

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
NUMBER
88

Interview with
Mr. Robert Bluntzer
May 30, 1969

Place of Interview: Corpus Christi, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. A. Ray Stephens

Terms of Use:

Approved:

Date:

Open
Robert D. Bluntzer
(signature)
11/18/71

Copyright ©2016

**THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS
IN THE CITY OF DENTON, TEXAS**

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system without permission in writing from the Director of the Oral History Program or the University Archivist, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas 76203

Oral History Collection

Robert Bluntzer

Interviewer: Dr. A. Ray Stephens:

Place of Interview: Corpus Christi, Texas

Date: May 30, 1969

Attorney: It must be that he had a tremendous amount of conversation during the three preceding years to get around to this business of Hibernia.

Mr. Bluntzer: Yes. Yes.

Attorney: There again, of course, Roberts contend that there . . . either the Alsatians or the English came in later and reconciled the speech problem . . .

Mr. Bluntzer: I don't know.

Attorney: . . . that was occurring there between the Irish and the Mexican. One of them speaking Gallic. Another one a member of this Hibernian Society this old order of Hibernias from which a lot of McGuires came from you know. And the others in contrast to that wonderful, wonderful people. That's what this foundation is about. That's what is going to occur, I think, the formal organization of it. It's chartered now, and it needs to be organized. And very distinguished people are handling . . .

Dr. Stephens: You had it chartered recently?

Attorney: Yes. The Home Sons and Daughters of San Patricio de Hibernia.

Bluntzer: Society of the Sons and Daughters . . .

Attorney: Of San Patricio de Hibernia

Bluntzer: That's the society

Stephens: This is open just to direct descendants or this is . . .

Bluntzer: Well, there were . . .

Stephens: . . . open to friends and relatives or what?

Attorney: Well, they haven't been adopted, but we can take a peep at the proposed by-laws which, of course, will follow the standard pattern. (1) That there is . . . the foundation is organized. (2) The foundation then creates a trust. And the terms of that trust are such that no founder or no contributor to the trust can ever withdraw anything from it. That's for the purpose of getting an exempt status from the federal government and also an exempt tax status from the status.

Stephens: The reason I was asking on . . . like some school alumni associations have alumni and then . . . and friends of the group directly involved.

Attorney: Well, that's the purpose of this trust. Of course, first the founders are . . . will have their blood lines and no doubt will have their genealogies on the back of their certificates and so on as they do our in Tucson and in Washington. And those who are members of the . . . are descendants of the Lewis and Clark Expedition they have beauti . . . have you seen those? Beautiful illustrations . . .

Stephens: No, I haven't.

Attorney: . . . of membership, and then on the back they have their genealogies. And then they have another over here, carved, that's beautiful who are their friends who have contributed to the trust.

Stephens: And they don't . . . I see. Well, the reason I was thinking you . . . you don't get the Dallas Morning News down here, and there's no reason why you should. No reason why . . .

Attorney: We get it because it's . . .

Stephens: Not much reason why we should.

Bluntzer: We get it for one person's writings up there.

Stephens: Tolbert?

Bluntzer: (Chuckle) Frank X. Tolbert.

Stephens: We saw a write-up this spring where he did several articles, in fact, a picture, which . . . he wasn't in residence for the picture one day when it wasn't connected with the story. But he's written several about the ghost and about the town and the old house. And, of course, his article this spring was how unkempt everything was, (chuckle) you know.

Bluntzer? Yes, that's true.

Attorney: Well, now our problem immediately is to qualify for these . . . for these medallion things. In order to do that we must produce some evidence of what type construction was there before it was destroyed in this area which presents a problem. Now our best thinking at the present time is that it's similar to the house that are still in being to some

extent in Saltillo. Now bear in mind that these Hibernians, too, were exposed to the construction in New York and as far down as Baltimore and in Washington. And some of their craftsmen that came on the Albean and finally got here as early as 1830 in the springtime were craftsmen who had been trained in New York. On the other hand, just across the river from them were these people who were living in . . . well, they were living in what was then called Marguerita.

Bluntzer: Santa Marguerita.

Attorney: Santa Marguerita but now is more nearly the pocket line.

Bluntzer: Yes, that's true.

Attorney: And they had structures that were high upon the hilltops, so to speak, and were, we think, similar to those that were being constructed with the mud and the straw in Saltillo as were most of them.

Bluntzer: Yes.

Attorney: Undoubtedly those Mexican people who were living here on this vast outpost . . . yes ma'am.

Secretary: _____

Attorney: Yes, I must.

Secretary: _____

Attorney: I'm handling matter for Rocky that's most important, gentlemen.
(Pause in tape)

Bluntzer: Role in Texas history because it was . . . first it was in . . . it stood a fort invasion.

Bluntzer: See, and it was built not to hold them, but it was built to . . . it was a kind of a rear guard action place in a spy deal. See? And there was more fighting there than any place in Texas because it dated way back before the revolution and then past the revolution because in 1842 they had a . . . they had a battle there. See? You remember when Mexico claimed everything south of the . . . of the Nueces? But somehow or another, see, the glamor of these other ones . . .

Attorney: This matter waiting to go to Sinton . . .

Oral History Collection

Mr. Robert Bluntzer

Place of Interview: Corpus Christi, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. A. Ray Stephens

Date: May 30, 1969

Dr. Stephens: This is an interview with Mr. Robert Bluntzer, Corpus Christi, Texas, May 30, 1969. Mr. Bluntzer, would you describe for us your acquaintance with this Coastal Bend area?

Mr. Bluntzer: Well, I was . . . I was born in Corpus Christi in November . . . November 20, 1897. And from there I . . . my father moved to Atascosa County where we had a ranch. And then we moved back and lived at Round Lake in San Patricio for a while. And that's my first memories of the social life. I was just a little boy and . . .

Dr. Stephens: When did you move back to this area?

Mr. Bluntzer: We moved back when I was about 5. I moved . . . we moved back to Round Lake. We lived at San Patricio.

Dr. Stephens: Round Lake is in San Patricio County?

Mr. Bluntzer: Well . . .

Dr. Stephens: Or is it in the town?

Mr. Bluntzer: . . . it is San Patricio town. It's a mile from the center of town.

Dr. Stephens: Oh.

Mr. Bluntzer: Of course, my memories then were horseback riding and hunting

and trapping and all stuff like that.

Stephens: Do you remember when the homeseekers first started coming in?

Bluntzer: Well, the homeseekers . . .

Stephens: Do you recall that?

Bluntzer: Oh, yes. I remember that.

Stephens: Can you describe that for us?

Bluntzer: Well, it was just all prairie and they can't . . . they knew how to farm these people did that came in and they plowed it up. And I think they paid about \$25 an acre for it.

Stephens: Where did they come from? Where did this land . . .

Bluntzer: Well, they came from . . . oh, the Midwest a lot of them, I think.

Stephens: Do you . . .

Bluntzer: And then at Robstown a lot of them came from the cotton belt of Texas. The . . . you see, over in Robstown, Lockhart, and Temple and places like that . . .

Stephens: Did you ever hear of how Mr. Paul and others encouraged people to come from the Midwest? And what sort of stories would he tell them to get them to make the trip?

Bluntzer: Well, he was a good salesman, and he was selling them something . . . had something to sell, too.

Stephens: Did you ever see him here at all?

Bluntzer: Yes, yes, but I didn't know him very well. My father knew him, he was a small fellow, I think. See, I was just a kid then.

Stephens: Full of energy?

Bluntzer: Yes, I think so.

Stephens: Always going around.

Bluntzer: Yes. But . . .

Stephens: You didn't hear any particular stories on how they might've sold the people or conned them into it?

Bluntzer: Well, they just . . . this was wide open spaces out here, and I guess God making too many people up there (chuckle) . . .

Stephens: (Chuckle) I guess we can blame it on Him.

Bluntzer: So that was . . . I remember Walter Timon (?) told me . . . he had a ranch over here in San Patricio County, fine, fertile land. And he was . . . he was holding out for a good price. And I said, "Well," --the ranch was getting old and all that-- "and why don't you that?" Said, "Well" . . . "or take the lesser price for it." He said, "Well, God is making people everyday, and he just made so much good land." (chuckle)

Stephens: (Chuckle)

Mrs. Sparks: (Chuckle)

Bluntzer: and that's right.

Stephens: Yes.

Bluntzer: That's what makes land go up, see? And I imagine that's just theory that the Midwest was beginning to populate pretty, you know, fast. And here a kid he'd looked forward maybe to farming 100 acres, and he'd come down here and farm 600, see? There was just lots of land here, and good land. That's what it was. And these . . . and Paul recognized this fact. See, that's all theory on my part, but that's . . . that's . . .

Stephens: Well, now this area land around Robstown was bought from the Driscoll Ranch.

Bluntzer: Driscoll Ranch, yes.

Stephens: Did you know the Driscolls?

Bluntzer: Well, I . . . yes, I knew both . . . I didn't know the original. But Bob Driscoll and Clara Driscoll, I knew them.

Stephens: Mr. Bluntzer, I was wondering . . . you . . . you once said Driscoll Ranch being sold off, didn't you?

Bluntzer: Yes . . .

Stephens: That is that . . .

Bluntzer: I saw George H. Paul.

Stephens: Paul. Did anybody else buy up a portion of the Driscoll land?

Bluntzer: I don't think so.

Stephens: Did Driscoll himself sell off any of it to the individual farmers?

Bluntzer: He had heirs to that. No, I don't think so.

Stephens: He kept them.

Bluntzer: Yes, Paul was the subdivider. Yes.

Stephens: Do you remember about the past. . . about the King Ranch subdividing for homeseekers?

Bluntzer: No, I . . . they never did subdivide as I remember. They sold some land to Chapman.

Stephens: Yes.

Bluntzer: And he kept it.

Stephens: He didn't sub-divide it himself?

Bluntzer: No. Well, he farmed the whole thing.

Stephens: Oh, what size area was that?

Bluntzer: Oh, I don't know. It was Laureles (?) Ranch. It's a big area, about 20 thousand acres.

Stephens: Well, what about the area known as Riviera?

Bluntzer: Well, I don't know anything about that. Oh, they . . . I guess that the . . . there was a sub-division down around Kingsville of the King Ranch, but I don't know who did it or what.

Stephens: Do you remember about the Taft Ranch?

Bluntzer: Well, vaguely.

Stephens: Your family didn't have any connections with that?

Bluntzer: Well, I . . . no.

Stephens: Well, what about . . . let's see, after George H. Paul sold off the Driscoll land and started selling off the Taft Ranch land . . . were you acquainted with his actions over there and bringing homeseekers?

Bluntzer: No, you see, I was just a young fellow then, and I wasn't interested. I just remember.

Stephens: Well, you said your memory started about age 8. You said about . . .

Bluntzer: About Robstown.

Stephens: Oh, about Robstown. Oh, I see just your . . . I see.

Bluntzer: I remember there.

Stephens: I didn't know if you maybe heard your parents talk about it.

Bluntzer: Well, I heard my father say that he bought the first that Paul sold him, the first block in Robstown. And he decided that, well, a town never grew close to a railroad or to a depot so he picked it three blocks down (chuckle). And the town grew close to the . . . right at the depot (chuckle). So he had the first choice, see, and that's why he selected this block three blocks down away from the depot. See? And Robstown built right around the depot.

Stephens: Do you remember about the Marazak plow?

Bluntzer: Yes, I remember about using it.

Stephens: Tell us about that.

Bluntzer: Well, it was just somebody that found something that did the work.

Stephens: That is the . . . is that how you pronounce that?

Bluntzer: Huh?

Stephens: Marazak?

Bluntzer: Meri . . . yes, Marizak, that's right. He was a Bohemian, I thing, and a . . . one of these mechanically-minded people and the reason in this country why the . . . the . . . cultivated land was confined to sand, see, sandy hills and mixed land because they didn't have any plows that could plow it. See? And then the shrubby mesquite came in, and without the Marazak . . . I think he must have had the first plow. I don't know, but his was sure used a lot. And it did the job.

Stephens: Can you describe the plow itself?

Bluntzer: Well, it was just a, as I remember it, just a turning plow, you know.

Stephens: How many bottoms?

Bluntzer: Oh, I don't remember (chuckle). I think two.

Stephens: Two?

Bluntzer: Maybe. Couldn't have been three because it . . . see, in those days they had difficulty having something to pull it, see?

Stephens: Do you remember what pulled it?

Bluntzer: Well, it had steam engine.

Stephens: And do you remember the names of the maker?

Bluntzer: No, I don't. Do you?

Mrs. Sparks: No.

Stephens: What were you going to ask?

Mrs. Sparks: Oh, I was going to tell him . . . ask him about if he remembered the running mesquite. That was one . . .

Bluntzer: Sure, the running Mesquite.

Mrs. Sparks: . . . real . . . one of the big problems.

Bluntzer: Oh, that was a big problem because if you had just plain mesquite there was a world of Mexican labor, and they could grub that. They couldn't grub . . . couldn't make any headway with the running mesquite because it was all root, see, just a little foot high . . . what would you call it . . . shrub or something. And it has roots just tremendous, just like bamboo or something like that. And the plow . . . and the steam plow plowed through these.

Stephens: Mr. Bluntzer, what did you do for entertainment when you were growing up in Robstown . . . or rather, excuse me, in the Robstown vicinity?

Bluntzer: Well, I lived . . . we lived outside of Robstown.

Stephens: Right. In the vicinity there.

Bluntzer: Yes, in the vicinity. Well, we went to dances, hunt and fish and run coyotes and things like that. I remember my dad used to say . . . was talking to him once, and he told me and friends in the vicinity sometimes, he said, "You know," he said, "this damn young generation, they're not worth a damn." He said, "All they know how to do is to chase cats, you know, bobcats, squeeze girls, and smash cars." (chuckle) Tells all about the generation gap then, too.

Stephens: No new topic.

Bluntzer: (Chuckle) Well . . .

Stephens: Yes, but . . .

Bluntzer: Well, now as far as entertainment I . . . for young people or . . .

Stephens: Yes, you . . . you can . . .

Bluntzer: Well, there's . . . they had . . . well, I remember this. They had dances, see, like they . . . these country dances. In those days they'd dance all night.

Stephens: How often did you do this now?

Bluntzer: Well, not very often. And they'd go . . . we rode horseback and . . . but they'd dance all night. Now down here in Corpus, why, they wouldn't dance but till 12 o'clock.

Stephens: Oh, that's quitting time.

Bluntzer: Now that's . . . quitting time.

Stephens: Now this was whites and Mexicans who were at it or . . .

Bluntzer: Well, in those days the . . .

Stephens: No mixing?

Bluntzer: No mixing. And the Mexicans would have their dances, and it was rather dangerous to go to a . . . to a Mexican dance, you know; you wanted to get killed, that's a good place to get it (chuckle).

Stephens: That's a good place. Well, now was there any . . . was there any mixing between the . . . and dating between the Anglo boys and Mexican girls and the other way around?

Bluntzer: No. Not . . . I'd say . . . well, there was a bit of dating.

Stephens: Either openly or illicitly?

Bluntzer: Well, no, not too much. But, of course, in South Texas there were a lot of the old Texas families that . . . South Texas families that are intermarried, see, with the Mexicans. But it's just like in any other race there're different types of . . . different classes of Mexicans. But that . . .

Stephens: But not much social mingling at all here between the two groups?

Bluntzer: Well, no, not too much.

Stephens: Did you have any . . .

Bluntzer: But then . . . there you come back to the class, you see. You have the high-class Mexican and there was, and there was intermarrying, see. And the big . . . some of the big families in South Texas are married . . . their grandmothers were Mexicans.

Stephens: Did you have any distinction between the early families and

- Bluntzer: Well, yes, I can remember that.
- Stephens: Any conflict between groups?
- Bluntzer: Well, I remember that the . . . that the cow man resented the idea of plowing up the good grass, see. But there wasn't any open conflict.
- Stephens: Well, what about the newcomers versus the oldtimers? That is the early settlers here and then a group of people came in. Did you have any conflicts?
- Bluntzer: Well, you mean as far as politics is concerned?
- Stephens: As far as politics or . . . or anything.
- Bluntzer: Well, there wasn't any open fight about it, but it . . . they . . . in politics the newcomer kind of . . . you know, he had his weight in the deal. I remember Walter Timon (?) at one time here. He was the czar of South Texas . . . of politics in this area. But he was one of those who resented newcomers, see, and they finally beat him.
- Stephens: Does he say . . . did you find out why he resented them?
- Bluntzer: Oh, I don't know. He was the . . . why.
- Stephens: Well, I was thinking in terms of several reasons. Was it because that he . . . he was in power, and he didn't want anybody else sharing it with him? Or was he Catholic, and most of the newcomers were Protestants?
- Bluntzer: Well, I don't know . . . well, most of the newcomers were Protestants, but, of course, there were a lot of Protestants here, too, that were . . .

Stephens: Yes, but this would diminish the influence of the Catholics, though. Was this . . . do you think . . .

Bluntzer: No, this was . . . I don't think that religion was mixed up too much in this.

Stephens: Okay.

Bluntzer: Oh, of course, this territory down here is predominantly Catholic as far as politics is concerned because if every Catholic would vote for a Catholic you wouldn't have anything but Catholics, and that's how the . . .

Stephens: Is it still the same thing now?

Bluntzer: Well, it's . . . yes. Because if every Mexican votes, you know, 90 percent of them are Catholics, see? And if they voted on that basis, why . . . no, but there was a resentment, but it wasn't a . . . it wasn't what you see in the movies--none of that.

Stephens: Now . . .

Bluntzer: It was mainly on the . . . I think, that they ruined the good grass. See at that time these old cow men they were just cow men and then . . . see?

Stephens: Yes. Well, now you lived outside of Robstown didn't you?

Bluntzer: And my . . . reason my daddy went into farming . . . he didn't know a thing about farming. He said, "Now this land's getting too high to graze. And I'm either going to have to sell it, or I'm going to have to start clearing you know . . . clearing it up to farm it."

Stephens: Did taxes go up on it?

Bluntzer: No, not much. Nothing like we . . .

Stephens: Oh, it's just that he could get more for it than . . .

Bluntzer: Well, it . . . I don't . . .

Stephens: . . . make more profit by selling it than he could by . . .

Bluntzer: Well, he had a \$20 cow, see. \$25 an acre land.

Stephens: Yes. Well, let's see. I believe our subject was amusements.
Do you remember besides dances now whatever . . . what
else you might've done?

Bluntzer: Well, they'd have . . . they'd have celebrations here in
town, you know. They'd have rodeos and tournament was a
thing they used to run. You know what tournament is? Well,
they had three things up there like a seven and then at
the . . . down on the bottom they'd have a ring and you'd run
a horse through there with a lance, see, and try to catch
the ring. Now that was one of the big deals.

Stephens: (Chuckle)

Bluntzer: Yes, and this was really an art because you're running up . . .
your ring'd be an inch and a half in diameter, and you
run the horse full tilt, and you have to spear it. And
there'd be three of them. And I think they'd run through
there three times. Now that . . .

Stephens: Did you do that?

Bluntzer: No, I didn't That was before my time.

Stephens: Before your time.

Bluntzer: But that's when I was a kid. I remember that. And then they'd queen the . . . whoever'd win it could crown the queen, and then I remember box suppers, ice cream deals, you know.

Stephens: Where were these held?

Bluntzer: Well, around San Patricio, all through . . .

Stephens: Well, no. At school, churches, or homes?

Bluntzer: Well, in those ice . . . the box suppers and things were usually church deals or at school.

Stephens: Was this part of the community if it were at church or just for the members of the parish?

Bluntzer: Well, it was . . . well, it'd be both, maybe for the parish.

Stephens: Well, are you . . . you are Catholic.

Bluntzer: Yes. Of course, in San Patricio we're all Catholics.

Stephens: Yes.

Bluntzer: But that . . .

Mrs. Sparks: Well, you used to play polo.

Bluntzer: Well, that was way back. That was after his time.

Stephens: Horse polo.

Bluntzer: Yes.

Stephens: This is after . . .

Bluntzer: Well, that was after the '30's.

Stephens: Oh, but you didn't have . . . this didn't come in until then?

Bluntzer: No, no. That was after . . . oh, I was 30 years old, I guess. We had a polo . . .

Stephens: How did you happen to introduce polo in South Texas?

Bluntzer: Well, I was living out on the ranch, and I had a friend. I was in an officers' training school in Louisville, Kentucky, Field Artillery Officers' Training School. And the Major was a man named Grady Kinsolving. And after the war . . . of course, I was in the . . . just a candidate there. I didn't get to pow wow with him. You know, I was going through the officers' training school. But he came down here to run . . . to publish . . . to edit . . . no, what . . . publish . . . no, he's not a publisher. . . the Caller-Times. And then I met him, and I was out in the country, and we had horses and all that. And one day we were out together and had lunch, and he said, "We ought" . . . he had played polo. And he said, "Well, what we ought to do is organize some of these cowboys around here into some polo games." So that's what we did. We had Robstown, Beeville, Odom, and San Diego and then I forgot maybe . . . maybe another . . . and Corpus, see. And we'd just haul our . . . we had plenty of feed. And then we'd just have . . . had two horse trailers . . . you know, two horse trailers, and we'd just haul them. If we happened to have a game in Beeville, why, we'd just put the horses in and haul them up there and then after the game haul them back. And it was really rough because we didn't . . . they didn't call any fouls if you had a broken bone or something.

Stephens: I see.

Bluntzer: One of my men got killed here.

Stephens: Is that right?

Mrs. Sparks: Bob, do you remember much about the activities of Texas Rangers in your early life around in South Texas?

Bluntzer: Well, no, but I remember that they'd send . . . when you'd have these hot elections or something'd happen, they'd send one or two Rangers down there . . . down here . . . and everybody respected the Ranger, and anybody . . . I mean everybody. And in that I was . . . one of my real dear friends was Bill Sterling. He . . . he rose from private to the head of it. He's . . . I think he's the only man that ever did that . . . rose from private to attorney general. And, oh, he lived he lived here in Corpus.

Stephens: That was adjutant general.

Bluntzer: Well, adjutant general, but he's head of the Rangers, wasn't he?

Stephens: Yes.

Bluntzer: Yes.

Stephens: That's right. That was the title.

Bluntzer: And so I got alone one day going some place with Bill, and I asked him, I said, "Why . . . how in the hell do the Rangers handle things like they do? You know, how they can get off a train and stop all this lawlessness." Well, he told me, said that a Ranger when he goes to do that he never goes to the bottom. He goes to the top man, see, and has a showdown with him and preferably in public, see. And if he wants to shoot it out, why, all right. But none of them want to shoot it out, see. Then he loses face with his following.

Stephens: The next thing . . .

Bluntzer: And . . . well, the next thing . . . no, the next thing the Ranger does is to run him out of town, see, after he doesn't come through with the duel which they don't do.

Stephens: That takes a pretty tough man to do that.

Bluntzer: And he told me another thing. He said a Ranger never hits you with his fist closed. He'll slap you because of the psychology of it. That when you get slapped you're addled. See, if I'd punch you in the nose, why, you'd get mad. But if I . . . for a while you'd be . . . if I slapped you, you'd be addled. It has a psychological effect. And some of those Rangers especially Hamer. He died just not long ago. He had an arm like a person's leg, and they said he could just slap you and knock you down. That's the guy that got . . .

Stephens: He didn't get to Bonnie and Clyde, though, did he?

Bluntzer: Well, he's the one that was . . .

Stephens: He got caught?

Bluntzer: No, he's the one that was sent to bring them in dead or alive, and he brought him in.

Stephens: Yes, but . . .

Bluntzer: That picture show is not . . .

Stephens: That they had kidnapped him earlier, and this was the retribution?

Bluntzer: No, no, no, he was sent out . . .

Stephens: A lot of the Texas Rangers came from this area like Bill Sterling came from Odom and a number of others did, didn't they?

Bluntzer: Yes. Well, but they came from all over. It wasn't . . .

Mrs. Sparks: Did Sterling come from Odom?

Stephens: That's what he says in his book Thousand Trails. Isn't that right?

Mrs. Sparks: I thought . . .

Stephens: Isn't that where he's from?

Bluntzer: Yes . . . yes . . . he's . . . yes.

Mrs. Sparks: I thought he got a . . . recruited a lot of Rangers from Odom, but I didn't think he was from Odom himself. I don't believe he was.

Bluntzer: I don't know whether he was from Odom.

Stephens: _____

Bluntzer: No, I don't think so. No, I don't think so. Might've been from Alice or the Valley. I think he's from the Valley.

Mrs. Sparks: I think so, too, because . . .

Stephens: Did he say what particular psychology they went into to develop into a good Ranger?

Bluntzer: Well, he told me this about it. He said "There's something funny about the Ranger business. You can take a deputy out here--a good one--and you put a Ranger badge on him, and he becomes a Ranger. There's something just like when you join the Marines or something like that." He says that there . . . it has a psychological effect and he couldn't explain it. But he says, "It's a fact."

Stephens: Was this town of Bluntzer named for your grandfather?

Bluntzer: Yes.

Stephens: And when did he first come to that area?

Bluntzer: He came in 18 . . . he bought the ranch in 1870 and . . .
Huh? I say he bought the ranch in 1870, and he lived in
San Patricio for a while. And then this ranch was right
across the river from San Patricio, and he built a log
cabin over there. That was during this time before the
lumber, see. No, it wasn't before the lumber but anyhow.
Then they brought the lumber in, and, I think in the '70's they
built the old ranch . . . old Bluntzer ranch home. It's
still there. They gave it to the sisters, you know, as a
retreat place.

Mrs. Sparks: Bob, now was Bluntzer named for your father or your grandfather?

Bluntzer: Grandfather.

Stephens: What was his name?

Bluntzer: Nicholas Bluntzer.

Stephens: Nicholas.

Bluntzer: Yes.

Mrs. Sparks: Bob, San Patricio was the old . . . San Patricio was the
county seat of San Patricio County.

Bluntzer: Yes.

Mrs. Sparks: Now was it . . . it was a railroad but . . .

Bluntzer: Yes. The railroad coming through Sinton caused Sinton
to be the county seat, and then it just died on the vine.

Mrs. Sparks: Did San Patricio . . . the San Patricio County people . . . I mean, the San Patricio town people resent Sinton that . . .

Bluntzer: I don't think so, no. They just realized what happened.

Stephens: Yes. Who owns the area around San Patricio?

Bluntzer: It's split up now.

Stephens: Who owns the area that'll be restored?

Bluntzer: Oh, various people, and most of them are just old vacant lots out there, not worth anything.

Stephens: Do you intend to do anything with this new society as long as . . .

Bluntzer: Well, this depends on how the society gets along?

Stephens: Do you intend to make it a recreational town for the Corpus area out there?

Bluntzer: No, if we do anything we . . . and if we're successful we're going to try to make a little area Williamsburg out of it. Now that's what we are trying to do, preserve the old . . . the history of it, see.

Stephens: Oh. Would you tell us how in . . . who came up with this idea and how it has progressed in the last few weeks?

Bluntzer: Well, it's progressed fine, but the person who really came up with the idea was Mrs. Dudley Dougherty, see. She thought, well, we'll, you know, have a society out there because she loved her . . . my aunts, you know.

Stephens: Most people . . .

Bluntzer: And she is Irish. She's . . . was a Calhoun from Charcoal. That again?

Stephens: Right.

Bluntzer: Society of the Sons and Daughters of Saint Patricio de Hibernia is the name of the society.

Stephens: And when was it incorporated?

Bluntzer: Oh, just last week.

Stephens: Last week.

Bluntzer: Yes.

Stephens: And I believe you said a while ago that recent water developments or whatever you said that was . . . had something to do with the area.

Bluntzer: Well, we . . . the people who have their roots out there--not only them but just lots of other people--don't want to see history destroyed.

Stephens: Now what was this water development you were talking about a while ago? What's the name of it?

Bluntzer: Well, it's . . . there's a proposal now to have two dam sites that they're going to have to . . . going to have to select one of them, see. And one of them's right here close to town and the other one's up the stream a little, see. And we just don't believe that they will destroy that history when there's an alternative and lots of people on up the line.

Stephens: Well, what exactly is at San Patricio besides the graveyard and the house and some vacant lots?

Bluntzer: What do you mean, it's history?

Stephens: Yes. Well, what's there right now before you restore anything?

Bluntzer: Well, there . . . old . . . there're at least six old homes, square nail homes, you know, that date way back.

Stephens: How far back? To the empresario period?

Bluntzer: Well . . .

Stephens: Civil War period?

Bluntzer: . . . I would say Civil War, see.

Stephens: Civil War.

Bluntzer: And then there're four graveyards--an Indian graveyard and then an old, old private graveyard and then in San Patricio there are two graveyards. There are four historical markers--one at San Patricio, one at the . . . and this McGloin home is the only empresario home in Texas, as I understand it. And there's one there and then there's two . . . there's one in the town of San Patricio, see, where these Texas Republic soldiers were killed, and there's one out at the old graveyard see. So there're four graveyards and four markers . . . Centennial markers, see. Now they're put up there . . . they've been well documented. They . . . you know. And then there's this Indian village there that really has a history. This first discovery by de Leon . . . you know, de Leon went . . . came after La Salle. See, the Frenchmen came in Texas, and the Spanish were up to run him out. Well, I think in his last invasion he . . . well, maybe it was before that that he discovered this . . . the

Nueces River, and they mapped it, see. But we've got a map that shows here . . . La Salle's map shows that . . . it shows the Nueces River. It was called the Rio del Oro then, see, and then they renamed it Nueces River.

Mrs. Sparks: Rio del Oro was river of gold, wasn't it? Gold rush . . .

Bluntzer: Yes. They must've found gold up it, and then they found pecan trees and renamed it. Well, anyhow, this map shows the . . .

Stephens: Nueces means nuts.

Bluntzer: (Chuckle) This map shows _____ doesn't show Corpus because Corpus wasn't there yet, you know, see. Well, it . . . in the river beds still there are . . . in the sand banks in the river beds you can still find arrowheads. And more than that, you can find thousands upon thousands of chips, you know, where they made their arrowheads, and I believe that there must've been a manufacturing plant there, you know . . .

Mrs. Sparks: Did you find . . .

Bluntzer: . . . because that's an expert's job making an arrowhead.

Stephens: Yes.

Bluntzer: Huh?

Stephens: Yes. Do you still find them there?

Bluntzer: Yes, and that's 300 years just shifting back and forth in the

Mrs. Sparks: This book says that Colonel Henry L. Kinney of . . .

Stephens: Let's name the book.

Mrs. Sparks: This book that says Texas Irish Empresarios and Their Colony .

Stephens: By Father Oberste.

Mrs. Sparks: Yes . . . says that Colonel Henry L. Kinney of Flower Bluff . . . Flower Bluff, and it doesn't say anything about Corpus Christi. The date is 1841 . . . I mean, this is writing about 1841 so evidently it was Flower Bluff instead of Corpus Christi at that time. . . I mean . . .

Bluntzer: Yes. Well, see, Kinney was here before Taylor. You're right about that.

Stephens: Yes. And it seems like I've . . .

Bluntzer: It's a family story. To give you an idea after the boom . . . see, Corpus had a boom. My daddy said that they had a place here called the Alta Vista Hotel. It must've had a . . . it was a . . . there was a wooden building . . . I mean frame building that must've had 100 rooms in it, wasn't it? It was . . . didn't you thing? At least 50. It was three story . . .

Mrs Sparks: I remember it had 100 rooms.

Bluntzer: Yes, it had 100 rooms in it. Well, that's out here now about a mile. Yes, by the Donagan home. It's out here about, I would say, a mile or two miles. Well, when the boom left it, why, then there wasn't any . . . they didn't have any guests, and they just closed up. Well, my grandfather, Nicholas Bluntzer, he liked to come home . . . I mean, come to town. And when he came to town, he liked to see all his friends. And, of course, where you could see all your friends was in the saloons around here, see. So

he got high (chuckle), and somebody decided they'd sell him the Alta Vista Hotel. So he brought it for \$4,500, and then he knew that he was in trouble, see, because he was going to have to go home and tell his wife about it. And he'd caught . . . he's been in trouble before because he'd come down here . . . he believed in Corpus, see, and they decided some time somebody'd sell him a bunch of lots, see, and go home, and he'd get just catch all kinds of hell (chuckle). Well, he went home . . . went home, and she . . . my grandmother found out about it, and he was really in the doghouse. Then he hit upon the idea, said, "Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. I think I'm going to be out of it. I'll give that to the bishop, see." That big, magnificent hotel, which in those days it was, and on the prettiest spot in Corpus--it's on a peninsula on Ocean Drive, see. Well, he went to the bishop to give it, and his bishop said, "Oh, we don't want that, Mr. Bluntzer, we couldn't get back and forth, no roads out to it and black dirt." So the bishop wouldn't take it. So finally somebody came along and bought it, paid \$7,500 for it (chuckle). But it was so bad that the church wouldn't take it. And it had 11 acres of land with it, too.

Stephens: Oh, say, what about entertainment that day and time? You mentioned a few things . . .

Bluntzer: Well, I do recall . . . I know when I was a . . .

Stephens: . . . but when did outside entertainment come in?

Bluntzer: Well . . . oh, yes (chuckle). We had these medicine shows.

Stephens: Yes, tell us about the medicine shows.

Bluntzer: Oh (chuckle) well, they just had these stemwinders that would hypnotize and go out selling this patent medicine just as fast as they could get the money out of their pockets.

Stephens: What sort of approach did they make to the people to get them to come to a meeting? Would they advertise that a medicine show was going to be there?

Bluntzer: No, I . . . no, they just . . . of course, Corpus was a small town--maybe 5,000 or 10,000, no, I don't think it was 10,000--and it just . . . the word just got around, "The medicine show is in town." And they really sold the medicine.

Stephens: Did they have a vaudeville act with it to get . . .

Bluntzer: Yes, they'd have a little vaudeville.

Stephens: Such as?

Bluntzer: Well, I don't remember. But they'd have some kind of vaudeville.

Stephens: Magicians?

Bluntzer: or something like that.

Stephens: . . . ventriloquists?

Bluntzer: Yes, some . . .

Stephens: You don't remember exactly . . .

Bluntzer: No, I think they had just a mixture.

Stephens: How about a dramatic production with it?

Bluntzer: Well, I don't remember exactly. But one medicine show it had one kind of an approach, and the others'd have another as far as entertainment was concerned. But they really went to them, and they really bought that medicine.

Stephens: But the entertainment was a come-along for . . .

Bluntzer: Yes, sure.

Stephens: . . . the main act which was selling the medicine.

Bluntzer: Selling the medicine. And they did . . . they did both. They did usually have pretty good entertainment.

Stephens: How much of that did you buy?

Bluntzer: I never bought any of it. I was just a kid.

Stephens: You wouldn't admit it. (Chuckle)

Bluntzer: No. (Chuckle)

Stephens: Did your folks buy any of it? They didn't . . .

Bluntzer: No, they . . .

Stephens: Have you been around where you could smell it or taste it or know what it was like?

Bluntzer: Well, I was . . . I was just 10 years old, you know.

Stephens: Well, that's just the right age.

Bluntzer: And I was interested in that entertainment. I was . . . huh?

Stephens: That's just the right age to watch a medicine show.

Bluntzer: Yes, it is. And then they'd have baseball games. See, that used to be a big thing. Teams like Laredo . . . you know, on the 4th of July here they'd . . . Laredo and Corpus'd have three or four days of baseball. Then they'd have rodeo, but

rodeo wasn't as big a deal as it is now. And they'd have parades, of course, all on a . . .

Mrs. Sparks: Boat rides.

Bluntzer: Oh, yes, boat rides. They had the old Japonica, and they'd go out on the boat. So that's about . . . that's just a simple and happy life.

Stephens: You being a Catholic did you ever go to any of the Protestant revival meetings just for the social aspect?

Bluntzer: Well, they used to have a Epworth League out here. I remember going out there.

Stephens: You went to that a time or two?

Bluntzer: Yes, but I mean I was just going out there looking, you know, like some of the . . . yes.

Stephens: Well . . . sure. But did the other people . . .

Bluntzer: But that was the big deal.

Mr. Sparks: Bob, what he meant was those big revivalists. Do you remember when Billy Sunday was here?

Bluntzer: No, I . . . see, I was off at school so long.

Mr. Sparks: And then there was another big revival. It was Ham and Ramsey and they stirred up the whole . . .

Bluntzer: I remember them. They really stirred up . . . they had people carrying six-shooters.

Mrs. Sparks: Nearly ruined us (chuckle).

Bluntzer: (Chuckle) I remember that, but . . . but I was off at school (chuckle). Ham and Ramsey--I remember that.

Mr. Sparks: And it was . . .

Bluntzer: How did they do it? About . . . was it over religion?
I don't remember.

Mr. Sparks: I don't remember, Bob. I just . . .

Bluntzer: But I remember they had them carrying pistols to each other.

Mr. Sparks: I never was very strong on going to church.

Bluntzer: Well, that's usual (chuckle).

Mr. Sparks: I got sleepy when I got to church.

Bluntzer: (Chuckle) Ham and Ramsey.

Stephens: Who are Ham and Ramsey?

Bluntzer: They were two revivalist, weren't they?

Stephens: Did they go together?

Mrs. Sparks: One sang, and the other one preached.

Stephens: Oh, which was which? Do you remember?

Mrs. Sparks: I don't remember. But I know that one . . . one sang
and the other preached.

Bluntzer: Oh, boy, it got so bad had to send in the Rangers. What?

Stephens: How did they get people mad at one another?

Bluntzer: I don't remember the basics of the thing. Wasn't it the . . .
there were two factions here--Pease and Roy Miller. Was
it mixed up in that?

Mr. Sparks: I just don't remember.

Bluntzer: I don't . . . I don't know.

Mrs. Sparks: I don't remember.

Bluntzer: Some of it . . . it was politics at the bottom of it.

Mr. Sparks: We lived in the other county, and we just heard about it. I came over one time, that's all. I don't know anything about it.

Bluntzer: Yes, that's right. Well, I was going off to school, see, and I'd be back in the summertime. And I . . . but I heard plenty about Ham and Ramsey.

Mrs. Sparks: I don't remember too much about it either. As I say, I think we came over maybe one time. I don't remember--to it--because that was quite a deal to just come hear. We got furious about it, for one thing, heard so much about it.

Bluntzer: See, my . . . oh, excuse me.

Mrs. Sparks: No.

Bluntzer: I was off at school from the time I was 10 years old till I was 22 between that and the Army.

Mrs. Sparks: What year was that when you . . . were you 10 years old? What year were you born? '97?

Bluntzer: '97.

Mr. Sparks: So there's 1907 to . . .

Bluntzer: Along about . . . about these medicine shows? That was about 1906 or something like that.

Mr. Sparks: You were off at school through 1907 and 1918.

Bluntzer: No, 19 . . . I got out in '20, see. But inbetween there I was in the Army. So I missed a lot of this like Ham and Ramsey. I heard it, but I wasn't here when it happened. But I remember they'd have these hot elections here, and they'd send a Ranger to keep down the heat and straighten them out. They got the job done.

Stephens: What about courting?

Bluntzer: Huh?

Stephens: What about the courting techniques around here?

Bluntzer: Well, I remember my courting techniques was back in the Model-T days.

Stephens: In this area?

Bluntzer: Right.

Stephens: Your wife came from this area.

Bluntzer: No. She came from up south of San Antonio--Hamilton. Well, I loved the courting business. Just like it is now only on a smaller scale (chuckle).

Stephens: Did you have these parties . . .

Bluntzer: Oh, yes. They had parties . . .

Stephens: . . . with the idea of getting the kids together?

Bluntzer: Well, I remember one thing that . . . at Christmas time was when they really had a big time and, you know, the kids back home from school. And they used to give egg nog parties, see. I mean, we'd go from one home to the other. There was one lady here . . . she gave them till she died--Dunn, Mae Dunn. But then that . . . that was . . . that got too slow.

Stephens: Was this . . .

Bluntzer: Didn't it, Walter?

Mr. Sparks: It sure did (chuckle).

Bluntzer: (Chuckle) So I don't know what . . . but it seems to me like the interesting part of the . . . of this life would ante-date me, see.

Stephens: Well, you fit right into what we're talking about here . . .

Bluntzer: Oh, yes, that's right.

Stephens: . . . such as this courting technique. I still think you're holding back on us, Mr. Bluntzer.

Bluntzer: Well, I don't know. They'd come out here. They'd moonlight ride . . . the moonlight and the bay and all that. Huh?

Stephens: Motor boat, sail boat?

Bluntzer: No, Model-T. (chuckle)

Stephens: Oh, on the coast. I thought you said on the bay.

Mrs. Sparks: Well, you know, Bob, what you and I forget is that we're . . . I mean, when we were young 50 years before the earlier was real history to us. Now we can look back 50 years, and that's history, too.

Bluntzer: Well, I don't see where . . . human nature hasn't changed except it's gotten a little more accelerated (chuckle) than it used to be.

Mr. Sparks: It's the same old problem that's facing the whole world: more people getting on the same piece of land.

Bluntzer: Yes (chuckle) that's . . .

Mr. Sparks: They just made the . . . because said a while ago it quit making land, and it's getting populated.

Bluntzer: We're getting more people.

Mr. Sparks: It's not over-populated yet, but it's going to be if we don't do something.

Bluntzer: Yes. Oh, another thing I remember--I don't know what that would come under so . . . is that no matter where you went you'd . . . if you went on the train or any place, they'd give you a shoebox lunch, you know. Like, you'd go from here to San Antonio or somewhere.

Stephens: Who would give it to you?

Bluntzer: Your parents, see, they'd fix it up. You didn't have any diners, see. And I bet . . . when I was a kid, I went off to Austin to school, and I'd eat mine before I got to Sinton (chuckle).

Mrs. Sparks: Well, that's right.

Bluntzer: In the shoebox lunch. And then I gave a . . . had this meeting . . . you know, that Bluntzer meeting, and they were wondering, "What about a barbecue?" That's the sorriest thing to have that there is because somebody's got to do the barbecuing, and after all you bring your own lunch like the old timers a long time. They didn't have barbecues. I mean, the real ones. They'd bring their own food, you see, and have a meeting. And the enjoyment wasn't eating. The enjoyment was seeing each other, you know, seeing friends. So we pulled one up there, and it was a big success.

Mrs. Sparks: Well . . .

Bluntzer: If we have another one, it's going to be about the same way.
See, they . . . everybody's sold on that barbecue pit.

Stephens: This'd be a good thing to get your sons and daughters to come to.

Bluntzer: We're going to have one, yes. Then you can invite 2 or 3,000
if you want to. Bring your own . . . bring their own lunch,
see, and just have a place for them to eat and maybe soda
pop for the kids, and if they want liqueur, let them bring
their own liqueur (chuckle).

Mrs. Sparks: Well, this shoe box . . .

Bluntzer: Think that's a good deal?

Mr. Sparks: Yes, sir.

Mrs. Sparks: . . . shoebox lunch . . . I remember when we went . . . started
to Indiana, we took a lunch with us, and we ate off of it,
and finally then, well, you know, it'd play out. Then we'd
get ready to come back, my grandmother'd fix us a lunch
and save some nine . . . we were all poor then. We're trying . . .

Bluntzer: They all gotten brainwashed now on barbecues because of
these politicians, see.

Mrs. Sparks: Yes.

Bluntzer: Tell you about that.

Stephens: All right. This a letter from a relative . . .

Bluntzer: Oh, this is a letter to Miss Josephine Sullivan, 8 . . .
invitation . . . invitation note and it read, the date's
on 1874 and Miss Josephine Sullivan would like to have

your company for a moonlight ride and carriage . . .
carriage and two horses . . . no, a carriage and two . . .
buggy for two, see. And the reason that buggy for two
she didn't . . . he didn't want . . . signed, Murphy.
And the reason that had that . . . that they had the
two in there they were going to be sure wouldn't have
any chaperones. Well, anyhow, she died at 85, and she'd
had lots . . . oh . . . the family didn't like him
because he was a gambler, see, and so . . . but she liked
him because she never did marry and died at 85 and had . . .
and when she died, why, they went into a bunch of old
trunks and, lord, she really had the love letters,
proposals. See, in those days they'd propose by mail and
(chuckle) . . . well, the funny part about it is that some
of those proposals . . . one of them was from a man that
married her sister (chuckle).

Mrs. Sparsk: Well, Bob, did they have chaperones when you were growing
up? Didn't have . . .

Bluntzer: Well, they chaperoned the dances and things, but the dances
always . . . they ended early except those country dances,
and they were all . . . they lasted all night. And you'd
get out of them, and I'd go get on a horse, you know, and
ride over to San Patricio and get . . . and then stay there
all night and ride back, sleep on the way on the horse. You
know, just have a road and no . . . just a country road and no
cars or anything to wake you up.