationed permanently in Corpus Christi.

Stephens: Is that made up of Mexican-Americans, too, that is the patients?

Elliot: The ones we have found here, yes, that's true. We've found about four cases that I can recall right offhand as leprosy here in this county.

Stephens: And all Mexican-Americans.

Elliot: Yes.

Stephens: Well, now what about of the Anglo-American group? Do you have the same number . . . the ratio, that is, to that population of TB and leprosy?

Elliot: Well, they, of course, are exposed to the tubercular organism very prevalently here, and therefore, they do have a high incidence of tuberculosis.

Stephens: And then what about flu and that sort of thing? Do you have a lot of that in this sub-tropical climate?

Elliot: Not so much, no. And what we do have is more, let's say, light.

Stephens: Yes. You say in wintertime you have a lot of problems with the tourists. What about the general population that remains here year-round? Are they generally healthy?

Elliot: Yes, I would say their general health year-round is very good. I think our main problem with tourists to a certain extent has been alleviated when we improved our water supply and went on to lake water instead of well water and dropped the salinity down to a level that their various hypertensive diseases could tolerate.

Stephens: What about the clinics and the hospitals that have operated since you've practiced here?

Elliot: Well, of course, when I first came here in '48, well, we had two doctors and each of us had our own office. And following that there was a clinic of two other doctors who briefly opened. It was sort of a branch clinic from a hospital in Aransas Pass. They also had a dentist part-time with them. And, oh, this lasted for maybe a brief year, say from '49 to '50. And then somewhere around '51, well, Dr. Wood opened the Rockport

Hospital. He had approximately eight beds, and he operated a hospital for about a year and a half before closing it.

Stephens: So you don't have any hospitals here now?

Elliot: No hospitals here now. After he closed his hospital, Dr. Hughes, who came in as a partner with me in 1955, he and I opened a hospital. And we called it Elliot-Hughes Hospital, and we opened it in October of 1957. And we operated jointly and then I operated it as a sole ownership for another two years, and finally the hospital was closed in 1962. And that was the last hospital that has been operated in this county.

Stephens: Why did you close it?

Elliot: For strictly financial reasons. It was a monetary loss all the way. And you can keep losing money to a certain extent.

Stephens: And have any hospitals opened up since 1962?

Elliot: No, sir, not in this county at all. I did convert the hospital later to a thirty-two bed nursing home, and I operated the nursing home until 1970 at which time I closed it and turned it into strictly an office building.

Stephens: Why did you close the nursing home?

Elliot: I was tired of government interference in how to run a nursing home.



Stephens: Oh, particularly in what type of regulations did you disagree with?

Elliot: Well, I had gone along with them on all sorts of odd requirements. We had changed everything all the way. I'd changed the entire heating system to electrical heating system. We had central air and heating. I changed it to electrical. We put in all kinds of fancy doors exactly like they wanted, and hand rails all over the place. Covered up my paneling with sheet rock, which I doubt would have helped anything in case of a fire, but that's what they wanted. And we had registered nurses on duty at all times. We had everything as far as I was concerned. And then they came along with a law requiring the administrator to have a license. So I obtained a license as a hospital administrator. And then I was told by the state officials in charge of licensing that it wouldn't do a bit of good for me to have the license, that I had to hire someone else that had a license, or else I had to spend forty hours a week in that building sitting doing nothing as an administrator. And, since I had an active practice of my own, I just told him, "Well, there's one other thing I could do. I could close the doors." And that's what I did. Actually, it was

a successful business because we had quite a waiting list of old people. This would be a fine area for a nursing home. We need another nursing home here. We could easily handle a hundred-bed nursing home in this town.

Stephens: How has the medicare affected the medical practice in the county?

Elliot: Well, I'd rather not comment on that subject. I feel like I made an adequate living long before medicare, and I'll make quite a good one after medicare.

Stephens: Have you noticed anything along the topic of health as a factor in migration? Do the persons who come to live in Aransas County come for health reasons, or is it for other reasons?

Elliot: I think it's both. The trend nowadays is for people to go to a climate that is healthy for them and also one that offers recreation. And since we certainly have the recreational area and we have a healthy climate, well, they enjoy it. Most of the people who are permanent people here, who have come here in the past few years, have spent at least a winter or something with us as tourists and have since then purchased homes.

Stephens: But as far as coming to the South Texas region, to, well, for stated health purposes you don't have many

of those? Of course, you have the wintertime older people who are escaping cold weather north to come through, but they don't settle here, do they?

Elliot: We have the people who, like myself, come down here to get out of the cold weather and stay. And we have a lot of people in the summertime who come to get out of the hot weather from Central Texas and West Texas. I would say over the years I've had numerous people who are my patients all during each summer for years and they're from Amarillo, Lubbock, and that area. And they spend their summers here.

Stephens: How has the affluence of American people since the Second World War affected medical practice in this area? That is, people have more money to go to the doctor with these days and can seek treatment where once they might have relied on home remedies. Have you noticed any increase in your . . .

Elliot: No, I really haven't. I can't say that I have. I think my practice has been more or less stable over these years in this area.

Stephens: No, I mean do people really have ailments when they come see you, or is it because they have money they'll come when it's not a serious ailment?

Elliot: Well, we have both types, of course, but most of them I would say do have serious ailments when they come in to see me.

Stephens: And not just something to do with their time and money?

Elliot: That's true. Even though they may have third party coverage of some type--medicare, medicaid or what have you--well, they actually are ill when they come in.

Stephens: I see. Being that you don't have any hospitals in the county now, do you send most of the people to Aransas Pass? Is that the nearest hospital?

Elliot: Yes, I take care of my patients over there. In fact, I had the first surgery over there this morning . . .

Stephens: Oh?

Elliot: . . . at the hospital. And the anesthetist informed me that I--even though I had attempted to cut down on my obstetrical work--that I did deliver twenty-one babies last year over there.

Stephens: Oh. Do you do most of your work such as that in hospitals rather than in your office?

Elliot: Yes, sir.

Stephens: Do you do any baby delivering in your office here?

Elliot: No, none. When I first came to Rockport we'd deliver them in the houses, but that's a long time back.

Stephens: Oh, and most of them were delivered in the homes at that time?

Elliot: That's right. They all were delivered in the home practically, very few in the hospitals. In fact . . .

you might call it a rural country practice back there in those days when you had to carry your own sterile packs. I have had to use a spotlight off of my car battery for a delivery light. They didn't have any lights in the house.

Stephens: Is that right? Now that was for Anglo-Americans as well as Mexican-Americans.

Elliot: Yes, that's true.

Stephens: Can the lower income people afford a hospital these days?

Elliot: Well, that's a good question. Unless they have some type of very good insurance coverage it certainly is high. There's no question about it, it's high to anyone now. The average hospital room rates have changed completely. When I first came here, the rate for a hospital semi-private room was around eight dollars a day. And now a semi-private room is forty dollars a day.

Stephens: My goodness. Dr. Elliot, where do you send your patients from the Rockport vicinity for specialized care?

Elliot: Well, the majority of local patients go and are sent to Corpus Christi since Corpus Christi can provide just about all the necessary specialists. Now, since M. D. Anderson Cancer Research Hospital at Houston is very close to us, well, naturally any cancer patients are usually referred to Houston for treatment.

Stephens: What sort of special ailments would cause you to send persons to Houston for other than cancer treatment or . . . and, well, what sort of ailments come about that make you send them elsewhere?

Elliot: Well, on the first part of your question, any cardiovascular problems naturally are sent to Baylor School of Medicine at Methodist Hospital. Dr. DeBaakey and Dr. Cooley are world recognized heart surgeons for any type of vascular problems. Naturally that would be the ideal spot to send them. Now, as for any other type, for general X-ray therapy or anything like that, it would be much more convenient to send the patient to Corpus Christi. Now we do have also in Texas close at hand the Scott and White Clinic at Temple which is a very fine facility for diagnostic survey.

Stephens: And they go there for diagnosis and come back here for treatment?

Elliot: That's right.

Stephens: Do the people in the D.O. program and the M.D. program cooperate on a local basis and wider range basis?

Elliot: Yes, I think they do to the most extent here. We certainly have no problems between a D.O. General Practitioner and a M.D. specialist. At the present time there are three M.D.'s practicing here and myself,

and one D.O.. We have had a preliminary meeting with the four of us present to discuss operating a sixty-two bed hospital which may be built in the very near future here in Rockport.

Stephens: Who would finance it?

Elliot: Well, it's a corporation. I'd rather not name it.

Stephens: It's nothing concerned with government operation, not necessarily . . .

Elliot: No, sir. No, it's a corporation.

Stephens: A hospital district or anything like that?

Elliot: No, it's a privately owned corporation that at the present time owns 230 hospitals over the United States.

Stephens: Aransas County is not part of a hospital district, is it?

Elliot: No, sir.

Stephens: The one in Aransas Pass is a private hospital?

Elliot: There are two hospitals in Aransas Pass. One is a non-profit organization--the one I work in. That's Aransas Hospital. And the other one is Medical Arts Clinic, formerly Lyman-Roberts Hospital, and it's owned by Florida Corporation, private owned.

Stephens: Oh. Have there been any attempts to establish a hospital district in this area?

Elliot: Not in our immediate area. The nearest one to us would be over at Taft, Texas.

Stephens: What area does it cover as far as taxing is concerned?

Elliot: It covers Taft, Odem, and mostly farm land areas through there. It doesn't take in any other town. And they do have a very fine hospital there now. At Taft, about a sixty-bed hospital.

Stephens: Do most of the rest home people go to Taft?

Elliot: Yes, since I closed this nursing home here. Cartwheel Lodge at Taft had 100 beds, and other than that, several of the people who were in my home went to Port Lavaca, to the Gulf Coast Nursing Home.

Stephens: Can you comment on the increasing medical cost since you have practiced here, how that has affected health care?

Elliot: Well, medical costs mainly have increased by way of diagnostic tests. The more diagnostic tests that are available, naturally they run the cost of health care up. Back, say twenty-some odd years ago, well, the major part of a laboratory examination consisted of a blood count and a urinalysis. And today where you can have any kind of fancy chemical test and so on naturally they're going to cost money. And diagnostic cytology tests for cancer, they, of course, are expensive, and all of your various X-rays as these medical things progress, will . . . well, the costs have to go up.



Stephens: Where is your lab?

Elliot: We have a twenty-four-hour lab service available to all the doctors here in this county. It is a pick-up service from Memorial Hospital in Corpus Christi. They pick up the samples from us in our office and deliver the results back in twenty-four hours.

Stephens: Just one in the South Texas region, one lab . . .

Elliot: Just one lab, yes. It's Sisson-Parks Lab at Memorial Hospital. They have this service, of course, you can mail them to several other labs but you won't get the twenty-four hour service thanks to the mail delivery.

Stephens: You were County Health Officer from 1949 to 1955, and then you've been Rockport City Health Officer since that time. Can you say something about your experiences as a health officer in the county and city since 1949?

Elliot: Well, we have survived without any help, especially, other than voluntary nurses, which I was always able to obtain somehow. We were able to hold mass immunizations for polio and diphtheria, tetanus, and also for typhoid especially following Hurricane Carla, and then again after Hurricane Buelah. And then we just this past year gave booster shots which were following the series that was given after Hurricane Buelah.

Stephens: This was on a mass basis.

Elliot: On a mass basis and no cost to the public. The state furnished the medication for us and also furnished syringes and everything else for it.

Stephens: Did you get paid?

Elliot: No.

Stephens: You donated your time.

Elliot: There was no pay involved for any of us. We just all did it. In fact, all the doctors have always worked together very well on this as well as on athletic examinations for school children and so on. They've all cooperated very well on it.

Stephens: You've had some experience with quarantining while you were Health Officer. Would you comment on that, please?

Elliot: Yes, sir. Way back when I was County Health Officer we did have several cases of Infectious Tuberculosis and the families were rather refractory and would not go to the state hospital. And, since at that time there was no way to legally send them to state hospital, we did quarantine them in their home. And, subsequent to that, well, they decided they might be better off in the state hospital.

Stephens: Now, what does a quarantine mean?

Elliot: Well, just exactly what it used to mean. We hammered up the signs on their door and on the fence post and

so on saying that it was a dangerous disease and everyone was to stay out and they were to stay in.

Stephens: By force of law?

Elliot: Right.

Stephens: Did you ever have any violators?

Elliot: No, I think it was one of the first times they'd ever seen a quarantine sign put up in this area.

Stephens: Oh. What about the polio scare? I understand there was some quarantine that went on then. Was that before your time?

Elliot: No, sir. When the first major outbreak of polio in this area . . . well, there wasn't exactly a quarantine. They did close down all the . . . oh, the one or two municipal swimming pool areas and so on that were in action. And they attempted to stop any groups from congregating in our churches and so on, in the youth groups especially, to cut down the spread of the disease.

Stephens: I read in the Rockport Pilot back files that occasionally they would quarantine the entire county and have road blocks. Were you here at the time of that action?

Elliot: No, no sir, I was not. The only time I remember any quarantine like that was just lately when we had the outbreak of Venezuelan equine encephalomyelitis. And at that time they did have the road blocked for horses,

and a mass program for the veterinarians to inoculate horses. But that's about the only road block that I remember.

Stephens: Dr. Elliot, you've been involved in some of the hurricanes that have hit the coast area since 1949. Can you comment on the medical problems involved in the storms, and then something on the storms themselves and their effect on the community?

Elliot: Well, the main storms that I've been involved with here have been Hurricane Carla and Buelah and then finally Celia lately. I have been here during all the storms. And during Hurricane Carla, for instance . . . well, during any of these storms I should say, well, all you can do is first aid. You take care of them the best way you can. And you try to patch them up with what facilities you have since you probably have no electric power to run any kind of X-ray machines or anything like that. You just go ahead and treat them. During Hurricane Carla we had many people evacuated to the grammar school of Rockport that had no food and so forth, so we had to just proceed to break into the cafeteria in order to feed them. There was plenty of food in the deep freeze in the cafeteria. And there was gas in the lines to run the ranges and we did have

water. All we needed was to get into the building and into the deep freeze and then we could feed the people. So we managed to take care of that.

Stephens: Who stood the cost?

Elliot: Well, eventually the Red Cross paid the school back for everything that was used. Because now I did ask for help. I appointed Mr. Oscar Lewis who was and still is the chief cook for St. Joseph Island, formerly for Sid Richardson, now for Perry Bass, to be in charge of doing the cooking and keeping track of what he used. And he did a very fine job of feeding all those people.

Stephens: Now where did the people come from?

Elliot: Well, they were people who didn't bother to evacuate and leave town when they should have, and all of a sudden found that their homes were under water.

Stephens: Is the high school on a high ground?

Elliot: Yes, the high school area is very high ground.

Stephens: So it doesn't get flooded.

Elliot: No, sir.

Stephens: Is it always used as evacuation center?

Elliot: Yes, it has been until we built our new Live Oak School. The new Live Oak Elementary School is now the evacuation center since it's practically a bomb shelter and has no windows and so forth and has emergency power and so on.

Stephens: Where specifically is that located? Is that Peninsula Oaks?

Elliot: Yes, it's out near Peninsula Oaks to the west of Rockport.

Stephens: So that's farther away and as you proceed inland it's higher.

Elliot: It's higher ground in the center of the peninsula.

Stephens: I see. And it's far enough away from the coast that it doesn't get as much wind damage.

Elliot: That's true and there's no glass to break there anyway.

Stephens: Oh. Now you were here when they had the old court house. Was it ever used . . .

Elliot: Oh, yes.

Stephens: . . . as an evacuation center because it was a, what, three story building?

Elliot: Well, yes, it was used, the top floor of it and also the jail was used. And then following that, after they tore that building down, well, then the new jail house, the second floor of that, was used for an evacuation center at one time.

Stephens: I see. But now Live Oak School takes care of people from the entire region.

Elliot: Yes, sir. Right.

Stephens: Anybody who needs shelter.

Elliot: That's right because they do have kitchen facilities and . . . well, they have their own wells there and have emergency power and sewage system. So it's by far the best when it comes to an emergency situation.

Stephens: The school has a separate sewage system?

Elliot: Yes, out there.

Stephens: Oh, it's the Live Oak School was built on the other side of the city limits?

Elliot: It's outside the city limits and therefore we have our own septic system out there.

Stephens: Oh. Was it built with education in mind, of course, but also, to serve as an emergency center?

Elliot: Well, since it's completely air conditioned and no windows it's a regular bomb shelter as I said. The concrete is pre-stressed and raised to form a roof and all of the walls are solid concrete. And I doubt if any kind of storm could blow it over.

Stephens: Well, now, does it have its own electrical power plant?

Elliot: Yes sir.

Stephens: Oh, it does.

Elliot: Yes sir.

Stephens: Well, now it gets its power from CP&L.

Elliot: Well, yes, but this is an emergency stand-by.

Stephens: Oh, it has an emergency . . .

Elliot: And then we also have a small emergency stand-by.

Stephens: A generator.

Elliot: Yes, generator and then we have a hook up with plugs to the outside where the Aransas County Emergency Corps can bring their big generators and plug them right in and then run the whole works.

Stephens: I see. Do you work closely with the Aransas County Emergency Corps?

Elliot: Well, in these storms, yes sir.

Stephens: Who is in the Corps? This is getting a little off the subject, but I want to talk about that if you would. Is it a volunteer unit?

Elliot: It's strictly a volunteer unit, yes sir.

Stephens: Now they handle fire calls . . .

Elliot: Fire, drowning, and any kind of emergency if it's a riot or anything of that type well, they are ready to be called out.

Stephens: Are they equiped for riot control?

Elliot: I think they are probably better equipped than anyone else we have. They're pretty well trained on the subject, and they have first aid knowledge. In most cases their two-way radio systems and everything are adequate to contact all of their vehicles and the sheriff's department, the police department, and to the highway patrol.



Stephens: You have a salaried chief of police; do you also have a salaried fire chief?

Elliot: No, it's entirely voluntary.

Stephens: Even the chief?

Elliot: That's right. Now, there's a fire marshall that . . . oh, his salary is about the same like say, the county health officer or the city health officer. Our pay is twenty-five dollars a month in which we pay all of the mailing of supplies back and forth to Austin and so forth out of that, and all postage and communication and letter writing. So you can see it's a non-profit concern.

Stephens: Well, you don't even make expenses though, do you?

Elliot: No, no, not . . .

Stephens: So this is just a civic function for the person involved.

Elliot: That's right.

Stephens: Which is you.

Elliot: And the fire marshall, his salary--if you would call it that--is for travel allowance.

Stephens: Oh. Now these are all volunteers--I mean people from various other occupations--and they do this in lieu of taxing themselves for professional emergency fire department, emergency corps or fire department. Is that correct?

Elliot: That's true. And I think they do a very fine job.

Stephens: Well, yes. Now, it's kind of a by-membership-only group?

Elliot: Yes, they . . .

Stephens: Or anybody who wants it? Of course, they can't . . .

Elliot: They are elected into membership if they apply. In other words, this group in order to work together on a fire or a situation and so on, they have to be compatible. And if they apply for membership and they are elected, then they have certain rules and regulations that they have to attend so many meetings. They have to attend so many practices. If they drop out, if they miss so many meetings then they're out. And they pay dues themselves . . . .

Stephens: They pay to be members.

Elliot: . . . to be members of this organization. They buy a lot of their own equipment themselves. And at the end of the year they put on a big Christmas party for the children in this area and their dues money goes to give treats away to the underprivileged children.

Stephens: Are they all Anglo-Americans or do you have any Mexican-American members?

Elliot: We have both.

Stephens: Do you? What is the size of the corps?

Elliot: Well, the County Emergency Corps actually is divided in three units. We have Lamar Fire Department. That's

Unit One. And Fulton Fire Department, Unit Two, and Rockport Fire Department, Unit Three. But all three together compose the Emergency Corps. And so I would that roughly we're talking about 100 members plus an auxillary--very active auxillary--of ladies who can also get out if they have to. They practice and they go to inter-city competition meets and practice or compete as to how fast or how long it takes them to hook up a section of hoses and put a fire out and so forth.

Stephens: The ladies?

Elliot: The ladies.

Stephens: Is that right? Dr. Elliot, you've been involved in public education in the county for most of the time you've been here. Can you say something about your board of education service and the public school system that operates here?

Elliot: Well, I was first elected to the Board of Trustees of Aransas County Independent School District in 1951. And I've served continuously as a trustee and have served as the President of the Board of Trustees since 1958. And during that time, well, we have progressed considerably from one campus. About the time I went on the board, we were just opening the first branch, the first section I should say, of the present high

school plant. And we had a wooden frame building at Fulton for a school and we had the old elementary building down at Rockport. And we had a little old stucco building to the north of the present building at Rockport campus which had served as high school which we turned into a junior high. And the football field and gymnasium all that was behind the Rockport Elementary School. And we also had just closed a colored school that was located down by the railroad track, and after I went on the board we voted to pay to send these colored students to Aransas Pass School and to send the high school colored children to Corpus Christi to school by bus. And this proceeded to go on for a couple of years. And then we decided that the cost of their education was so far exceeding the cost of anyone elses and Aransas Pass was having trouble repairing their school building for colored students and so on, and we decided that since we really only had eleven colored students in our whole school system that there was no future in it, that we'd just integrate. And so we were one of the first schools in Texas to integrate. And we did this way back before anyone else came along and told us we had to integrate. We just did it because we only had eleven students. We just put them in our school system.

Stephens: You integrated for economic reasons then? Not for legal reasons?

Elliot: That's right. We just thought why go to the trouble of having these children ride the bus and so on and also because of the fact that it was costing about \$1,000 per student to educate a colored student whereas it was only costing somewhere around \$200 a student for all the rest.

Stephens: Do you remember what year that was?

Elliot: Well, roughly it was fourteen years ago.

Stephens: '57, '58.

Elliot: About '58.

Stephens: And you integrated all twelve grades at once.

Elliot: Right, the whole works.

Stephens: Did you have any problems--racial problems?

Elliot: We never had any as far as I know.

Stephens: Now, have you always permitted Mexican-Americans to go to public schools here?

Elliot: Yes sir. Always.

Stephens: Do you know when that integration started?

Elliot: No, I really don't. They were going to public schools at the time that I went on the board. However, also now, there was the Sacred Heart Church was running a six grade parochial school, and they continued to run

that for . . . oh, I would say another ten years. Just in the last ten years they've closed the school. And so a lot of the Latin-American students, because of their religious affiliation, went to that school of their own choosing, but they were free to come to public school.

Stephens: I'll look into the history of the Sacred Heart School. What would you say the status of public education is in the county now?

Elliot: Well, I think we have a very fine school system. We're fully accredited. We've grown considerably to where, for instance, we are now in the category of the Class 3A football team, for instance, which means that we have more than 2,000 students in our school system. We are now starting kindergarten. We have about half of the five year old kids in kindergarten. Of course, with this large increase in students, well, the school has been able to give a more varied curriculum. This area was surveyed and we found . . . our major industry was ship building which requires metal trade workers. We are now offering a course for metal welding and have it fully accredited. And this is about the fifth year of its operation with students that graduate from our metal shop course and welding course, these are the

type students that would not ordinarily go on to college, but yet they are fully trained in a good trade and are picked up readily by the ship building and other industrial metal trade users.

Stephens: Do you have any other type of industry here for which you train persons?

Elliot: No, not after the survey. We have a very good commercial organization or teaching unit on regular typing, shorthand, commercial work, but other than that there isn't really any other phase that would help as far as any industry.

Stephens: Do you have a distributive education program here?

Elliot: I don't follow you.

Stephens: Distributive vocational.

Elliot: The only other vocation program is a vocational home economics program. And, otherwise, our main concern, really, has been to turn out people ready to enter the universities and colleges for higher education. And our percentage has been exceedingly high. We have probably the highest average of anyone in our South Texas area for students attending college. In fact, I believe on last year's graduating class, which was around ninety-four students, we had 85 per cent go to college. We also have incorporated adult education classes where once again we have taught welding

and metal work at night for people, some of them have been or are presently employed as helpers down at the shipyard and would like to better themselves by getting a certificate as a first class welder and get much better jobs and pay increases. And this has been a very successful course. And also, in the line of adult education, we have the high school equivalency courses. They're being taught for adults who would like to get a high school diploma. And this is done through the cooperation of state education, and these classes are taught at night at our elementary school.

Stephens: What about your teachers' pay scale. Do you pay above minimum--state minimum?

Elliot: Yes sir. Our teachers are paid at about the highest rate around here. We're on an equal par with Refugio and with also Austwell-Tivoli which have always been the highest. And our present scale is \$800 above the state scale.

Stephens: I see. Now since 1951, since you've been on the board, have you always maintained a higher than state minimum?

Elliot: Yes sir. We have. And we've always been able to fill all of our vacancies with accredited teachers.

Stephens: Because you do pay more, is that the reason?

Elliot: Yes sir. In fact, our vacancies are filled or will be



filled say for next year before the end of this school year. We know who we're going to have and so on and what vacancies, and we have very little trouble filling them. We have had a lot of young teachers.

Stephens: Now, most school systems get stacked with teachers from a particular school, and that seems to perpetuate the hiring. What sort of pattern exists here? Do you have teachers from Southwest Texas, from the University of Texas at Austin, from Texas A & I, or do you get most of your teachers from a particular source?

Elliot: No, our teachers come from all over. We have some very fine ones coming from . . . well, from . . . science teachers from Lamar Tech. We have teachers from the University of Colorado. We have teachers from California. And almost every school in Texas. It's a very wide variety of schools. We know which schools . . . well, emphasize certain subjects, and we attempt to fill our vacancies in that subject from that particular school because we realize that a graduate of that school is probably better trained than some of the others.

Stephens: Do you have any particular emphasis on the athletic program?

Elliot: Well, we have been a little lucky, I'd say. We don't have any special emphasis on it.

Stephens: I mean as far as spending more money or permitting your coaches or paying your coaches to go out and recruit the type of boys that . . .

Elliot: No sir. We have no recruitment. Our boys are all local boys and so on. And as far as spending more money, we hold our budget down considerably. We were rather lucky in the past few years to have had a few good teams and some very good players. We have one who I am especially fond of who's now playing with the Oakland Raiders.

Stephens: Who is that?

Elliot: One of our former boys. He was known locally as Big Tom Lewis. His correct name is Tom Gibson, and he's playing for the Oakland Raiders. He's going back to school now that the Raiders are through playing. He's finishing his work at North Texas State University.

Stephens: Yes, I remember the name. Is he the only one you can think about right now who is playing football?

Elliot: I believe he's the only pro-ball player we have from Rockport. We have a lot of very fine high school players go on and play in colleges and are doing very well. For instance, this very past year--this last year--three of the . . . the three fullbacks for Texas A & I, all three of them--the starters--were from Rockport.

Stephens: Oh, is that right.

Elliot: We also . . . far back in memory I remember Ernest Henry Camele playing for Trinity University as a back. He had been all-state player from Rockport.

Stephens: Do you place any particular pressure on your coaches to come up with winning teams or be fired?

Elliot: No, I wouldn't say that. We had one coach leave us last year. We hated to see him go. He'd been with us for twenty years. And he left us merely to take over the new job as Athletic Director and Head Basketball Coach for the new university at Loreda Junior College.

Stephens: Oh. What would you consider in your twenty years' experience on the board the bright spots of public education?

Elliot: Well, the bright spots, of course, are always when you see students go on to college or graduate from your school system and go on to college and appear on the Dean's honor roll and so forth, which we have several this year from here on the various Dean's list. And the University of Texas there's two boys. Our students have done very well academically in the colleges and universities that they've gone to.

Stephens: So this is what you consider success then, that you train them well enough to do well when they go to institutions of higher learning.

Elliot: That's right. Our basic thought is that we are training them for whatever they are going into, no matter what, to do a good job, whether they're going out into the industrial trade, or whether they're going on to college. We want them to do the best they can.

Stephens: On another subject, Dr. Elliot, you are actively involved in the Boy Scouts. Can you comment on the scouting program in the county?

Elliot: Well, I have been actively involved in Boy Scouts for a long time. I'm on the Executive Board of the Gulf Coast Council of the Boy Scouts of America. And I have been Cub Committeeman, Scoutmaster, Explorers' Advisor and so forth here in Rockport. And more or less anything they need done, well, I'll work with or do it from merit badge counseling or anything else. And we do have a very fine program. I'm especially interested at the present time in the exploring program which involves the older boys. I think it is great when you can get a group of boys fourteen to seventeen years old and have forty of them show up to a meeting on each Monday night, and then go ahead and not only participate in the Explorer Olympics for the council, but bring home the first place trophy. And we go down and take part for the first time in the canoe races

fifty-five miles down the Rio Grande River to Laredo through pretty rough country when they've never even seen the place . . . we had two canoes in that race with twenty-two boys working and it's quite a program. I enjoy it and I know the boys enjoy it.

Stephens: How many scout troops do you have in the county?

Elliot: We have three scout troops here in Rockport. We have two cub packs and we have one explorer post.

Stephens: And do you know when scouting first started in Aransas County?

Elliot: Well, the first charter troop was Troop 49, and I really couldn't tell you the exact date. I have pictures of them--the original group--down in my office. But it was somewhere around forty years back, possibly more. Troop 49 has been in existence for quite awhile. And then Troop 280 was formed which was sponsored by the Sacred Heart Catholic Church. And then Troop 281 was formed which is sponsored by the men of the First Methodist Church.

Stephens: Who sponsors 49?

Elliot: The men in the Presbyterian Church has sponsored Troop 49. Now the Explorer Post 49 is sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post. And the two cub packs, one is sponsored by the Rotary Club and the other is sponsored by the Rockport Lions Club.

Stephens: Do you know the numbers of those or do they have numbers?

Elliot: One is Pack 49. That's the one sponsored by the Rotary Club. They were all 49's to start with. We had a pack, a troop, and a post.

Stephens: What is this other one now?

Elliot: The Rockport Lions sponsor the other one. It's 347 or 374, one or the other. I don't remember it, though.