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Interview with

LOUIS E. TURCOTTE, JR.

February 4, 1988

Place of Interview: Sarita, Texas

Interviewer: Floyd Jenkins

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Oral History Collection

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Dr. Jenkins: This Floyd Jenkins recording for the Business Archives Project, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas. Today is February 4, 1988. Today I'm talking with Louis Edgar Turcotte, Jr., long-time rancher and former foreman of the Kenedy Ranch.

Louis, let's get you to go back and not only review your own family history leading up to your birth, and then we'll follow your life from there; but give us your knowledge of your own family's coming over here and the relationship that the Kenedy's and the King's had in the ranching industry in South Texas.

Mr. Turcotte: Okay. Well, on my mother's side, to begin with, her grandfather and father came over from Ireland, and her mother's people came over from Scotland. So her folks were Scotch-Irish stock. They settled in Illinois.

Dr. Jenkins: Give us some names now.

Turcotte: Well, I forget his first name, but my Grandpa Anderson's wife was a Cameron, and they had the tartans of the Cameron Clan, and on down to the later generation they were proud of their kilts and their colors of the Cameron Clan. I wasn't real familiar with those folks; I just saw them on visits when they would come down south.

Jenkins: Did they have anything to do with Cameron, Texas?

Turcotte: Not that I know of.

Jenkins: Okay.

Turcotte: Not that I know of. They settled around Bloomington and Hoopeston, Illinois. When her father was killed in a buggy accident, her mother came south. She was a schoolteacher and came all the way to Sarita, Texas; and here in Sarita she remarried and married a railroad telegrapher. It was C.L. Jackson, Claude L. Jackson.

Jenkins: Throw in approximate dates anytime you can, too.

Turcotte: Well, Dad was eleven years older than Mother when they married. Mother was twenty-one when I was born in 1926. Dad's folks emigrated from France to Nova Scotia to Canada and down to Louisiana. There, Maria Stella Turcotte Kenedy met John Kenedy and married him and moved to the La Parra Ranch, which is the ranch home place, headquarters, six miles east of Sarita. As a matter of fact, the headquarters was there before the town of Sarita was. The town of Sarita was built when

the railroad came through in 1913 or so.

Jenkins: So this first settlement, when they got here, was in about what year?

Turcotte: The first settlement when they got here?

Jenkins: To this part of the country.

Turcotte: Oh, around the turn of the century.

Jenkins: Oh, okay.

Turcotte: Dad was born in 1887, I think, and he was three years old when they moved down. So it was right around the turn of the century. They lived at La Parra Ranch, which means "the grapevine.

Jenkins: Oh, okay.

Turcotte: That was the name of the Kenedy Ranch headquarters. When Aunt Stella came down, shortly after she brought her two brothers down--Uncle George and Grandpa (William) Turcotte. Grandpa was one of the earlier trained well diggers. He had worked as a well driller in Louisiana and knew how to drill wells and operate machinery. He was also a carpenter, and he was pretty well a jack-of-all-trades. But his primary training was as a well driller. They brought him to drill artesian wells, and he drilled some of the first artesian wells on the Kenedy Ranch, some of which are still flowing today, nearly a hundred years later. He also was in charge of a construction crew that built camp houses all over the ranch in the development of the ranch. At that

time the ranch was receiving all their supplies by water from Corpus, and they had a landing which they called the Kenedy Landing out here. It was five miles east of headquarters, and Uncle George (Uncle "Cott") was in charge of receiving the supplies and had sort of a quartermaster's job. Later on he did the purchasing and whatnot, but he started off being in charge of receiving the posts and wire for the fencing of the ranch.

Jenkins: And you called him Uncle "Cott?"

Turcotte: Uncle "Cott. That was his nickname. Where that came from, I don't know.

Jenkins: Maybe he liked to sleep a lot (chuckle).

Turcotte: Yes. He was an old bachelor, and he never married, never married. But Grandpa and Grandma (Emilia) Turcotte married and had three children. Andrew Turcotte was the oldest, and there was my dad and my Aunt Stella. They moved down there, and then Stella went off to school. She married a cattle buyer by the name of Lee Lytton, and they lived in Fort Worth and then later in San Antonio, while my family stayed on the ranch here. They had two children, Lee and Arthur. Both Lee and Arthur were raised in Fort Worth. Lee went to law school and graduated, and as a young lawyer he came to Kenedy County right at the start of hostilities in World War II. And so did Arthur. About the time that I was leaving to go to the service, well, they

arrived at the ranch.

Now Dad and Mother...there were five of us, five boys. I'm the oldest, and then there was Brother Pat, Brother Jack, Brother Joe, Brother Bob, and Sister Beth (Elizabeth). Brother Joe died in an accident a few years back, and the rest of us are still living.

Jenkins: Let's go back again, even before you were born, and get what you know of the relationships between the Kenedy's and King's and how the ranches started and who worked for whom and so on.

Turcotte: Well, there's been much written about that. There's never been a real history of the Kenedy Ranch that I know of. There's been quite a bit written about the King Ranch. They were both steamboat captains, and I know that Uncle Johnny--I'm referring now to John G. Kenedy, Jr.--told Bob Kleberg one time that...Mr. Bob asked Uncle Johnny, "You got a drink, Johnny?" And Uncle Johnny said, "Why sure, Bob, I ought to give you a drink. After all, your grandfather was my grandfather's cabin boy. So the story from the Kenedy side was that Captain Kenedy was the elder of the two and that Captain King worked for him as a cabin boy and apprentice and got to be a captain. This was on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, I believe. Then prior to the Civil War, they came down to South Texas and established a shipping company at Brownsville.

Jenkins: What kind of time, years, are we talking about?

Turcotte: We're talking about the beginning of the Civil War. When the Union forces blockaded, they had a fleet of steamboats operating on the Rio Grande all the way to Larado and back. They were carrying primarily cotton but also anything, hides or what-have-you. When the Union forces blockaded the port of Brownsville, well, they changed to the Mexican flag, and they sailed under the Mexican colors. They ran the Union blockade and hauled cotton to the Carolinas for use by the Confederate forces, and they became wealthy in this trade in cotton.

Jenkins: Well, that was probably the real beginning of a gathering of the wealth.

Turcotte: That's where they accumulated the wealth, and shortly after the Civil War, well, they accumulated land that was generally all the way from the Mexican border to Corpus Christi. At that time the ranch headquarters was in Corpus Christi.

Jenkins: Now how were they getting that land?

Turcotte: They were buying the land. All of the land was old Spanish land grants, and a lot of it had been abandoned due to Indian raids, and it was considered a very unsafe place to live, although it was prime grazing country.

Jenkins: This is part of that neutral, no man's land.

Turcotte: It was referred to in that aspect. They bought this

land as partners. Captain King settled on the Santa Gertrudis Creek and established the Santa Gertrudis headquarters there; and Captain Kenedy established his headquarters here at La Parra Ranch. Their original home was in Corpus Christi. They always operated a ranch. The place was very isolated even when I was growing up there, you know. The highway didn't come through until 1938 or so, so I was raised, you might say, sort of in the suburbs of Riviera. We had a chance to ride horseback six miles to school, but we only did that for one year.

Jenkins: Now as we were out at the ranch in the grave site and the cowboy graveyard and all of that, you were telling some early stories, and you have some pictures of the people involved in some of the bandit raids around this part of the country.

Turcotte: Well, that picture you saw was of the two Armstrong's, Major Tom Armstrong and his brother Charlie Armstrong, and an old ranger by the name of John Cardway, who at that time was the deputy sheriff; and then the other one was an old ex-Ranger who was sheriff of Kenedy County, by the name of Akin. They went to Norias by horseback. They went to Norias after they received word that a large force of Mexican bandits were on their way to attack Norias. When they got there, Norias had already been attacked, and the bandits were moving back toward

Mexico and taking a bunch of cattle with them. This group that you saw in that picture were part of a group that followed them to Mexico. There were sixty-four of the Mexican bandits originally, and they pursued them all the way to the Mexican border with a much inferior force. Not all the Mexican bandits made it back to Mexico; some stayed on Texas soil. But none of the pursuers were lost.

Jenkins: I remember reading in Texas History an incident that sounds like that. It may not have been that exact same incident, but it sure sounded like it. Let's go back now and get you to follow as best you know, without worrying about specific dates, throwing in as many people and giving us some idea of the time of the growth and events as the Kenedy Ranch came through the years and how it was organized. You mentioned something about Texas Rangers and foreman. Just develop that history as best you can.

Turcotte: Well, on the King Ranch, all during my early lifetime, every division was headed by an ex-Ranger.

Jenkins: On the King Ranch?

Turcotte: On the King Ranch, with the exception of Santa Gertrudis, which was headed up by Lauro ("Larry") Cavazos; but they also had two ex-Rangers on there besides Larry. Larry was the man that was the main defendant at the Norias Ranch raid. Dad always said

that Larry Cavazos killed the bandits himself--all the bandits that were killed. But Dad didn't talk much about it, about the pursuit of the bandits, other than to say that the group that you saw in that picture was equipped with 1895 Winchesters and .30-06's. He said they had a hundred-yard range on the .30-30, so therefore they tried to do all of their shooting at about 300 yards.

Jenkins: Now you were saying that you have read a lot of the history concerning the Kenedy Ranch, and you know that there are a few things, historical things, that usually haven't come out in those histories.

Turcotte: Well, that's quite true. I think it's true of nearly all of the earlier ranches. I think the thing that has never been pointed out, to my knowledge, is the fact that they did have ex-Rangers in charge of every division of the ranch. They had Tom Tate on the Norias, George Durham on the South, and they had Jim McBride on the Encino Division, and they had Worth Wright and Bill Taylor on the Santa Gertrudis Division, and they had Charlie Burwell over on the Laureles Division. They were all ex-Rangers and lawmen and were all men that were capable of protecting their territory.

Jenkins: Did you say that lasted up into when? What the Texas Rangers did?

Turcotte: Well, they're all gone now, but they haven't been gone

that long.

Jenkins: Is that right? Very recent history. Are there any other types of historical facts that usually have been left out and that need to be recorded.

Turcotte: Well, my dad laughed when Tom Lea came out with a book on the history of King Ranch. He said, "They left out the fact that they did have trouble protecting their things and had a Texas Ranger in charge of each division. He said, "Really, there wasn't much emphasis on it. But he said, "They also left out the fact that they used imported cowhands. He said, "I think that they had a cowhand by the name of John Wesley Hardin that brought his whole cow outfit down for about six months or so.

Jenkins: And John Wesley Hardin, we know, was not his popular name.

Turcotte: Well, John Wesley in his later days was known more as a killer or a pistolero than he was as a cowman.

Jenkins: But what did the general public call John Wesley Hardin?

Turcotte: Well, I never heard anything other than...

Jenkins: Oh, okay. He didn't have a name something like Billy the Kid or something like that?

Turcotte: No, no, no. No, John Wesley was enough. He killed about forty-three men or so.

Jenkins: I was thinking that he was the one that had a nickname.

Turcotte: In terms of the actual number of men killed, he was by

far and away the toughest killer that the West ever produced.

Jenkins: Are there any other things that you can remember that your father said or that you know weren't included in the usual history of the King Ranch?

Turcotte: Well, no. That's sort of word-of-mouth history that is of interest. It wasn't included in their history. The fact is that they had to spend quite a bit of time defending their borders and getting their cattle back. It's a matter of record that there was over 400,000 head of cattle stolen from the King and Kenedy Ranches during their earlier period. The last of the stealing happened in 1916, and it came on up pretty close to as late as 1919. After World War I the bandits were still raiding back and forth across the river.

Jenkins: You say your father spent how long with the ranch?

Turcotte: Oh, he was on the ranch all of his life.

Jenkins: The Kenedy Ranch.

Turcotte: He came as a child three years old, and he spent his life here. He went away to school. He went to business school at Waco and came back to the ranch. He went with Uncle Andy and Uncle Johnny. They all went to school in Waco together. Uncle Johnny married in, like, 1911 or so, and a couple of years after, he was married, in 1913, and he came back to the ranch. Well, Dad went to Rio Grande City and worked for the Border Patrol from

1913 until 1916, and in those days the border was fairly rough. I heard Dad say one time--heard him tell a friend--that the only reason he volunteered for the Army in World War I was because he was tired of smelling that gunpowder on the river, and he knew that if he stayed long enough, he'd be killed down there. He thought if he went to France, he might stand a chance (chuckle). So the border was rough in those days.

Jenkins: Did your father talk much to you about his life--things that you could pass on as part of the history at that time?

Turcotte: Well, no, he didn't. One of the things that took place during that time was told to me by Tom Tate, who was the Ranger foreman of Norias Ranch. I dated his daughter, and when I met Tom, he said, "Oh, yes, I know your dad well. He said, "Your dad came down to help us during the bandit raid, and down on the border at Rio Grande City down there, he had to kill two Mexicans. He shot them left-handed with a .45 automatic. I said, "No, I don't believe that. I've never heard a story like that. You must be mistaken. He started laughing. He said, "Well, when you get home, just look at your dad's right hand and see if it doesn't have a scar all the way across it. He said, "Ask him how he got that scar. Boy, I cut my date short. I couldn't wait to get back and ask Dad. I immediately went and looked at his right

hand, and he did have a scar across it. I said, "Dad, how did you get that scar?" He said, "Oh, I got it cut with a knife one time. I told him what Tom Tate had said: "Tom said that you killed two Mexicans shooting a .45 left-handed on the river down there. Dad said, "Well, you tell Tom that I don't see how he could say anything like that. I didn't see him there. And that was the only comment that I could ever get out of him.

Jenkins: How about his relationship with the ranch? Did he pass down to you some of the history of his time?

Turcotte: Oh, yes. He came back to the ranch after he came back from the service in 1918. He came back to the ranch and stayed and worked on the ranch for John G. Kenedy, Sr. When the fever, Texas Fever, came along, they were having all manner of problems. All the ranches had to build dipping vats and dip, and they had Dad appointed as federal cattle inspector. He was in charge of all the dipping from Kingsville to Brownsville. He was still a ranch employee, but he was also the federal cattle inspector in charge of all of that. The primary reason that was that the Armstrong Ranch refused to dip. And through Dad's earlier association with the Armstrong's and the bandit times and whatnot, he was a friend, but even Dad couldn't get them to dip. But they didn't object to him. All the neighbors put the Armstrong's in court--to get court orders to make them

dip their cattle. They finally prevailed, and even at that the Armstrong Ranch still didn't dip until Dad took enough of the Kenedy Ranch cowboys and the King Ranch cowboys and went in and dipped their cattle for them and cleaned up. But he did it under good conditions because he was a friend.

Jenkins: What was their excuse for not dipping?

Turcotte: I don't know. Dad never could figure it out because he thought that they should have been able to...it was an expensive undertaking. Those people were independent, and they didn't want other people telling them what to do, whether it was neighbors or no neighbors.

Jenkins: But they did agree to let these guys do the dipping.

Turcotte: Oh, yes, finally, after they lost in court.

Jenkins: They had to forcibly go in there.

Turcotte: No, no, they went in and dipped their cattle and cleaned up their country. Then Dad went back to work full-time for the ranch when that was over.

When Uncle John, Sr., died, the ranch was divided. Aunt Stella got part of the headquarters, and Uncle Johnny and Aunt Sarita each got what we refer to as the M-K Division and the Laurel Leaf Division. The Laurel Leaf Division was the part of it, and that was Aunt Sarita's part of the ranch. The M-K was the part that was Uncle Johnny's part of the ranch. M-K was the old Mifflin-Kenedy brand. The Laurel Leaf was the brand

that they retained when they sold the Laureles Division of the King Ranch, which they owned previously. They sold it to a Scottish syndicate, and then later the King Ranch bought it from them. They sold that in order to finance the railroad.

Jenkins: Now this was about..

Turcotte: This was in the early 1900's.

Jenkins: Oh, before 1920?

Turcotte: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, early 1900's. There was a story about the railroad being moved overnight. They wanted to put the town actually about a mile farther west.

Jenkins: Sarita?

Turcotte: From the present site of Sarita. The old roadway and everything is still there, but they wanted the road here. So overnight they moved all the survey stakes and everything and built it here. The old road for the thing still exists; it's still there. You can see where it is. It's about a mile west. Then they went on south from there, and the first shipping point was the Sarita pens, about a mile south of Sarita, and the next one was Mifflin pens, which is nine miles south, and the next one was the Turcotte pens and also camp. It's one of those places that had a camp with a little building for cooking and so on--cow camp. Below Turcotte was Armstrong, and below Armstrong was Norias, which was the King Ranch headquarters in Kenedy County. And at that

time, it was Cameron County, which went all the way to Brownsville. The county seat was at Brownsville. Each one of those places had a set of pens--facilities for shipping cattle by rail.

Jenkins: I'm having some problems pulling out...now the town of Sarita was more closely related to the Kenedy Ranch than it was to the King Ranch.

Turcotte: Oh, yes! Oh, yes! It was named after Sarita Kenedy Hughes. It was named after Aunt Sarita.

Jenkins: But the King Ranch headquarters is now there.

Turcotte: No, no. The King Ranch headquarters has always been in Kingsville.

Jenkins: Okay, so the headquarters that she was showing us was...

Turcotte: ...was the Kenedy Ranch.

Jenkins: ...was the Kenedy Ranch, okay.

Turcotte: Oh, yes. When the ranches divided, like, in the 1890's or somewhere along in that area, they each kept their own land.

Jenkins: Now go back and tell us about that division. I'm not sure I ever got that straight, either.

Turcotte: Well, I'm not a historian only.

Jenkins: Oh, yes, but you know (chuckle).

Turcotte: Well, they divided their property. We always heard that the Kenedy's didn't want to acquire more land, that they were satisfied with what they had. The King Ranch went on with land acquisition.

Jenkins: So there was a connection between the King Ranch and Kenedy Ranch.

Turcotte: Oh, yes. They operated as one ranch. It was a partnership.

Jenkins: Okay, all right.

Turcotte: It was a partnership, but then they broke up.

Jenkins: That partnership started about when?

Turcotte: Oh, it started just right shortly after the Civil War.

Jenkins: Then the separation came about...

Turcotte: It came along like in 1890, somewhere along in there. The Kenedy side always said that Captain Kenedy was a Quaker, and he liked to avoid violence. He felt like the land acquisition program was getting involved in too much violence, because they were buying land from heirs and then other heirs were creating fights over it, and there were a considerable number of lives being lost in the land acquisition program due to the different heirs. With some selling and some not wanting to sell, it was a situation that was made to order for a lot of trouble. And the Kenedy stories that I always heard said that they wanted no part in that type of violence just to acquire land.

Jenkins: Previously, the original Kenedy-King Ranches covered what kind of area?

Turcotte: From Brownsville to Corpus Christi.

Jenkins: Okay. After it broke up, the King Ranch was about what

and the Kenedy Ranch was about what?

Turcotte: Well, the size of the Kenedy Ranch...well, they sold the Laureles. That was 200,000 acres. They had 400,000 acres left here in Kenedy County. That was their main landholding. They had some land out of Corpus and some in the Valley. But the main ranch was 400,000 acres.

Jenkins: Principally in this county.

Turcotte: Right. And after Aunt Stella had purchased a small portion of the land around the headquarters itself, and basically when Uncle John died, Aunt Sarita had 200,000 acres, and Uncle Johnny had 200,000. Uncle Johnny...in 1947 his health was...I guess he knew that he was having a health problem because he leased his ranch to Aunt Sarita and set the lease up. Dad and I kind of went with the lease, so to speak. In 1943, before this came about, I was about seventeen years old. Uncle Johnny drank rather heavily on occasion, and Dad would send me to drive him. Uncle Johnny loved to go to Mexico, which in those days was quite a trip.

Jenkins: How would he go? What would he travel on going to Mexico?

Turcotte: Well, we would generally...on one trip we started at Brownsville and hit nearly every border crossing all the way to Larado.

Jenkins: In cars?

Turcotte: In cars, yes, driving. He usually had a friend or two

with him, and they also drank on occasion. On those trips, it was the occasion (chuckle).

Jenkins: I'll tell you what let's do, then. If you got us up to when you were seventeen years old, what I want to do is to go back now, unless there are things that you remember and want to say about the ranch before your time. If there is any other things that you want to say about the ranch before your time, let's do them now. I'll leave it up to you.

Turcotte: Well, the main thing about the ranch, as far as the cattle business in general in this part of Texas, was that the fever tick was a terrible thing. It caused a terrible loss of cattle, and it was finally eradicated. But the screw worms weren't, and we lost tremendous numbers of calves to screw worms, and grown cattle.

Jenkins: Ticks they got rid of mainly how?

Turcotte: By dipping. Every six weeks. And it was quite a chore. The land there at the Kenedy Ranch was 400,000 acres, and they ran approximately 20,000 head of cattle, so logistically it was a hell of a job to dip all those cattle every six weeks.

Jenkins: Did they carry dipping vats with them? How did they do that?

Turcotte: No, no. They built dipping vats at different places on the ranch.

Jenkins: Tell us about the process of making and using a dipping

vat.

Turcotte: Well, the dipping vat was built at a set of pens, just in connection with an ordinary set of cattle pens, cattle working pens, usually on one corner. They were made out of concrete. The only difference from a normal set of pens was that they had a drain back then where the cattle were jumped into this dipping vat and had to swim to the other end. They had these big, long forked sticks, and they'd push their head down under water. Then the cattle went to a ramp letting them out, and that ramp, which was all cement, tapered back to where the water would run back into the dipping vat.

Jenkins: So a concrete dipping vat was made below the level of the ground?

Turcotte: The vat itself came up above the ground, though, about four feet or so,but the water level was below the level of the ground. It was deep enough so they couldn't walk. They had to swim.

Jenkins: And they would be pushed under.

Turcotte: They would be pushed under, yes. Every now and then they'd have to rope a calf or something. The dip that they used was an arsenic dip, which was a very poisonous thing. They measured it very carefully with water when they put it in.

Jenkins: Now how do they get rid of ticks?

Turcotte: Oh, nowadays they use Co-ral.

Jenkins: How?

Turcotte: Well, mostly by spray. But they still use dipping vats. There are dipping vats that have been in use for over fifty years. Primarily along the river, the government still dips cattle.

Jenkins: What do you remember about the fight against screw worms?

Turcotte: Oh, that was terrible. There was one year that they were so bad before the screw worm program really got established. One year they were so bad--we did have Co-ral then--and all we could do was make one or two round-ups a day and spray the cattle, doctor the worst ones. This was all done in the open, no pens. Round them up in the open. We'd doctor the worst ones and spray the rest of them. That Co-ral was absorbed by the body and through the hair and hide and killed the screw worms.

Jenkins: Spell that word.

Turcotte: Co-ral. That's the trade name for an insecticide. It's accumulative and kills the screw worms.

Jenkins: Well, what was another scientific device trying to do away with screw worms? Something to do with breeding?

Turcotte: Oh, yes. Well, the screw worm program was what they called the "sterile fly program. That thing made a difference. We could see the difference every year. I was already running the cow outfit during this part of it. I can remember, as a kid, going with Dad and the

men to dip the cattle. But I've had an active part in the last of the screw worms.

Jenkins: Well, how much of a problem is the screw worm today?

Turcotte: Thank God, it's no problem at all, but there is an occasional little outbreak along the southern border. They get it reported and get right on it and get it contained. The way that they do that is that they have an immediate drop of sterile flies, and then they have all the ranchers surrounding the area where they found the case to spray their cattle.

Jenkins: I see. So I guess periodically they'll make a comeback, and they'll have to go back to the program again.

Turcotte: Well, not like it was. It was terrible. There was areas where they were so bad that they couldn't run anything but steers.

Jenkins: But, I mean, occasionally the flies will make a little comeback in an area.

Turcotte: Oh, yes, mostly along the southern border.

Jenkins: Oh, okay. Any other things before we grow you up?

Turcotte: One of the things that ws the turning point of ranching, along in 1913 to 1920 or so, was the development of the artesian well. Of course, my grandfather drilled a lot of these wells. It enabled the ranchers to have a much more dependable water supply. It was originally touted as for being for irrigation, which didn't prove out. Some of the land on the Kenedy Ranch was subdivided and

sold off in farm lots, but that didn't last long. The first drought wiped that project out.

Jenkins: Well, what was the source of cattle water before the wells?

Turcotte: Well, they had what was referred to as a few ojos or springs, and most of them were earthen tanks that were dug with mules and scrapers. We took advantage of natural lakes and natural drainages, and that was their main water supply.

Jenkins: You use a word back there that sounded like okra or something.

Turcotte: Ojo, which is eye-of-water or sea.

Jenkins: How do you spell it?

Turcotte: Ojo--eye-of-water.

Jenkins: Okay, I wasn't understanding what you were saying.

Turcotte: There were a few of those, and there were also quite a few shallow wells. We still found some during my early cowboying days that had the casing made out of cypress--two-by-twelves made and sunk--and most of those were up to about thirty feet deep. Then the water was pumped out of them with a windmill, and the windmills usually pulled them hard enough so that the water would go salty. Some of the areas around the same hills and whatnot had good, sweet water. That was the main source of supply until the artesian wells came along. These were flowing wells, and around Sarita most of them were

in the neighborhood of from 540 to 640 feet deep. They got deeper as you went toward the coast. Some of the farthest ones east were nearly 1,200 feet deep.

Jenkins: They started digging those about when?

Turcotte: Well, they started in the early 1900's.

Jenkins: How were they digging that deep at that time?

Turcotte: Oh, Grandpa's old rig was still at the warehouse. Fifteen or twenty years back, I guess, it was finally sold off for junk. But they had a huge steam boiler and steam engine, and they built a tower just like an oil derrick over the thing. The casing was rotated. As they drilled, the casing was rotated down into what they would call a tight hole now. Nowadays they drill a hole and keep it full of mud, and the hole is larger than the casing. They can drill one real quick in just a matter of a day or two. But in those days, it took six weeks to make a well. In some of those old wells, they used wrought iron casing, and some of those old wells that Grandpa drilled are still flowing. Some of them rusted out, but they ran in liners.

Jenkins: Okay, we were asking you to follow up any history that you know of before your time, and then we'll get you involved in it personally.

Turcotte: Well, I guess I know quite a bit, but I don't have it just right at the tip of my tongue. The advent of the artesian wells was the turning point in ranching in

South Texas. That and the railroad, which gave them an easy means to market their cattle. Instead of driving them to Kansas and Colorado, they had a railhead right here.

Jenkins: Have you learned how much the ranches themselves were involved in getting the railroad coming through.

Turcotte: Oh, it was the ranchers that got the railroad in. Uncle John Kenedy was Captain Mifflin's son, and Bob Wells...the King Ranch...the land was donated by the ranchers for the railroad to get them in here. And they also provided the financing.

Jenkins: The ranchers did?

Turcotte: The ranchers did, yes.

Jenkins: Now the Kenedy's got their financial start for this largely from the cotton business during the.

Turcotte: The steamboat business, solely from the steamboat business.

Jenkins: Now during the years of operating the ranch, do you have any knowledge that they go outside the family to do much financing, you know, to banks or something like that?

Turcotte: Oh, yes, they invested in banks, and they invested in other ventures.

Jenkins: But did they borrow from banks to develop this area?

Turcotte: Oh, yes. In those days, I know that the banking was done from St. Louis and New Orleans. Larger banks were far away from here. But they did invest in the local

banks, and nearly all the older ranchers were stockholders in the banks and were bringing banks farther south.

Jenkins: How much knowledge do you have of the Kenedy's being directly involved in banking and the development of banking and other businesses in the area?

Turcotte: Well, of course, the King and Kenedy both were active in that, the King Ranch moreso than the Kenedy Ranch. But in banking they were both involved. They were both involved in the original Bank of Corpus Christi, which was our local area. Then later Aunt Sarita was involved in the Alice National Bank and the Hebbronville Bank. The smaller banks were pretty well started by ranchers. At least they invested in them.

Jenkins: Now do you know whether they got involved in investing in other types of businesses?

Turcotte: Well, primarily in stock. They didn't buy land and sell it <u>per se</u>. They did buy income property, invest in income property, in some of the cities, in Corpus and in Brownsville. I'm talking about the Kenedy's now. The King Ranch built their own town, Kingsville, and they own numerous businesses in Kingsville.

Jenkins: Okay, anything else that you want to talk of before we get you born and raise you into an active rancher?

Turcotte: Well, let's go with me.

Jenkins: Okay. Let's go with you, then, and find out when and

where you were born.

Turcotte: Well, I was born in Kingsville. My mother, at the time I was born, was twenty-one or so, and I was what they call a breech birth. She was having difficulty, and the doctor...we'd just gotten a doctor in Riviera, which was six miles north of Sarita. The old doctor said that Mother had to go to the hospital, and I was born in the hospital in Kingsville on June 13, 1926, by what they call a breech birth. That means backwards.

Jenkins: Remind us again of who your mother and dad were, and trace us back--remind us again briefly--of your direct line back to the original Kenedy's.

Turcotte: Well, my father was a nephew of Stella Turcotte Kenedy, and he was the first cousin to Sarita and Johnny Kenedy. They were all raised, you know, just like they were brothers and sisters. Aunt Sarita was actually our second cousin, but we always called her "Aunt. We always called her husband Uncle Arthur. Uncle Johnny, we always called him Uncle Johnny although he was our second cousin.

Jenkins: So the Kenedy Clan, if you want to call it that, were all very close and worked with each other daily.

Turcotte: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: And you were born in Kingsville, but your mother brought you back to the ranch.

Turcotte: Oh, yes. We were raised here in Sarita. Our home was

right straight across the street from the store and commerce area and post office in Sarita.

Jenkins: Give us your earliest recollection of what the town and the surrounding area was like. Kind of grow you up going to school and getting experience on the ranch.

Turcotte: Well, the town of Sarita at that time wasn't a very large town, no more than it is now. The population probably hasn't changed much in the last fifty years. It took the same amount of people to operate the ranch and had about the same number of cowboys. The county has roughly stayed the same size for quite a few years.

Jenkins: Now the town and the county...about what population?

Turcotte: Around 600, a little over 600.

Jenkins: In town?

Turcotte: No, in the entire county.

Jenkins: And in Sarita?

Turcotte: In Sarita, oh, 200-and-some-odd, between 200 and 300. Nearly half the population of the county.

Jenkins: And practically everyone in Sarita is directly involved in the ranch today?

Turcotte: Well, most of them are. Most of them are. A lot of them are retired cowboys, and we have a couple of game wardens living here that have no connection with the ranch. We have peace officers that are here, and we have county employees that are not directly involved with the ranch. But other than that, most of the people

are still ranch employees or descendants of ranch employees.

Jenkins: Of the 600 people in the county, what percentage of them are in that way related to the King and Kenedy Ranches?

Turcotte: Well, most of the people at Sarita are like my family--third and fourth generation. There are five generations in my family in Kenedy County. Most of them are at least third or fourth generation of cowhands of the Kenedy Ranch, ranch employees.

Jenkins: I still don't have all of this straight in my mind. This county is primarily the Kenedy Ranch. The King Ranch is out in another county, primarily.

Turcotte: Oh, yes. Well, of course, the King Ranch operates in a number of counties. They have over a million acres of land total.

Jenkins: Now in this county, the Kenedy Ranch is by far the biggest.

Turcotte: Yes.

Jenkins: And you say there are about how many other people operating ranches?

Turcotte: Oh, about thirteen or so ranches.

Jenkins: So practically everyone in this county is involved in ranching.

Turcotte: Oh, yes. The county is almost solely in ranching. Some of them have raised farming to the extent of raising a little hay or a little feed, but that's the extent of

their farming. They don't grow crops at all.

Jenkins: And you were saying that land doesn't really change hands.

Turcotte: Oh, no.

Jenkins: And the population doesn't change.

Turcotte: And the population doesn't change (chuckle).

Jenkins: Let's get you back, then, to growing up in Sarita. You went to school where?

Turcotte: I went to school in Riviera.

Jenkins: Okay. Now give us some recollections of how big school and how it was run and the physical layout.

Turcotte: Well, Sarita at that time had a little one-room schoolhouse. The population of Kenedy County is, like, 80 percent Hispanic, and at that time we all spoke Spanish. But at that time the folks wanted us to learn English. My grandparents were French, and we spoke French and Spanish, but we didn't speak any of the English too good. So they sent me to Riviera.

Jenkins: So you learned English really after you learned Spanish and French? Is that right?

Turcotte: Yes. Now that's not true of all my other brothers, only Pat and I, the two oldest. Of course, Dad and Mother didn't speak French. Mother wasn't French. But my grandparents both spoke French, and so did my dad; and when I was around them, the language was French.

Jenkins: The Turcotte's?

Turcotte: Yes. And when my grandparents died, well, French was no longer spoken.

Jenkins: Do you still speak French?

Turcotte: No. I can still understand French, but I can't really speak it. I've had no opportunity to practice it for the last forty-five years. But it's funny. I can understand the Italian language enough to follow generally what's going on, and I never spoke Italian.

Jenkins: What? Enough of a combination?

Turcotte: There's enough of the similarities to the Italian language and the French language.

Jenkins: And Spanish?

Turcotte: And Spanish. Well, the Romance languages are all similar.

Jenkins: So they shipped you off to speak English, you say?

Turcotte: (Chuckle) Well, I'll say that I spoke Spanish and French better than I spoke English.

Jenkins: And they sent you to school where?

Turcotte: They sent me to school in Riviera. When I went to school in Riviera the first year, we got to ride horseback when the weather was good.

Jenkins: Which is how far?

Turcotte: Six miles. We had a creek up here, and I went horseback one day, and it was just started raining and sleeting. The horse I was riding wouldn't go across this danged wooden bridge, and I had to ride him through the creek.

I got my feet wet up to about my knees, and by the time I got to school, I was just shivering, and I had ice on my britches legs. The teacher set me in there by...they had a big ol' potbelly stove, and I got to stay by that stove all day. The teacher talked to Mother, and, anyhow, that was the end of horseback riding to school. Vann Crocker rode in from the Crocker Ranch out here. He came horseback and backwoods from the Magill Ranch. There were the three of us. Then other kids around Riviera came in on horseback. They had a place to tie horses and whatnot. The restrooms were modern, but they were outside.

Jenkins: Modern meaning flush toilets?

Turcotte: No, modern being that they were brick, made out of brick.

Jenkins: Oh, yes, I thought it was a little early there. But they had a separate boys and a separate girls restrooms.

Turcotte: Yes, yes.

Jenkins: Two-holer and all that kind of thing.

Turcotte: Well, then the folks down here got together and bought a Model-T, financed a Model-T truck for one of the families, and we got to go in that truck.

Jenkins: School bus (chuckle).

Turcotte: Yes, which was one of the earlier school buses. It was "air conditioned. It didn't have a top. It was just an open pick-up truck.

Jenkins: What kind of lighting did you have in the school?

Turcotte: Oh, we had...

Jenkins: Electric lights or big windows?

Turcotte: No, not at first. No, they had just big windows. They just had big windows and a potbelly stove in every room.

Jenkins: How many rooms?

Turcotte: It seemed big then. I don't guess it was really that big. I don't remember what the enrollment was.

Jenkins: Do you remember, though, how many rooms--different, separate rooms--they had?

Turcotte: Well, all the school was there together, both the elementary and the high school. They were in two separate buildings.

Jenkins: How many rooms were in the elementary?

Turcotte: Oh, well...

Jenkins: Pretty good-sized, though?

Turcotte: Oh, coming from Sarita that was "uptown.

Jenkins: It wasn't a one-room schoolhouse by any means.

Turcotte: No, no. The population of Riviera then was pretty good with several hundred.

Jenkins: Now you stayed in that school how long?

Turcotte: I stayed in that school for two years. I went two years, and then Dad bought Mother a house in town, in Kingsville. During the school year, we went to Kingsville and went to school. I went to Lamar School in Kingsville and to Kingsville High School for two years.

Jenkins: What kind of things did you get involved in while you were at school? Did you have sports and spelling bees?

Turcotte: Well, about the only sports that they had at that time was baseball, and, of course, all the kids played baseball. They gradually went to football. I went to Lamar School, and they had just put football in before I got there. I played football at Lamar and then went to Kingsville High School. I didn't play football other than the intramural physical education classes during the two years I was there. Then I went to Corpus to a Catholic school, the Corpus Christi College Academy. I went to College Academy for two years and graduated in 1943.

Jenkins: Now that was high school?

Turcotte: That was high school.

Jenkins: Did you get involved in much there besides going to school?

Turcotte: In my senior year I played football, but I had to quit. I got sick and had to quit. It was during that time that the war came along. The war came along, of course, in 1941, and we were on a wartime footing.

Jenkins: Before we get to the war...because you went into the service. As a kid going to school, did you have any kind of job?

Turcotte: Other than on the ranch, none at all. I cowboyed all my life.

Jenkins: Okay. But you were a cowboy all your life?

Turcotte: Oh, yes. We started riding, I guess, when we were four.

Jenkins: Let's get that, and then we'll get you into the service, and then we'll bring you back and get you back involved. As you were going to school in town, Corpus, a big part of that, you were coming out then and working on the ranch.

Turcotte: Well, as soon as school was out...we spent every weekend and every summer on the ranch.

Jenkins: And you spent the week in town.

Turcotte: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: The weekend was spent on the ranch.

Turcotte: yes.

Jenkins: So while you were in town, you didn't have a paper route or anything like that?

Turcotte: No, no.

Jenkins: Resting up for the weekend.

Turcotte: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: What were the things that you were learning to do as you were growing up on the ranch?

Turcotte: Well, of course, like all boys here, the main recreation then was rodeoing and breaking horses. In later years, when we was cowboying pretty much, we'd work all week and then rodeo all weekend.

Jenkins: Where would you rodeo?

Turcotte: Oh, we had a little roping club up here at Riviera, and

all the cowboys from the different ranches would get together and have pot roping.

Jenkins: Have what?

Turcotte: Have pot roping, what we call pot roping. Everybody would put in an entry fee, and they'd divide it up.

Jenkins: Well, did you ever get out of that and go other places to rodeo?

Turcotte: Oh, yes, we'd travel farther. We'd spend time dragging horses to another town to rodeo, you know, and when we did win some money, we'd loan it to somebody for an entry fee and be lucky if we made our gasoline to drag the trailer and horses.

Jenkins: How far away did you get rodeoing?

Turcotte: Well, we'd got to Falfurrias or Hebbronville or Freer--just about the range of what you could go and come in one day pulling a trailer.

Jenkins: On the ranch as you were growing up, tell us the kinds of work that you did and what you were learning and doing.

Turcotte: Well, all of the kids in the cow outfit would usually apprentice to one of the older men. Before you were a full-fledged cowboy, you had to know how to repair saddles, put a saddle together; you had to know how to make a rope, how to put a bridal together, how to make a halter. You don't see that now. I can still make a quirt or a bull whip or plait leather. We used rawhide

ropes originally.

Jenkins: Where did you get your rawhide? How did you get it into the form to make a rope?

Turcotte: Oh, that was the worst part. That was the worst part. You would take these hides that were tacked on the walls of the barns, and they were raw hide. They kept those things in a big long circle. Just kept going in a big circle, cutting a strand a quarter-of-an-inch wide.

Jenkins: Just eyeballing it with a..

Turcotte: No, they had a little knife that had a guide on in that you cut that thing with--just go round and round.

Jenkins: In uniform, though?

Turcotte: Oh, yes, very uniform. Then they'd soak that thing in lime water overnight, which would soften it and loosen up the hair. Then you took a knife and scraped the hair off. Then while the things was soft, you'd start your rope. Most of them were six strands around, were plaited six strands around.

Jenkins: How did you do that?

Turcotte: A lot of them were four strands. I don't even see any of these kids...you can see kids that can plait three.

Jenkins: You got four to six. How do you put that thing together to make a rope?

Turcotte: Well, you just start with the middle of one of these long strands.

Jenkins: You tie them all to something down there?

Turcotte: Oh, yes. You tie them to a splice on the wall, and they're tied together with a string real tight and as close to that thing as they can be. Then you just take off starting your plaiting. When you hit the end of that one, you splice on another set. They're made in staggered lengths so none of the rope, where two strands joined, wouldn't be in the same place and they'd stay the same diameter. I still have one of these old rawhide ropes. We got away from them. That was done really more, I guess, just to teach the kids how to do it because rawhide ropes really weren't in use much then by anybody except the young kids. Most of the ropes that the cowhands used were manila.

Jenkins: Did you make those or did you buy them?

Turcotte: Well, during the start of the war years, they made them. We had rope making machines, and we'd take these rolls of manila. Later during the war when they couldn't get manila, they used sisal.

Jenkins: Binder's twine.

Turcotte: Yes. We turned the crank on this thing. It had three hooks on it, and it would twist those three strands together. On the other end they were hooked onto a deal with a crank. When you got them all pretty tight, then you would go down to the other end and get on that thing. They had a belt, so you could stretch it tight. Then you started cranking on it, and it wrapped them all

together, and you had a pretty tight rope. Then the sisal didn't stay as tight as the manila rope, so you'd take white gas and dissolve paraffin in it and soak that rope in it to kind of water proof it so you might get a little more use out of it.

The ropes stayed on your saddles, and the saddles were put outside on a pipe or a saddle rack. Most of the time they were put on a pipe hanging from wire so the danged rats couldn't get them. You hung your bridal and spurs on your saddle and then your saddle blanket upside down, and then you covered the whole thing with your slicker so you wouldn't have to get on a wet saddle.

Jenkins: What were the slickers made out of?

Turcotte: Well, the slickers were oil cloth. They always let more water in, I think, than they kept out. But they did break the wind, and they were warm. They were warm in cold weather.

Jenkins: What other skills were you developing as you were growing up?

Turcotte: Well, along with making the ropes, you had to learn how to make what they called the botones that go on the end of the rope. It's a deal that is just like a ring. It's a plaited rawhide ring that goes on the end of your rope--lets it make a little loop to drop down on your saddle horn. It's like a neckerchief slide. They're

made in exactly the same way as a neckerchief slide. All these old viejecitos taught you how to make neckerchief slides out of cow horns and cow hooves. These old-timers couldn't write, and most of them couldn't sign their name. But they knew how to do everything. They could make a saddle almost from scratch. They knew how to work leather, and they took all the kids and taught them how to do it. They rode with you going to the round-up and kept you out of trouble. Usually, they'd put you over by the cut, and you'd stay there with one of them. You didn't get to rope; they wouldn't let you rope anything. Finally, at the last they'd let the kids rope a calf or two apiece, you know.

Jenkins: You called him a viejecito or something like that?

Turcotte: Yes, the older men.

Jenkins: Spell that and what does it mean?

Turcotte: Well, viejecito means old man, older cowboy.

Jenkins: Okay.

Turcotte: And those old devils were poison with the rope. They could outrope a younger man, but they didn't have the stamina to rope all day in a herd. They taught you how to trim your horse's hooves, how to take care of your horse, how to comb his mane and his tail, how to rub the horses down; how to make halters, how to put bridals on them, how to rig bridals; and generally how to keep your

gear in shape and how to properly ride a horse. I can really remember the first horse I had that was pitching with me. One of these old viejecitos was riding along with me. I got sideways, and he grabbed me and scraped me up and popped me on the butt with a quirt and said, "Ride straight!" (chuckle) But they wouldn't let you get thrown. They'd ride right with you, right beside you, and if you'd start getting to one side or the other, they'd straighten you up.

Jenkins: Now...

Turcotte: Most of the hands on the Kenedy Ranch were horseback riding dudes by the time they started to school.

Jenkins: Well, was that kind of cowboying done until when? Is that what you're talking about here?

Turcotte: Oh, up through the late 1940's, they still had mules and wagons on the Kenedy Ranch.

Jenkins: Was cowboying during your early years still very much horse-oriented?

Turcotte: Oh, yes, it was all horses and wagons.

Jenkins: And you were still doing it about like...

Turcotte: On the entire 400,000 acres the only car that was there was Uncle Johnny's car and Dad's car and Uncle Lester's car. Everybody else rode horseback and in those wagons.

Jenkins: And you still did round-ups?

Turcotte: Oh, yes. What we called the "big pasture" was done in nine round-ups. We had traps where the camps were,

which was a holding trap for what we called the cut or the shipping cattle. On the round-up the cattle were thrown together. They were thrown together in a round-up. The men would be split two ways and would make a big circle on the land area. What they called the volteadores, the men that go around, made the circle. They would take half the men with them and drop them along and say, "You go here, you go here, you go here, until the two volteadores would come to where they could see each other, and then they would gather the cattle to a pre-designated point, usually by a well or a lake.

Jenkins: Now you called these something, and we're going to know what it means and how you spell it.

Turcotte: The volteador, which means "the one who goes around" would be the literal translation.

Jenkins: What about branding? Did you brand?

Turcotte: Oh, yes. In the make-up of a cow outfit was the mayordomo, who was the foreman. In this case it was my dad. Beneath the mayordomo was the caporal, and the caporal was the cow boss. The mayordomo was the manager or the foreman. Next, below the caporal, was what they called the segundo, or second. He was the second in command to the cow boss, and he was just usually one of the volteadores, one of the ones that was in charge of half the round-up. Usually, the caporal went on the other side. The cocinero, or the cook, was the most

important man in the outfit. Everybody that I ever knew that was connected with the Kenedy Ranch always said, "If you don't have a good cook, you don't have a good outfit. Unless they were top-notch cooks, they didn't stay. And they were paid as much as the cowboys. They made the same as the cowboys.

Jenkins: Did the cook do anything besides cook?

Turcotte: Oh, yes. The camp usually consisted of two large tents--they were fourteen-by-sixteen tents--and two small tents. The small tents were usually twelve-by-fourteens or nine-by-twelves. Dad and I usually stayed in a small tent, and the cook and the horse jingler, _____, stayed in the other tent. Then the men stayed in the two large tents. So you usually had sixteen to twenty-four men in the outfit. When camp was moving, the cook drove the big chuck wagon, and he was in charge of the move and setting up camp.

Jenkins: Just like in the movies, a real old chuck wagon.

Turcotte: Oh, yes. Then they had a small wagon that went along. The guy that drove the small wagon, they called the carrero, or the small wagon driver. His job was important. He was in charge of...the cook would fix dinner, and the carrero took charge of setting up the camp. That would consist of getting the tents set up, and it was always on the southeast side of a live oak stand, usually.

Jenkins: Why?

Turcotte: Because in the winter it was protection from the northwest wind; and then on the south to get the southeast breeze. So it was for very practical reasons. He took charge of setting up the tents, spacing them, and they always cut a brush windbreak on the north side out of trimmed-up live oak and brush. The windbreak was six or eight feet high, and, believe it or not, it stopped that wind pretty good.

Jenkins: Now the men, though, slept in tents.

Turcotte: yes.

Jenkins: Like community tents?

Turcotte: Big sixteen-by-fourteen tents. Each man had his own cot, which were folding wooden canvas cots, and he had his own bedroll. All of the cots and bedrolls went in the chuck wagon when you moved, and this was a big ol' long wagon. It took two teams to pull it. All the bedding and stuff went in the front of the chuck wagon, and the chuck box was on the back end of it. There was quite a bit of equipment that went.

The little wagon was used for...his job was real important. He had to haul wood and water to the camp, and he took food out to the round-up at noon. He carried the branding irons and all of the necessary stuff to work cattle--vaccination equipment, the horcata, which was a fork. Most people don't know what

one is. It's a live oak post about ten feet long, and it had a fork at the top of it. That thing was set in the ground so that the fork was just above saddle horn height so that the roper could just ride up to it and raise his rope up and drop it in that fork and pull the calf up against it. And you had two men there. One would grab that calf by the head and the other one by the tail, and then the roper would slack off, and they'd throw him, just turn him over. And it was fast.

The branding...after you had lunch, well, the guy with the little wagon had to stay because all of the equipment was there. He'd stay until you finished your branding. Then you dug that post back out, loaded it in that wagon for him, and took all the Dutch ovens and cooking utensils in a small chuck box. He had a small chuck box and had all the plates and stuff, molasses and spices and condiments and stuff like that. And a bread pan. He brought the bread out made. It was made by the cook early in the morning. And his job was to set up...sometimes if it was a round-up that was close to camp, why, he'd make hot bread, but most of the time he brought bread out because the round-up would be nine or ten miles away from camp. So it was a pretty good ride for him to get back.

Jenkins: But he baked bread in the camp at the chuck wagon?

Turcotte: The cook did. And he sent dinner out.

Jenkins: What kinds of things would you eat?

Turcotte: Well, breakfast was always pretty much the same. They'd have maybe grits or maybe cereal. Usually oats or grits or beans.

Jenkins: Oatmeal?

Turcotte: Yes, and beans. Sometimes they'd cook rice with raisins in it, and some of the men liked that. But always beans. Always beans and always fried potatoes and bread. And that was breakfast. No eggs unless you brought your own or unless the turkey hens were laying.

Jenkins: Chickens...

Turcotte: Oh, no. You were out there a long ways from any fowl.

Jenkins: In town the people had chickens?

Turcotte: Oh, yes. All the people had chickens in town.

Jenkins: Now what would be your next meal of the day?

Turcotte: Well, the next meal would be noon, and that was when the guy that drove the small wagon. .the first thing that they'd do is rope a calf and butcher that calf. It was his job...the cow boss would give him a helper to help him butcher. He butchered that calf, and he'd take this grill, and he had to start the fire. All the beans and rice and stuff were taken out already cooked in Dutch ovens, and he'd set them out to warm up the dinner. On this grill he'd cook the sweetbread and the food that would spoil (the heart and the kidneys) and the ribs. Then the rest of it, the head and the hide...he'd put

the hind quarters and the front quarters and the loins, roll them up...the feet and the head and the stomach were rolled up in the hide. The stomach went to make menudo the next morning. What you had for dinner was grilled ribs and then the organ meat, besides your beans and rice or fideos, which is vermicelli, and hot camp bread and molasses and, of course, coffee or water. It was pretty nourishing food but not much green vegetables. The only green salad we had was throwing jalepenos and onions together.

Jenkins: Dinner was noon?

Turcotte: That was noon. When you'd go back in the afternoon, when you got through with the branding, you'd gather everything up and put it on the little wagon. He had a water barrel, and he had to haul wood. He had to haul wood. He had hell because some places you had to go fifteen miles to get a good load of wood because it was all prairie. They used cow chips for keeping mosquitoes away, but the troops didn't like meat broiled over cow chips (chuckle).

Jenkins: So for supper you'd have about the same thing you had for dinner?

Turcotte: Just about the equivalent. When he got back, as soon the carrero got back with the wagon, got back to camp, he had to go get a load of wood and a load of water for camp. Then he had to start making jerky out of that

meat. Usually, the horse jingler would go help him, and between the two of them, they'd make jerky out of the meat.

Jenkins: The jerky took some warming time somewhere, didn't it?

Turcotte: Oh, yes, but they started cooking on it the next day. They hung it on wired lines with little sticks and put lots of pepper on it to keep the flies off of it.

Jenkins: They made it pretty fast.

Turcotte: They didn't have a choice. Then the next morning for breakfast, they always had barbecued head and menudo. That's tripe or tripe stew. You never have eaten menudo?

Jenkins: I think I have, but people who read this don't know anything about this.

Turcotte: Well, I'm glad to finally meet a man that's never eaten menudo.

Jenkins: Tell us how you make it and what it is.

Turcotte: Menudo is the tripe made from the stomach. The stomach is taken and washed and then salted and scraped and salted again, clean, and then it's cut into strips and put on to boil along with the feet, with the hooves removed, of course. They stick them in the fire and then take them out and then hit those hooves, and they just fly right off. Then they cut them, drop them in the thing, and it's real high in gelatin. They throw a handful of chili in it and a can of hominy.

Jenkins: It sounds good.

Turcotte: Oh, it is good. There's a place locally famous for it just north of Riviera here.

Jenkins: Is there really? I'll have to stop by and get some. Now how early would you get up in the morning?

Turcotte: Oh, you hear that horse jingler out there popping his bull whip, and you hear the bell--the bell mare had a bell on her--and you hear those horses. Oh, it's about 4:00, and by 4:30 you were supposed to be drinking coffee.

Jenkins: In the morning?

Turcotte: Yes, and this is out there with damn lanterns, you know, and it's plenty dark.

Jenkins: Kerosene, I suppose?

Turcotte: They had kerosene lanterns.

Jenkins: And the day would last until about when?

Turcotte: Well, the day would last until you got through working that cattle. Sometimes it was at dark. We had one round-up where we'd catch about 2,500 head of cattle, and we'd work all day and not get through and have to round them up again the next morning to finish. But the cook...there was an old windmill tower at camp there, about seven miles off from where we actually had the round-up, and the cook at night would run that lantern up in the windmill so we could drive in the herd. See, we'd be driving a herd of the cattle that we had cut out

back to put in the trap. These traps were--most of them--about a section to hold the cattle until you worked several round-ups. Then you'd take those things and take off headed toward Mifflin with them. The longest drive was from Point Penescal to Mifflin, about fifty miles, and we did that in two days.

Jenkins: So cowboying, really, except for the long cattle drives, was very much in the 1930's and 1940's like it had been fifty years before that.

Turcotte: Oh, yes. The herds were all worked outside. They weren't worked in the pens. The only place that pens were used was for breaking horses and separating the cattle for shipping.

Jenkins: What do you know about when this "Y" post was introduced as a device for throwing calves for branding?

Turcotte: Well, the...

Jenkins: That's a new one on me.

Turcotte: Oh, on the larger ranches in South Texas, that goes back for, I guess, centuries. But it's not done anymore. Most people I talk to don't even know what I'm talking about.

Jenkins: No, the movies never did one of those. But with this one, they roped them and brought them to this.

Turcotte: Oh, yes, on a lot of the ranches in North Texas and also Colorado, they hid in hills, you know. And some of them roped the cattle by the hind feet and dragged them to

the fire. But we weren't working small numbers of calves; we were working large numbers. You'd put two ropers out there, and most of the time we'd have between a hundred and 200 calves at every round-up. And it didn't take us very long.

Jenkins: Now what did you call this "Y" post?

Turcotte: Horcadda. It's like what we used to call some kind of shooter. I forget what kind it was. Sling shot, I believe they called them.

Jenkins: Modified sling shot (chuckle)

Turcotte: Yes. Well, it was exactly like that, except it was usually a big heavy oak post that was a minimum of ten inches or so in diameter with the fork on the top of it. And it's fast because you ride your horse right beside the post, and as you go by you raise your rope, spring it up and drop it down in that notch, and keep going until that calf is pulled right up against it. And it's high enough so that it throws the calf's front feet off the ground.

Jenkins: But you don't have to worry about hurting it?

Turcotte: No.

Jenkins: No broken necks or anything?

Turcotte: No, you worry about him hurting you.

Jenkins: Yes, but, I mean, you didn't really ever have any trouble injuring the calves that way.

Turcotte: Oh, no. We never broke legs! We never broke legs! We

might break one leg a year. If we broke one...we went once for four or five years without ever breaking a leg on anything.

Jenkins: So it's safe for you and the calf, and fast?

Turcotte: OH, yes. Real fast because two men would get them when you let him back down. You can get him by one ear and by his nose, and you led him back down. You just started over with him, and the guy pulled on his tail, and he just hit the ground. The man grabbed him in the flank, and the guy on the head gets him by the front leg, and you're ready to castrate him, brand him, and vaccinate him.

Jenkins: All in the vicinity?

Turcotte: All right there where he was. And it was fast.

Jenkins: How did you heat the branding iron?

Turcotte: Well, we dug a hole a foot wide and three feet long and probably eighteen inches deep and built the fire in that. That got a good bit of coals, and then we'd put more wood on it. Your dirt is strung out along the edge of that hole, and you work your branding iron down into that dirt so that just the head of the iron stays in the coals and your iron doesn't get hot behind that. It keeps the handle from getting hot.

Jenkins: Okay. We were exploring what kinds of skills you were developing as you were cowboying.

Turcotte: Well, that was all part of it. The old men would take

you over there and let you watch while they were castrating and vaccinating and whatnot. Then your next step would be for you to start washing up the equipment and what-have-you. Then they'd let the kids, not all of them, but just certain ones that showed a little aptitude, castrate a few calves. That old man would be standing right there with you, and you can't hardly kill a young calf as long as you don't pull on the horse. That's the way that you can kill those calves.

Jenkins: You used a knife at that time?

Turcotte: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: Did they ever develop into pinchers, or are they still using that?

Turcotte: No. In later years I had a very good friend that was a surgeon, and he gave me a scalpel with a big handle. That scalpel was fast, and I liked it because it was sharp. When it would start to get dull, you'd just snap that blade out and put a new blade in it. And it was a lot more sanitary than a knife. As far as I know, though, we were the only ones that used a scalpel. Most of them still use knives. And I use knives now.

Jenkins: They never did get to the pinchers?

Turcotte: Oh, yes. We used <u>yurdizzios</u> during the summer if we had to because of screw worms, during the screw worm time.

Jenkins: It wasn't as accurate, though.

Turcotte: No, you had to make two cuts to be sure, and even then

it wasn't as good.

Jenkins: You still got the bulls out of them on occasion.

Turcotte: Yes. In the first place I liked the knife because all our outfit like to eat calf fries.

Jenkins: That was my next question. So you had lots of calf fries?

Turcotte: Oh, yes. We did.

Jenkins: Okay, any other skills, jobs, that you were learning as you were growing up?

Turcotte: Well, the old men that were training the kids would work around a round-up, and they would let them get to where they gradually, as they started breaking horses, ride the young horses to help cut the calves out of the herd. When you brought the yearlings out, they'd come out by themselves. The people cutting would bring an animal to the outside of the herd and just kick him out, and your two riders would pick him up and take him over to what they called the pie, or the cut, which was just a small group. You usually started with a few old cows and calves together--always cut your cows and shipping calves. Then you'd cut your yearlings to them that were weaning. Then after you did that, one of the old men and several of the kids would start off with that cut back toward camp just real slow with them. The wagon would hook them going back to camp, and the rest of the men would start the vaccinating and branding. You do

that and then mother the herd up, hold them let them get mothered up, and then turn them loose. But meanwhile, your horse wrangler was moving the horses toward camp, the wagon was going in, and then the old men and some of the kids were drifting the cut in.

Jenkins: Now who was in charge of this operation out there, you know, at the round-up?

Turcotte: Well, the foreman, which was usually my dad. Obviously, he couldn't be at every round-up, and when Dad wasn't there, well, it was me. But on the ranch at one time, there were three complete cow outfits. There was over a hundred men on the Kenedy Ranch. They had what we called rancheros, who were the older cowboys that were responsible...they stayed at one of the camps, and they stayed there permanently. They didn't go out. They would help with the round-up when it was in their territory. Usually, they were responsible from 20,000 to 30,000 acres. Their job was to ride every day, check the fences and the waterings and the cattle. If there was anything wrong, they got in and reported it. They stayed there all week. They stayed in camp houses with a fireplace.

Jenkins: High living, uptown.

Turcotte: Oh, they were first class. But the rest of us stayed in tents because we moved. Usually, the camp would be in one spot for a week, and you would work three or four

round-ups and then move your cattle.

Jenkins: Bring them all to there.

Turcotte: Bring them all to Mifflin to ship. Then you'd have to take the cows back that belonged to the calves. You stayed one more day there.

Jenkins: Oh, you mean you took cows and calves to the shipping and then brought the mamas back?

Turcotte: Yes. well, you wouldn't bring them all the way. You'd just bring them to the fence going to the big pasture and turn them back out, and they'd go home by themselves. But you had to keep them there a couple of days. Otherwise, they'd turn around and come back to where they last saw their calves. You had to stay there and, what we called, let them "bawl it out," you know.

Jenkins: Oh, but you...

Turcotte: Usually forty-eight hours.

Jenkins: What I'm getting at is, when you brought the calves to market, it was easier to bring the mamas with them so they would all...

Turcotte: Well, not for all of them. Just enough of them so that your herd was gentle. You can't take a bunch of yearlings and move them across the ranch.

Jenkins: So you brought the mamas along to kind of...

Turcotte: To form a nucleus to the herd. But sometimes we'd come with twenty, twenty-five loads of cattle.

Jenkins: How many calves would you usually have?

Turcotte: Well, they were forty-foot rail cars that we used in those days, and they usually held thirty-six or thirty-eight head.

Jenkins: For a drive of how many calves to the pen would you have how many mamas to go with them?

Turcotte: Oh, probably a 150 or so, and then you might have up to 400 yearlings.

Jenkins: So for 400 yearlings you might have how many mamas?

Turcotte: Oh, 150.

Jenkins: Then you had a pretty good percentage there of "chaperons."

Turcotte: Oh, yes. Well, even at that, when you first started, you had to handle_____. Those yearlings would just take off, and when they did you just put a point man in front and just keep them going straight ahead until they began to slow down. You'd take them straight ahead and not try to turn them, not try to turn them at all until they started showing signs of slowing. Then when they started slowing down, one man would drop back, and the other one would start turning them. You just turned them in a circle until they...

Jenkins: Now when you got them to the loading pens, you forgot about them. I mean, they were sold at that point?

Turcotte: Oh, no.

Jenkins: Did anybody ever go to Fort Worth with them or wherever they took them?

Turcotte: No. We put a man on the train to Colorado, but usually not to Fort Worth. Arthur rode to Fort Worth, my cousin, because he was from Fort Worth. He just used that as an excuse to go.

Jenkins: They were still yours when they loaded up?

Turcotte: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: So you had somebody with them wherever they were going?

Turcotte: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: Oh, I see. Did you ever make those trips?

Turcotte: No, no. For Colorado by then I was foreman, and I went up there and waited for them.

Jenkins: Oh, okay. Well, now I'm going to ask if there's anything else before you got out of high school? I assume that when you got out of high school, then you continued right on into full-time cowboying.

Turcotte: Well, yes, I did until I went in the service.

Jenkins: Let's go back and, before we get you out of high school, see what other things were happening that you might want to tell us.

Turcotte: Well, I didn't do much except work cattle. I didn't do much except work cattle. Usually, on Friday afternoon I came to the ranch and stayed until Sunday afternoon. Then I went back to Kingsville and got ready for five more days of school. Then when I went to Corpus to school, well, I had a little ol' car that I would drive over there, and I'd jump in that thing on Friday

afternoon and "hook 'em" for Sarita.

Jenkins: Well, unless you can think of some other things that were happening to you or the ranch and your family before you get out of high school, let's get you out of high school and see what happens to you then.

Turcotte: Well, there was one thing during that period. .well, it was the summer right after I got out of high school. I got put on one of these trips with Mr. Kenedy.

Jenkins: Trips to where?

Turcotte: To Mexico. He was with some of his buddies. He was taking a little drinking tour, so I had to drive them. Dad delegated me to drive them. I was just a kid, and I never took a drink or anything. But they were all grown men, and they were drinking sometimes at what some people might consider an excess. But on this one trip when we went down, it was nearly dark. We were out from Laredo, and Uncle Johnny...the thing that always worried me was that he carried a lot of money. We were in his car, and it was after dark, and it was stormy and raining and carrying on. He started putting his money in his danged hat, and it was right out on the table where everybody could see it in this damned bar down there. I was pretty concerned about it, but they were all drinking a little, and they didn't pay much attention. I finally talked them into leaving. I said, "Let's go back. We were staying at the Hamilton Hotel

across the river, and we left.

We got in the car, and it was raining, and you just couldn't see anything. Uncle Johnny said, "I want to drive. I said, "No, no, let me drive. But he got under the wheel, and he drove. I said, "That's not the road. We were up on top of a levee, one of those irrigation canals, way down there. So I talked him into letting me drive, and I backed the car very carefully off of it and turned around. I had to back out on to that levee to get where I could come back down off of it.

About that time Uncle Johnny stepped out in front of the car there. He and Ted Christiansen, one of the guys that was with us, were having a drink. I looked up and there was two guys who came running out of the brush toward them, and both of them had knives. Uncle Johnny had a little .25-20 under the seat of his car that he carried in his scabbard, and I grabbed that thing and just bounced out right quick. The guys were just almost on top of them. They were coming into the car lights, and I was behind the car lights. I just stepped to one side and shot a couple of times to frighten them, and they disappeared, took off. I guess we scared them or something. I got Uncle Johnny and Ted back in the car, and we took off, and we got ourselves back across the river. So I feel like I really saved his life by

frightening those fellows off. Anyhow, they disappeared.

Two days later, after we got back here, down at Mifflin there was one of the engineers from Exxon, a guy by the name of Ben Stanley. He was a real noted rifle shot. We all got engaged in a shooting match, and Uncle Johnny dropped out, and then ol' Ben and I kept shooting at things. We started off throwing cow chips up in the air and shooting at them, and then we went from cow chips to Pet milk cans, shooting at them with this .25-20--throwing them up and shooting at them. Finally, we got to shooting at empty shells, and we each shot one or two of them. Then I hit the next one, and Ben missed. Anyhow, I won the pot, whatever it was, that we had in there. The next day Dad came in, and he said, "Well, your Uncle Johnny was in, and he wants you to have this rifle. He told me about that shooting you did down there at Mifflin. He said you were entitled to this rifle." I always felt like it wasn't the shooting I did at Mifflin; it was the shooting I did in Mexico that won me that rifle. My daughter Betsy now has that rifle. So it has kind of sentimental value to me.

Jenkins: Yes, I guess so. Now this was when you were...

Turcotte: Seventeen years old.

Jenkins: Your first real trip out into reality (chuckle).

turcotte: Oh, well, I'd been to Mexico with Uncle Johnny many

times. But that was the first real life-threatening situation that..

Jenkins: Well, are you just out of high school at seventeen?

Turcotte: Yes.

Jenkins: Okay, so you got out of high school in 1943?

Turcotte: Yes.

Jenkins: And you come home from Corpus Christi, I suppose.

Turcotte: Yes.

Jenkins: And pick us up and tell us...

Turcotte: Well, I went to the service just almost...I signed up in January of 1943, before I actually got out of school, in the aviation cadet program. As soon as school was out, I went right in the service.

Jenkins: Tell us briefly what...

Turcotte: Well, they sent me to Fort Sam Houston, and from Fort Sam Houston they sent me to Amarillo Army Airfield. I was put in the cadet program after I finished basic. We had six weeks basic training, and I got to do an extra three weeks because I came between two bunches. But by then I was a seasoned Army veteran, you know. I had an extra three weeks (chuckle). They took us and put us down on the line and had us washing down airplanes and telling us about the glory of being aviation cadets. Finally, I figured out that there were thousands ahead of me, waiting to go to flight school, which I realize now was the psychology they used on you. They'd come

down every so often and give you a chance: "Any of you guys want to volunteer out for any of the schools?" All of us in the cadet program could have picked any two schools. I could have gone to radio school, armament school, gunnery, or mechanics. Finally, another guy and I said, "Oh, the hell with it." He wanted to be an armorer and go to Denver, and I started to and I said, "No, hell, I don't want to be an armorer. I just want to volunteer out as a career gunner." So I volunteered out as a career gunner and went to gunnery school.

Jenkins: Where was this?

Turcotte: At Harlingin, seventy-five miles from home. That was real funny. They gave me the pick of the gunnery schools and where you would like to go. I wanted to go to Kingman, Arizona, and I wanted to go to Florida, and I wanted to go to El Paso or to Del Rio or to Laredo. I never mentioned Harlingin, and that's where I got. But I didn't stay there very long. From Harlingin they sent me to Transition in Florida and then I got with a group and started training. I was awful glad that I came along that far in the war because one of my good buddies...we went in the service almost together at the same time. He was one class ahead of me, and he went to Europe and "bought the farm."

Jenkins: You didn't have to leave the U.S. then?

Turcotte: No, no. I got to patrol all the way south as far as the

Panama Canal.

Jenkins: Oh, okay.

Turcotte: We got to do some over-water flying, but I didn't get shot at. I didn't get shot at, but I put in an awful lot of time in B-24s. I started as a tail gunner and worked up to the front end as a crew chief. When the war was over, well, I was a crew chief. I stayed in another five months after the danged war was over. They doubled all the married men's points, you know. Instead of letting us come home and start families, they let the guys that already had them come home. Of course, the reason they did this is because it was costing them more money.

Jenkins: So you got out then when?

Turcotte: Oh, I got out in 1946. When I got out, I came immediately back to the ranch and went back to work for Uncle Johnny. I hadn't been back with him just for a year or so before he leased to Aunt Sarita. When he leased to Aunt Sarita, well, I kind of went with the lease. In 1950 or so, they sent me on my first trip to New Mexico and Arizona and Colorado, and we looked at one ranch in Wyoming--all on one trip. I was gone for a couple of months looking at these ranches. They gave me a list of things to check each one for, and I went to the courthouse to check for no outstanding liens; or if there was a lien, I checked what the original amount of

it was and the date of it. Then I checked on the available water on the ranch. About the second thing on that list was whether there was outside property inside the ranch boundaries; and if there was, that ruled it out. But if it was a small piece, I was to check and see if it would be available.

Jenkins: What was the result of that trip?

Turcotte: Well, I think of the ranches that we looked at, some nineteen ranches or so, I had that narrowed down to five or six ranches that Aunt Sarita came and looked at. There was one in New Mexico and one in Wyoming and three in Colorado. Dad came with Aunt Sarita, and after we looked at those, they bought ranches but they weren't any of the ones that I had selected for them to look at. This ranch became available, the Twin Peaks Ranch, while we were up looking at the ranches, and the owner of the ranch was an old Texas boy, Noah Ewton, from Hereford, Texas. He was in the cattle ranching business, but he was also more in the land business. At the time Noah died, he owned the mineral rights to over 200,000 acres of Colorado ranch land. What he would do would be to buy a ranch, improve it, sell it, and make a profit and keep the minerals.

Jenkins: All of them?

Turcotte: On every one.

Jenkins: Total 100 percent of the minerals?

Turcotte: That's right. We told him, "You're dealing with Texans now." And this was the only one--it originally was 4,500 acres--that we bought from Noah. We finally made a trade where he kept half the minerals for ten years. He didn't share in the lease money, but he got half the minerals for ten years. Of course, our plan was...and what we did, we just didn't lease it for ten years until the minerals reverted. But at the time he bought that, well, Dad bought a ranch, and they sent me up there to continue acquiring property and take care of the cattle as they sent them up. Both ranches were unimproved, and so I was developing two ranches and adding property to them at the same time. And I was a pretty young man. I was in my twenties.

Jenkins: Why did they want ranches in Colorado?

Turcotte: Because we had a tremendous drought here, a seven-year drought in the 1950's, in Texas, and we got up there just in time to join them for their drought up there.

Jenkins: Did those ranches develop at all?

Turcotte: Oh, yes. We kept adding property to the ranches. Dad's ranch was seventeen air miles from the Twin Peaks and about twenty-seven road miles. I kept adding pieces of property to it. Of course, I had to okay every deal over the phone and whatnot, and when Dad could, he came and joined us on it. The last piece that I bought for him was a piece of land that he had offered twenty

dollars an acre for it. It was a 4,500-acre piece of land. The folks wouldn't sell it, so we bought another piece that just joined. All the stuff that we bought was joining. One day the guy that owned that thing came up, and he had a daughter that was threatening to marry somebody that they figured was ethnically below their level. And she wasn't but about sixteen years old, you know, just a kid. His wife took the daughter and said she was getting out of there, and if he didn't sell that ranch and come along, there was going to be a divorce in the family. Of course, I didn't know all that, but I saw him and I was building a set of pens on Dad's ranch and was also building one on the other one. I was building them both at the same time--had a crew on each one. I was laying out these pens, and he came roaring up, and he said, "Do you folks still want to buy that land?" I said, "Well, we've already bought some land since we talked to you." He said, "Yeah, I heard about that." He said, "But would you buy it?" And I said, "Oh, I imagine so. I'd have to talk with Dad." He said, "How much money could you give me, cash, today for this thing?" I set down and I figured it out, you know. I told him it amounted to about seven dollars an acre. He said, "Oh, no. Hell, your Dad offered..." I said, "Well, you asked me."

Jenkins: So he had asked you, and you had offered him about seven

dollars an acre.

Turcotte: Yes. And he said, "Oh, no, I couldn't do that. I said, "Well, you asked me how much cash you could get today. He said, "Oh, I couldn't consider that. And he drove off. Well, he drove to the top of a tall hill from there. I could see him. He was about a mile off, but I could see him sitting on that hill. He sat there for about two or two-and-a-half hours. And in a minute he came driving up and said, If you can get me the cash today, you've bought a ranch. So I got in the car. I immediately just dropped everything and took him to Trinidad. I didn't know the banker. I had a $10,000-working account there, and I got the president of the bank and told him. Our lawyer was this guy's lawyer, so we were really lucky there. Our lawyer had sold him the land before. So I told our lawyer that I felt sure that Dad would go along. He said, "Did you talk to him?" I said, "No, but he'll honor it. I guarantee you he'll honor it. So he had already done the title. He prepared the title and everything. So I couldn't get Dad. He was out on the ranch. I made two or three calls down here. Finally, I told the president of the bank, "Well, I'm going to draft on my Dad's account. I called the president of the bank in Corpus where Dad had an account and told him I had a draft coming through, and I was trying to get Dad, that I had

bought a piece of property that Dad had wanted at considerably less than what Dad had offered for it. He said, "Send it through. I guess I'll be hearing from your dad." Dad finally called me. I stayed by a pay phone down there at a drugstore at that little town. He finally called about dark that night. I told him that he'd bought a ranch, and he said, "Well, what did you have to pay for it?" I told him, and he said, "Well, don't worry about it. The money will be there when the draft gets there." He said, "I'll probably see you in a few days." The next afternoon he came rolling in (chuckle). But that was how we added 4,500 acres at one crack to our holding.

Jenkins: For seven dollars an acre.

Turcotte: But that wasn't with all the minerals. The coal was reserved on half of it. The rest of it was all the minerals.

Jenkins: Pretty good grazing land, too, I guess.

Turcotte: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: At this point, let's go back and get you married. Not just get you married, but see how you met your wife and kind of go through those days, and then kind of blend that in with the Colorado story and take off from there.

Turcotte: Okay. Well, my wife was a younger sister of my best friend in Kingsville, Paul Manier, Jr. Paul, Jr. and I,

during the time I was in school in Kingsville were just practically inseparable. His father had an automobile agency, and he was a mechanic. Of course, his sister was just a little ol' thing, you know. I never did date her until I was in the service. I dated her a time or two when I came home on leave. After I got out, why, we got a little more serious about it and got married in 1947. We were at La Parra, at the chapel where my parents were married.

Jenkins: Where we were today?

Turcotte: Where we went today and also where my daughters, Susie and Betsy, were married.

Jenkins: Right there on the ranch?

Turcotte: Oh, yes. At the La Parra Ranch Chapel. At the time all this Colorado stuff came along, well, we had Katie and Betsy, and Bud was the baby. Susan was born in Colorado in Walsenburg while all the land acquisition during that period was going along. At that time, generally we would go up in anywhere from March to the end of April to start getting ready for the cattle and come back in October when the cattle were at market. And my brothers, Jackie and Joe...Bob was living out...he was just out of high school. Jack had been to Korea and had just returned, and Brother Joe was on the ranch down here. So we kind of alternated going up there, but I was pretty much up there very summer. All the land that

was acquired was land that I made the trades on--on both ranches. I was in on all the land purchasing. We wound up with roughly 10,000 acres in each ranch--bought mostly in small parcels.

Jenkins: Scattered?

Turcotte: All adjoining. All the land purchases on the Twin Peaks were all joining, and the land purchases on Dad's were joining.

Jenkins: How far apart were these two?

Turcotte: The ranches were twenty-seven road miles apart. Of course, when we brought the cattle up, they came on the same train, and we just trucked them to each ranch.

Jenkins: These two properties were independently owned. Your dad owned his...

Turcotte: Dad owned his, and Aunt Sarita owned hers. Dad always had one or two men on his ranch, and some helpers. Of course, the helpers varied, you know, different ones. Over on the other ranch, well, I had up as high as sixteen men because I was doing a whole lot more improvement than over there. On Dad's ranch, on the fencing and whatnot, I was contracting it. But on Aunt Sarita's ranch, I was building it myself with a crew.

Jenkins: You worked for both ranches independent of each other?

Turcotte: Yes.

Jenkins: Okay, so you really had two jobs--working for two people?

Turcotte: That's right. And, of course, that was an arrangement that Dad and Aunt Sarita had. If I had something important on one to do, I saw about it. They were very well satisfied because I built two sets of pens at the same time, and I had fences going. I had this fence contractor. I worked him with me on the Twin Peaks until I taught him how to build the type of fence that we wanted to build, and then I put him over on the other ranch and gave it to him by contracting. He got his own crew.

Jenkins: This is what year?

Turcotte: This was in the early 1950's.

Jenkins: So you were still in your twenties?

Turcotte: Yes.

Jenkins: So you were learning fast, weren't you?

Turcotte: Well, I already knew fencing.

Jenkins: I know, but...

Turcotte: But to me it was a great challenge. I woke up every morning just wanting to work because it was a challenge, and I was the only...the closest boss was a thousand miles away. I had $10,000 in one bank and about $7,000 in the other bank, and I was just getting after it.

Jenkins: That's great.

Turcotte: And every month I would send them a report and all the bills and receipts, and they'd pump the accounts back up to their balances, and then we'd go again. If I needed

to make a major purchase, well, I would call and ask about it. I bought some land that I didn't tell them about. I had one that was an eighty-acre piece of land on the Twin Peaks.

Jenkins: For yourself?

Turcotte: No, I bought it for Aunt Sarita.

Jenkins: I see.

Turcotte: And she paid a hundred dollars for the land around it, and it was an isolated thing, and I got a letter from the lawyer to tell me to try to buy that piece of land since it was outside-owned land. He said I should buy it even if I didn't get the minerals and that I could go up as high as $200 an acre if I needed to. I went down and told him, "I just bought that from Mr. Thompson yesterday." I said, "The papers are on their way to you." And he said, "Well, how did you pay for it?" And I said, "Well, I paid here at the bank." He said, "Well, how much did you pay for it?" I said, "Well, I paid forty dollars an acre, but I got the minerals."

Jenkins: (Chuckle) That was on the border of...

Turcotte: No, it was entirely inside of that.

Jenkins: I know. But once you bought it, it made it all one piece.

Turcotte: Yes. It was a piece that was inside of it. But it was a piece of rough country. It was on the side of a hill, but it was timbered--big timber on it. Aunt Sarita was

very pleased with that.

Jenkins: And how long did that operation last?

Turcotte: Well, both ranches were going after Aunt Sarita died.

Jenkins: Which was when?

Turcotte: In 1961. Of course, Dad was managing the ranch, and he was the executor of Aunt Sarita's estate. Then we had this will contest coming along, and it was quite a legal deal going. That ranch was sold. Dad said he didn't want anybody accusing him of having a ranch up there, buying it and operating it with the assets of the other one, so he agreed to the sale of that real quick.

Jenkins: He sold his own?

Turcotte: No, not his own. He sold Aunt Sarita's and kept his own. Then Dad died two years later, and when he died my brothers and sisters began hollering, you know. Before Dad died, he and Mother had given the ranch to us, the six kids, so we owned it. I mean, I was a part owner of the ranch. But I was the one that was developing it and building it up. I asked Dad one time, "Dad, don't you think I deserve a little something special?" He said, "Well, you damn sure do, son, but I don't know any other way to do it." He said, "I'll just have to make it up some other way." Of course, I wasn't real happy about that. They began to put the heat on me to sell it, and I just flat refused. I said, "I put this danged thing together. I've got lots of years of my life that I've

put in it, and I don't want to sell mine." So finally they came and they brought Mother, and she just put the heat on me. She said, "We've done everything as a family, and I want you to sell." I said, "Well, the only way that I'd sell if I was put in charge of the deal." And I was put in charge of the deal and got everybody signed up to a contract. I went up there, and we sold the land, and I came home with a little over a quarter-million dollars more than they'd agreed to sell for. As my reward, they bitched about my expenses, which was five hundred and some-odd dollars for me and the accountant going up there to close the deal. I brought them, like, $270,000 or $280,000 extra, and they bitched about that $500. We flew first class, that's what it was, and they all bitched about it.

Jenkins: So you got out of Colorado in when?

Turcotte: Well, we set that thing up...I can't remember the year that that was. We set it so we could take our money in three years. We got a payment in December, a payment in January, and a payment the following January. So it took us three extra years. I would say that it was probably 1965 or so when we were out of Colorado.

Jenkins: So you come back to home base.

Turcotte: Yes.

Jenkins: Pick us up there.

Turcotte: Well, we came back here, and I went back to work in

the...

Jenkins: Where are you living when you get back here?

Turcotte: Well, when we had moved up here.

Jenkins: Into this house?

Turcotte: Into this house.

Jenkins: Give us some history of this house.

Turcotte: Well, this house was built by Aunt Sarita's parents for her. She used to refer to it as "my honeymoon house." This house was finished before the big house, headquarters, was finished. She and Uncle Arthur didn't live here but about a couple of years.

Jenkins: Now this was built about when?

Turcotte: This was built, like, in 1916 or so. She and Uncle Arthur...Aunt Stella put it on Aunt Sarita and Uncle Arthur to move out there with her in the big house because Uncle Arthur was gone so much. She was just staying here in this big house by herself.

Jenkins: Now remind us again to kind of bring us up to date on who's in charge. Uncle Arthur and Stella are...

Turcotte: Well, Arthur East married Aunt Stella. Aunt Stella was my father's sister. They lived here in this house for just a couple of years, maybe three. And when that was finished there, they acquired another ranch over in Jim Hogg County--leased property first and then later bought land. Uncle Arthur was gone all the time. He was buying steers. He was a steer man. He was a

speculator, and he ran steers on that country over there. I don't know the primary reason that they got Aunt Sarita to move, but, anyhow, they did and after they'd been gone...they closed the house up, and it stayed closed for a while, and so then they sold it. The house went through two owners, I think.

After I got back from the service, the property became available, and Aunt Sarita bought it. She wanted to fix this house up, and she offered it to Dad and Dad didn't want it. He thanked her, and he said that Mother wanted to build her own home, so they built out there where Mother's place is now, on his ranch here in Sarita. Aunt Sarita just told Joyce and I one time, "I want to fix that house up. I'll fix it up any way that you want it, and I want you to move up there. You're the only ones that are going to have enough kids to fill it up." And Joyce didn't want to. She didn't want to at all; she wasn't that interested at first. We came up and looked, and owls flew out of the damned thing, you know.

Jenkins: Oh, it was abandoned at that time?

Turcotte: Yes. It was abandoned, and there was a couple of the windows broken, and there were some owls in the attic. I talked to Joyce, and I said, "Well, there's land with it, and it's a good place to raise a bunch of kids." Aunt Sarita talked to her, too. We had to persuade her.

Finally, she got a contractor, and we came up here and sheet-rocked all the thing. The house did have gas lights in it, and we took all of them out. We sheet-rocked it. When did we come up here, Joyce? [Speaking to his wife]

Mrs. Turcotte: Thirty-three years this August. We've been here thirty-two years.

Turcotte: Thirty-two years.

Jenkins: Thirty-two years last August, 1987?

Mrs. Turcotte: Right.

Jenkins: Okay.

Turcotte: Well, that was while we were just starting to go to Colorado because when we first went to Colorado, we started working on this house. It was, like I said, a seven-month job. Things went along, sheet-rocking it and all, and we were doing everything and getting it generally up in shape and building a garage. Of course, we'd have to leave, and we'd go to Colorado. We got in that cattle truck and put all our stuff in it, all our kids in our station wagon, and we'd take off for Colorado. I'd have one of the men drive our stuff up there, and we'd stay until it was time to come home. We'd load that cattle truck back up again.

Jenkins: So y'all didn't actually spend all of those years full-time in Colorado?

Turcotte: Oh, no. We went back and forth every year. We'd go in March and come back in October. We'd come back and winter in Texas.

Jenkins: Okay.

Turcotte: We liked the winter in Texas. We were some of the original winter Texans.

Jenkins: You had somebody looking after that ranch in the winter.

Turcotte: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: Okay, so you are back here, and you move your family into this house in about what?

Turcotte: What did she say? How long ago?

Jenkins: Thirty-two years, August of 1987.

Turcotte: Okay.

Jenkins: To help me out a little bit, although I probably ought to do this last...

Turcotte: During this period there's one little aside that might be kind of interesting. I was a J.P. [Justice of the Peace] Everybody here had to hold some county job because we didn't have many people, and I was the the J.P. from the time I got out of the service. When I was twenty-one years old, I was a justice of the peace in Texas. At one time I was a justice of the peace in Texas and the deputy sheriff in two different counties in Colorado at the same time.

Jenkins: Is that right?

Turcotte: So that's kind of unusual.

Jenkins: Yes. Were all of those elected offices?

Turcotte: No, those were appointed right there.

Jenkins: (Chuckle) So we get you back here in the house and out of Colorado completely. Pick up the operation here at the home base. Develop us from there right on up until today.

Turcotte: Well...

Jenkins: Very slowly (chuckle). How about being a J.P? Was there anything unusual about being a J.P.?

Turcotte: Well, the main job in those days was a few misdemeanor cases, and the main job was the side job as coroner, working with state colleges. I was the guy that had to work all the wrecks that had fatalities. But during the years that we were going back and forth to Colorado, when we were leaving here and going back and forth to Colorado, a very good friend of mine, Fred Flato, a great, big ol' boy...he played football at Northwestern and was a little All-American. His playing weight was 245 pounds, but then he weighed well over 300 pounds, like 370, close to 400. I think at the time Fred died, he was up around close to 500 pounds. Huge man. He was about 6'7" and just big in proportion. But his reflexes were quick. He'd jump out of cars while they were still rolling--just scare you to death. But he and I came up, and I invited him on an elk hunt.

Jenkins: In Colorado?

Turcotte: In Colorado. Fred and I were sitting up on this hill. We were watching some elk on the hill across from us, and we were looking at them through binoculars and a spotting scope and just watching them. They were too far to shoot at, but we could see them real good, and we were just trying to see what they were doing. They weren't doing anything. They were just eating. I was talking, and I said, "Fred, I'd like to ask you a personal question." And he said, "Well, sure, Louis, go ahead." And I said, "No, never mind. It's not important." We watched the elk some more, and then he said, "Come on, Louis, what is it? What'cha got on your mind?" I said, "Oh, no, forget it, Fred." We watched the elk some more. In a minute he got me by the arm, and he said, "Damn it, Louis, we're good friends!" And he said, "What is it you got on your mind? I want to know!" And I said, "Well, Fred, I really..." I guess I said, "Okay, if you were to have a heart attack up on this mountain and die, would you mind too much if I gutted you before I started to drag you down off this mountain?"

Jenkins: (Laughter) What did he say?

Turcotte: He said, "You S.O.B., you would!"

Jenkins: (Laughter)

Turcotte: Well, Fred was a very wealthy guy that was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, and he was used to having

people jump when he said, "Frog." That didn't really ever apply to me, and I kind of always enjoyed putting it on Fred a little bit. The people that worked for him enjoyed it tremendously.

During this period of time, he asked me to go to Miller, South Dakota, with him. So Joyce and I took some time off and went up there. He was going to buy some cattle, and he wanted me to help him pick them. We went up there and bought several loads of Angus cattle. Coming back, we came through Yellowstone Park. We drove up to the gate just several days after they had just had some of these college students killed up there by bears. We drove up to the gate, and this park ranger handed us this circular warning of the danger of feeding the animals and the bears and to mostly stay clear of the bears. He handed this thing to Fred, and he said, "Sir, you look like you're big enough to fight one of these danged bears with a switch." He said, "But, sure enough, we've had some serious problems with these danged bears." And he said, "This means what it says. Y'all be extremely careful because these bears have lost their fear of humans." And so we drove along, and we saw some elk. We stopped and looked at some elk, and then we looked at some deer. I glanced off to the right at a little old turn-off, and I saw a pick-up there. There were some trees, but I could see all the way

around the pick-up, and I knew...I couldn't see any animals anywhere close, but I knew it had to be a bear. So I just pulled off on that road. That pick-up left, and I drove up, and, sure enough, there was a great, big ol' black bear. We were in Fred's car, and I was driving. It was a big ol' long Lincoln with a console in the middle, and we drove up and that old bear reared up just stuck his nose on that glass, and he had his paws there on that window. Ol' Fred was just pecking him right on the nose through that glass, and he said, "Oh, you mean son-of-a-gun, you!" And that's about the time I ran that window down on him. (Chuckle) And as that window went down, the color in Fred's face just about equaled it (laughter). He didn't say anything. He just got real still, and that bear just raised his paws up and just slapped them on that window sill real heard and stuck his head inside. He wasn't growling. He was just kind of purring. [makes a purring sound] And ol' Fred "sold out." He buddied that console and was hitting his head on the door on my side, and my bride in the back seat screamed at me and said, "You crazy son-of-a..." something. I forget what she called me, but she said, "We'll all be killed!" And Fred was trying to get that window up, but I had it jammed on the other side. And, you know, he never forgave me for that.

Jenkins: Well, did the bear just amble off, or what happened?

Turcotte: Well, he finally reared back a little, and I ran the window back up and drove off.

Jenkins: (Laughter)

Turcotte: Well, he told me that night...I was kind of kidding him, and we stopped at a motel. He wanted me to go to a bar and have a drink, and I said, "Oh, no, I've got to sit down and write a letter about today." He said, "There ain't no letters going out of here!" He said, "I'll break every bone in your body!" Well, I wrote a post card and put it on there, and I left it in my room with a dollar bill and a note and put, "Please put a stamp on this and mail it." Well, we went on and we got back. I sent it to Jack Roberts in Kingsville, and when we got home, Fred went to a sporting goods shop that all the hunters and whatnot go to in Corpus. He went in and they asked Fred how his trip was. "Oh, fine." "Did you see the country?" "Oh, yes, we saw Yellowstone--beautiful country." They all kind of gathered around, and they said, "Did you see any bears, Fred?" And he just turned around and stalked out of that place.

About two weeks later, we were over at the Carlisle's house there on the lake, and it's a two-story house overlooking the lake. Everybody had come up and gone over in boats, and it was just a little barbecue and party. I was wearing a suit, and everybody was

dressed up. I was sitting on the bar stool there, and somebody asked me to tell the bear story. And Fred said, "Hell, I'll tell the bear story. There wasn't anything to it. The bear came over to the car, and this fool rolled the window down; and the bear left, and that's all there was to it." He picked me up, just walked out of that thing and just pitched me off that balcony. I landed right between those boats down there (chuckle). We had gone in a pontoon boat. I had boots on and a suit, and I was trying to come up underneath that pontoon boat, and I was just going to let him dive like a beaver. But I got disoriented before I could get up, and I missed it about that far (gesture). Everybody helped pull me out of the water. Fred came down there, and I said, "Good night, big buddy, I could have been killed!" And he said, "Oh, hell, that was a chance I was willing to take."

But he was one of my dearest friends, and we had a lot of fun together. But he never quite...I thought that the "gutting him" thing was a much better one, but there wasn't any witnesses. But he never fully forgave me for that until the day he died. He went to his grave not forgetting about that bear (chuckle).

Jenkins: We were exploring the J.P. experiences. Is there anything else surrounding the J.P. office that you want to tell?

Turcotte: Well, we had quite a few deaths in that period. I think I worked some seventy-some-odd deaths during the period I was the J.P., and that J.P. job lasted for some twenty-six years. Then I ran for commissioner one term and didn't make it, and then I ran again the next term and got elected, and I've been a commissioner since then. Son Bud is now a J.P.

Jenkins: Is that right?

Turcotte: Brother Jack is a county treasurer, and his wife, Barbara, is the county clerk. So we're well represented in the courthouse. I don't think that I'll continue in public office forever. I think my bride says I need to quit working one of these days and take her somewhere.

Jenkins: Okay, if there's nothing else with the J.P. then, let's just see what else was going on during those years. We're working up toward today and seeing what's happening to the ranch and so on.

Turcotte: Well, during those years, or the part I skipped lightly over, there was a will contest suit that was going on all during that time.

Jenkins: As a result of whose death?

Turcotte: Aunt Sarita's death.

Jenkins: She was the owner?

Turcotte: The owner of the Kenedy Ranch. She signed a release letting Mrs. Kenedy have her half of the ranch, but they actually had a reciprocal will where she owned the whole

thing. But she released half of it to Aunt Elena, Mrs. Kenedy, because she knew that that's what Uncle Johnny really wanted. But they actually had reciprocal wills.

Jenkins: Oh, if one died the other got their half?

Turcotte: Right.

Jenkins: I see.

Turcotte: So if Aunt Sarita hadn't done that, Mrs. Kenedy wouldn't have gotten her 200,000 acres. But when Aunt Sarita died, there was a hell of a commotion because of this, and that's all been publicized.

Jenkins: Well, could you kind of graze through this episode. Most of the people that read this probably won't know those details. We're talking about letting whoever reads this know this to the extent that you are willing to talk about it.

Turcotte: Well, it's one of the largest will contests ever in the state of Texas. Of course, we were on the ranch. Dad had died and I was foreman here on the Kenedy.

Jenkins: Let me ask you to do this first. It'll help me at this point. Kind of go back and follow the ownership down to this point to kind of give us a clear picture of how the ownership developed.

Turcotte: Well, Aunt Sarita owned the ranch outright until 1961.

Jenkins: As a result of whose death? She got if from whom?

Turcotte: She got it from her mother and father. Her mother was the last one. Maria Stella Turcotte Kenedy willed half

of the ranch to Aunt Sarita and the other half to Uncle Johnny. And Uncle Johnny leased his half to her in 1947, and she operated the entire ranch.

Jenkins: Okay. She didn't own it, but she...

Turcotte: ...she owned half and operated the other half. She had 43,000 acres in Jim Hogg County, Hebbronville, and operated that besides the Colorado properties.

Jenkins: The ranch here had how many acres?

Turcotte: The ranch here is 400,000 acres.

Jenkins: And it stands today still...

Turcotte: The same acreage.

Jenkins: Same acreage, 400,000 acres. How many in Colorado?

Turcotte: There were 10,000 there.

Jenkins: And then that was sold.

Turcotte: That was sold. Before Aunt Sarita's death, she had gotten into ill health, and this monk came down and began as a spiritual advisor to Aunt Sarita. He invited her on a trip, and she took a trip. Then he took her to South America. While she was in South America, he got her to buy a ranch down there to contribute to his order and whatnot.

Jenkins: How big a ranch?

Turcotte: Oh, I don't know the amount. I just know the dollar amount. During the last eighteen months of her life, he extracted some million-and-a-half from her. I made an official complaint to the bishop of the diocese here,

Bishop Marx, in Corpus Christi, Texas. I went with the local padre who was Aunt Sarita's confessor and parish priest, and I said, "For a man of the cloth, this is not right." Now Dad was still living, and it made him furious when he found out about it. This was like in 1960, before she died. I said, "Dad, I'm following my conscience there, and I'll accept full responsibility." He said, "Well, I don't think you're going to get anywhere attacking the Catholic Church." I said, "I don't really give a damn. I'm going to try to get to the bottom of it or know the reason why." So the bishop said, "No, if it's a formal complaint, you will receive an answer in due time." Of course, I never did. Aunt Sarita died, and in her will it came out that she had established a foundation and appointed Cousin Lee to the foundation and her lawyer, Jake Floyd, and this monk. This monk was guided in this by J. Peter Grace. All of J. Peter's lawyers were used.

Jenkins: Grace Lines? Who is J. Peter Grace?

Turcotte: He's the guy. And he's high in the Catholic hierarchy, one of the most decorated Catholics in the United States.

Well, meanwhile, they told Dad there wasn't anything that he could do about it. He had qualified as executor, and Dad wasn't really aware of all the money that had been spent until after Aunt Sarita died because

while he was running the ranch, he had no knowledge of her personal stuff until along toward the end when the accountants began calling him and telling him. He had qualified as an executor, and they told Dad that he couldn't contest the will. Well, the three of us, myself, Brother Jack, and Brother Joe, were working here on the ranch. Pat was working for Marathon Oil Company, and Brother Bob was farming out in Pecos.

So Brother Bob filed the suit, contesting the will. The first suit was filed by a group of relatives from Laredo, and Bob just joined the suit and filed. Then they got one of the courts ruling somewhere that Bob had no status in the case or something. I don't remember the "ins" and "outs" of it. But, anyhow, then Pat joined the suit as the executor of Dad's estate, because Dad danged sure had a right to be in it. Aunt Sarita gave Dad a power of attorney that was testamentary and said, "Even after my death he shall continue to manage my affairs."

I really think that that's what killed Dad. The bishop's lawyer came down. They were preparing to fight this case, and he wanted to make photocopies of all the evidence. He took all the evidence from the Kenedy Ranch office that Dad was responsible for. He took them to Corpus to photocopy them, and he's never returned them to this day.

Jenkins: Just lost, huh?

Turcotte: Well, I heard that he didn't even give them to the bishop. Anyhow, the case went on to trial, and in the probate court there were several wills. One of the wills gave Dad and Aunt Stella, each, half of this ranch down here, which would be half of 200,000 acres. There were two of those wills. The last will was this foundation, that put everything into the foundation. But it gave Dad and Aunt Stella the ranch, the 43,000 acres in Jim Hogg County. Of course, the will was contested, and the probate judge upheld the contest. But then they appealed, and on the technicality they threw us out of court and fired us here from this ranch. Of course, we still had the property that we got under the second will, which was half of the ranch in Jim Hogg County. We each got our places here. But we still feel that wasn't Aunt Sarita's true wishes and intent, but be that as it may, why, they threw us out of court.

Jenkins: Is that finished now?

Turcotte: Well, I don't know. We felt like there was criminal fraud there, and, of course, there is no statute of limitations on fraud offense.

Jenkins: But at the moment the courts are through unless something else is brought to the court.

Turcotte: Oh, yes. The foundation is very active and managing the ranch, and we're out, although there is a paragraph in

the will that says that we're to run it in perpetuity.

Jenkins: In the final will?

Turcotte: Yes. Damned sure is. But the way it was written, it said, "It's my desire." It didn't say, "It's my command." The way that the lawyer wrote it, it says, "It is my wish and desire."

Jenkins: So as it stands now, to the extent that you...

Turcotte: We don't have anything to do with the Kenedy Ranch at all anymore.

Jenkins: Okay, but you inherited part of the Kenedy Ranch.

Turcotte: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: So you and your brothers and sisters...

Turcotte: No, my sister didn't get any. Just the three of us that were on the ranch.

Jenkins: Oh, okay, the ones who were active in management.

Turcotte: Right, in management.

Jenkins: Okay. Let's go back. Of the 400,000 acres, where does that land lie now?

Turcotte: In Kenedy County. The church has half of it, the 200,000, and the other 200,000 of Mrs. Kenedy's is put into a trust of which the church is the beneficiary. They don't own the land. The trust owns the land, but they get the proceeds.

Jenkins: So in reality the Catholic Church is getting the benefits of the entire 400,000 acres. And outside of that, the three of you who were actively engaged in

running the ranch, you got the home sites?

Turcotte: *We got our home places.*

Jenkins: Each one of you got a home place, consisting of no more than a home and a hundred acres.

Turcotte: Well, no, the way that it was written...and incidentally, the monk was directing the will. They were in such a hurry that they left out...they forgave all debts. They were in such a hurry that they left out one whole page of debts. They just omitted that page in the will. They were in a tremendous hurry because she was dying. It was signed on her death bed in New York. Aunt Sarita got cancer in South America, and they didn't bring her home. They took her to New York and put her in the hospital up there.

Jenkins: *She died there?*

Turcotte: Yes.

Jenkins: Now what page of forgetting of debts are you talking about? I don't understand that.

Turcotte: Well, they had a list of all of her employees and people that owed her money.

Jenkins: Oh, okay.

Turcotte: And she said she was going to forgive all the debts, and in copying that they left out, omitted, one whole page.

Jenkins: So those people legally still owed the money. Did they have to pay?

Turcotte: Well, I don't even know who all was on it, but that

wasn't my worry. I didn't owe any money.

Jenkins: Yes, okay. Actually, the end of that suit to the present time came when?

Turcotte: Well, the end of that suit was just last year.

Jenkins: Oh, okay. So it's really only been settled...

Turcotte: Well, of course, our thing was terminated when they fired us.

Jenkins: Yes, but the estate was actually settled. Unless it is further contested, the courts are through with it.

Turcotte: Well, I would hope not, but who knows?

Jenkins: I mean, some member of the family would have to reopen the issue, is what I'm saying.

Turcotte: Well, the Supreme Court ruled, and the way that they ruled was that our interest was so small as to be inconsequential. I don't know what they consider a small interest, but that was the judge's ruling.

Jenkins: Well, what I'm trying to get at is, unless one of you raises a question, the courts are through with it.

Turcotte: Well, I'm not a lawyer, so I can't answer a legal question. I know that we're not very happy, and most especially not happy that we've never gotten an answer to my formal complaint to the church.

Jenkins: Oh, I see. So you're still expecting further developments.

Turcotte: No, not really. If they haven't given me an answer now...

Jenkins: You may not be anticipating it, but you expect it. You think they ought to.

Turcotte: Oh, yes. I feel like I'm due that.

Jenkins: Okay, from that point, are there any other things...because this is your life. Are there any other things up until this point, you know, developments in your life that you want to speak of?

Turcotte: Oh, no. My wife and I said we can't just entwine our lives around a will contest suit. We've got to go on with life, and we have. Our ranching operation has continued, and we've leased some country, and we've continued with our ranching, and I continued with my job as county commissioner.

Jenkins: Well, let's get to your present occupations. Let's put it that way. Since you quit being active with the Kenedy Ranch...

Turcotte: I ranch full-time on my own, but I've been ranching on my own since 1948.

Jenkins: Okay, let's go in, then, and explore your own personal ranching operation.

Turcotte: Well, really, in 1947--but it was signed in 1948...Uncle Johnny...I was getting ready to leave the ranch to go to work for the Border Patrol. They came down and offered me a job because they didn't have any men in Kingsville that were fluent in Spanish, and they wanted me to go to work for them. So I gave notice, and Mr. Kenedy asked

me how much I was going to make. I told him, and he said, "Well, I can't pay that kind of money." I said, "Well, I didn't think that you could, but I'll work with whoever you're going to bring for this round the next six weeks." I said, "It won't take them that long to learn all I know." He said, "Well, I don't think they'll learn this ranch in six weeks." He said, "I appreciate your attitude." And the next morning he came back and said, "Well, I can't pay you that kind of money, but I can lease you some land and sell you some cows where you can make that kind of money."

And the wheels of fortune turned. I leased the land, bought the cows for, I think, $300 or $350 a head. Six weeks later, the market went to pieces, and they weren't worth half that. So we chipped away at that for some nine years. We had that country for...he said that I could have that country as long as I stayed on the ranch, that I was to have that country the rest of my life. He said, "Not my life, but your life." He told both Aunt Sarita and Aunt Elena that, but Aunt Elena didn't honor that (that was Mrs. Kenedy).

Jenkins: Now where was that land?

Turcotte: That was part of the Kenedy Ranch. It was seven miles west of Mifflin. It was 2,400 acres of land, and I ran about 150 cows on it for twenty years.

Jenkins: So you were leasing Kenedy land?

Turcotte: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: Okay.

Turcotte: I was one of the few outsiders that was. Well, Dad, at the time of his death, had about 18,000 acres leased.

Jenkins: From Kenedy?

Turcotte: From the Kenedy's.

Jenkins: Now he had owned that Colorado land himself.

Turcotte: Right. That's right.

Jenkins: Now he sold that?

Turcotte: No, he didn't. He gave it to us, to his children.

Jenkins: But eventually you sold it?

Turcotte: Right. We sold it but Dad didn't.

Jenkins: Had you bought land, yourself?

Turcotte: No. Oh, I bought some here in Sarita, an outside piece that was available, but I haven't bought any large tracts.

Jenkins: No ranch land, I mean.

Turcotte: Well, this was a piece that was adjoining me here--that I bought.

Jenkins: Oh, so that was your ranching operation. What I'm trying to get a fix on is that you said in the 1940's you started your own ranching operation. I want to follow that and see what happens.

Turcotte: Oh, yes. Well, I started it in 1948. Of course, when we wound up with that country over there, my portion of that country over there is in the neighborhood of 3,000

acres. So I'm a little larger than I was then, and I have leased land. I have another ranch leased now, and I'm ranching on a little larger scale than I was when I started out.

Jenkins: So you're leasing how many acres?

Turcotte: Well, I'm leasing another ranch that I'm running a hundred cows on.

Jenkins: Oh, okay. And you essentially have been doing that sort of thing since the 1940s?

Turcotte: Yes. I've leased different pieces of land, but leased land is kind of hard. The owners change, and your lease is subject to sale. I only have that land leased now on a one-year lease. They have it up for sale, but my lease is firm. I have it until the end of the lease.

Jenkins: Clear me up now. The lease that you had on the Kenedy Ranch...

Turcotte: Right, I kept that lease for twenty years.

Jenkins: But you no longer have it?

Turcotte: No.

Jenkins: It got lost in the shuffle?

Turcotte: Yes.

Jenkins: Oh, okay. So at the present time, you're still ranching just your native cows.

Turcotte: Yes.

Jenkins: Do you feed or anything?

Turcotte: Oh, yes, I do all of that.

Jenkins: Give us a picture of your ranch in operation.

Turcotte: Well, my ranching operation is just like the ranching operation on any other ranch, except it's not on the scale of 200,000 acres. It's on the scale of several thousand acres.

Jenkins: You see, the thing that you don't realize is that the people who read this may not know anything about ranching operations, so we want them to have a picture of what it's like today ranching.

Turcotte: Well, things have changed. Most of the ranchers and the ranching in brush country are utilizing helicopters and pens. Oh, yes, all our neighbors around us are doing that. They are now working cattle on the Kenedy with helicopters.

Jenkins: Working them. How do you work them?

Turcotte: Gather the cattle.

Jenkins: With a helicopter?

Turcotte: Right.

Jenkins: Instead of a horse, they use a helicopter?

Turcotte: Right. And pick-ups. But right now the only cattle outfit I have is my bride and me. We manage to gather all of our cattle...I hire hands. I keep one hand on the payroll. But I hire extra hands to work the cattle once I get them in the pen. But to pen the cattle, we are still on horseback. We still work our cattle horseback in the pens. But my bride and I trap the

cattle by using water locks, and just the two of us catch the cattle. We try to keep gentle cattle.

Jenkins: What part of the year? How much of the year do you hire outside people?

Turcotte: Oh, usually a couple of times a year, maybe three times a year.

Jenkins: Well, how long?

Turcotte: Oh, just for one weekend.

Jenkins: Is that right?

Turcotte: All the rest of it...about 400 head.

Jenkins: Oh, I see. What do you run?

Turcotte: We're running Santa Gertrudis and longhorns. We're putting longhorn bulls on the Santa Gertrudis now to see how our mate carcasses are going to grade? We think it's a pretty good cross, and my bride has been in the ranching business long enough, so this was her idea, going with the longhorns.

Jenkins: Oh, do you ever cross the other way? Santa Gertrudis and longhorns?

Turcotte: Well, we just happen to have more Santa Gertrudis than we do longhorns. It's quicker to go longhorn bulls with the Santa Gertrudis.

Jenkins: Would you get much of a different calf with the opposite breeding?

Turcotte: Well, yes. What they're shooting for now is an animal that doesn't have the fat cover, and this is the type of

animal that this cross produces.

Jenkins: And if you breed with an opposite cross--is what I'm saying--do you get much of a different animal?

Turcotte: I don't think it would be that much different.

Jenkins: But it's more convenient.

Turcotte: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: We've pretty well covered the broad outline, I think. But at this point, I usually say that I've asked all the questions that I have, but is there anything that you can think of that I should have asked you? I know your kids have some stories that they want you to tell. So let's just kind of graze back over now and randomly pick up some stories that need to be recorded that might not necessarily come in sequence.

Turcotte: Well, there's one thing that I didn't mention, but it didn't have much to do with ranching. But it has quite a bit to do with family history. About thirty years ago my wife at that time was about seven months pregnant. We went out dove hunting one evening with friends--on the ranch--and she had shot a dove and was walking and keeping her eye on the bird. I was on the other side of the big, long, dry lake, and I heard my wife scream. My friend said, "What's the matter with Joyce?" I said, "A snake's got her." We went running over there, and she had stepped on a five-foot rattlesnake. She had stepped on him with one foot, and he bit her on the other leg

five times. Of course, we were a long way from town, and it was a pretty exciting event.

And it happened that I had my saddle slicker on my saddle in the back of the pick-up, and we also had a water can full of ice. I started to put a tourniquet on it and cut it, and when I got my knife out, she started crying and said, "Don't cut my leg!" So I wrapped it in ice and that slicker instead, and we took off for Kingsville. It took us about forty-five minutes driving wide-open to get there because we were quite a distance from town. When we got there, the doctor told me that Joyce wasn't having any trouble at all.

She seemed to be doing fine until we took that ice off her leg, and then she started having trouble breathing. She was in the emergency room, and they hollered for oxygen. I grabbed that oxygen bottle and ran it over there, and they put her on oxygen and whatnot. The doctor came in and started suction. He told me, when I was away from Joyce, that he didn't know how it was going to turn out because she'd gotten so much of that venom. She was in the hospital, and they pulled two complete blood changes on her. She just turned black all the way up to her head and then back down again. She lost a major portion of the calf of her leg. They said they had never had a medical history on any woman that was that far along that had been snake-

bitten, so they didn't know the effect on the unborn child. So I had a worry there that...of course, he said, "There's no point in saying anything because we don't know. So we were very fortunate that she had a healthy baby girl.

Jenkins: Great.

Turcotte: And her leg healed up almost immediately after Marie was born. It just started healing.

Jenkins: Well, she was probably lucky that she wouldn't let you use that knife because they tell you to do exactly what you did--wrap it in ice and go to the doctor.

Turcotte: Well, they had a doctor at the University of Arizona that came up with this theory of biotherapy, which was icing the thing. He had this thing that worked out that for every degree that you can lower the body temperature, it takes twenty minutes longer for the poison to dissipate. I told this doctor that, but he said, "Hell, Louis, she was bitten five times, and I'm not familiar with that. I've got to get all that poison out of there that I can. Of course, he did. He had suction cups all over her leg--on all the bites with ten incisions.

But as a sidelight of that, this was late in the afternoon, and the old ranchero that we had at the nearest camp heard about that, and he went over there and tracked that snake and killed that snake and sent

him in to me. I took the snake to the doctor at the hospital, and he said, "Oh, that could be any rattlesnake." I said, "This old man says it's the same snake." He'd tracked him all over and before the cattle was there, and it was in loose sand. And the fang marks were uneven. One was higher than the other. He measured them with calipers, and it was the same snake. So that was kind of an interesting sidelight to that because he got that snake overnight. That snake stayed there overnight, and he still tracked him. He wasn't far from where he had bitten her.

Jenkins: Okay, look at the list again, and let's get another story.

Mrs. Turcotte: You should tell him about when you were a hunting guide.

Jenkins: Yes, when you were a hunting guide. Well, let's just kind of ask you to give us your highlights of your career as a hunting guide. How's that?

Turcotte: Well, of course, I've handled a gun all my life from a very early age. Even with weak eyesight and whatnot, I'm still a pretty fair rifle shot. I can shoot them all fairly well--rifle, pistol, any type of gun. But during my years in the service, I was going through transition in Florida, and I did a little stint as a trick shot artist with a circus in Florida. I went over and shot the .22 there, and the guy that ran the gallery --it was a midway set up in the winter quarters of the

circus--said, "If you come over, I'll let you shoot free anytime you'll come over." I said, "Heck, I can't come over here to do that." He said, "Well, I'll pay you twenty dollars a night if you'll come over here and shoot two or three hours." He said, "You don't have to shoot all the time. Just when things slow down come up and start popping targets." And I did. I had mentioned this story to a four-star admiral that I was guiding on a hunting trip. On that hunting trip, why, I shot a coyote at an extreme range. It was running in the sand hills, and I called the shot before the bullet got to the coyote. The admiral paid me a high compliment in his book that he wrote by calling that the finest shot he had ever seen, and I consider that a signal honor to get a compliment like that from a four-star admiral who has obviously seen a lot of people shoot.

Jenkins: How long of a shot was it as best you remember it?

Turcotte: Well, it was the extreme range for the gun. It was about 350 yards.

Jenkins: And what were you shooting?

Turcotte: I was shooting a .243.

Jenkins: Where did you hit him?

Turcotte: I didn't go look at the coyote. He was still laying there on top of the sand hill. We were on our way in, and the admiral still had to kill an animal or two. But I was honored by that compliment. He put that incident

in his book.

Jenkins: As a guide, how long of a period did this last?

Turcotte: Oh, I started guiding when I was fourteen years old, and I'm still guiding (chuckle).

Jenkins: Oh, so all your life?

Turcotte: All my life pretty well.

Jenkins: In this area?

Turcotte: Oh, yes. Well, we run commercial hunts on our Jim Hogg County property.

Jenkins: Today? Now?

Turcotte: Oh, yes, we still do. It's operated by our sons. I mean, I'm not an active guide anymore. I don't get deer for anybody except my daughters or granddaughters.

Jenkins: But that's part of your business, is the hunting?

Turcotte: Oh, yes. That's a very great part of our business.

Jenkins: Give us a little briefing of what that kind of operation is like. How you look after the land, after the animals? How do you bring the people in, and how do you feed them?

Turcotte: Well, we have it every year. We try to do it professionally. We're not experts. We feel like we're experts on hunting, but we rely on biologists to come in and help us with our game counts. We do helicopter and spotlight surveys, and they tell us how many animals we have and how many females need to be taken from the herd and how many mature bucks need to be taken from the

herd. We've been on this program for ten years or so, and it has really paid off pretty well. This year all our hunters were very happy. We run trophy hunts only, and this year we took ten nice trophy bucks. Our hunters are all happy and have all signed up for next year.

Jenkins: Well, what all is on that land--animals--as far as you know?

Turcotte: Well, we have deer and very few turkey, but we do have turkey. Deer, turkey, javelina, farrow hogs, coyotes, mountain lions or cougars, bobcats (a world of bobcats). Of course, the coyotes and the bobcats and the javelinas are the most numerous. But these guys are mostly trophy buck hunters.

Jenkins: Do you run any cattle on that?

Turcotte: We stock very lightly. We stock lightly on the land that we trophy hunt. The deer produce more income than the cattle.

Jenkins: But you do run some?

Turcotte: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: Do you get your cattle off of there during hunting season?

Turcotte: Well, we try.

Jenkins: Have you ever had any of them shot as trophies?

Turcotte: Oh, no. We've had some shot intentionally when people tried to butcher a calf.

Jenkins: But not accidentally?

Turcotte: No, not accidentally. In all the years that we've guided and have run hunting operations, we've never had a hunting accident.

Jenkins: Do you have fences to attempt to keep the game in or out?

Turcotte: No. In certain areas they install game fences. I don't have any. I may have to put some down to hold down on the poacher traffic. We've gotten a reputation for having big bucks, and there are a lot of people that want to come get one--trespass--without paying the price of hunting.

Jenkins: What I'm asking is, how do you keep your big bucks on your land?

Turcotte: Well, you really don't. They go back and forth. We try to plant food plots and have enough water available so that they hold their travel to a minimum.

Jenkins: But you make your land attractive so they stay?

Turcotte: Oh, yes, we try to do that. We have feeders that we maintain during the hard parts of the year, and we also plant oats and winter wheat, which we use as grazing through the end of February for our cattle. We put the cattle on it in February, let me say that.

Jenkins: To the best of your ability, you do try to count what's on there. I know that's limited, but you do attempt to count, right?

Turcotte: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: What's your best guess at how many different kinds--how many deer, how many turkeys, and so on--that you have?

Turcotte: Oh, they give us an estimate every year and tell us the number of animals that we can harvest.

Jenkins: So your best guess according to their inventory of the deer that run on there is what?

Turcotte: Well, I have letter from the biologist that says we have one of the highest deer densities he's ever seen. This was several years ago, and he recommended that we take in an extreme amount of does. It was a pretty heavy amount. It was just unbelievable. But we did it and we have the buck:doe ratio right where the biologists want it. Of course, there are different biologists that check the land, and they're pretty well in agreement.

Jenkins: But in terms of a number that's in there in any given year, do you have any idea?

Turcotte: It varies from year to year depending on the die-off.

Jenkins: Most of your hunters are after deer?

Turcotte: Oh, yes. We're in the country that's known as the brush country, and it's produced some awful big deer. We had one deer off of our ranch that was a Boone and Crockett two years ago. We had one this year that would have scored well into Boone and Crockett if he hadn't had some points that subtracted from the count.

Jenkins: If I were from Houston or Dallas or New York or Paris or

something, and I wanted to come and hunt on your land, how would I arrange it and what is the cost?

Turcotte: Well, you would be out of luck this year (chuckle) because we're booked, but the normal trophy hunt at the Black brothers ranch runs at the higher end of the spectrum. They get $5,000 for their trophy hunt. We get $3,500. We're $1,500 cheaper, but they have been in the business for quite a few years, and this includes entertainment to Mexico and side trips that we don't provide. We provide the facilities, a guide for each hunter, transportation to and from the blinds, all the meals, and take care of their trophies. And that's for a five-day hunt.

Jenkins: Does it make any difference whether I get a deer or not as to what it cost me?

Turcotte: Well, we guarantee to offer you a shot at a mature trophy deer, a mature whitetail deer, with an eighteen-inch spread, eight points or better.

Jenkins: And if I get it, it's the same price as if I don't get it?

Turcotte: That's right.

Jenkins: Okay.

Turcotte: If you wound one, that's your deer whether we're able to recover him or not. Our recovery rate on wounded animals is nearly 100 percent if the hunter lets the guide shoot when he has a wounded animal. But some of

the guys don't want the guide to shoot, and those are the ones that we sometimes lose. But if they let the guide back them up, that deer doesn't get away.

Jenkins: Now who all is guiding on your land? Your sons?

Turcotte: Well, they're all good hunters. Right now my son Bud runs the operation, and he usually uses...well, this year he had seven guides. They're all country boys. Three of the seven were millionaires.

Jenkins: Of the guides?

Turcotte: They're the guides.

Jenkins: They love it, I guess.

Turcotte: They just love to hunt, and they're good hunters. There's a certain fellowship that grows among people in a hunting camp. If you want to assess a man's character, just spend five days with him in a hunting camp, and you'll pretty well know just what kind of individual he is.

Jenkins: Well, do you have many that go for javelina or turkey?

Turcotte: Oh, yes. We don't let them kill turkeys because our turkeys are still not up to numbers. Our turkeys are declining. But we let them kill farrow hogs.

Jenkins: Now what is a farrow hog?

Turcotte: Those are wild hogs. We have African boars crossed with native farrow hogs. We have quite a few. We let them kill one of them, but most of them don't want to shoot until...they want to look at good deer. Fortunately,

we're able to be able to show them the deer.

Jenkins: I've often wondered why a domestic hog that live in the wild grows long tusks. I've never got a good explanation of why. Some people say that if you turn a tame hog loose and if it gets old enough out there, he's going to grow these tusks.

Turcotte: Oh, he will.

Jenkins: So it's age that grows the tusks.

Turcotte: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: It's not the fact that he's necessarily wild; it's that he's just got the years.

Turcotte: Some of them have some pretty tremendous tusks. I'll show you some in there that are pretty respectable.

Jenkins: So if you keep a tame hog long enough, it'll grow tusks?

Turcotte: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: All right. Any other story about the Kenedy Ranch that you think he ought to tell? Look at your notes and see if there are any more stories that you remember.

Mrs. Turcotte: What about hunting in Colorado?

Turcotte: I didn't put much in about hunting except about Fred on the mountainside and the bear story.

Mrs. Turcotte: Did you tell about Fred throwing you over the balcony?

Turcotte: Yes, that was the payback from the bear story, but he still never forgave me.

Mrs.

Turcotte: You don't have any Joe Hendricks stories?

Turcotte: Well, that's a pretty terrible story.

Mrs. Turcotte: It's a good story, though. It shows your personality--how mean you are (chuckle).

Turcotte: Well, I have a very good friend that I've hunted and fished with a lot. He ranched in South America for twelve years, and he should have been born a hundred years ago because those are the times that he lived. Not a hundred, maybe fifty years ago, because I came along just about the time things were settling down. But Joe's the type that was exposed in South America to where people still used rifles like we use axes and shovels up here. Joe and I were going fishing one time, and we got to the fishing camp terribly late at night. I call him "my ill-tempered friend" because he's gruff. He was just raising Cain with me all the way down there and fussing and just generally being obnoxious with me, and I guess it was because he felt bad. I said, "Joe, you sure are grumpy. Are you constipated or something?" He said, "No, I've got the hemorrhoids something terrible!" I said, "Well, we're in a terrible place here. The closest drugstore was about twenty-five miles, and it was 10:30 at night. I said, "There won't be anything open. He said, "Well, don't you have anything? Any kind of salve or anything?" I said, "Well, let me look in my shaving kit. I said, "Yeah,

Joe, I've got some chili pitin salve in here."

Jenkins: I've used it. I know.

Turcotte: He said, "Well, I don't know. If it says salve on it, I'll try it." He said, "I've got to have something." Joe disappeared into the other room and in a minute I heard this, "WHOOOOOOOOOO!" (Laughter) But evidently, it gave him some relief because he quit fussing at me.

Jenkins: I bet it numbed him (laughter). Where's Susan's list? Did you do all of Susan's list?

Turcotte: Oh, I kind of skipped one or two of these.

Mrs. Turcotte: You haven't talked about Congressmen Young and Sikes.

Turcotte: Oh, yes. I had two congressmen, Bob Sikes from Florida and John Young from Texas...and John Young was a friend that I had known ever since he was the county attorney and then later county judge of Nueces County, and then he went on to be a congressman. He called me one day and he said, "Louis, I've got a congressman here that I owe some favors to, and he wants to go on a trophy deer hunt." He said, "I don't have anyplace to take him. Can you come up with something?" I said, "Well, let me talk to Mrs. East, and I'll see if it'll be all right for you to bring him." So I talked to Aunt Sarita, and she said, "Oh, sure, go ahead and bring them and put a nice hunt on them." And we did. We put a tremendous hunt on him. He killed ducks, and he killed geese, and

he killed deer. He killed a beautiful buck, and he killed some nice turkey.

On the way in, we were almost out of gas, and he wanted to go by and shoot some more ducks at this lake that we had just seen. We were driving a jeep and were low on fuel, and I said, "Well, I think that there is a five-gallon can that we keep over here for emergencies, but it's probably old." I went over and put that gas in, but I was very careful to leave a bunch of it in the bottom so I wouldn't get a bunch of water in there, but, sure enough, there was enough water in it anyhow. It had condensed moisture. The congressmen were having a "victory" drink on the way in. They had a bottle of scotch and a bottle of bourbon. Congressman Sikes was drinking that scotch, and that jeep started just chattering and not running, and I said, "Well, we've got a water problem. We got a little water in the fuel." I said, "Just give me that bottle of scotch, and I'll see if I can't get us into town." The congressman took one more quick belt and handed me that bottle of scotch, and I poured it in the gas tank and the thing smoothed out. We did get on in, and just before we got in, he said, "Louis, I've got to ask you a question. I'm not much a mechanic, but why does it have to be scotch?" I said, "Because, Congressman, I drink bourbon."

Jenkins: (Laughter) But it'll work?

Turcotte: Yes. And the congressman said, "Well, is there anything that I can do for you?" I said, "No, not really. He said, "Well, maybe a little something?" I said, "Well, I have a carbine, and carbine shells are getting hard to come by. If you run across some of them, you might send me a few. Oh, about five or six months later I got a bunch of carbine shells that came from some foreign country--Czechoslovakia, I believe, or Yugoslavia. From the Czechoslovakian embassy. There were 500 rounds of carbine shells. Somehow, the congressman mentioned to somebody from another country that had access to carbine shells, and I got 500 rounds. And he did great work in Congress.

Jenkins: Do you have any more things on your list?

Turcotte: Can you use just a touch of profanity?

Jenkins: Oh, we put it down the way you want it. It doesn't make a bit of difference to us.

Turcotte: Well, I had some friends, one of whom just passed away a while back, that were out...both of these guys were farmers, and they were out one Christmas just kind of going from farm to farm and visiting, having a few drinks. They went by one of the guy's house, and he had a little Shetland It was a pet. The darn thing just...they could put him in a car or anything. Of the two guys involved...one set was twin brothers; and one of them was later the mayor of Corpus Christi, and the

other one was a pilot that I flew with quite a bit. As a matter of fact, I bought an airplane from him.

But they decided that they'd take this Shetland pony and go down to Sears and tell them that they ordered him through...Sears had sold Shetland's through a catalog several years earlier, and they took the pony and loaded him in one of these guy's cars. They took the pony to Sears and took him in to see Santa Claus. They went over, and they said, "Santa Claus, we need to talk to you about this damned pony. We bought him, and they said that he's going to be forty-eight inches tall at the withers. Look at him! He ain't but thirty-six. He was just one of those miniature Shetlands. "He hasn't grown a damned bit, and we want to get our money back. Ol' Santa said, "You boys better get that damned horse out of here before you get in trouble. They said, "No, we want to see the manager. He said, "The manager! Boys, you better get that damned thing out of here!" So they went over, and they put the pony in the elevator and took him up to the second floor where all the sewing stuff was. They asked one of the ladies in there...they started fussing about getting that pony and him not being as tall as he was supposed to be. They told them they wanted to see the manager, and the manager showed up, and he was pretty irate. They started this spiel, and he said, "I'm afraid that you

boys are in trouble.

This one guy said, "Smile! You're on Candid Camera!" The manager started straightening up his necktie and grinning, and he said, "Where's your crew? Where's your crew?" They said, "They're outside. What we'd like for you to do is call us a cab. Because the guy that had furnished the car took off. He "sold out" and left them there with that danged horse--left them there on foot, the two of them. He said, "Where's your camera crew?" They said, "Well, do you have an outside elevator?" He said, "Oh, yes, it's the freight elevator here. They said, "Well, call us a cab and have them call you when the cab's down there and then come out. We want you to be pleasant and help us load the pony in the cab. He said, "Oh, I can handle that, combing his hair and primping for the pictures.

In a minute they called him and said, "There's a Yellow Cab out here. So he said, "All right. The manager and the two farmers got in the elevator with the pony, and they went out and walked down the ramp, and the manager helped them load the pony in the cab, and they drove off. The manager is standing there waving at them, looking around for the camera crew.

But as a sequel to that, they found the other guy's car that had "sold out" and gone off and left them. It was a brand-new Oldsmobile. One of these guys went over

and ground up one of those horse apples and put it in the heater hose, dumped it down in the ventilator. About three months later, they saw his wife driving a new car. They asked him, "Say, Phil, how come you bought your wife a new car?" He said, "Hell, you know that night we had that damned horse in there? I never could get that Goddanged smell out." He said, "It smells just like horse apples. I had to take that Goddamn thing off and buy her a new car." (Laughter) I don't think they ever informed him of that. One of the guys is still living, and the other one has passed on. But it made the news. It made all the TV stations, of course, without any identities. It was too good of a story...it was one of the better ones for farm boys around Corpus to come up with.

Jenkins: All right, have you got anything else now before you tell the story?

Mrs. Turcotte: I can't think of anything.

Turcotte: Oh, I think that's pretty good. The Shetland pony is a good place to quit.

Jenkins: You can't clean it up or anything?

Turcotte: No.

Jenkins: Well, will you let her tell it?

Turcotte: Oh, she couldn't tell it right or couldn't remember.

Mrs. Turcotte: Well, you tell it or I'm going to tell it.

Turcotte: Okay, you tell it.

Mrs. Turcotte: My version.

Turcotte: I'm going to let you tell it.

Mrs. Turcotte: That summer, there were fishermen out here on the Spoil Banks, and they were fishing. Some kids had gone out there and murdered them, and it was a real bad scene out there. It had everybody up and down the coast afraid to go out on the coast because they were out there in the middle of nowhere. But we took a trip down to Tide Gauge, which is on the coast, and I had Peggy and Leonard. Peggy was pregnant. Our youngest child was with us, Marie, Louis and I, and my mother. We were going floundering, and Mother and I walked awhile with them with a flashlight shining.

We got tired and decided we'd go back to the Tide Gauge House. That's what we called this little house that we had out there. All we had out there was kerosene lamps. We didn't have any electricity, and it was quite dark. Mother and I were sitting there, and we heard all these sounds outside. We knew that someone was coming to get us because everybody, like I said, was scared about the murders out there. She and I were about to die because we were so afraid. Marie was with us, the youngest child.

I knew that Louis had a gun. He always kept a gun

in his car, so I was going to slip outside and get a gun to protect us with. I slipped outside, out the back door. Louis had walked up, left the rest of the kids floundering. He had walked up to the house, and he had locked the car because he knew that was the first thing I'd go after was that gun to protect us. I didn't know it was Louis.

The only thing Mother and I had there was pots and pans, and we were talking to each other. "Well, if he comes in here, I'll hit him with this." And, "I'm going to hit him with that." He terrified us, absolutely terrified us. We were so frightened. You can imagine two women out there by themselves, so frightened. Finally, he showed his face, and that's when I really wanted to kill him. That's the story of the Tide Gate. It wasn't all that bad except how he terrified his mother-in-law, his wife, and his young child.

Jenkins: Did you get out to the car?

Mrs. Turcotte: Yes, but it was locked.

Jenkins: Oh, I see. You couldn't get in.

Mrs. Turcotte: So he had come up and locked the car so I couldn't get the gun. That's basically the Tide Gate story. He can make a much better tale of it. But we've never forgiven him.

Jenkins: You don't want to give your version now?

Turcotte: No.

Jenkins: Okay, are there any other things that you can think of that you want to add before we wind up?

Turcotte: We never talked about aviation in the history of the ranching enterprise. Well, I started flying before I went into the service. I had flown a few hours. I went in under the cadet program. I flew some P-24s and later on, in 1945, P-47s. When I got out, I had two cousins that were involved in G.I. flying schools, and I started flying in 1946. As soon as I got out, in my spare time I started flying, and we got a Stearman down here on the ranch, and my cousin and I flew the Stearman. It belonged to the ranch, but we were the two that flew it. Later, Mr. Kenedy got rid of the Stearman, and then he leased his plane. Then later, I bought a plane, a little Cessna 150. My dad bought a Cessna 175. My brother Jack and I were both pilots, and we both flew those two airplanes during all this period of our ranching activity. We flew back and forth to Colorado quite a bit. Later, we got a Mooney Mark 21 and flew it. I had this 150 during all this time and put some 3,500 hours on that 150.

But the interesting thing about that 150 is it went through three tornadoes. Our hangar was out here east and northeast of town and was struck by two different twisters, and both of them thoroughly demolished the

hangar and damaged the airplane. The first one damaged it slightly, and the next time it got a wing. This is on the 150. It also bent the tail section, the rudder. I repaired the thing, got it rebuilt.

The last time I flew it up to Memphis and had it on a strip up there, and it got caught by a twister up there and wrecked it up. So I didn't try to repair it that time. I thought maybe the Good Lord was trying to tell me something about the little airplane. I stuck with the Mooney until we...I'm still a licensed pilot. I don't have a plane now, but I'm shopping for one. I had left that part out. I used the 150 for patrolling on the ranch.

Jenkins: Oh, I see. Have you had trouble with poachers and so on over the years?

Turcotte: Well, any rancher that has game is going to have that problem because you don't have much public land in Texas. The only hunting available is on state land or by lease, and you've got a lot of guys that don't want to pay for the lease.

Jenkins: Do you ever catch anybody?

Turcotte: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: What happens?

Turcotte: Well, here in Kenedy County it's pretty severe. We have a hanging judge here that puts a thousand-dollar fine on them. And in the Hebbronville area over there, the

judge over there is not quite as severe. You'll always have poachers if your fine is not high enough to be a deterrent. If they have to pay $3,500 for a legal hunt, they might get fined only $400 or $500, so it's cheaper to take a chance.

Jenkins: Okay, anything else you can think of you want to put in before we close? I got a little tape left there, ten minutes or so.

Turcotte: Well, my life has been a versatile, exciting life. My bride and I have enjoyed it. We haven't killed each other.

Jenkins: I usually like to ask people how they feel about retirement and whether they have any plans to do so.

Turcotte: Well, not really. I couldn't stand to hang it up all the way. I've got to be chasing some ol' cows around, fooling with horses. That's been my life. I don't think that I'd change that. But I have progressed with the times. We moved into aviation really before it became pretty fashionable for ranchers to have planes and fly. But we did it more as a practical matter than anything else.

Jenkins: So you hope to continue to chase the cows as long as you're physically able?

Turcotte: Oh, yes. I don't only hope to--I <u>will</u>! I think that most ranchers feel that way. I think that my bride is putting enough heat on me now so that I'll have to take

her on something longer than a weekend every now and then.

Jenkins: Well, with what little time we've got, and we've got some left, what do you see...you say that for a long time now the land in this county has been held by the same people.

Turcotte: I don't foresee any immediate change in that.

Jenkins: As far as you can see in the future, there's going to be a very limited number of landholders in this county.

Turcotte: I think it'll be the same ten years from now as it is right now.

Jenkins: How much change in the use of the land have you seen in this county in your lifetime?

Turcotte: Well, as I've done, the smaller places have put in improved grasses, and that's the main change in the use of it.

Jenkins: But by and large it's still being used the same way.

Turcotte: By and large it's still ranch land.

Jenkins: Is there any oil?

Turcotte: Oh, yes. This is one of the larger oil fields in South Texas. There's quite a bit of production on the Kenedy Ranch, mostly gas.

Jenkins: Oh, really?

Turcotte: Yes.

Jenkins: So they don't have to depend entirely on cattle.

Turcotte: No.

Jenkins: Is it pretty rough scattered all over the county? I mean, the possibilities of wells all over the county?

Turcotte: Well, I'm not a geologist, but I would say that they have probably pretty well experimented with every place where they've pretty well defined their fields.

Jenkins: How well isolated is it, or is it pretty well scattered --the actual production?

Turcotte: I think that the drilling that they have done has outlined the boundaries of the trend. I feel like that there's much more production that could be developed, but they don't have a market for all the gas. There's a market for oil, but there's not that much of a market for gas.

Jenkins: I guess I'm trying to get at...is it north, south, east, west, central?

Turcotte: Pretty well from one end of the county to the other, but not in a great density. Right around Sarita there's quite a few producing wells.

Jenkins: Okay, is there anything else that you want to say?

Turcotte: No, not a thing.

Jenkins: Okay.

Turcotte: Thank you very much.

Jenkins: Thank you very much. I've enjoyed it.