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Interview with
Charles V. Griffin, Jr.

Place of Interview: Uvalde, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Floyd Jenkins

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(Signature)

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Business Oral History Collection

Charles V. Griffin, Jr.

Interviewer: Dr. Floyd Jenkins

Place of Interview: Uvalde, Texas

Date: July 12, 1984

Dr. Jenkins: This is Floyd Jenkins recording for the Business Archives Project, North Texas state University, Denton, Texas.

Today is July 12, 1984. I am talking with Charles V. Griffin, Jr., who is the founder of the Uvalde Producers Feed and Elevator, Inc. We are talking here in his backyard by the swimming pool, on Highway 117, south of Uvalde about . . .

Mr. Griffin: 200 yards out south of the city limits.

Dr. Jenkins: Let's get this thing going by getting you to give us some family background, when and how your family got to this part of the country.

Mr. Griffin: I am one of 6 children; in fact the middle one, 4 girls and 2 boys. Five of us are still living. My youngest sister passed away a couple of years ago. I think there were two of us that were born in Alabama. The rest of them were born in Texas. The older ones were born in Texas, and the younger ones were born in Texas. We in the middle were born in Alabama. Prior to World War I my father went back to Alabama from Texas, in fact he was a native of Alabama, to work in

the Navy shipyards in Mobile, Alabama. And I was born just prior to our entry into World War I. After the war, in the '20s, he moved back to Texas and moved to the Rio Grande Valley.

Jenkins: Now do you know your grandparents' names?

Griffin: Yes. The Griffins were very prominent old southerners. My grandfather was a Civil War veteran. My Grandmother Griffin was a Jackson, and a relative of Andrew Jackson. In reading the history of Andrew Jackson, sometimes you wonder whether you should be proud of that or not, but he was a typical raw American. I know very little about my mother's people. They were hard working, all musicians. I think they enjoyed life probably more than my father's did. They played any musical instrument, and they were more or less epicureans. They believed in having a good time and living at the same time.

Jenkins: What was that family name?

Griffin: Hudson was my mother's name.

Jenkins: And your dad's name?

Griffin: Was Charles V. Griffin, Sr. Moved to the Rio Grande Valley, and he was a farmer, dirt farmer. We had very few livestock. We did all right until the Depression, and had a hard time with six children and a small farm.

Jenkins: You were born when? Your birthdate?

Griffin: November 2, 1915.

Jenkins: You were born where?

Griffin: In Thomasville, Alabama.

Jenkins: And moved down here to Texas?

Griffin: I think it was 1922, or '21.

Jenkins: And your first recollection of being a human was in what place in Texas?

Griffin: The Rio Grande Valley. It was raw at that time. Land was being cleared, irrigation was being put in. It was more or less the last frontier in Texas, really. They were developing that area, and my father thought it would be a chance to raise a large family and farm as long as you had water down there, and they were putting water on most of the land they were clearing at that time. I barely remember it. We had many problems down there, the old timers did, in the early '20s. We still had a few Mexican raids from across the border. They would come over and requisition various and sundry things.

Jenkins: Do you remember some of that yourself?

Griffin: No, I don't remember very much of it.

Jenkins: Tales by your folks?

Griffin: Yes, I know my father was called out at night two or three times. And we had floods down there. They had to work on the levees and the dikes. That was before they had any flood control. They had a big flood area down there that they tried to protect.

Jenkins: Where was this located?

Griffin: At Weslaco.

Jenkins: Now how long did you stay down there?

Griffin: I stayed in the Valley until I finished high school, and I never did move back down there.

Jenkins: Let's get some recollections of those years, and what your family was doing and what you were involved in and what was happening to the land.

Griffin: The land was developing very fast. Of course, the Depression in the '30s, which was my senior year in high school, was when all the banks closed. But I was an athlete, fortunately, gifted to a small extent along that line.

Jenkins: What sports?

Griffin: Football and track. And I was fortunate enough in the '30s, with two sisters in college already, there was no way I could go, except on a football and track scholarship to Texas A&M, which I was very fortunate in. It paid 90% of my expenses.

Jenkins: We will get you in A&M, but we are getting you out of growing up a little bit quick. Did you live on the farm?

Griffin: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: What kind of things do you remember about your home: water system, lighting system, cooking system, outhouses, whatever?

Griffin: Well, of course, we didn't have running water. We had a pump on the back porch, and a bathroom that we could carry our water to bathe in, but we had no running water in the house. No electricity while I was growing up. I think I was probably a junior or a senior in high school when we finally got electricity. REA as I recall. I don't remember whether it

was REA or a private utility company, but we did get it. I worked, I worked hard. We had to.

Jenkins: Doing what kinds of things?

Griffin: Farming, driving tractors, mules, horses, hoeing, milking cows. With 6 children, the baby was 10 years younger than the rest of us, so it was really only 5 of us to do the work while I was at home. We all had chores. I milked two or three cows when I was growing up. I was the only one fast enough to catch chickens when we wanted to eat one of them. When we wanted to kill chickens, all my mother would do would be to tell me to go out and catch them. I would catch them without a hoop or anything. I was pretty quick on my feet. So I would catch two or three chickens. We ate a lot of chickens.

Jenkins: After you caught them what did you do?

Griffin: We would wring their necks off the old fashioned way, scald them, pick them and put them in the pan.

Jenkins: What kind of mechanical milking equipment did you have?

Griffin: The mechanics consisted of strong fingers and wrists, both hands at once.

Jenkins: Do you remember when your dad didn't have any power equipment?

Griffin: My father was very progressive. He owned probably some of the first tractorsthat came into being down there; but, oh sure, I can remember the horse and buggy days, farming with mules. When it rained we couldn't drive the old car, the

Model T, to town. We would have to go in the wagon when the roads were muddy.

Jenkins: How far were you from town?

Griffin: About 7 or 8 miles.

Jenkins: How often did you get into town?

Griffin: Saturday.

Jenkins: What were typical Saturdays like when you got up early Saturday morning?

Griffin: Looking forward to going to town. We did the chores and worked probably until noon, and then we went to town and stayed until after dark.

Jenkins: How long did it take you to get to town?

Griffin: Oh, an hour or an hour and a half. Of course we had Model T's. My father owned cars. Even when we moved to the Valley we had an automobile.

Jenkins: You didn't go to town in the wagon.

Griffin: Except when the roads were impassable, and it seemed like they were impassable a lot of the time back there. I looked forward to riding in the wagon. My sisters were embarrassed to go in, but I would call attention to the fact that we did go in in the wagon. I wanted everybody to see them; anything to aggravate my sisters. But I was proud to ride in that wagon. It didn't make any difference to me.

Jenkins: How would you spend that Saturday in town?

Griffin: The picture show, if a western was on. Buy a candy bar if I

had a nickel or 10¢ or 15¢. We were never an extravagant family, but we had probably 25¢ to spend on Saturday when I was a little fellow.

Jenkins: That would go a long way, too.

Griffin: Oh, yes, it would go a long way.

Jenkins: Because the movie was how much?

Griffin: I think the movie was 5¢ and 10¢. 10¢ for adults and 5¢ for children. Sometimes we would sit there and see it two times if it was a good western.

Jenkins: Now the talkies were in by the time you got there.

Griffin: Yes, yes. I can remember the first picture show that I was taken to when I was just three or four years old. I can remember the lines being flashed on the thing. For all practical purposes when I got older, eight or ten years old, they had talkies.

Jenkins: But you did experience the silent movies.

Griffin: I can remember one that I saw, and that was The Covered Wagons. I saw that, and I was very impressed by the Indians. But no sound. I can barely remember when the sound came in.

Jenkins: Can you remember that silent movie, whether they had a piano or something going in the movie house at the time?

Griffin: No, I can't. All I remember was the Indians, the cowboys fighting the Indians, or the traildrivers fighting the Indians.

Jenkins: Now you went to school where in those early years?

Griffin: Weslaco, high school and grammar school.

Jenkins: How big was Weslaco at the time?

Griffin: I would say maybe 2,000.

Jenkins: Oh well, a pretty good size town.

Griffin: 1,500 to 2,000 if I remember right.

Jenkins: What was the modern school like?

Griffin: We thought it was a good school. I think we had better instructors back then, because that was one of the top jobs in the community, teaching school. I think the scholastic teaching were very well . . .

Jenkins: What were the physical facilities, how big was the school?

Griffin: I can't remember how large the school was. We played football, soccer, kick the can. We had very few playground equipment when I was in grammar school. Of course, the high school didn't have any, but we, after you got up to the age where you noticed the girls, didn't care too much about playing if you could get them to look at you and talk to you.

Jenkins: But a town that size at that time there was electricity.

Griffin: In the school, yes.

Jenkins: Indoor plumbing.

Griffin: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: All of that stuff.

Griffin: Yes. It was indoor plumbing. I don't think it was when I was in grammar school, but it was after I got out of grammar school. I can remember the outdoor privies in grammar school.

Jenkins: And you had central heat and all like that.

Griffin: We didn't need any heat down there. I don't think I ever recall ever having very much heat, except after I got to high

school, if I remember right, we had the steam heaters. But we seldom used them. You know that is a hot climate down there.

Jenkins: What kind of cooling system?

Griffin: No cooling system. Windows.

Jenkins: Fans?

Griffin: No. No fans. But we didn't notice the heat. I imagine the teachers probably did. But there was no air conditioning in homes, you know.

Jenkins: Nobody knew any different.

Griffin: No, they stood the heat very well, and the humidity is very high down there. I wouldn't want to do it again.

Jenkins: Not after experiencing air conditioning.

Griffin: Oh, no.

Jenkins: Now you say you were involved in sports all the way through school.

Griffin: Yes.

Jenkins: Did you get involved in club activities or anything?

Griffin: Just the FFA and 4-H Club. I was always interested in that, except probably my last two years in high school. But I was pretty well involved in athletics then. We had a championship football team, and I made All South Texas.

Jenkins: This was about when?

Griffin: 1933.

Jenkins: The middle of the Depression.

Griffin: Oh, yes. 1933.

Jenkins: Did they have plays and choirs and things?

Griffin: Oh, yes. I sang in the Glee Club. We had a real good high school band. And we had plays. I was always in the junior and senior plays; minor parts because I wouldn't come to practice very often. But I learned my lines.

Jenkins: Were you in the band?

Griffin: No. I was the only one in my family that wasn't in the band. My family is very musical, but I went the athletic route and didn't have time for it. I sang some when I was younger. I sang solos even, but never cultivated my voice any whatsoever. It was just real raw and probably corny, but I tried to sing. I would play a few instruments by ear, the guitar.

Jenkins: Now all the time that you were in school, including high school, were you still doing all your chores on the farm?

Griffin: Oh, yes. After I got home from football practice I had to milk.

Jenkins: Saturdays were probably pretty full.

Griffin: Yes. After I got up into high school we played football on Friday, and I wasn't really able to much of Saturday. We played hard back in those days. We went two ways, you know, and it seemed like I was always too bruised up to do very much. It was eleven man.

Jenkins: Not six man.

Griffin: No, I don't think they had six man back in those days.

Jenkins: Now did you have any other jobs while you were in school, or did the farm pretty well keep you busy?

Griffin: After I got up into high school after football season, I worked in a drugstore jerking sodas.

Jenkins: In Weslaco.

Griffin: Yes, and made 40¢ to 50¢ a day and all the milkshakes and malted milk that I wanted, or that I could steal. They expected you to mix you one or two. Sometimes somebody tipped us a nickel or a dime, and that was always a thrill. I made my pocket change. Money went a long ways then. I seemed to have something jingling in my pocket all the time I was working at the drugstore after they paid us.

Jenkins: Okay, we get you out of high school and what happens to you?

Griffin: Well, I was interviewed at two or three colleges to play football. One of my best friends was an All State football player, a large fellow, who was killed during World War II. And we had a coach by the name of Harry Johnson, who was a relative of Lyndon Johnson. Of course, no one knew Lyndon at that time. I think he was a distant cousin, but later it came to light that Harry Johnson, our coach, was a cousin to the president of the United States. But anyway, Harry was a big football player during his time, the coach was. He took two of us to A&M. Well, he took us to two or three colleges, but we weren't impressed too much. He took both of us to A&M. To make a long story short, they wanted the large fellow as

tackle, but they didn't want me at A&M. And Harry told them to take both of us or none.

Jenkins: How big were you at the time?

Griffin: I only weighed 165 pounds.

Jenkins: How tall?

Griffin: Around 6 feet. 5 11½ or 6 feet. But I was too light to play Southwest Conference football, but by a stroke of luck he told Homer Norton, who had just come in from Centenary as coach, they had just fired Mattie Bell, who went to SMU . . . And he told Norton if he wanted Smith he would have to take me, too. So that is how I got there. Kind of a squeeze play, you know. I was thankful for it.

Jenkins: Did you get to play?

Griffin: I didn't get to play much football. I was too light, and I got hurt down there at the beginning of my sophomore year, but I lettered in track.

Jenkins: What was your strength in track?

Griffin: I ran the 440, and was on the mile relay team. We had a darn good track team, so I kept my scholarship.

Jenkins: In addition to sports, did you get involved in much of anything else?

Griffin: Not very much at A&M. I was a member of the Saddle and Sirloin Club . . .

Jenkins: Which was what?

Griffin: It was an animal husbandry club for all students that participated in the animal husbandry, the judging of livestock,

etc. It was an animal husbandry club there.

Jenkins: And you were majoring in . . .

Griffin: Animal husbandry.

Jenkins: You entered A&M in thirty. . .

Griffin: '34. I finished in '38.

Jenkins: During the Depression.

Griffin: Yes, very hard.

Jenkins: Well, did your scholarship pretty well put you through?

Griffin: My mother, God bless her, would send me a little butter and egg money every once in a while. Maybe a dollar a week. And I worked in Bryan on Saturday afternoon at J. C. Penney.

Jenkins: All through?

Griffin: Well, no, after I got up and had to have a little money to run around on, you know. I didn't my first couple of years, but my junior and senior year I worked at J. C. Penney on Saturday afternoon when we weren't on a track meet somewhere. I worked in the mess at A&M during all three meals.

Jenkins: Doing what?

Griffin: Hopping tables. That is where the track team all worked, and that paid our room and board and \$6 a month extra.

Jenkins: So your scholarship was kind of a working scholarship.

Griffin: Oh, yes. We worked back in those days. Football players didn't work much. They swept the gym once a month and picked up trash around the gym probably once a week, something like

that. But they didn't work too hard, and I don't think they should have because they worked hard on that gridiron. They earned their way. They went both ways.

Jenkins: "Both ways" people may not understand.

Griffin: Both ways when they played offense and defense both.

Jenkins: Yes, 60 minutes of football.

Griffin: That's right.

Jenkins: Okay, let's get you out of A&M and see what happens to you.

Griffin: When I got out of A&M jobs were pretty hard to get, real hard to get. I made application everywhere I thought I might be accepted for a job because I knew I didn't want to go back to the Valley, for there was nothing down there, particularly in the field of animal science. And I was fortunate to get a job with A&M Extension Service. At that time they were administering two programs. They were administering the extension work and also the USDA program called the Old Triple A Program. The Extension Service was running both of them at that time. And I was put on as an assistant at \$1,440 a year, which was big to me, \$120 a month and \$25 a month car expense if you used your car that much. They paid 3¢ a mile then. We always saw that we drove that much and maybe a lot more. And my first job was in Jasper County in east Texas, deep east Texas. And I stayed there almost a year.

Jenkins: That Big Thicket country.

Griffin: Yes. I had never lived in that environment before, with all

the beautiful pine forest. They had some virgin timber over there at the time that had never been cut over or anything.

Jenkins: A lot different from Valley country.

Griffin: Oh, yes. But I enjoyed it very much over there for the short time I was there. The football coach and I roomed together. He had finished A&M when I did. We knew one another down there. And he was football coach, and I think he made \$90 a month. I know I bragged a little. I made a little more than he did and had a car, and he didn't. He used mine more than I did.

Jenkins: Now what was your work consisting of at that time?

Griffin: That is a question that I can answer very readily. I did more work vaccinating hogs for cholera than I did any USDA work, because they had a big outbreak of cholera over there. They had no veterinarians at that time in that part of the country, and the county agents were responsible for vaccinating all the hogs. At least they were told by the Commissioners Court; the farmers, we had to protect them. And we would round them up in the woods and give them what we called virus and serum and vaccinate them against cholera, because the losses were great over there at that time. They were kind of wild hogs. We called them piney wood rooters at this time. But I did a lot of office work.

Jenkins: Now this vaccinating, that just kind of happened; that wasn't really part of your job.

Griffin: No, the Veterinary Association later entered suit in court to make us quit that. In fact it happened while I was over there but we got around it since we didn't have a veterinarian. We would get these small, black farmers and the white farmers, too, to round up the hogs, and we would give what we would call a demonstration. But we would demonstrate on every hog they rounded up, so they didn't know much about that. You had to be careful using the live virus, and that was what we were using.

Jenkins: Did you lose many hogs from . . .

Griffin: No, the vaccination program was . . . you know, A&M had already developed this vaccine for cholera.

Jenkins: So the live virus didn't give any problem.

Griffin: Oh, no, not unless you vaccinated yourself with it. We had to be very careful.

Jenkins: Now who put you on to doing the vaccinations?

Griffin: The farmers would just come in and tell us they needed their hogs vaccinated.

Jenkins: Was this all sanctioned by your office?

Griffin: I wouldn't say it was sanctioned, but we owed that service to the farmers.

Jenkins: They didn't tell you to do this, it just became an accepted way of . . .

Griffin: That's right. They would have told us to. The Commissioners Court at that time had some control over the Extension Service

in the county since they paid part of the salaries. But we were there to help, we were there to serve. We were very dedicated to our work. The County Agent didn't have time. He was an older fellow, and he didn't have time to vaccinate all of the hogs. He didn't like to, anyway. But that was my job, and I guess I vaccinated 10,000 to 20,000 hogs in the short time I was over there.

Jenkins: Now you got out of A&M, you say, in '38.

Griffin: Yes.

Jenkins: So really during the depth of the Depression you were in college.

Griffin: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: Things were beginning, there was hope beginning, by the time you got out.

Griffin: Yes, Roosevelt had created many jobs, although the government was paying for it.

Jenkins: Do you remember being conscious of the Depression while you were in College Station?

Griffin: Oh, yes, we were conscious of it, but I will promise you this: We had a better time on nothing than they do now on an unlimited expense account.

Jenkins: What evidence did you see in College Station that there was a Depression?

Griffin: There weren't but two or three cars on the campus at that time. Of course, it was all military. We didn't have to buy any clothes. The government furnished them the first two years, then they gave

you a uniform allowance after you got up to be a junior.

But we all had one or two changes of civilian clothes then, so when we got away from the campus we could wear them.

Jenkins: And the town of College Station wasn't . . . there wasn't much of a town there.

Griffin: I don't even think it was . . . It must have been incorporated, because we did have a post office.

Jenkins: Did you get to Bryan much?

Griffin: Oh, yes, we went to Bryan.

Jenkins: Did you see much Depression there?

Griffin: I can't remember it. You would see these blacks coming in from the plantations. Especially working in J. C. Penney's, I know I had to sell them a lot of shoes from the farms down there on the Brazos bottoms. In fact they seemed to be the only customers I had, those field workers coming in. I had lots of talcum powder there that I would try to disinfect the thing.

Jenkins: What kind of shoes were they buying?

Griffin: Brogans they called them.

Jenkins: Real working shoes.

Griffin: Yes, they had to be working shoes.

Jenkins: Was a lot of this credit business?

Griffin: No credit, it was all cash. No credit.

Jenkins: Being J. C. Penney's they didn't do any swapping, either, I don't suppose.

Griffin: No, I wouldn't think so. J. C. Penney was all cash then.

Jenkins: They hadn't even developed . . .

Griffin: No, they hadn't developed any. I don't remember an item that you could buy on credit. It was all cash.

Jenkins: So, especially the part of the country that you were in and what you were doing, you didn't experience the Depression.

Griffin: I sure didn't. They were probably the happiest days of my life. Most carefree, happy.

Jenkins: Do you suppose that it had much of an impact on how you looked at life after the Depression financially?

Griffin: Definitely, definitely, because it motivated a person to work. You were motivated when you got out there, because you didn't want to go back to your childhood days of scarcities and things like that. Oh, yes, I think World War II brought that out. People who had to go to war were motivated to do the best they could in the armed forces as well as in civilian life.

Jenkins: How long did you stay with the Extension Service?

Griffin: I stayed with the Extension Service until the early part of 1942. I was moved from Jasper to Wellington up in the Panhandle. Quite a contrast, up on the high plains. There I met my wife. I went there as assistant county agent. When I was there they separated the Extension Service from the Triple A. We had our choice: We could go with the old Triple A Program, USDA, or we could go with Texas A&M Extension Service. I chose the Texas A&M Extension Service. And I married in

Wellington.

Jenkins: Who did you marry?

Griffin: I married Dorothy D. McDowell, an old pioneer family there.

Jenkins: From that part?

Griffin: Oh, yes, they were pioneers there. Her grandfather and great grandfather lived in dugouts when they first settled out there. They have quite a history of that name up there. Her father ranched about 25 or 30 miles from Wellington. She lived with her grandparents in Wellington, who owned the bank there and also were ranchers, her grandparents. I met her, and she was in Texas Tech. She didn't go back after we married. I went with the Texas A&M Extension Service, and they moved me to the little town of Wheeler, Texas, which is north of Wellington, 60 miles north. And I stayed there six months and was given a full county. I was the youngest county agent in the state at the time. I think I was 24 years old at that time, or 23 years old.

Jenkins: What county was that?

Griffin: I went to Jones County, north of Abilene, which was a large county.

Jenkins: And the county seat?

Griffin: Anson. Anson, Texas. And I was called to active duty from there. I stayed there about a year.

Jenkins: That's Anson Jones, huh?

Griffin: Yes, that's right. His statue is on the courthouse square. I really enjoyed my work there. It was a cotton county. We were the largest cotton county in the state at the time,

and we had a very active 4-H program. Beef cattle, dairy. And being young I didn't know any better than to put in 14 hours a day. My wife would go with me a lot. We had no children. Those were happy days. They were happy days because I was working hard, and I was interested in my work. Then came World War II. I went on active duty.

Jenkins: In what service?

Griffin: I went in the Infantry at Camp Barclay, which is in Abilene just 25 miles from Anson. And I transferred from the Infantry to the Air Force and was stationed all over the country during '42. I went overseas in the middle part of '43.

Jenkins: To where?

Griffin: I went to North Africa.

Jenkins: Hit the highlights of your military service.

Griffin: I served in the African theater, and from there we went . . . we were getting shellacked over in Burma, and they moved my outfit to Burma. We were on the tailend of Stillwell's retreat through there. After we got out of Burma we moved back to North Africa and took part in the southern France invasion. And much to our delight we had very little opposition there going in. I stayed in Europe until the war ended. The only wounds I got were over in the Middle East in Burma. We were subject to a lot of harrassment there. I saw very little action in France.

Jenkins: What kind of wounds did you get?

Griffin: Mostly bomb and shrapnel. Japan had a few planes over there. Of course the Germans bombed us some in Algiers, too, in Tunis when we were going in there. But they didn't make a maximum effort, only just harrassment.

Jenkins: Were these wounds to your body?

Griffin: A few to my body, but not serious. I had malaria over there, too. That was a lot worse than any combat that I was ever in.

Jenkins: Okay, so you get out of the service at the end of the war, what do you decide to do?

Griffin: I came home, and I had almost a two year old son that I had never seen.

Jenkins: Name?

Griffin: Charles V. Griffin, III. My wife named him while I was over-seas, at my request, I think.

Jenkins: He is the one who is presently running . . .

Griffin: He is the president of the company now, yes. I had a contract with Texas A&M to go back with them when I got out. I went with them as County Agent at Brownwood, Texas, which was a large county. I served there a couple of years. I had a golden opportunity then. This is where I met your old friend, Tommy Harpool. Tommy is coming into the picture now, yes. They wanted a livestock specialist. They were getting into the feed business in a big way. Incidentally, Tommy was one of the best dealers we had. And they wanted a livestock specialist to help formulate feed and tell the salesman what was in it.

I had a reputation as a livestock man at that time. Particularly Brownwood had lots of good club calves; fortunate enough to win the Houston show one year while I was there. I went with them as their livestock and feed specialist and enjoyed that work very much, traveling over three states when they needed me. I flew most of the time. We developed quite a feed business there at that time. Not through my efforts especially, but it was a large company with plenty of capital, plenty of scientists, plenty of nutritionists. They developed one of the best feeds. In fact they were right up with the Ralston-Purina Company; not on tonnage but on quality, they sure were.

Jenkins: Remind me now who this company is.

Griffin: The Quaker Oats Company. They manufactured what they called Ful-O-Pep.

Jenkins: I remember that.

Griffin: Good feed.

Jenkins: You went with them.

Griffin: Yes.

Jenkins: Out of Brownwood?

Griffin: Yes.

Jenkins: And what year?

Griffin: I think it was '48 or '49.

Jenkins: And the Tom Harpool we are talking about is Tom Harpool of Harpool Seed and Fertilizer in Denton, Texas.

Griffin: Yes, and he was a very progressive, intelligent seed man at that

time. He specialized more in seed. He had two brothers, one we called Pinky and one Al. They, I am sure, helped Tommy a lot, develop that company. He had done real well because he is hard working, and he knows seed. I know of no seed man any more knowledgeable or any more recognized in Texas than Harpool Seed Company.

Jenkins: During your time with Quaker, were there major developments going on in that type of business that you recall?

Griffin: I wouldn't say major developments. They were getting in the feed business in a big way, spending lots of money on technology, developing formulations and on new feeds, advertising, but I wouldn't say there was a major development. But they did get in the feed business in a pretty good way, the three years I was with them, they sure did.

Jenkins: Your travels into these states was to develop their market?

Griffin: Yes, I was a consultant to them. I would go to Memphis where they had a large plant. I would go to St. Joe, Missouri. Of course all of Texas. I was on the road too much.

Jenkins: Now you were operating out of where?

Griffin: Fort Worth.

Jenkins: You had moved to Fort Worth.

Griffin: Yes. I had another son at that time. They were little fellows.

Jenkins: What is his name?

Griffin: Gary Griffin. Gary McDowell Griffin, after my wife's name.

Jenkins: Now you were with Quaker Oats for three years.

Griffin: Yes.

Jenkins: What happened then?

Griffin: I took the big plunge and bought this business down here.

Jenkins: Okay, so here is where you get involved in what is now the Uvalde Producers Feed and Elevator, Inc.

Griffin: Yes. Through Uvalde Producers Wool-Mohair. That was my principle business when I bought this business. They had a small feed business, and of course I developed it.

Jenkins: How did this come about? How did you discover it, how did you get involved in it, how did you decide to make the plunge?

Griffin: I was very well acquainted with the ownership down here, because they were one of Quaker Oats Company's dealers in the field. The business had been mismanaged. It was in dire financial straights. I had saved a little money because I had a real good job with the Ouaker Oats Company, but not enough to buy a business on, as I found out later. It all turned out fine, but it was during the drouth down here. The drouth was just starting. My business grew too fast for my cash flow, my capitalization. But I worked, took a lower standard of living than I was used to. With the wife and two children and developing a business you don't have very much time or the necessary assets to be prominently social in the community, but we had a good time. And we developed the business. Incidentally, I can thank John Nance-Garner and the president of the bank at that time, a

fellow named Jack Ashby, who helped me get started in the business.

Jenkins: Give us all the picture that you are willing to about the trials and tribulations and the opportunities and the aches and pains and the people involved in that. What was the ownership of that mohair company when you discovered it?

Griffin: It was owned by a few ranchers. The principle stockholder was one particular rancher named Jack Richardson, who was a good friend of mine. He has passed away now. He remained a good friend until his death. He was more or less a livestock trader, a little bit fast for a business. So I bought him out entirely. I bought it. But I brought another real conservative rancher in with me.

Jenkins: Let me ask you now, at that point, how much do you know of the history of that business that you bought?

Griffin: I know every minute detail of the business.

Jenkins: I am talking about the history before you got it.

Griffin: It was formed by a bunch of ranchers here, promoted by Jack Richardson.

Jenkins: About when?

Griffin: I think it was started in 1948.

Jenkins: This was a young company.

Griffin: This was '52. They incorporated to \$40,000, and they had bad management for a while. They were just going downhill. They didn't know much about the feed business. The feed business was here, they just didn't know the technicalities of

it, and it was hard to make a go of it.

Jenkins: Was the ownership trying to manage it, or had they hired. . .

Griffin: They hired management. No, the ownership didn't manage it.

Maybe some of them had too much say-so in management, but they had bad management. And I cleaned house when I bought it. I kept two or three of the laborers is all I kept. I had to keep one, because I knew very little about that wool mohair at the time and he did. He helped me a lot. I kept him until he found something better. I learned the wool-mohair-business from the ground on up. We had no wool-mohair business hardly.

Jenkins: Who was that man?

Griffin: That fellow's name was Santos Cuellar. He is a merchant here in Uvalde now and has done real well. Raised a good family. He is a hard working fellow. He knew the wool-mohair business as we knew it at that time.

Jenkins: He got you going.

Griffin: Well, I had very little business. The buyers didn't trust the company too much. I had to develop my own business, and I was fortunate. It was a commission company, and if you didn't buy wool and mohair at the door, as we call it, you didn't have to have much capital to run that business. And I would bring it in on consignment which the old mohair businesses were set up to do in the first plce. And I think we were handling, when I came to Uvalde around 100,000 pounds of wool-mohair

a year. When we split the company we were handling over a million. But a lot of history goes in before that.

Jenkins: Let's pick you up then, and go back to where you were before I sidetracked you into the history of the founding of that, and pick you up and just watch you grow and what you were doing and how you were expanding.

Griffin: Well, as I say, I learned it from the ground up. I have average intelligence, certainly not too much over average, and I hope not too much under average intelligence. And when a person doesn't possess that intellect you have to make it up by hard work and long hours, and that is what I did.

Jenkins: What kind of hours are you talking about?

Griffin: I am talking about a minimum of 14 to 16 hours a day.

Jenkins: How many days a week?

Griffin: Six. I would take off on Sunday and go to church.

Jenkins: How many years do you suppose this was, at that kind of work?

Griffin: I did that kind of work for five or six years. I mean I really put in long hours.

Jenkins: What were you doing these five years?

Griffin: I was doing manual labor. I was unloading wool-mohair with a cart like my laborers did, and I was keeping the office, the public relations. Credit was a big item at that time, and I was the chief collector. I passed on all our credit customers. I swept out a few times. We were growing. We outgrew our cash flow, but the bank here knew I was working hard. They weren't

as lenient with their loan policies as they later became, but they stayed with me. I never did want for anything.

Jenkins: Now at that time mohair was the business?

Griffin: No, when we first started, the feed business was the principal business. But when we decided to separate the two, before we went into the grain elevator business, wool and mohair became . . . we were the largest in Uvalde. They had four wool-mohair businesses when I moved here.

Jenkins: What were they?

Griffin: You want the names?

Jenkins: Yes.

Griffin: Well, Uvalde Wool and Mohair was owned by the Briscoes. We were Uvalde Producers Wool and Mohair. And L. Swartz Company, old reliable company who later went bankrupt. I would suppose that those two were the largest. And then we had Horner's, Inc., which had been here from the year one. They were old, reliable, good people. They did banking, too. And L. Swartz did banking. But I had those three competitors that were all larger than I was.

Jenkins: Are those families still around?

Griffin: A lot of them are still around. Dolph Briscoe, the governor, is still around. Horner's have all sold out. At one time the Horner's and my company were the only ones in the wool and mohair business.

Jenkins: It got down to two.

Griffin: Yes, and I was handling the majority of it. But I brought a man in that really promoted that business. A fellow named C. A. Dishman, who was recognized as one of the best wool men in the state. When L. Swartz Company took bankruptcy, his company took quite a loss. He was a buyer out of Boston, living in Del Rio. His company took quite a financial loss on that thing, even though they were very solvent even after the loss. They just decided to pull in their business, pull their wool business in. I was fortunate enough to bring this fellow in as my manager of my wool-mohair department.

Jenkins: What does the wool and mohair business consist of? What do you do in the wool and mohair business?

Griffin: Your country warehouses, like we were, we were handling, I would say, 80% of the ranchers wool and mohair on a consignment basis, and we used to clear it with them when we had an offer to sell. Sometimes we bought, if we had the cash flow at that time we would buy some, not for speculation but merely because the ranchers needed the money. We would buy small lots, small clips. But in wool, wool is a very complicated fiber, animal fiber, because there are so many grades of wool: coarse wool, medium wool, fine wool. You have to know what it will wash out, or what we call a shrink after they wash it.

Jenkins: Mohair is not . . .

Griffin: I am getting to mohair. I always had more problems with wool than I did mohair, because when you sold it you had to see how much yield you would get out of a pound of wool. You would have to know the classification: whether you had fine wool for fine fabrics, coarse wool for blankets, etc., or medium wool for various and sundry purposes. And you would sell it on grade, what it would grade, and on the shrink.

Jenkins: Who did the grading?

Griffin: Well, they did the grading when I was running it: the buyers would ship it to their companies, and they would do the grading. But when I brought this wool man in, we did a lot of grading here. But you had to know how to sell it. You were dealing with the sharp, Jewish element out of Boston many times, and you had to know. I finally started selling wool on a shrinkage basis. In other words, I would take a buyer and I would ask a certain price on this wool after it was washed. And that put me in the wool business, because your heavy shrinking wools brought less money. Your good light shrinking wool topped the market. And that was something that Uvalde had never heard of. And we were even competing with Del Rio, the wool capitol of the world, after we started selling on a shrinkage basis. And when I brought my wool man in here he continued that and improved upon it.

Jenkins: Is this kind of a creation on your part, then?

Griffin: It was a promotion on my part.

Jenkins: You were one of the first?

Griffin: I was one of the first warehouses in Texas to start selling on a shrinkage basis.

Jenkins: You started this about . . .

Griffin: I would say about 1955 or 1956. The old concept of selling wool was to get everybody's wool together and sell the accumulation and pay everybody the same. Your wool might yield 40%, mine might yield 60%; yet you would get the same price I would. And that was the wrong concept. I saw that. Particularly in this part of the country. Del Rio didn't have that problem because it was all good wool, most of it was good wool. We got a lot of the sorry wools over here because . . .

Jenkins: Is it the area that makes for good or bad wool?

Griffin: It is the sheep, the type of sheep.

Jenkins: They just happen to raise . . .

Griffin: Oh, yes, that is sheep country out there. We had many good producers here, but we had small ranchers that would bring in the Delaine sheep that was heavy shrinking, beautiful, fine wool, but they were small. We just didn't handle the tonnage. I later handled as much tonnage as either one of the wool houses over there; but not until I got my man, we really went into the wool-mohair business. Mohair was a different fabric entirely. It is a specialty fabric. And you have your coarse hair and your fine hair; we call it grades on mohair. We got into all that grading. We did lots of grading here. But they

used to just sell the kid hair . . . hair off of the kid and hair off of the adult and that was it, two classes. Now I guess we sell five classes. And we got into that. We instigated that.

Jenkins: What are the five classes?

Griffin: It all goes down to the degree of fineness, the crimp in the hair. Your kid hair makes your most expensive mohair fabrics; tops, we call it. You go on down to your coarse hair. They used to use mohair for all your upholstery in your car before your synthetics came along. Back when you and I first bought cars, all of our upholstery was made out of mohair, coarse mohair. And it was a good upholstery, but a little hot to sit in sometimes without any air conditioning. But all the cars used it way back there before the synthetics came in. But we decided to separate the two businesses. Mr. Dishman was going to be president of Producers Wool and Mohair, and I changed the name of my company to Uvalde Producers Feed and Elevator Company, Inc.

Jenkins: We will remember to pick up after separation. But a picture that I want to get; if I am a wool or a mohair rancher, how do I deal with you?

Griffin: After you shear, twice a year, they shear twice a year all over this part of Texas.

Jenkins: What time of year do they shear?

Griffin: They shear in the fall and in the spring.

Jenkins: Why?

Griffin: We are too hot here to let . . . We have two types of wool. We have twelve months wool and six months wool, short wool. It is really instead of six months it should be seven and five, or eight and four. We have a short clip and a long clip. But we shear twice a year, the sheep, here. And when it reaches a certain length they like to shear it before it gets hot.

Jenkins: What kind of length is shearing time?

Griffin: Well, unfortunately sometimes it lasts a couple of months. They drag it out because of rainfall or extenuating circumstances or they can't get shearers when they want them. But they all have shearing pens at the ranch. They bring professional sheep shearers and angora goat shearers out, and they shear it and sack it and bring it in to the warehouses, the wool-mohair houses. And we lot it in.

Jenkins: Do you buy by the pound and quality?

Griffin: If we buy it, it is always by the pound, yes. We look at it, examine it very thoroughly if we buy it and see what is the wool strength and how it will grade. Mohair the same way. I like the consignment business. The ranchers trust me. They bring it in, and we usually . . . When I first started we charged a cent and a half a pound commission to sell it. And I am ashamed to say I don't know what the commission is now, but I would imagine around a nickel a pound. It should be that high. If it is any less than that they are certainly handling

it cheap compared to what we used to have to pay for labor. We used to pay 50¢ an hour for labor, you know. Now it is \$3.38 or \$3.48 or something like that, the minimum wage, we have to pay it. When they bring it in, lot it, we get a good sale on it, we usually call them or get in touch with them, and say, "We have a certain offer here to sell it." They usually say, "Roll it." So we just withhold our commission and handling charges out if there is any additional handling.

Jenkins: Do you sell that particular rancher's wool? I mean when you sell it you know that it is his?

Griffin: Yes, we have it lotted, and it has his number on it. We sell an accumulation. We sell it all together, but when we weigh it out we weigh every grower's separate, yes. We know exactly what the in weight was and the out weight was, and where it is stored, etc. We mapped the large warehouse. Mohair the same way.

Jenkins: But the money exchanged here.

Griffin: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: How would it go? You charge them and they charge you and . . .

Griffin: When we ship the hair we draw a draft, usually, on the amount of the sale, and we immediately pay the grower and withhold our commission from their check. We make a settlement sheet, for good business practices, showing every item on there. It is rather routine in wool-mohair areas to do it.

Jenkins: Your charge then, where you are making your money, in on doing what?

Griffin: Selling, storage. We carry the insurance, storage, and when we sell it we collect our commission.

Jenkins: All of that commission is what you said used to be about a penny and a half.

Griffin: A penny and a half is what it was when I first came to Uvalde. Now it is substantially more, and I don't know, I haven't looked at one of my own settlements even in the last year or so to see how much it has gone up.

Jenkins: We are going to break off and you are going to get out of the wool and mohair business, strictly into feed.

Griffin: I am still going to be involved, because I'll own half the wool and mohair business and all of the elevator business. I will stay in for a while.

Jenkins: So you are going to stay in the mohair business. Let's follow that one, and kind of keep the two separated. That will be a little easier. So let's follow the wool and mohair business up to today, and then we will go back and pick up the feed.

Griffin: Okay.

Jenkins: We want to go back and really bring it up to now, and then we will go back and pick up where you split off and got into the feed business. You retained an ownership in the wool and mohair.

Griffin: Yes. The mohair business, this is the mohair kingdom, through here. There were more Angora goats here when we were growing so

fast in that business than any other part of Texas, and had the best hair. We didn't have the best wool, but we sure had the best mohair. And we increased our tonnage tremendously in mohair. In the meantime I had put in the first automated feed system in my feed mill. I built several elevators while the businesses were still together. I put in the first pushbutton feed mill, automatic feed mill, that was in this part of the country. We had a tremendous feed business. It was demanding more of my time because I knew something about nutrition, and that helped me grow in the feed business all during the drouth. You asked me previously what I did besides sweep out and load feed, I would say 1/3 of my time was on formulations to various ranches. We had our own pelleting machine, blocking machine, and we were putting out several hundred tons of feed a week. There was a small conflict there. I was president of both companies. I was president when there was only one company. We decided to split and put Mr. Dishman as president of the wool company, and I would take over full control of the feed mill. So we split the charter. I don't know whether he kept the original charter, or I did. I believe I did and just changed the name with the Secretary of State, I guess. But it worked out a lot better. He is still in the business, a fine wool man. Fine mohair man. Honest, dependable and has done quite well. But I took over the other, and we got into the grain

business. I built more elevators and got into exporting grain, selling to exporters. Really, the grain outgrew the feed business.

Jenkins: We are going to follow you until you get out of the wool and mohair.

Griffin: We moved into separate offices. He kept the old office, and I went back and built offices where the elevator business was. And I was vice president of the wool and mohair company, and we owned 50%-50%. He owned 50% of the stock. I thought that much of him to sell him 50% of the stock. We were growing and doing quite well. Horner's were still in business, in the wool-mohair business, and Briscoe was still in business. Dolph Briscoe, Jr. came down one day and wanted to merge the two companies. And said, "You all are doing all the business, and I just don't have a wool-mohair man." He had political aspirations at that time, too. He knew he was going to run for governor. To make a long story short, we merged the two companies. I had a third of the stock, Briscoe had a third and Mr. Dishman had a third.

Jenkins: Let me identify here, now. The Briscoe that you are talking about now is the one that ran for governor?

Griffin: Yes, the one that was governor for two terms.

Jenkins: But his father is the one who . . .

Griffin: Who founded the business. His father passed away in the '50s. We merged the two companies and did quite well. The markets

went haywire. We got caught with a bunch of mohair we bought. We didn't make much money for a year or so. Dolph got into politics. We all wanted him to be elected governor if he ran. He is a good man. I think one of the best governors we ever had. Conservative democrat. And he came to me, and asked me to buy him out. We had large bank loans at that time to take care of the large inventory that we had. He owned the bank, and he just didn't want any criticism since he was running for governor. Just before he was elected I bought him out. I stayed in with 2/3's . . . well, I in turn sold Mr. Dishman half of the stock I bought from Briscoe. And I stayed in a year or so, and my grain business got so big. My boys were still in A&M. I had no one except myself back there. I tried two or three managers over my grain and feed department. For some reason they were promoted or didn't like the work or were incapable. I hired some good men, and I made some mistakes in hiring managers. I think I had three of them. I hit on two and missed on one, but the other two got better jobs and went into business for themselves. But anyway I decided I was going to sell out, sell my wool interests. I wasn't active in it, didn't have time to fool with it, and I wanted to keep on top of the financial situation with it, and I just even didn't have time to do that. I sold out to Dishman. He owns 100% of it and is still operating it.

Jenkins: And the year that you sold out?

Griffin: The year that I sold out was 1970. . . I know my boy, my oldest

son, had graduated from A&M and had just returned from Vietnam. He had a commission and was called to active duty the minute he got out. He got back from Vietnam, and he came into the company, the Feed and Elevator Company. He wasn't interested in Wool and Mohair business, so that is why I sold out. I found out he wasn't interested in it. We had a Frito-Lay contract, furnishing corn to two or three of their plants. It was pretty large.

Jenkins: Have you in any way kept track of what has been happening in the wool and mohair business?

Geiffin: Oh, yes, I owned goats for years. I was in the business of producing it rather than selling it.

Jenkins: Let's just get a little highlight of your knowledge of what is happening in that business since you got out of it.

Griffin: Your angora goat people who have kept their goats and raised mohair are the only ranchers that I know of in the state of Texas that have made lots of money ranching. Mohair, I would say, probably on a parity I would say, it is probably 125%, whereas cattle may be 60%. Wool hasn't done as well as mohair. But the people who kept their goats, had the goat country that they called it, brush, etc., free of noxious weeds, varmints, eagles, have really made money.

Jenkins: Does the drouth not hurt goat people?

Griffin: A goat's diet is 90% brush. They tromp out more grass than they eat. So as long as you have any kind of brush to

browse on, they do real well. Drouth doesn't bother them much.

Jenkins: They haven't had any really bad years.

Griffin: No, not since I sold out. They were having bad years when I sold out, the drouth hurts some, the brush doesn't green up well.

Jenkins: So the drouth hasn't bothered them.

Griffin: The brush greened up well, put on fresh growth. Goats are a dry weather animal. Their diet is 90% brush.

Jenkins: All this part of the country that we are talking about; cattle, goats, sheep, what percentage of it is the goat industry? The goats over cattle and sheep?

Griffin: Oh, a very small minority. I would say 10% goats. I would say maybe 15% sheep. The goat and sheep population's gone way down since those real bad prices back in the '70s. The goats, I don't imagine we have 50% of the goats we had when I started in business.

Jenkins: But the ones who stayed in it are . . .

Griffin: In real good shape, particularly the goats. Sheep people are kind of like the cattle people.

Jenkins: Well, now explain to me a bit, which is kind of confusing. Since the goat business has held up for the individual ranchers, why have so many got out?

Griffin: They got out when the prices were low, and they shipped them for meat, bologna, shipped all the older goats. They are hard to take care of, but not near as hard as they were before

we controlled the screw worm. Screw worm used to kill 15% of the goat population here before the screw worm program. They just got out of it, and a lot of them just didn't get back in it. They were hard to find, hard to buy. It is slowly building up, I believe. It is a special fiber. We ship 90% of it overseas, to England, mostly. It has just held up.

Jenkins: Is there ever any problem of overproduction?

Griffin: Of goats?

Jenkins: The market is always there?

Griffin: The market is always there because it is a special fiber. They are going to use it. It is the best fiber made. It is the most expensive fiber made, probably more expensive than silk or any other fabric. A good mohair suit will last you all your life.

Jenkins: You have already told me, but I would like for you to focus in on it one more time. Just anybody or everybody, then, can't get into the mohair business.

Griffin: No, you have to have goat country. You have to have lots of good brush, free of varmints. Do your own trapping.

Jenkins: That is another one of my questions: How do they control the predators?

Griffin: Trapping. They have the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Predatory Game Control have trappers here. The coyotes are up through Uvalde north up through Garner Park and up through the Junction area all west of there, the Edwards Plateau,

all more or less under control. I have ranched out north of Uvalde, and I would have a coyote come through occasionally and kill three or four goats and come back a little bit later. We finally trapped them. We trapped one out there that killed fifteen. Old, raunchy looking coyote. We finally got him. Your bobcats are bad, have been killed the way you drove in from the north. Your coons, I don't think they hurt goats very much.

Jenkins: I never heard that they even might. Raccoons?

Griffin: Yes. They say they will, but I never experienced any. They eat a lot of feed you put out for livestock. You have to feed a goat.

Jenkins: What do some people claim, that they get real young ones?

Griffin: Yes, they claim they will. I have never experienced it. But coon skins have been so expensive, most of your ranchers trap them before they have a chance to multiply. We have had a few eagle problems. We have had a few lawsuits over killing bald eagles. They bother more little lambs than they do goats. Your bobcats and coyotes are about the only varmints we really have. Wild dogs. You get one of these ranches, and they will try to develop it, you know. They will move one of these little, old houses or trailer camps in. They had one right beside me. Now their dogs get after them. I say they kill more than any other varmint. You get sheep-killing dogs. They are real bad. If you have goats close to the city, this little, old metropolitan area, any metropolitan area, where

you have lots of city dogs, you will always have sheep killing dogs. You have to watch them. A few ranchers don't put up with it too much. They have means of controlling them. They hate a dog, unless he has a border collie you know, trained to work them.

Jenkins: Do they use those much?

Griffin: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: I have been to some shows where they have contests with these collies.

Griffin: They are equivalent to two or three cowboys, if they were trained right.

Jenkins: Do most of them have dogs?

Griffin: I wouldn't say most of them. I would say a large portion of them.

Jenkins: Are more of them discovering this?

Griffin: A lot of times they are not practical, because they may be on a small ranch. But you take the large ones, they can round up a bunch of goats quicker than three or four cowboys can. Goats are hard to round up, anyway.

Jenkins: The reason I ask, when I went to this sheep-dog demonstration, I asked one of the guys about what I asked you, and he said that an awful lot of ranchers, you just couldn't convince them that these were worthwhile. He told me that he was out in west Texas and a guy gave him this answer. And he had his dogs with him in a station wagon. He said, "I will tell you what I

will do. Your sheep are out here, and my dogs are out here and that station wagon is here. I will open the backend of that station wagon and open the front door. Can I have every sheep that those dogs with run through that station wagon?"

The guy said, "Why, of course you can."

Griffin: He filled it up.

Jenkins: He said he had to back up from his statement, because he just had them swarming through that station wagon.

Griffin: A lot of the ranchers are like me, they are too dumb to train one. You have to be smarter than the dog. And a lot of them don't need them. They have their pastures divided and they are not too pressured. If I was going back in the goat business, which I am not in now, which I regret very much, I think I would try to buy me a trained dog. You have to know how to work them. It works both ways, the dog and the man working him.

Jenkins: Do most of these ranches have fences that might keep coyotes out?

Griffin: I don't think the dogs can keep the coyotes out.

Jenkins: I mean fences that can keep them out.

Griffin: Oh, no.

Jenkins: No way.

Griffin: Dogs and coyotes will jump or go through a fence.

Jenkins: Will get in. Before we leave wool and mohair, give us an idea of how prices have changed in that business since you first got into it.

Griffin: Mohair is more or less gone ahead of our inflation. But wool, I don't think so. We have lots of competition in wool from Australia, New Zealand. About the only competition we have in mohair is from the Union of South Africa. I don't think we do much with Turkish hair. In the European capitols they buy Turkish mohair. Then they have a fabric in South America that is very similar to mohair, but it doesn't have the quality after it is made into fabric that mohair has. They call that alpaca.

Jenkins: Oh, alpaca.

Griffin: It is about the only competition mohair has. The Union of South Africa more or less establishes the price on mohair, what we have got to pay for it over here. We ship it to England, because most of our mohair is exported.

Jenkins: When you first became acquainted with wool and mohair, what was kind of the going price per pound?

Griffin: Oh, if you could get 66¢ or 86¢ or \$1.00 for mohair and maybe 20¢ or 30¢ more for your kid hair, your fine hair, it was a good price.

Jenkins: When?

Griffin: That was in '50, '60s.

Jenkins: And you were paying what in wages?

Griffin: 50¢ an hour.

Jenkins: And today those prices are?

Griffin: Grown hair would be \$5 a pound. Kid hair, some sold as high as \$8 and maybe more.

Jenkins: And wages are . . .?

Griffin: Minimum wage, labor to handle it. Wool hasn't gone up that much. Wool would bring 30¢ to 50¢ to 60¢ a pound. Now sometimes it is a little higher. Maybe \$1.00 a pound, something like that for better wool, maybe more. It depends on the demand.

Jenkins: Are the growers as well off today in what they are doing as they were when you first got into it, with those prices and wages?

Griffin: Your mohair people who kept the goats, have sufficient numbers are in real good shape, a whole lot better. A sheep man, he is kind of like a cattle man.

Jenkins: Year to year.

Griffin: Year to year.

Jenkins: Sort of what I was asking you earlier, people were wondering, why don't people get out of the cattle and sheep business and into the goat business, and you say you just have got to have the land for it.

Griffin: You have got to have the land, you have got to have the knowledge and you have got to have the goats. There are not that many goats. They don't breed goats very quick. You are lucky to get a 70% kid crop. That is considered excellent, comes closer to 50%.

Jenkins: Is that a birthrate or is that a survival rate?

Griffin: Yes, the birthrate and survival rate.

Jenkins: Yes, that is the birthrate. The birthrate is that low,
is that right?

Griffin: I got as high as 80% out at that little, old ranch I had two
years ago. It was hard to make people believe.

Jenkins: Did you do anything special? Is there anything that they are
working on to try to increase that birthrate, that you know of?

Griffin: Well, selective breeding. I guess that is going on with some
of your better goat people to get a better kid crop. Weather
has a lot to do with it. You get a crop of kids during a
storm, during a real bad winter bite or something like that.
The chances are that little old kid won't survive. A lot of
the mamas go off and leave them to starve.

Jenkins: I am separating the birthrate from survival. Do you have a
considerable percent of your goats that just don't get pregnant?

Griffin: I would say you have a little bit larger than you would sheep.

Jenkins: So you just don't even have the birthrate.

Griffin: That's right. You know you get 120% lamb crop with the sheep.

Jenkins: So you don't have twins in goats.

Griffin: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: But not like sheep?

Griffin: Not, you know, near as much.

Jenkins: I will get off of this, but my curiosity. If I had a beauti-
ful pasture for cattle, and I decide to raise goats on it.
You know, grass, it has got great grass, no brush. You just
can't do anything with goats.

Griffin: Oh, they would survive. They would eat grass. But it would not be good feed. You need brush not only for nutrition, but for protection.

Jenkins: Okay. From what?

Griffin: Well, weather mostly. You shear a goat slick most of the time. You get a half inch rain and chilly weather right after you shear him because that hair is a . . . well, let's compare it to a straw you put in a glass of coca cola. It is hollow.

Jenkins: Oh, really?

Griffin: Yes. When you shear that goat, that hollow stem is right on top of his skin. That water goes down and paralyzes him if you are not careful. They can build up a certain resistance to it. Since goats got so high in price, they leave what we call a cape on them. They will shear that old goat here and here and here and his face and leave a cape right on top there that water will shed on. They go back and shear after the cold weather, or they try to hit a dry season. It would sure be safe to shear one now. They will go back and take that cape off. Since mohair is so high I would leave the cape on and let them shed it. No, goats are harder to handle, harder to raise than sheep. I love a goat. I love a goat because they are the only livestock I have ever made any money on. I guess that is the reason I love them.

Jenkins: Okay, before we move into the feed business now, are there any other observations on the mohair and wool business before we move on?

Griffin: My only observation would be that it is a specialized business

requiring skilled people to run it, which I never was. I tried to be a businessman and acquaint myself with the bare facts. It has changed so much during the past 15 years. I think the man that is handling consignment on wool and mohair, or buying wool and mohair must be skilled in the business, in the technology of all what it is used for, how it is processed, the various grades that would come from that knowledge, and being able to merchandise it to the best avenues, where the returns to the grower. And that is what it is all about, how much money we are putting back into the growers hands. It is very technical now in handling it. And even though I love the business, I would hate to be in it today, because I would have to go to school every night.

Jenkins: Well, that raises the question of what kinds of people are raising goats in terms of background, education, continuing information. You say they really have to stay on top of things.

Griffin: Oh, yes. Your old families in the Rock Springs and Uvalde area, Junction, Bandera, Bracketteville; you don't get very many fly-by-night people to go into the sheep and goat business like you do the cattle business. We have some of your best goat people here in the Uvalde area who are A&M graduates who have large herds of goats. But I would say most of your goat people go back to your old families who have been in the goat business all their lives and their children kept it up.

Jenkins: And the children have kind of, generally, gone off and studied?

Griffin: No, they learned it from the ground up and kept up with the technology. To prosper you don't have to have too much of an education as far as scientific education is concerned to be a good goat and sheep man or a cattle man. You have to be very keen and observing to keep up with it. Now with your computers coming in, I don't know what that is going to do. That ought to simplify it, really.

Jenkins: You were saying that a lot of the best ones are A&M trained.

Griffin: No, I wouldn't say that.

Jenkins: You indicated something about . . .

Griffin: We do have a bunch of good goat people who have a degree from A&M that went into the ranching business. Unless you heir a ranch or heir a lot of money or have a lot of minerals, it takes lots of guts to go into it. You can't start at scratch.

Jenkins: I guess what I am trying to get at is; typically, then, the goat raiser is not necessarily a college trained person.

Griffin: No. Some of your best goat people are the ones whose father and grandfather . . . they learned it from the ground up. They kept up with the improvements and the breeding programs and all like that. No, I wouldn't . . . no.

Jenkins: A lot of those never went away to college of any kind.

griffin: Right, a lot of them, that's right.

Jenkins: Now, are there any typical sizes of the goat ranches? Do they kind of tend to be big, or little, or what?

Griffin: Well, I think that has changed, too. I don't think we have too many real large goat people like we used to have. I know Adolph Steeler over at Fredericksburg country was the largest goat man in the world at one time. He must have had 50,000 or 60,000 goats. We had several, two or three herds here in Uvalde with 15,000, 20,000, 30,000. I don't know of any that large. 3,000 or 4,000, yes. Quite a number have that many goats. Maybe more than that, 10,000.

Jenkins: In terms of animals per acre, what are you talking about, typically? Is there such a thing?

Griffin: Oh, yes. It depends on the individual ranch, how much brush they have, how they have conserved it, what they can rotate. I just wouldn't make an estimate. If I was, I would say 200 goats to a section or 300 goats to a section with plenty of brush, maybe 400. Oh, yes, you could goat a place out. They eat that old brush, they rear up on their back feet as high as they can reach on an oak tree. But you can overstock on goats. They will tromp out, too, they have paths. Buffalo used to have a wallow. If one went to it, all of them would wallow in the same place. Goats will, and the goat trails, and they stomp out more grass than they eat on their trails.

Jenkins: I am remembering an ad that I read about a ranch for sale in

the Big Bend country several years ago with 77,000 acres, and they said you could run from 2 to 3 thousand animals on the thing.

Griffin: That is about all you can on cattle out there, about one cow to every 50 or 60 acres.

Jenkins: They were talking about the possibility of sheep, goats and cattle.

Griffin: The coyotes will eat you up out there.

Jenkins: Is that right?

Griffin: They still have a few sheep out there. Coyotes are real bad. Varmints have been responsible for a lot of this goat population. We used to have lots of goats out in Uvalde. You put them out down there they wouldn't last 24 hours, for the varmints.

Jenkins: You can't control them like you used to, then?

Griffin: We just don't have the people. You have to have several trappers.

Jenkins: But legally, you can.

Griffin: Yes. Well they did away with 10-80, you know. That hurt. You could control with those bombs. They have done away with that, the environmentalists. They don't even want you to kill a certain species of rattlesnake now. The white rattler they have put on the endangered list.

Jenkins: Have rattlesnakes ever been much of a threat to livestock? Is it that they don't bite much, or they don't harm much after they bite?

Griffin: They don't harm too much. You get a snakebite on a horse or a calf once in a while, and maybe have to cut it open and lance it. I would say the rattlesnake is more dangerous to human beings than animals.

Jenkins: A sheep or goat or a cow that is bit by a snake, they are not . . .

Griffin: They have very few deaths. They get over that, and you never know it.

Jenkins: Now the people who do run goats, what else would they use that land for?

Griffin: A few cattle, and a few sheep. You have sheep, goats and cattle on a lot of these smaller ranches, and larger ranches, too. Yes, they run all three.

Jenkins: Now the difference between what sheep eat and what goats eat.

Griffin: Sheep is a grass eating animal, but they will eat brush, too, but not like a goat. You have got to have goats on a lot of these ranches to keep your brush down. They will trim it up, just like I have these trees pruned where grass can grow around them. You know, the sun can get to it. You have to have goats on a lot of that land. Your brush will take it.

Jenkins: What kind of competition from deer, in terms of feed?

Griffin: Of course, deer is one of our better cash crops out here. You can get too many deer on a place. Deer eat brush, they are brush eaters.

Jenkins: Not grass.

Griffin: Oh, they will nibble on oats and grass. They will nibble. I think a deer might a little more than a goat will, of grass. But the more deer you have on a place and the less brush you have, the smaller the deer is going to be and the smaller the antlers. We are trying to control our deer population down here by killing does off of it. We are killing lots of females. Give them a doe tag and let them kill does and keep the population down. Keep the population of your does down, and the hunters would keep the buck population down. But we kill thousands of does here a year now.

Jenkins: And you still have got plenty of deer?

Griffin: Still have plenty of deer. Those does, get too many, will be small. The bucks will be small. Especially in the hill country, we have a lot smaller deer than we have south of here and west of here, because there are so many of them.

Jenkins: I see. Have the diseases of cattle, sheep and goats been relatively well controlled?

Griffin: Yes, technology has taken care of it. We still have all kinds of problems, vaccinating and all like that. The ticks kill a lot of deer. The drouth kills a lot of deer.

Jenkins: Will ticks bother your cash animals much?

Griffin: No, they dust them and spray them, but you can't get to the deer. I have killed deer when they were just full of ticks.

Jenkins: What about toxic plants? Do you have much trouble with those?

Griffin: Not in this country. No, we have what we call kyat'ea here, and it will kill a goat if he is not used to it. But the goats that have been raised on it doesn't seem to be too much. But we have no loco weed or anything like that. The only thing we have is kyat'ea. And I haven't heard of much. White brush causes limber leg. The old cattlemen used to have limber leg. They eat this white brush, and it gives them a calcium deficiency and their legs give away on them. Our mineral programs, a lot of work has been done on minerals, I haven't heard of any white brush hurting cattle lately. I used to hear it all the time.

Jenkins: You were saying awhile ago that a lot of what you were doing was custom mixing for individual ranches.

Griffin: That composed most of our feed business.

Jenkins: Why would ranches need a custom feed, different from what people around him might need?

Griffin: He might have more grass and just want them to eat a little bit, and we would put an inhibitor, which is salt, where they couldn't eat very much. A lot of them would need heavy mineral, they would be on a mineral deficient place where they had this white brush I was speaking of. And prejudice entered into it. A lot of them have their own ideas, you know. There are a lot of ranchers still in this part of the country that don't feed.

Jenkins: So that pretty well brings up to date what is going on in the

goat and sheep business. Let's go back now and see when you peeled off and into the feed processing business and work you upto date on that.

Griffin: We went into the feed and grain business on a pretty good scale when my son came back from Vietnam and consented to come into the company. He had grown up with the feed business. He graduated from A&M and knew agriculture. It didn't take long to teach him the feed and grain business, because he was more or less raised with it. And we started handling really three products, three grain products: corn, milo, with wheat. We had a corn contract with Frito-Lay where we bought and delivered corn to three of their plants. We later dissolved that corporation and made another company out of it.

Jenkins: You knew Herman Lay, then.

Griffin: Yes. I didn't know him personally, but I heard of him, yes. We were buying and selling grain for export and domestic. In our own business we were handling just hundred thousands of bushels a year. In the middle '60s we bought an elevator in Knippa, Texas, over in a farming area east of Uvalde. That elevator had been very good to us. We stored grain over there and bought and sold and shipped out. It was nothing for us to handle 600 carloads of grain a year in these small elevators, for export and domestic use. Mostly exports back in the '70s. We were told the world was hungry and would be hungry from now on out if we didn't sell them the grain. Now we have surpluses of grain, which is another one of those government

reports that I don't put very much credence in. You can't believe everything you read. I am sure they wrote it in good faith, but our export business is practically nothing now, and our grain business has slacked off terribly. The feed business has increased every year. But my youngest boy finished A&M in 1970 and decided he wanted to be a county agent for awhile. He got an appointment. He stayed with it a couple of years and decided he wanted to come back and get into the business. We broke him in as vice president in charge of production. The oldest boy is president in charge of everything except production. And they get along perfectly together, and I am more or less retired after I got those two back in it. I don't interfere with them any whatsoever. I offer my advice at times, which is taken sometimes and sometimes it isn't, of course. They have minds of their own, which they have to have to run a business.

Jenkins: Now your oldest son went to work down there when?

Griffin: He had his military obligation, and he served in Vietnam. He was in the Army for two or three years.

Jenkins: He had worked down there as a kid?

Griffin: Yes, and between the time he went on active duty we had gotten him pretty well acquainted with it. He spent six months before then.

Jenkins: And when he came back from Vietnam he really went into it.

Griffin: He went into it fulltime.

Jenkins: When did he become president?

Griffin: He became president two or three years after he was back, in 1972 or 1973 or 1974, somewhere along in there.

Jenkins: What did he start doing immediately after Vietnam?

Griffin: He started learning the business in the production end. The other boy was still at A&M.

Jenkins: Now you were still . . .

Griffin: I was still president.

Jenkins: At that time. And when Charles, III, became president, you . . .

Griffin: Chairman of the board. No better title.

Jenkins: Did you stay active at that time?

Griffin: Yes, I stayed active in the overall picture, but I encouraged him to make all the decisions. And I monitored them, not from the idea of being interfering with him; but I watched the decisions he made, and they all seemed sound. If they hadn't of been I would have suggested this and that. But I didn't keep him on my . . .

Jenkins: Were you down there every day?

Griffin: Oh, yes, I was down there every day helping any way I could.

Jenkins: Fulltime?

Griffin: No, I kind of took off to the farm. I have an irrigated farm here, and I had a ranch up north of Uvalde. I like to play golf. I got in more golf than I ever did, because he did a good job, and he is still doing a good job. They do things different than we older people.

Jenkins: Are you tapering off more and more from directly being involved?

Griffin: Yes, I would say that. I have been tapering off. All your feed and elevator business is hard hit at this time because of your PIC program. We are not handling too much grain. I guess I have offered more advice to them this year than I ever have, on expenses and things like that. I think we have got to pull our horns in. We lost all of our exports. Russia is going to buy what they are committed to buy, and I understand the weather is bad over there. But the dollar . . . it is very expensive overseas. Our dollar is over-valued over there, and that means they can buy less from us. That has hurt us more than any other thing, the strong dollar overseas where we used to export grain. The common market has taken lots of our business away from us because of their weak currency. Brazil, Argentina, South Africa, even Australia has taken a lot of our export business. Mexico is broke. They can't buy what they used to. The peso, down there is really in bad straights. It would take a boatload of pesos to buy one shipment of corn. So our foreign market. . . our grain business in this country is real bad.

Jenkins: You made the break, the separation, in what year? When you took over the feed.

Griffin: I believe it was 1971 or 1972. Or maybe '70 when it happened. I have it all down at the office.

Jenkins: What the company was doing at that time changed much?

Griffin: No, not really.

Jenkins: Basically you have been engaged in what?

Griffin: Since I got my wool and mohair man in in the '60's, I have been basically involved in things I knew more about, feed and grain.

Jenkins: And typify what you do in the feed and grain business.

Griffin: In the grain business you have all the problems you have in any other business: grades, type of grain. Wheat especially, you have hard wheat, soft wheat, yellow wheat, blight wheat, wheat high in protein, wheat low in protein. Wheat gives us more problems than any other thing as far as grade and handling is concerned. And we were handling around 300 carloads of white and yellow corn for Frito-Lay. All of that corn was for human consumption, not livestock feed. And that required special handling. We divorced that company. I sold out to another man that I had manage it.

Jenkins: When did you do that?

Griffin: I did that in '75. We got rid of it.

Jenkins: Human consumption?

Griffin: The corn, yes. We got rid of that corn for human consumption to Frito-Lay.

Jenkins: I was asking a farmer the other day how much difference is there between growing corn for consumption and growing corn for feed purposes?

Griffin: Not too much except for feed purposes you don't have to have the grade; you don't have to worry about a clean-out, you know, getting all the cracks out, everything like that that they

have. You have to clean the corn that goes into your food.

Jenkins: Clean it in what way?

Griffin: We put it through all kinds of cleaning scalpers, cleaning shakers. We take everything out but the grain, the whole grain. And they are not as particular on alpha toxin, which is . . .

Jenkins: That is part of what I wanted.

Griffin: On this food grade corn it has to have less than 20,000 parts per million in alpha toxin, which is in all the corn in this area at one time or another, depending on the climate and conditions. We have been bothered quite a bit with that down here. We have had a lot turned down for food grade corn. We are still having that problem.

Jenkins: Now this fellow who bought that part of it, concentrate on food grade corn?

Griffin: That is all he handles. I put him in business, and taught him the business.

Jenkins: That is strictly corn?

Griffin: He handles strictly corn.

Jenkins: No one fools around with milo as a human feed in the United States.

Griffin: No. We ship a lot overseas for human food.

Jenkins: That is what I heard, yes.

Griffin: But very little here in this country. They are experimenting with it.

Jenkins: Why don't we go in for it, and Europe does?

Griffin: We don't need it as bad as some of these countries. I don't think many European countries are using milo for flour, meal to make bread out of, for cooking purposes. You have to get over in the Middle East to get any of that. Maybe some of your African countries are doing it. I know India uses a lot of milo for food for their populace. Pakistan. Egypt.

Jenkins: Is it more economical to grow milo than it is corn?

Griffin: Oh, yes, milo is a lot easier. It takes less water, less work, less expense to grow milo.

Jenkins: How about yield per acre?

Griffin: You don't have the yield, average yield, on milo that you have on corn, but you have a month's difference sometimes in the growing process and about 1/3 less water about 1/3 less work, about 1/3 less fertilizer.

Jenkins: The return on investment is better.

Griffin: No, I wouldn't say it was better. No, I think the return may be better on corn, but you don't have the investment. You don't have to borrow as much money to make milo as you do corn, and a lot of them take that chance. It is easier to grow.

Jenkins: After you got out of the corn for human consumption, you were left with feed grains.

Griffin: Feed grains exclusively. We didn't handle any more grain for food, except wheat.

Jenkins: And the feed grains that you handle are?

Griffin: Milo, corn and some wheat, some off-grade wheat.

Jenkins: Now what do you do with those grains?

Griffin: Well, we make various feeds out of them. We buy supplements. We buy protein, soybean meal, cottonseed meal, guar meal, dehydrated alfalfa, molasses, various phosphorous minerals, antibiotics to put in there if we need to, various roughages for more roughage where they didn't want to feed so much grain. Salt is a big deal.

Jenkins: So you are strictly in the feed manufacturing business.

Griffin: Yes, we manufacture our own cubes. That is our big thing.

Jenkins: You don't deal in grain itself.

Griffin: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: In addition to feed making, what do you do?

Griffin: We buy and sell grain, domestically and for export.

Jenkins: Those same grades?

Griffin: Yes. We sell about the same grade. We don't use inferior grains in our feed products.

Jenkins: You don't buy and sell grains that you don't also might use for feed.

Griffin: That's right.

Jenkins: It is all the same.

Griffin: We don't ship much corn for export. We don't handle too much corn. We have a tremendous retail business on corn. We just buy corn for our own feed mill. We don't try to ship corn.

We do ship some occasionally.

Jenkins: Any soybeans in this part of the country?

Griffin: Yes, a few.

Jenkins: But you don't deal in that?

Griffin: Yes, we deal in soybeans. We ship several cars a year out, but they are a very small part.

Jenkins: Anything else besides soybeans that you handle?

Griffin: Oh, yes, we handle a guar bean.

Jenkins: Where are those raised?

Griffin: They are raised right here. We had a contract to sell and ship to Celanese Corporation. But they overloaded themselves. They contracted with the farmer, and they would bring them to our elevators. We received it and shipped it to Vernon, Texas for Celanese to process there. They made a glutinous material for petroleum products and several other additives, food additives, etc. But last year they cut that program off down here, because they were loaded with guar beans. They over-bought. Celanese is a big company, and they were even going to locate down here and process it. We worked up formats for them on selling them some of our facilities to process those beans and crack them, as they call it, and all like that. About that time they found out they were overloaded. They could get them cheaper from India than they could grow them in this country. And as far as I know they still import most of their guar from India.

Jenkins: Does anyone else around here still grow guar?

Griffin: A few. I think there are a few fields. But they cut the price so much that the farmers can't afford to grow them. Celanese was paying \$20 a hundred, and the last company that came in here from Kennedy, Texas, offered \$12, and they didn't get very much at \$12 a hundred.

Jenkins: You don't deal in them any more?

Griffin: No, but we would like to. We did good with them. We were handling lots of guar beans. Good profit item for the customer. That was cut out.

Jenkins: But you don't see much future here.

Griffin: Unless Celanese gets back into the business, or the oil companies decide they want to get into it. Gulf was pondering the idea a few years back. Petroleum, you know, is in the doldrums, too. The petroleum people are not experiencing the growth that they anticipated they would on this energy situation. I think Celanese may come back in down here, but I think it would take them a year or two to use up what they have bought down here.

Jenkins: The oil companies would be getting in for what purpose?

Griffin: The extraction from your guar beans, your glutinous material, is used in petroleum products: lube oil and things like that. It is used in food additives. It is a great food additive for all of your sweets and things.

Jenkins: I noticed. When you start reading the labels on things, guar is in a high percentage of them.

Griffin: It is very widely used. But as long as they can get it from India cheaper than we can grow them and sell them over here, they are going to get them from India. It is just good business. You can't blame them. It is a good dry land plant. It makes a deep root five or six feet deep. It sure does sap the moisture from the ground, the land, but it is a dry weather plant. It doesn't take much water. Water hurts it. One time is about all you ever have to irrigate guar beans here even in a year like this. We are not handling those anymore, and our grains are wheat, milo and corn.

Jenkins: Let's go back and do a little bit of summarizing now. Give us an idea, in whatever way you want to, how these companies that you were involved in grew over the years; starting from the beginning kind of what your sales capacity and volume was and kind of bring it up to what it is now.

Griffin: All right.

Jenkins: Whether in tons or dollars or bushels or whatever.

Griffin: I think I gave you some of the statistics on wool and mohair. When I first started in 1952 or the latter part of '51 we had probably a 1,500% or 2,000% increase in our wool-mohair volume. As of when I went out of the business, I have no idea the volume he is doing now, but mohair went way down in numbers and volume. Wool went way down in numbers and volume when the fiber got so cheap back in the '70s. But I can give you some pretty good statistics on my feed business and grain business. We

started out in the feed business handling almost all commercial feed, sacks of feed, bought in carload lots. I would think that when I first started in business we were handling a couple of thousand tons of feed a year. The first thing I did was to put in a feed mixer of our own, where we could do what we call custom-feed mixing: that is mixing formulations that the ranchers needed or wanted out there, various forms of mixes, depending on how much salt he wanted in there as an inhibitor to eating too much. I know we ranged all the way from 10% salt to 50% salt in a lot of those mixes. That business really told the potential that we had in the custom feed mixing business. We put up some upright grain elevators. This country wasn't raising very much grain during the early '50s. In fact, very little, except for their own use. We had one old elevator here that shipped a little bit out, but we put up the first upright grain elevator here. I went to West Texas and bought used oil tanks, bolted them together and put them up. Those tanks right now are better than any new ones you could buy, and that has been 30 years ago. Our commercial feed business, or our custom feed business picked up to, oh, probably 5,000 or 6,000 tons a year. That is when we decided that we would spend \$150,000 to go to a push button mill, where one man could get on a switchboard and add the ingredients and the number of pounds he wanted, and when he got them all in a hopper, he would punch a button and it would mix it. Then he would punch another

button, and it would be ready to sack out, or go out in bulk in weight. That was quite a novelty to us. We happened to get one of the best millwright engineers in the state to put it in. We had no bugs, hardly any, to work out, and we just started mixing. Since then they all went to it.

Jenkins: Who is that fellow?

Griffin: Sanford Supply and Equipment Company out of Houston, and I understand he retired last month or the month before. He was one of the finest men I ever dealt with. He put in over 300 horses of horsepower to electric motors to pull everything. We have not changed one thing about that pushbutton system since he put it in. He put it in in the early '60s, twenty years ago. When we first started in the feed business our accounts receivable . . . I think we could go on accounts receivable, since most of it was credit, better than I could tons, really. Our accounts receivable was \$50,000 to \$60,000 a month. They grew, I know when they went to \$100,000 a month it scared me to death because it was all out on paper. When it got that high our cash flow wasn't as serious as it was when it was \$30,000 and \$40,000. I had adequate financing from the bank. When it went to a quarter of a million, our accounts receivable, it really did worry me. I had an old German bookkeeper that it worried a lot more than it did me, and he didn't even own any interest in the company. He was a conservative, and really responsible for the efficiency in

our office that lasted during his tenure of 20 years there. But he worried when we borrowed \$200, then when we got up to borrowing \$200,000 or \$300,000, it really did. He still spoke with a German brogue, and he would say, "Mr. Griffin, you are going to go broke." If it had been up to him I am afraid we would still have had that one little custom mixer on that back platform out there. But anyway, we grew with the times. I was fortunate being that I could formulate what the rancher wanted; balance, what they call balance, their ration out pretty well. My technical training was in that. I used it a lot. I was expanding so much I spent many hours a day working on formulas for the little rancher, whether he wanted a ton or whether one wanted a hundred tons, I would spend the same amount of time on each one of them.

Jenkins: What would you base it on? Soil samples?

Griffin: No, you would base it on the protein they needed. You always started out with the protein. That is the key nutrient for human beings, and especially animals. I would base it a lot on the protein they needed by the grass they had, by the roughage they had, the type of country they were on. Like you say, the soil had a lot to do with it. I knew the country pretty well. I could balance their protein, and if they wanted to get technical, with amino acids. Total energy and carbohydrates and roughage and fiber and all like that, I could

figure it right down to the T for them. Not that they would have known any difference, but I did use my scientific knowledge. I never did misrepresent it.

Jenkins: As you moved on up to today then, what kind of volume did you have?

Griffin: Well, our volume today is greater in the feed business than it was back there then. Our grain business has certainly decreased, because of the government program mostly, and we have lots of feed lots. I know that you wanted me to talk about competition.

Jenkins: I have a section later on that.

Griffin: Well, it would fit right in with why our grain business isn't so great. The feed yards from all over Texas will send trucks down, and they will park out at the farm and buy it directly off of the farm. It doesn't come through the elevator. That has hurt a little. A lot of farmers put in their own storage. They store that grain, then we usually end up selling it for them, but that has hurt a little. I would say your government programs, particularly your PIC program has hurt worse than anything. And grain has been priced, really, below the cost of production for several years. The farmers don't plant as much. We have had two or three dry years in a row, where the dry land farms didn't produce. It is just an accumulation of things that all adds up. Right now we really have trouble buying enough grain for our feed bins without exporting anything

but wheat. We do not use much wheat in our mill operations, the feed business. We do still ship a good deal of wheat to port for export. But milo, no. We sell a lot to some feed yards, but we buy all we can now, where we used to just take it in on storage or buy and sell, to keep our money rolling all the time.

Jenkins: You buy from individual growers.

Griffin: The farmers, that's right.

Jenkins: Well, your total volume, though, is it still growing?

Griffin: I would say our feed business is growing, but our grain certainly isn't. Our grain handling facilities aren't growing.

Jenkins: You said that you were going to speak in terms of accounts receivable, and you got up to, what, \$250,000?

Griffin: Our accounts receivable now are better than \$500,000 per month, but you must consider, back when I was running the business that wouldn't be equivalent to over \$100,000. But that was strictly on feed. I would say that our feed business has increased in a slow rate of growth. We don't have as many sheep in the country. We probably have more cattle than we had back there then. We don't have near the number of goats that we had. They did feed goats and turkeys corn. We make a little goat pellet with dehydrated alfalfa, corn and things like that. It really does the job. We sell several hundred tons of that a year. But I would say that our overall business in the last two years

because of the grain situation, has decreased. And I wouldn't advise a young man, unless he had more potential than most areas of Texas, to go into the grain business. And we did not enter into the government storage program on this PIC program. We could have entered in if we had wanted to, but the boys . . . we were qualified. We had an agreement with them. All we needed to do was to exercise our privileges there, and we had the storage space. It would have been a little trouble to have put us in shape, but they didn't want to. I think in looking back with 20-20 hindsight they would do it now, because we didn't have the business that we have had in the grain business. But I think it will come back, regardless of all that.

Jenkins: How seasonal is this business?

Griffin: During grain season we are real busy, and that is from April, May and June we will handle wheat. Mainly April and May, some in June. Milo season will start July 15 through August. Corn season will start in August through September. Our feed business will start around December 1st; and depending on the weather, how cold it is, how much rain we have had, it will go through March. So you might say we have four months of grain season and four months of feed season. And the other four months we sell lots of feed. But that is our busy season. And we take that four months to try to shape up and clean up and get ready for the grain season, etc.

Jenkins: Do you use much parttime workers, or is your number of employees pretty constant over those two seasons?

Griffin: Our number of employees are pretty constant over the years.

Jenkins: You don't have to lay some off and then . . . because of the different seasons.

Griffin: We are going to have to this year, if it ever rains and we quit making so much feed for this drouth situation. We will probably, because we need to cut our overhead to make up for a bad year last year. We did have a bad year, considering what we have always done. And it is very discouraging to those young men. But I was fortunate, I never did have a year that we lost money. We lost a little last year. Marked off every bad debt that we could, and we will collect that. But we didn't lose much. If we had kept some of our accounts receivable from being marked off, we could have probably broken even, or even made a little money.

Jenkins: Was the drouth the cause of this?

Griffin: No, it was mainly the grain season, and we had a real bad feed winter last winter. It rained, and we didn't have very much feed to sell. We didn't sell very much, even though it got colder than at any time. It was sporadic. It was kind of wet back then. It hasn't rained since. Really, our feed business came after we closed our fiscal year in April. I think the grain business will come back, and our feed business, as I say, has always shown a little increase.

Jenkins: Over the years, how has the number of employees grown from the

time you got involved in this until today?

Griffin: Not much. We put in automation. When we put in our push-button deal one man could do the work of four people.

Jenkins: Is that right?

Griffin: But we kept our old ones on. We just expanded that much. Our business picked up that much.

Jenkins: You have got how many employees today?

Griffin: I would say that laborers and four managers, we have around sixteen not counting the officers.

Jenkins: And it has been pretty constant over the years.

Griffin: Yes, it has been pretty constant. We pay very little unemployment. We keep those on.

Jenkins: **T**echnology has kept you able to maintain the number of employees and increase your production.

Griffin: Right. During grain season, my youngest son does the work of two laborers. He puts in the hours I used to put in, being late receiving, testing the grain, storing it or shipping it out. We would rather pay overtime to our regular employees and let them stay on at night until we unload all the grain.

Jenkins: What has been some of the major changes in equipment in that business since you have been in it? Certainly you described the pushbutton.

Griffin: Electronics has played a big part. Every piece of machinery runs more efficiently. But we still have our original machinery

in our pushbutton mill, and I don't know whether we could get any more efficient. We bought the best that we could buy, and it has been very handy. Of course, you have a lot of automation now. You have automatic scales that will take it out of the hopper, sack it. Better sewing machines to sew the sacks up. You have more bulk equipment: we sell more bulk feed in big, bulk trucks. One man can load 30 tons and take it to the ranch, load it in their bin and come on back; whereas if you had sacks it would take four men to load the truck, four men to unload it.

Jenkins: Do you own the trucks?

Griffin: Yes, we own our own bulk trucks, but we hire a lot of it done when we have to.

Jenkins: How many trucks do you own?

Griffin: We have three bulk trucks.

Jenkins: Have you ever had more than one location?

Griffin: I have an elevator at Knippa, Texas. It is right in the heart of the grain industry. We handle most of our grain over there for export and storage.

Jenkins: You told us when you acquired that, but do it again.

Griffin: We bought that in the early '60s.

Jenkins: Has the volume of that one kind of kept pace with business?

Griffin: It has up until this past year. We didn't have any grain.

Jenkins: What do you consider your market area, your distribution area?

Griffin: For our retail feed business we will cover every county around us which is about a five county area. We deliver feed to about five counties.

Jenkins: What are those counties?

Griffin: Real County, Edwards County, Kinney County, Uvalde County, Dimmit County and the Eagle Pass county, Maverick County, about six counties. The farther you get the less we do. We still get lots of business, especially in Edwards County, Kinney County. Zavala County is another one. That is probably our largest county, just south of here. We do business with about seven counties. Zavala is a good customer. We buy lots of grain from Zavala. We don't sell much in Medina County. We kind of cut off at the Uvalde line, because they have lots of good feed mills just over in the Hondo area.

Jenkins: In terms of size, and I have got a spot on competitors here, how do you rank in terms of size in this area?

Griffin: We are the largest feed manufacturer, and we possibly have more grain storage than any other, counting our Knippa facilities and our Uvalde facilities.

Jenkins: In these seven or eight counties?

Griffin: In seven counties. I think we are probably larger than anything in Hondo or Medina County.

Jenkins: Do you have any idea how you rank in the state of Texas?

Griffin: On grain storage? Oh, we would be way, way down.

Jenkins: Who are the big ones?

Griffin: West Texas, the plains. Three or four times, ten times bigger than we are.

Jenkins: Really?

Griffin: Oh, yes. They are in the grain business out there.

Jenkins: What about the feed processing business? How do you rank?

Griffin: We rank pretty good up in to your country feed store. We couldn't compare with Ralston-Purina or Paymaster.

Jenkins: As an independent, though, you consider yourself an independent.

Griffin: Yes. I would say we would be up in the top 20 or 30.

Jenkins: Okay, in the whole state.

Griffin: Yes. I would say on total tonnage on feed, yes, we can match them there, but not grains.

Jenkins: Now you have mentioned a time or two how you financed, but focus in again, if you are willing to, how you financed expansion, how you financed accounts receivable and such as that.

Griffin: On all of our buildings, and we built a lot of them, elevators, tanks, office buildings, we built most of that with SBA loans, with the bank participating. What they call a participating loan. In fact, I was on the SBA Advisory Council for a long time after we paid them off. We paid all those terms off; very satisfactory to do business with. I believe the bank would have financed us. I don't know if they would have financed

the first ones or not. When John Garner was in the bank. He was a very conservative banker. I doubt if he would have given us long enough term on it. But the SBA was a good friend of ours at that time. We had no problem whatsoever getting a loan from them, and I think the bank participated in it with them, and they both profited by it.

Jenkins: Did you know Garner?

Griffin: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: And banking was his business?

Griffin: Yes, he owned the bank here. He gave it away.

Jenkins: Where did he get his base for banking?

Griffin: He owned four or five banks.

Jenkins: Was he a rancher?

Griffin: No, I will promise you one thing, he didn't get into it through hanky-panky. He was just a real prudent businessman. He realized the importance of banking way back there, and he probably stuck what little money he had in small banks, and they grew. Let's see. He had 1, 2, 3 . . . He owned a bank here for a number of years. He owned a bank in Crystal City. And he had one in Amarillo. He had another one, but I can't remember where.

Jenkins: I was wondering, though, had banking been his career, or had it been politics. He got into it early, he didn't have a vocation before?

Griffin: But he was a very prudent, wise, intelligent businessman.

Very close. Very cold hearted when it came to business.

He was, as far as I know, very honest. He worked very hard.

Jenkins: On your elevators, your facilities expansions, you used a lot of SBA and the bank.

Griffin: Mostly SBA on all that mill work. I would say half a million dollars, off and on. I had two or three different loans.

Jenkins: How about your accounts receivable?

Griffin: When we needed to borrow money for cash flow, we established an almost unlimited credit account with the bank. We would just go down and get what we needed and carry it through. Fortunately, now, we don't have to borrow much money.

Jenkins: Cash flow has been pretty good.

Griffin: Yes, we have put a lot of surplus back into the company. Our cash flow has been excellent during the last five or six or seven years.

Jenkins: How has your organization structure changed over the years and why?

Griffin: It is still a family corporation. We run it like a co-op really, but it is a corporation. We incorporated.

Jenkins: When, from the start?

Griffin: Oh, yes, we have been incorporated from the start with three stockholders. And now we have three, my two boys and myself. We have given both of them combined the controlling interest in it. I kept forty some-odd percent. So if one of them has

a falling out, I am kind of the balancing factor, but it is doing fine.

Jenkins: What kind of organization structure do you have?

Griffin: We have a chairman of the board, a president and general manager, an associate general manager and a vice president. I am the chairman, the oldest boy is the president, the other one is the first vice president and associate manager. We have a fulltime bookkeeper. We are computerized. She has one helper, a girl. We have a retail sales floor manager who has been with me since my inception in business. We have two boys at the dock who load out feed. They are called dock workers. We have a mill foreman that supervises the Mexican labor, and an assistant mill foreman. The youngest son is production manager. He is in charge of everything pertaining to grain, feed production, mechanics, maintenance, but he has very little to do with actual business. Not that he couldn't do it, but he is pretty busy with all of the machines and everything.

Jenkins: So the family owns the business. Are there any other family members that are working there, besides you and your sons?

Griffin: No.

Jenkins: Okay. Their kids haven't got big enough to . . .

Griffin: One goes over to Knippa and tests grain.

Jenkins: A grandson?

Griffin: Yes. He is 11 years old, but he can run that moisture tester and take bucket tests for weight just as good as anybody. But the grain business has been so slow over there that he won't be there this summer.

Jenkins: He likes it?

Griffin: Oh, yes. He is fully capable. He knows how to grab samples.

Jenkins: The future for family management looks good.

Griffin: Yes, if we can stay ahead of the hounds as far as grain production and feed production, dry weather and inflation, government debt. There is nothing in this country that would help cure the agriculture business more than a cheaper dollar overseas and lots of extra kissing and making up with Russia. They are the people that buy the grain. But our dollar is so strong over there now that we are just priced out of the world market.

Jenkins: And management is staying within the company with this grandson being interested; there looks like there is plenty of potential for the future, I suppose.

Griffin: Well, you never know, do you?

Jenkins: Now in this area who are your major competitors? Do you have major competitors?

Griffin: Everything is competitive. It wouldn't be very interesting to be in business if you didn't have a competitor, really. Our competitor is, we have two more retail feed stores here. They get their share of the business. We don't have too much competition with the elevators here in Uvalde on grain. We

usually get all the grain that the farmer wants to bring into town to a country elevator. But I have noticed we have competition on the farms that we used to not have. These truckers. Since they deregulated this trucking deal to a certain extent, there have been a lot of the farmers get stuck. These truckers come in and buy grain and give them a hot check or run off without paying. That doesn't seem to make an impression on a lot of them. But they will bring ten trucks in here, for instance, park them on a big farm down here and take that grain directly to a feed yard. That is the most competition we have, and in a way it is really unfair. They don't pay any merchant's license. They are not under the Environmental Protection Agency, like OSHA, and all that. It is hard competition, and they take away several hundred carloads a year from us.

Jenkins: Percentagewise, what would you guess?

Griffin: Oh, I would say 10%. But every little bit hurts. The farmers have put around 10% of farm storage, and they handle it there and sell it to these truckers that come. I would say that between farm storage and direct selling to truckers, I would say 25%.

Jenkins: Of the people who are doing what you are doing in these counties that you consider to be your market area, do you have major competitors who are doing what you are doing?

Griffin: Not in the grain business. There are no elevators in these counties that I mentioned. There are no elevators there.

Jenkins: What about the feed business?

Griffin: Not like we are. They can't mix it as economically as we can, or we wouldn't be delivering feed there.

Jenkins: Do you have any idea what your share of the market is in those counties?

Griffin: I would say in Uvalde it is probably 50%. In Zavala County it is probably 25%. In Real County it is probably 25% of all the business. Kinney County probably 10%. Of course, Uvalde would be the main one.

Jenkins: In those other counties, is there anyone as big as you? You have already said you are the biggest one.

Griffin: Yes.

Jenkins: Is there anyone in anyone of those counties doing as much business in that county as you are doing?

Griffin: Oh, in that county? Yes, I would say so.

Jenkins: You have some individual ones in those counties.

Griffin: Yes, I would think so. A lot of them buy out of San Antonio, too, you know; out of Hondo where they have got good mixers.

Jenkins: Let's move on to another section here. Have you ever been involved with unions?

Griffin: No.

Jenkins: Never had any dealings with unions.

Griffin: People voted on it one time & turned it down twenty years ago.

We were never bothered with union organizers anymore.

Jenkins: Do you have much turnover?

Griffin: No, we sure don't have. We have got employees who have been with us thirty years.

Jenkins: Is that right.

Griffin: Right. Most of our labor force down there have been with us ten years, fifteen years. That is right.

Jenkins: Your management, of course, is internal.

Griffin: When we have to put on temporary people, that is when our turnover is greatest. They quit, and we have to go out and hire some more. We have no problem with labor. No problems whatsoever.

Jenkins: What kind of advertising do you do?

Griffin: We do very little advertising. I have analyzed the advertising connection with our business, and I haven't ever been convinced that the type of customers we have, the type of business that we do with exporting grain or selling grain somewhere else, I have never been convinced that advertising would pay off. Speaking about strictly advertising per se. Now we support everything that Uvalde stands for, and, of course, that comes out of our advertising budget.

Jenkins: For instance?

Griffin: Oh, we support the Opera House. We support the city in every way: the little leagues, the Lions Club, the Industrial

Foundation, the Chamber of Commerce, the Livestock, 4-H and FFA Livestock. We take a big thing in the paper on that when it comes up. But advertising 'Feed for Sale' or 'We Want your Grain' and we want this and that, I have never been convinced that that pays. We have done very little of it.

Jenkins: What about trade magazines, do you do anything with those?

Griffin: No, we take all of them, but we do very little advertising.

Jenkins: Most of the money that you spend, then, that would be classified as advertising is more community support.

Griffin: Right. Our annual show, we will spend \$2,000 or \$3,000 out there buying these kid's animals. We will support the football team. We will support the FFA and 4-H Club on trips. We will buy things for them to use within the clubs themselves. We are very lenient. Maybe a little too lenient. We will have to cut down on a little of that if business doesn't get a little bit better. We do not do much newspaper, radio, or TV advertising.

Jenkins: What about your government regulations? Are there major regulations directed specifically towards your business?

Griffin: Oh, yes. Yes, and they are headaches. We have a uniform grain storage agreement with the government that we can handle Commodity Credit grain in any way they want us to handle it. We have had it for years. OSHA has left us alone. I don't know how much longer they will.

Jenkins: Have you ever had a brush with them at all?

Griffin: Yes, we were fined \$25 or \$50 back 10 years ago for not having

a sign in the restroom or something. They were very lenient with us. They were very considerate. You can't hear this from every grain man or feed man. They are trying to change the thing now to make it too costly to do business. Your Wage and Hour people have given us problems. That cost us several thousand dollars one year when we weren't paying time and a half even to my old bookkeeper who was so slow and would work ten to twelve hours a day to get six hours work done. I had to go back and pay him, and he immediately endorsed the check back to me. He wouldn't take it. But I wasn't allowed to take it either, so he gave it to charity.

Jenkins: But you never thought about getting another bookkeeper.

Griffin: He stayed with me until he got ready to retire. We would still have been posting by pencil. And we have, you know, the USDA is very involved in the grain and feed business. Your State Feed Control doesn't give us any trouble. They keep us pretty well informed. That is a good agency.

Jenkins: How about EEOC?

Griffin: We have had no problem whatsoever with them, no problem. Most of our employees are Mexicans.

Jenkins: Never had anyone to file a complaint or anything.

Griffin: No.

Jenkins: Okay, we are getting down toward the last section here where we start kind of looking toward the future. Your present role in the company now is what? Chairman of the Board . . .

Griffin: Chairman of the Board and that is just about it.

Jenkins: How much time do you spend down there a day?

Griffin: I will average two or three hours a day down there, I would imagine. I go down some days and spend the day there and take care of my calls and take . . . You know, I am second vice president of Texas Grain and Feed Association. I have got lots of work to do there.

Jenkins: We are going to get into that in a little bit, too. Primarily your sons are running the business.

Griffin: Yes, and I think that I have handled it probably better than the average, because I left them alone. I monitored them and kept them under my thumb until they learned the business. And when I stepped out, I turned it over to them. They made lots of mistakes. I doubt if they made any more than I made. I know they don't make as many as I would have made at their age.

Jenkins: Has the company grown much since they took over?

Griffin: The feed business has grown, yes. The feed business has grown. And when you say the company has grown, how are you going . . . You have got to account for the value of the dollar.

Jenkins: Right.

Griffin: We used to sell cotton seed cake for \$50 a ton. Now we get \$300 for it. We used to sell milo for . . . I paid \$1.80 a hundred for many a hundred pounds of milo. Now we pay \$5.25.

Jenkins: Has your tonnage grown?

Griffin: Our tonnage has grown in the feed business, yes. I would think our tonnage has grown.

Jenkins: What do you hope for? Do you have plans and visions for the future of this company?

Griffin: Yes, I do. I would like to see the country get back to open production where we could grow all the grain we wanted to grow. I would like to see our export grow because we cannot possibly consume 50% of what we raise. And I would like to see our export grow. We need to do a lot of work on it from a national standpoint on that. I would like to see us get back in the grain business, is what I am trying to say.

Jenkins: The country or your own business?

Griffin: My own company. But the only way I am going to do it is for the whole country to get in the same situation.

Jenkins: So you would like to get back in the grain business.

Griffin: In a big way, where we could ship several hundred carloads of grain a year.

Jenkins: Do you have any hopes, do you have any desires to expand geographically and have other locations?

Griffin: No.

Jenkins: This is it.

Griffin: My boys are not turned like that. No.

Jenkins: So Uvalde location is what you want.

Griffin: Yes.

Jenkins: You are satisfied.

Griffin: Yes. There is a good living for three families down there from an executive ownership standpoint. We employ 16 to 18 other

families down there and pay well. Pay a few bonuses when we make the money. Give them vacations. We pay retirement. We have got our own retirement system, our own hospitalization. We are good to those people. You asked about turnovers. Don't you think that might be one reason why we don't have turnovers?

Jenkins: So you do all of the things that an awful lot of these big. . .

Griffin: Companies do. We have our own retirement system. I am the only one that is not on it.

Jenkins: Is that right? Do the employees contribute to it?

Griffin: They contribute a little, but we contribute more than they do. And with Social Security being cut back and inflation like it is, they are going to need that retirement policy to supplement their Social Security.

Jenkins: You have been in this business since 19. . . what?

Griffin: I bought this business in '51 here in Uvalde. The Wool-Mohair and Feed Business.

Jenkins: So you have been in this thing for 33 years. Obviously you have been successful because you are the biggest thing in this part of the area. How do you account for that, your personal and company success?

Griffin: Hard work and reasonable judgement. I wouldn't say good judgement; I certainly haven't had that all the time. But reasonable good judgement, but mostly hard work and dedication, not being afraid to work. Getting with it, in other words.

Jenkins: Do you care to speak to any of your major mistakes, or did

you have any?

Griffin: I had a lot of them. I had lots of them. I was very lenient on credit. If I had all the bad bills I have marked off, I could possibly have a home on the Riviera. I was very lenient. I used to have a temper, which tempered with age. I don't have that problem anymore. I used to get riled up, and it costs every time a businessman does that. He usually loses customers, and I have lost a few by being unreasonable along that line when I was younger. My boys don't do that. It is a funny thing. They don't have the temperament that I had. It is a lot better than I had. I was a lot more active in civic affairs in the city than them.

Jenkins: I have got another section on that. Let me ask you here in terms of this credit, do you think the credit that you allowed is rather typical of your business, or did it have a lot to do with the fact that you probably knew a high percent of your customers personally?

Griffin: It was typical of my business and not enough good judgement on many occasions. My boys have had the same problem, but theirs came in big sums that I would have probably have done the same thing. I mean \$15,000 on one customer. We can't even find the old boy that they served the judgement on there. I would say credit. it certainly wasn't a lack of enthusiasm or afraid to expand, because I was always willing to borrow money to expand.

Jenkins: Do your sons know as high a percentage of your customers as you knew 20 years ago?

Griffin: Yes.

Jenkins: Do they really pretty well know most of their customers?

Griffin: Almost all of them.

Jenkins: I have asked you this before, but is there a greater tendency to have problems with credit when you know that high percentage of your customers?

Griffin: I would say it was less. Most of the bad credit that we have has been fly-by-night people that checked out good, paid for seven or eight months real good, and the last big bill they let go and disappeared.

Jenkins: Set you up?

Griffin: Well, not necessarily. They would go bankrupt, or just sorry and won't pay. I was a little more cold hearted than the boys. I always turned it over to my lawyers when it went so long. I don't think they are as hard hearted along that line as I was. I was more lenient with credit than they are.

Jenkins: What do you consider some of the most difficult business decisions that you have made?

Griffin: Expansion. Obligating your family, obligating yourself for ten or fifteen years with more money than you ever thought was printed in Washington. That will make you stay awake at night.

Jenkins: Let me explore other business ventures that you have been in.

Are there any other things that you would like to say about business before we grope around on some other things?

Griffin: I would say that I wouldn't advise any person, regardless of the agricultural background or education they might have in the field of agriculture, to go in this business at the present time, because it is not a rosy picture as of today. The capital is great. I don't think your investment will ever pay off as the business is today.

Jenkins: It is not something that just anybody can experiment with and try to get into.

Griffin: No. It is too complicated. Machinery is too expensive. You get in an area where you have to do enough volume to make some money, it takes too much capital.

Jenkins: What happens, if anything, to the relative position of what we will call you, the independent, in this business and the big corporate chain type?

Griffin: We have the advantage. Yes, they used to be very competitive with us, but now we can do things that they can't do. We can under-sell them and make a product as good as they make. If we don't have the formulation, the technology and nutritionists, your Ph.D.'s in animal nutrition and all like that, we can get it. Just get on the phone and hire them real cheap. We can make as good a feed a lot cheaper. We are not unionized. We don't have the transportation problems that they have. The overhead. We don't have to pay the salaries they pay. Oh, yes.

Jenkins: Here in the state of Texas what kind of balance would you guess that there is between the independent and the corporate chains in terms of volume in Texas.

Griffin: Your large companies sell probably as much feed as all the little elevators like me put together, because they have such a variety of horse and mule feed. They have such a variety of feeds and national advertising and all like that, and we help them do it. We handled thousand to two thousand tons a year for Paymaster. We are their customers, too. I would say they as far as commercial feed, retail feed business, they are wholesale. They probably make as much as all the little ones put together. Excluding your large feed yards now. Your feed yards in west Texas and wherever they are. Excluding those.

Jenkins: What are their sources?

Griffin: They mix their own. They are kind of a different industry entirely.

Jenkins: The independents are carrying half of it, do you think?

Griffin: I would think so. It is divided between your feed yards, your large national companies, and your small independent people like myself.

Jenkins: You are saying that you now have some advantages. Do you see a gradual shift back towards, maybe, a greater percentage of volume by the independents?

Griffin: No, I can't see it in the future.

Jenkins: You think you are going to hang in there, though, with what you have got?

Griffin: Oh, yes. We are on computers now. My little, old company, we have access to everything your large, national companies have. We have every expertise they have.

Jenkins: But you don't see a continuing takeover by those?

Griffin: Oh, no, no way.

Jenkins: They are not going to come in here and make you such a good offer you can't afford not to sell to them.

Griffin: If they came in and made a good offer to convert this to their national large company and they wanted it bad enough, they could sure buy it.

Jenkins: But you don't anticipate that.

Griffin: No, they have no use for this, no.

Jenkins: Okay, that is what I was looking for. Let's look now at other business ventures that you are involved in. You have got some cows running around out here. What other things, what are you doing besides running this feed business?

Griffin: Well, of course, that has been my base of operation; has been my financial base, and everything else has been my wool-mohair business, feed business and grain business over the years. I couldn't have done anything without those. I have farmed, irrigated farms, large and small.

Jenkins: Growing what?

Griffin: Cotton, milo, corn and wheat. I farmed at Batesville, a large farming area down here, quite large.

Jenkins: Do you personally get involved in those farms?

Griffin: Oh, yes, I loved it.

Jenkins: Get out there on tractors and all that?

Griffin: Yes. I do occasionally.

Jenkins: How many acres do you farm?

Griffin: When I was farming in Batesville, I had 640 acres of irrigated farm land. That is quite a big farm. But I gave that up. I had to because I was just killing myself. My boys were little then; I was running the whole show. I would get up at daylight and go down there and get back at the office at nine. Leave there at five and get back home at nine that night. Leave there at five and get back home at nine that night. But I made a little money. I built my home here with my farming money, and bought this farm and did a lot of things that the business couldn't afford to do back in those days.

Jenkins: That 640 acres was irrigated land?

Griffin: Was leased, yes, at Batesville, south of here.

Jenkins: And you were growing grain on that?

Griffin: Grain and cotton mostly. I have about 196 acres in this one.

Jenkins: What are you doing with this?

Griffin: I have cotton and livestock on it, and I have corn. I didn't have any corn this year. I have cotton and I grow wheat, grass and livestock. And I leased a 2,500 acre ranch up north on 83. You went right by it on the way to Garner Park. For 12 years I ran that ranch. I leased it. I had goats and cattle. I ran

1,000 goats, good nanny goats, angora goats. Made money. Cattle didn't make anything, but the goats did. I have enjoyed the ranch. The hunting out there, the deer ran over you when you go in there. Turkey.

Jenkins: You say you leased those?

Griffin: I leased those two places. I own this one, though.

Jenkins: You are operating this one?

Griffin: Yes. I let the boys use whatever they want to. They never pay me any rent or anything.

Jenkins: Any other kinds of business ventures you have been interested in other than on boards and things. We will get to that.

Griffin: Not worth mentioning. I have been in the moving and storage business. Had a business that was North American Van Lines. We had a place here for them. Never did make any money, and we gave it up.

Jenkins: Were you involved in the management of that?

Griffin: No, I was just president of the company. Put up the money, in other words. That is just about all. I have tried to stay with agriculture.

Jenkins: Let's look to trade association involvement first.

Griffin: I don't guess there are very many in Uvalde that has any more Ex's by their name as I have. It seems like I am Ex- everything.

Jenkins: Let's start on the national and state level in terms of trade associations.

Griffin: Well, I will start with the Air Force first. I stayed in the Air Force Reserve for 27 years. I retired just like a regular does after spending weekends. You wonder where all this time came from: I trained in San Antonio a weekend every month, went to two weeks camp almost every summer. I retired a colonel with 27 years in the Reserve and active duty. I draw military retirement. I would say I draw about a fourth of what a regular would draw, but I have all the privileges of a regular retired Army officer, or Air Force officer draws. I was a director on the Sheep and Goat Raisers Association for many years when I was in that business. And even when I was a grower I was on the board. I have been a member of the Texas Grain and Feed Association for, I guess, 20 years. About six or seven years ago I was elected to the board. Served on the board of directors for four years. I went off for a year, and at the convention this year at Fort Worth I was drafted as second vice president, which came about in a very unorthodox way. They couldn't agree on anybody, so I told them they got as close to nothing as they could get. They talked me into accepting it at my age; I didn't feel right in doing it, but I did it to keep harmony within the association. Evidently I had very few objections to it, and I accepted it and was elected. I am very active in that particular association at the present time. We are talking about trade associations. That is just about all.

Jenkins: If you can't think of any others that you have been involved in . . .

Griffin: Trade associations?

Jenkins: Trade associations, because I have a question to ask you. State level, national level, local level.

Griffin: Not trade associations.

Jenkins: What have the trade associations done for you, not as an active member, but what good does it get out of the trade associations?

Griffin: We bind together for the good of all the industry. We are active in legislation that would hurt our business; any kind, whether it be labor, transportation, restrictions of any kind. We try to protect our free enterprise as much as we can. That is the whole purpose of it. Working together as a whole industry rather than pulling apart. Pooling our knowledge. Many times pooling our resources to help make a big export sale in grain, for instance. Our association can, if we are having trouble filling a contract, some exporter who also is a member of our organization, we kind of work together. Not in a collusion way, but in a way that would help the industry and help the people that are involved in it.

Jenkins: What about technical information?

Griffin: Technical information is very important to us. We spent millions and millions of dollars on dust control, on dust explosions in

elevators. We appropriate the membership dues and all like that to do that kind of research on safety in the elevators. Dust is the big problem. Dust explosions.

Jenkins: Has your elevator ever had any problems?

Griffin: Oh, yes, we have had a dust explosion, we sure have. It didn't hurt anybody fortunately, except the pocketbook. It blew out an elevator.

Jenkins: OSHA is pretty hard on those things.

Griffin: OSHA is trying to change it to where it would be very impractical to do. And we have fought it. We had a hearing in Fort Worth this past week with OSHA, and we have really been politically involved on this thing with our Congressman and our lobbyist, National Grain Association, in Washington, and we think we are going to get this thing. They want these new elevators that have no way for the dust to get out. You seldom hear of a real old elevator blowing up, because it is all out in the open where the dust can get out. These new ones are all enclosed, and what is going to happen. Any spark can explode it. Things like that. Technically, yes. New ways to handle grain, new elevators, new equipment, things like that. We have displays at our convention. They are all members of our association. There has been many improvements in the elevator business. We are for that. We have a mediation board. Two members get into a squabble over contracts or delivering grain, we have a

committee that will sit and hear those complaints. We call it the arbitration committee, and the members are bound to be bound by their decision. If they are not, they are kicked out of the association if they don't take the arbitration committee's decision. We pick the best people in the business to serve on it, the fairest minded. But I would say that every trade association that I have been in has done the same thing: One is to promote the product that you are handling; second, guard against political adversities to that particular business; third, is you brought up your technical improvements to help the business; then your arbitration between members. It is very important. We have lots of arbitration cases.

Jenkins: Let's move then to the local scene and see what you have been involved in in the local community over the years.

Griffin: Over the years I have been president of just about everything here starting with the Chamber of Commerce. I was president of the Chamber of Commerce in the late '60s. President of the Industrial Foundation, which Uvalde's population has doubled in the time I have lived here, and we have industry. We have promoted that industry very conscientiously.

Jenkins: Today the population is about what?

Griffin: Around 15,000, but we are closer to 20,000 than we are 15,000. Crystal City had lots of political trouble with the Hispanics down there, and we got half of that town moved up here since

the census was taken. We have lots of Latins. We are 70% Mexican here. And I would say that there are 2,000 or 3,000 Mexicans not even counted because they are not even citizens, but they are living here. The Chamber of Commerce, President of the Industrial Foundation, President of the Lions Club, President of our Livestock Association, President of our A&M Club, Chairman of the Advisory Committee for the Research and Extension Center out here from Texas A&M. We have a large one here, you know. Served on the 2,000 Committee for Agriculture.

Jenkins: What does that 2,000 Committee represent?

Griffin: Well, I served on two of them. I served as an adviser on the Governor's committee to propose research and betterment for agriculture until the year 2,000; what we should do for it; problems we are going to encounter on water, production, insect, diseases. Then I served on the Board of Directors of A&M 2,000 Target Committee, which took us two years. I served on that two consecutive years. We would meet every three months to plan the future of A&M until the year 2,000. I was on the Agricultural Research end of that one. We had every phase of A&M represented there with a committee member: academic, veterinarian, engineering, forestry, marine, and all phases of agriculture. What else? Everything but football. We didn't devil into that. But I was on the Agricultural Research Target 2,000 committee, and we issued a report about this thick.

We got it out 3 or 4 months ago. We are proud of that report because we told the University what they needed to do for the farmers and agriculture in the way of research. The academic people did the same thing. Your Veterinary School of Veterinary Medicine did the same thing: diagnostic laboratories they are going to have to put up, all like that. Your Forestry Service, what they are going to have to do with the insect control problem they are having over there now. A&M is getting quite large in marine research end of it. They have got a School of Marine Life in Galveston, you know, a branch of A&M is down there. They have got hatcheries on the coast where they are breeding these giant shrimp domestically. They have just got lots of those kinds of problems going. Genetic Engineering is going to be our big one, where you can change characteristics of plants where they won't have to have half as much water, be resistant to certain diseases and insects. We have given them quite a task to do, and I was proud of the work that I could do free of charge on that thing. We paid our own expenses over there every three months and stayed two or three days and worked like the Devil. It is one of the best, I think, not counting my report that came out, but the others were one of the best you have ever read on what we want them to do. They have the capability to do it, leaving out the money.

Jenkins: Can you think of any other things locally?

Griffin: Yes, I serve on the Edward's Underground Aquifer, which is turning into quite a headache right now. We have an underground water system here that furnishes all of the water for five counties, including San Antonio. And it can only be recharged by the Lord, and you know what that is. We have recharge areas up north of us here, and the Frio that you passed coming in. We have a bunch of caves and calcareous formations that when it rains and those dry rivers flow, it goes down into the aquifer; and it is the best water in the state of Texas. We have built recharger stations. We have built recharge zones in the Nueces River, in the Frio and in the Guadalupe. All those rivers feed the underground aquifer.

Jenkins: Is that why the Frio disappears and doesn't dry up?

Griffin: We have got a Dry Frio and a Frio. And they both run dry most of the time. Yes, it all goes down into the aquifer.

Jenkins: Because at Garner State Park the water is running.

Griffin: That's right. That is out of the aquifer.

Jenkins: Right, but it doesn't run across the road down here.

Griffin: No, it is the Dry Frio. The water all goes underneath to the aquifer. But we are running out fast.

Jenkins: Does it ever resurface after that?

Griffin: Yes, we have San Marcos springs. That is part of the aquifer.

Jenkins: I mean the Frio is running up at Garner State Park. It is not running down . . .

Griffin: No, it doesn't surface. In springs, no. It would have to be

spring fed. We have a few small springs between here and New Braunfels, but the springs in New Braunfels and San Marcos is all out of the Edward's Underground Aquifer. And I serve as a director on that thing representing Uvalde County. That was what they called about this morning, our Chairman of the Board.

Jenkins: Okay, any other things, Boy Scouts or anything like that?

Griffin: No.

Jenkins: Churches?

Griffin; I teach Sunday School class at the First Baptist Church. The only reason they let me teach it is I know more about sin than anybody else. You can quote me on that.

Jenkins: You have been there, so you know.

Griffin: I have been there, and I practice it more than they do. That is what they say about me.

Jenkins: Let me ask you what some of the honors that have been given you over the years.

Griffin: I received the Citizenship Award when I was in the Air Force Reserve for devoting my time and effort to it, which was quite an honor. I served on the Air Force Academy Selection Board for one year, which was quite an honor. I was selected Man of the Year in Agriculture for the work that I was doing getting the Agricultural Experimental Station into Uvalde. I was Chairman of that procurement committee when we had to compete against San Antonio and several other towns to get it. Uvalde managed to bring it to our area. They employ about 55

scientists out there. I have received the Environmental Reward from the Soil Conservation Service for the work I have done on this little old farm as far as environmental work is concerned. That is just about all.

Jenkins: What tend to be your reading habits? Have been?

Griffin: My reading habits? I read, I guess, five different publications, technical publications that I get on a weekly basis.

Jenkins: Dealing with your business primarily?

Griffin: Dealing with business, world affairs, politics.

Jenkins: What are the publications?

Griffin: Time Magazine, U. S. News and World Report, Southwest Agricultural Digest, Sheep and Goat Raisers Magazine, The Grain Journal, The National Water Resources Bulletins and magazines that come out. I have to be first in water because I am on the Aquifer Board of Directors. Daily publications, we take two papers. The Wall Street Journal, I take it. Learn very little. The Southwest Grain Journal. I take lots of those. I try to get most of them read.

Jenkins: Do you do any pleasure reading?

Griffin: Yes, I read novels.

Jenkins: What kind?

Griffin: Any kind. I am reading one now which is from William L. Shirer. It is supposed to be a bestseller of the 20th century prior to World War II.

Jenkins: Do you particularly just like historical stuff, or did that

just happen to be . . .

Griffin: I like historical novels more than the dirty novels like The Godfather and things like that. I don't enjoy those vulgar novels. Saigon is a good one. I read it. Centennial. Gone With the Wind. I took all of the Life's publications of the subjects there, which was very interesting. I get them in every month. World War II, I get all of that. I have got all their picture books up there.

Jenkins: Do you have other hobbies? You mentioned golf.

Griffin: Yes, golf is my only hobby I have. I take the grandsons fishing every once in a while. But I play golf regularly. I love it.

Jenkins: Have you thought about health practices over the years, have you done things deliberately to watch after your health?

Griffin: No.

Jenkins: You swim a lot, apparently.

Griffin: I stay in the water a lot now. Yes, for the past two or three years I try to swim every opportunity I get. If I don't have a meeting in conflict with my swimming, I go out there and spend about an hour in the pool swimming around, floating, and getting relaxed. Health? I have been endowed with good health. My old football knees give me trouble. I have had to have a cartilage removal once. And I have a little heart problem, but it has never given me any trouble.

Jenkins: Is your swimming mostly just because you like to swim or is it designed for your . . .

Griffin: It relaxes me, and I enjoy the water, especially if I can get my grandchildren out here to swim with me.

Jenkins: Over the years you have businesses that could be stressful.

Griffin: It really has been stressful.

Jenkins: Did you deal with the stress in any particular way? I mean were you conscious of it, and you knew you had to do something about it, or did you just kind of roll with the punch?

Griffin: I rolled with the punch, and I had a good wife to put up with me. She has helped me in the business. She was a very efficient bookkeeper, typist. When I got in a jam, she would come down. When I got overstressed, she would calm me down. She always provided a good home for the boys and me. This home is her number one job. She has always recognized it. She created it herself. She is a marvelous woman to put up with me all these years.

Jenkins: How do you feel about retirement?

Griffin: I don't know how a person can ever retire and live very long. I don't see how. I do more physical work now than I did ten years before I retired. I work out here on the farm, and I go down and I take care of my book work at my office, my correspondence here and there. I attend the Water Board meeting every month, and I attend the Texas Grain and Feed Directors and Executive meetings every month or two. I play golf two or

three times a week, 18 holes. I don't see how a person can retire.

Jenkins: Are you about as retired now as you want to be?

Griffin: I am as retired now as I want to be. I don't think I want to retire. I am like John Garner told me once. Somebody told him if he would quit drinking that old whiskey and smoking those old, black cigars, he would live a long, long time. He said, "By God, it would seem like a long time." I heard him say it.

Jenkins: Now how old were you when you went into business for yourself?

Griffin: I went in business in 1951. I was about 34 years old.

Jenkins: So most of your life you worked for yourself. You were self-employed.

Griffin: Right.

Jenkins: And that was a decision that you made.

Griffin: I made it.

Jenkins: And how do you feel about that now?

Griffin: I have material things now that I would have never had if I had stayed with the Quaker Oats Company, which was the best job I ever had. It was the highest paying job. They wanted me to move to Chicago and start the executive ladder. I went up and looked at what I had in the Merchandise Mart Building and where I would have to live and commute from and take two little boys and my wife up to that city. I decided I better look around for something else, because those opportunities only come once. And when you don't take what they

offer, you are a dead duck as far as the company. So that is when I bought this business.

Jenkins: You are guessing you are ahead financially.

Griffin: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: Other than the financial gain, do you feel good about having made this decision?

Griffin: Yes, because I have been averagely successful, you know. I am a country boy coming from a real poor family and all like that. And take this and build a million dollar business, yes, I feel like the effort has been worth it. Yes.

Jenkins: What do you particularly like, you think, about working for yourself, instead of working for somebody else?

Griffin: You have to take all the blame and all the credit. If you can keep those mistakes down and just take credit it is real good. You take the bitter with the sweet. But you are your own boss, you know, and you can leave when you want to. I could stay in the Air Force Reserve. I could serve on all these boards and not have to clear it with any boss. There are fringe benefits from being in business for yourself that you don't have unless you have it, you know. You get lots of good traveling, no taxes, you can always find business wherever you go and things like that. All businessmen do it.

Jenkins: One last thing. If someone asked you to come to a meeting to advise a university on what to teach prospective future business people and some of the things that you think that they should be taught, what would be some of your ideas?

Griffin: My ideas would be, first, hard work and preparation while they are there. These students, if they are like I was, they don't prepare themselves for this old cold world. And I am sure they are just like that now. They don't fully appreciate what they are getting into.

Jenkins: Can it be done in a university?

Griffin: I think so. I think they can teach hard work there. Of course, your students are so much different now, Floyd, than they were when I was in there. Our sole purpose was to prepare ourselves for something that we didn't have before we went to the university; that is, we had a low standard of living: sweet milk and cornbread, and turnip greens and homemade rolls, living off the farm, never going any place. We didn't want that. We knew that if we didn't get that education and could buy us a car. That was the only way we were ever going to get it, is to get that education and get a job where we could buy the things we craved at that time. The kids don't have that now. My God, my kids were better off in college than they are now with those big families. They have too much material things there now, and I am not blaming the kids. That's not the kids fault. I would have taken it, too, and I wouldn't be worth killing when I got out if I had had what my boys had. I would have been a playboy. I would probably never would have worked as hard. That was a good

question. It may not be able to be taught. But I do know that we need more engineers, we need more mathematicians, we need more technical people if we are to keep ahead of the rest of the world. They need to be prepared to work when they get out. I wouldn't know how to motivate them, no, I wouldn't. In my own experience I can't relate to it.

Jenkins: Well, that is what I am really kind of wondering. Obviously things that you learned simply by being there, and I am wondering if you think much of this, if any of it, can be put over in a classroom, or to what extent can we really prepare them for this. If you were charged with trying, are there any thoughts that you have? Here you have this bunch of young folks ahead of you, and they are saying, "One of these days I am going to go into business." And you are going to try to say, "Here are some things that I would like to try to do to you to make it possible that you might be less likely to fall on your face."

Griffin; I would take the approach of a football coach. You know, great football coaches are not always the smartest people. The smart coaches don't always win: It is the coaches that can motivate those players. I would take the approach of motivation. You have got to motivate to get these young people to do anything. And there are several ways of trying to motivate, and you will motivate a few if you try hard enough. Your successful football coaches are capable of motivating those

boys and getting them to play not only up to their capabilities, but a little bit better than they actually are. Those are the teams that win. Those are the coaches that win that can do that. It is not your I.Q. as a coach, it is how much you can motivate those boys. I think that would be the main thing. I think we ought to have a little bit higher restrictions. You have 20,000 students in North Texas State University. I will ask you a question. Is that too many for that university? Can you adequately handle them with your funding that you have? Can you take care of that many people? Can you give them the academic programs that will be, that should or is applied on a basis that they can prepare themselves for that particular course that they are studying?

Jenkins: That is the big question. In terms of numbers, I think there is no problem. In terms of what we ought to be doing and whether we can do it, that is really the big question.

Griffin: I am quoting the president and chancellor, and I am not going to tell you what university it is, of one that has 35,000 students right now. And that is too many, I am quoting him, that is too many for that institution to handle and do the job that they want to do. I think we have too many I think we are putting too much stress on higher education. My definition of higher education is college level, not post graduate work. I think we put too much stress on that. I think we have people over there that should be in technical

schools rather than getting a degree and following teaching or accounting or business management. I don't think we have too many engineers if the curriculum is what it should be.

I think we ought to have twice as many engineers as we have.

Jenkins: I think this is part of what I wanted you to talk toward. Part of it is, then, that you are really uncertain that an awful lot of what you wound up knowing that helps you to run a business, you are not at all sure that that can or even should be attempted in the university. Are you saying that?

Griffin: You mean technically speaking or . . .

Jenkins: Not as an engineer. Of course, there is a difference between your capacity to mix feed, and your capacity to manage a business in such a way that it will be successful.

Griffin: I think your college helps you. I think it gives you more flexibility. It gives you a wider knowledge and a lot of more human understanding. But I think that after they do get that course in management, let's say agricultural economics, for instance, if they just had an on-the-job training school that they could go to and serve an apprenticeship, wouldn't that be wonderful? Instead of coming into my business and immediately getting down to the hard facts of life and having to decide on credit and having to do those things from the book that you haven't had the experience to do, I think that maybe on-the-job training, that if some university or several

universities could arrange for a lot of those management jobs, for instance, to get on-the-job training like a doctor has to do.

Jenkins: Internship.

Griffin: They call it residency now. I have a niece that has just graduated from Texas Medical School. She is taking her residency. I think we need that in any business. And that wouldn't have anything to do with your college curriculum, because you couldn't give on-th-job training in a university. I think I would stress hard work and the importance of grasping the subject they are teaching instead of daydreaming and things that I did while I was in class. I don't know. I would have to give it a lot of thought. I have never wanted to be one. I never wanted to be a lecturer in a university, because I never did think I had the capability.

Jenkins: If you were asked by some local school to come for an hour and tell you, "Here are some people who think they want to be business people," and you have got this little bit of time with them, "pull from your wisdom and drop some pearls on them." You would concentrate on things that you have mentioned, which are . . .

Griffin: Have a high degree of failure because of poor management and lack of knowledge. Oh, yes, I could do it. Whether I could impress them enough, I wouldn't know that. Because you are dealing with a different set of dogs now than they had when you and I were boys.

Jenkins: In your business the family is pretty much running the thing. Are there people working there who are learning the business to the extent that they could go out and start one from a knowledge standpoint?

Griffin: No, not in my business. No.

Jenkins: They just can't get the breadth from there.

Griffin: I just don't have that many positions that afford them to do that. To learn that much. I keep a retail man there that writes invoices and knows all about writing formulas from a card index and can direct loading and things like that. He doesn't have to be anything but that, and he doesn't want to be. I have Mexicans to do the loading, and loading them right. And there is an art in there, making them happy when you load it. No, I don't have that, no. I don't have that in my business. We really only have two executives, and that is my two boys. Three counting myself.

Jenkins: And they learned an awful lot of it as they grew up in the business.

Griffin: Right. I taught them a lot after they got out of A&M. They sure didn't learn much over there, except how to have a good time and raise a little hell every once in a while. They both graduated. One graduated with a high grade point average, and the president of the company, I was just thankful to get him out with a diploma. And he has been all right.

Jenkins: How valuable do you consider your own university education in the running and building of your business?

Griffin: Oh, I consider it every day. I think without that I would have been probably a plumber or a ditch digger or something like that. Oh, yes, it gave me the insight of what could be done. It gave me confidence in myself, and gave me flexibility. It gave me congeniality to meet with people, how to mix with society. You take an old boy that is raised way out in the country, went barefooted until he was 12 years old, I had all those things. I learned how the other half lived, and I wanted to live like that, and I was willing to work to do it.

Jenkins: In terms of the technical aspects of your business, did it do a great deal for you then?

Griffin: Yes, it teaches you where to find it in a book.

Jenkins: Okay, it helps you find answers.

Griffin: Yes, sir, you know where to go after them, because it rings a bell, you know. Well, I learned this in feeds and feedings, and I learned this in livestock breeding, and I learned this in nutrition, and I learned this in genetics. I learned this there, and I know where to find it.

Jenkins: So helping you to know that answers were available and that you could go and find them.

Griffin: Right.

Jenkins: So it is not what you kept in your head, but you knew where

you could go to find them.

Griffin: Remember, I had training as County Agent, too, which helped me tremendously. And that was on-the-job training, really, because I kept my mouth shut and listened. To give you an example, when I first started in A&M Extension work, they were working lots of mules out in the field. They had very few veterinarians. Talk about vaccinating hogs. I will tell you another thing we had to do. We had to castrate the mules. And the Commissioners Court wanted that done. The farmers that couldn't castrate their own mules, the County Agent had to do it. And they asked me when I met with the A&M District Agent in the Commissioners Court, they said, "Young man, can you castrate the farmers' mules that want them castrated?" I said, "Yes, sir." I had watched my dad do it, and I had held the clamps and burned and seared the cord and all like that. I was always foolish enough to think I could do as good a job as he did with it, but he never would let me do it. I said, "Yes, sir, I can sure do it." He said, "Do you know how to throw one, how to put the ropes on one to pull him down?" I said, "Oh, yes." I did know that. That was about the only question he asked me I could answer truthfully. But we had to do that. And I sweated out the first two or three I did. I knew they would be dead the next morning, you know, but sure enough they lived, and that gave me all the confidence I needed. But how many young men today have those? I was a little brazen, don't you

think?

Jenkins: A little confidence.

Griffin: I had all the confidence in the world. Here I was going to marry the best looking girl in the county. I had big ambitions, and I never was beaten down.

Jenkins: Take those chances.

Griffin: That's right. I took them.

Jenkins: Okay, are there any before we close? I have covered all of my outline here, but are there any other things that you can think of that I should have asked you and didn't?

Griffin: No.

Jenkins: Okay, if there are not, we will end it here then, and I thank you for a fascinating interview.