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Interview with
Miss Marguerite Lang
May 28, 1969

Place of Interview: Lang Farm,
Portland,
Corpus Christi, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. A. Ray Stephens

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Oral History Collection

Miss Marguerite Lang

Interviewer: Dr. A. Ray Stephens

Place of Interview: Corpus Christi, Texas

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Dr. Stephens: This interview with Miss Marguerite Lang, Portland, Texas, May 28, 1969, concerns the history of Portland, San Patricio County.

Miss Lang, would you relate to us your account of the early days in this area as you remember them and as you remember the country being settled when your folks came, and from where, and something that might be pertinent to this particular topic.

Miss Lang: My grandfather, W. A. McHary, came here looking for a warm climate where he could be healthy. He came to Corpus Christi. Soon after he came to Corpus, the little town of Portland was organized. It was a tent city at that time. He had trouble with rheumatism so he built the first wooden building in Portland which was a one-room store. He lived in it.

Dr. Stephens: Well, let's see. You might . . .

Miss Lang: At that time the country, of course, was full of brush, thick mesquite, cactus, and other chaparral. It had been used for cattle. When they cleared part of it, they found that it was very fertile right around Portland and for about as far north as Saint Paul. A Mr. Williams rented my grandfather's Hart-Parr "engine"--they

called it then instead of "tractor." He cleared 1,000 acres of land for the land company beginning at Saint Paul and coming south. The cleared land ran back about a mile on either side of the new railroad that they'd put in. When Mr. Williams finished his 1,000 acres he had enough money to buy his own Hart-Parr.

Dr. Stephens: What did those tractors look like?

Miss Lang: Oh, they looked almost like a locomotive. They had a steam boiler.

Dr. Stephens: Steam driven?

Miss Lang: Yes.

Dr. Stephens: What kind of plows . . . do you recall the type of plow they pulled?

Miss Lang: Well, I've seen pictures of them, but I couldn't describe them. They're a pretty good size, like a mold board, like several of them.

Dr. Stephens: Do you remember which land company this was?

Miss Lang: I suppose it was the Taft Ranch that bought the land from the Coleman-Fulton Pasture Company.

Dr. Stephens: And what year did you say this was now?

Miss Lang: I can't be sure. Grandpa's first deeds are dated 1891 on his land.

Dr. Stephens: Oh, out here? I thought you were about . . . you Colorado. You might finish why he wanted to come to Texas.

Miss Lang: Well, he was looking for a place where he could be healthy. He contracted rheumatism in Colorado.

Dr. Stephens: Where did he live?

Miss Lang: He was born in Kentucky. His family moved to Illinois while he was a young man. He went to Colorado at the time that they built the railroad through the Royal Gorge. He and a partner freighted supplies and heavy materials to the railroad.

Dr. Stephens: And he came here seeking a warmer climate?

Miss Lang: Yes.

Dr. Stephens: Okay. How'd he happen to pick South Texas?

Miss Lang: Well, he came first to Hot Springs, Arkansas, and that didn't soak all the rheumatism out and so he came on down here just looking for a warmer place.

Dr. Stephens: Did he tell you anything about the reasons he came and what his first impressions were when he got here and he knew this was the place? Or he was just stopping for a while and just happened to stay or . . .

Miss Lang: No. He just liked the climate and wanted to stay. And then, of course, when the town went broke and so many people had to move away and sell their land, he couldn't go broke because his father had left his property to his grandchildren with income to his children during their lifetime. So grandfather couldn't go broke (chuckle). He couldn't get all of his money at the same time, which is what a number of people did who came here, they invested everything they had. And the drouth halted the farming operations, and they had to move away.

Dr. Stephens: Okay.

Miss Lang: And so he bought some of their land and some of their lots in Portland. Grandfather paid taxes on people's lots in their own name . . . so they wouldn't lose them because we had real estate developers down here who were interested in getting their hands on everything that was left.

Dr. Stephens: Oh.

Miss Lang: And he prevented a little bit of that. We always have that kind of real estate people around.

Dr. Stephens: Do you . . . do you remember the bridge across the causeway?

Miss Lang: Oh, yes, but that was many years later.

Dr. Stephens: Oh, that was much later then. Well, didn't they have some sort of a low tide crossing?

Miss Lang: They had a railroad bridge. But the people who raised vegetables and fruit over at Ingleside where there was water, would pack their wagons at night, load their stuff, and start for Corpus. They drove through the water, and there was a low water shallow part between Corpus Christi and Nueces Bay.

Dr. Stephens: An oyster reef?

Miss Lang: Well, I don't know whether it was oysters or whether it was just shallow. It's not the one the Indians used. It's to the west of that. And they put cedar posts in the ground all along to mark the way for the wagons Some of the posts are still there. The wagons would get to Corpus by . . . 10 or 11 in the morning to sell their produce.

Dr. Stephens: I understand. Well, I didn't know if your father had settled in . . . had settled in Portland, had to go to Corpus and then which way he would take. But by the time you were old enough to remember . . .

Miss Lang: Oh, he didn't go to Corpus after we came here in 1904.

Dr. Stephens: From Portland?

Miss Lang: (Chuckle) No, he didn't . . . he liked Portland and he didn't go back. He jsut stayed in Portland.

Dr. Stephens: Oh, not even for business?

Miss Lang: No, he later built a general merchandise store. He did business by mail with the first Lichenstein in Corpus and the first Caldwell --hardware and farm implement company. But he didn't like to go to town.

Dr. Stephens: I see.

Miss Lang: He just stayed here. And his store had everything in it from ribbons to plows, but he didn't keep it open all the time. He had it mainly for his own use and for the hands he had out here on the farm. He opened the store every Friday evening to pay off. At other times when anybody wanted in, they came and rattled the front door. If he wanted to come downstairs, he did, and if he didn't, he didn't (chuckle).

Mrs. Sparks: What was his name now?

Miss Lang: W. A. McHarry.

Mrs. Sparks: Okay. Did he raise vegetables?

Miss Lang: Beg your pardon? No, no, just cotton. And, of course, in those days they raised enough feed for the mules. They plowed with mules instead of tractors except when they were breaking land.

Mrs. Sparks: They did raise quite a bit of . . . quite a few vegetable there, didn't they?

Miss Lang: The vegetables were raised about where the city sewerage system is now. There were few acres of light land in there that caught a lot of water when it rained. Mr. Bob Arnold had a truck farm, but he was the only one that raised much truck. Of course, Mr. Marriott raised some on their sandy land. This land of ours was too heavy

for vegetables.

Dr. Stephens: Too slow?

Miss Lang: Yes. You can't get them up fast enough. It raises delicious vegetables, but there's no market for them by the time they're ripe.

Dr. Stephens: Oh. How . . . how do you speed the process up? You mean . . .

Miss Lang: We just don't raise them.

Dr. Stephens: Doesn't have enough nitrogen in the soil?

Miss Lang: Oh, no, it has plenty. The Valley gets theirs off a month earlier than we do, and there's no market for ours.

Mrs. Sparks: However, in the early days there wasn't any Valley.

Miss Lang: I know it. Each person, I suppose, had a little garden of their own. Grandpa at one time had strawberries. We ate strawberries in February--and he tried all sorts of fruit trees. He planted 3,600 fig trees. He got a canning company to promise that when he had 300 trees in production, they'd bring a canning factory here. But my uncle who came down to help him didn't like figs and didn't want to bother with them so he told Grandpa that those figs needed plowing. He plowed them real deep and cut all the tap roots and killed every one (chuckle).

Mrs. Sparks: Did you go to Bayview College?

Miss Lang: Two years. One when I was six and one year when I was twelve.

Dr. Stephens: Oh, tell us about Bayview College.

Miss Lang: Well, I'll tell you something about Bayview College you don't hear (chuckle). When the weather was bad, I couldn't get across town to go from home to school because the mud was so deep you couldn't even drive through it. So I'd stay at the college. Sometimes I'd

stay as long as a week at a time--board. They had a wonderful old Negro cook. He made just enough biscuits to go around with maybe two extras. The children would eat just as fast as they could in order to get through first. The first two had a chance to get a second biscuit (chuckle). But I don't see how in the world Professor Clark ever fed those children on the amount of money that he charged for tuition. It was so ridiculously low, I think something like \$36 a term, less than \$100 a year.

Dr. Stephens: What sort of curriculum did you have?

Miss Lang: Oh, we had everything. Began with the Primary department. Miss Molly Turner was the teacher for the first and second and third grades. And then they had Ray Mullen, when I was there, for the intermediate grades. Professor taught the . . . most of the higher grades himself. He taught Latin and mathematics and commercial arithmetic. I remember yard long problems that went clear across the board. And he was a very, very thorough teacher. His niece Florence Davis taught history.

Dr. Stephens: Most of the children came from this immediate vicinity.

Miss Lang: Well, a good many of them were ranch children. No, they didn't all come from this vicinity. Some came as far as from Victoria. We had Dr. Webb Detar, the present one. I guess he's still practicing in Victoria. His father was Dr. Detar then in Victoria. We had children from over on Port Aransas. And we had the Rachal and and other ranch children. There were girls from as far as Richmond, Texas. A good many Corpus children came to Bayview.

Mrs. Sparks: You had a lot of the Valley children, too.

Miss Lang: Yes, I suppose that was before my time, though. See, I didn't come until 1904, and I was just a kindergarten pupil then.

Mrs. Sparks: Where did you . . . did you come from Illinois?

Miss Lang: I was born in Illinois. We came down in 1904. We were on our way to California when we came here. Grandpa didn't want us to go any farther so we stayed around about two years. Then they had the earthquake in San Francisco, and we didn't go on. Grandpa said, "You see what'll happen to you if you go out there." (Chuckle)

Dr. Stephens: Then your grandfather wrote to your father and mother and asked them to come.

Miss Lang: Oh, no, we were here at the time of the earthquake in San Francisco.

Dr. Stephens: You were coming to . . .

Miss Lang: We were coming to California, but we came by way of Texas.

Dr. Stephens: Oh, just stopped over here. And you stayed. Then the earthquake occurred. So what . . .

Miss Lang: So we decided to stay here.

Dr. Stephens: Your father was engaged in farming in the meantime?

Miss Lang: No, my father was never a farmer. He was in the mercantile business in Illinois. And he didn't want to invest any money in Texas because he was afraid that it was just a wild and woolly place and wouldn't be safe (chuckle). So he took a position traveling. He had the whole state of Texas to travel over. And he did until he died at eighty-six.

Dr. Stephens: Is that right?

Miss Lang: But he was never a farmer.

Mrs. Sparks: He had to travel by trains then, didn't he?

Miss Lang: By train at that time and then by car. Finally, when he was about seventy-three, I think, he learned to drive a car (chuckle). You might be interested in the way my grandfather harvested cotton--there's nothing like that any more--he had fifty or sixty hand pickers. On Friday nights the girls would come into the store to get their money and buy eight to ten yards of bright colored lawn, and lace and ribbons. Saturday morning each made herself a dress to wear to the baile on Saturday night. They wore that dress to the baile and danced all night. Next week they picked cotton in it all week. The following Friday they bought some more material and made another dress. They had their dances over in Fisher's Hall. Mr. Ed Fisher was the community handyman. You know, new communities always have to have somebody that can do everything. Well, he was it. He farmed, blacksmithed, carpentered, and acted as hunters' guide and deputy sheriff. Among other things he made cigars in the back of the "hall." During cotton picking season the pickers used that hall for their dances, and during winter time the Portland residents used it for their dances. The cotton pickers' dances were very interesting then. The boys would buy large silk handkerchiefs in two colors of embossed silk and a bottle of bay rum. Each one had to have the handkerchief and the bay rum to get ready for the dance. They'd go to the dance and give their favorite girl this handkerchief. She took it and laid it in the lap of her chaperone. During the evening every boy who wanted to give her something gave her candy or whatever was for sale in a small booth at the end of the hall. The girl laid her trophies in her chaperone's

lap. The most popular girl had the most stuffed handkerchief to take home that night (chuckle).

Mrs. Sparks: This is the Anglo residents, is that right?

Miss Lang: No, no, these are the Mexican cotton pickers that came as seasonal pickers, you know.

Dr. Stephens: (Chuckle).

Mrs. Sparks: I thought that's what you meant. I wanted to make it clear.

Dr. Stephens: What about, in general, the Mexican-Anglo relationship? Said occasionally, for instance, in 1914, '15, '16 had some trouble here or at least threatened trouble between the Anglos and the Mexicans?

Miss Lang: I never heard of that, and I was here in 1913. We left in '14.

Dr. Stephens: Oh, you left in '14, about the time the difficulty started.

Miss Lang: We never had any trouble. I never even heard of it. But, of course, I suppose there are always the dissatisfied agitators, but the Mexicans at that time were happy people. You could go out in the field when they were working, and they were always singing at the top of their voices. You never hear that any more. It's appalling the way they have changed. And at night we used to sit on the upstairs porch. You could hear the guitars and singing going on three or four places in town. Of course, they lived out in the brush in their little hovels, but they were happy.

Dr. Stephens: Do you remember anything about George H. Paul? Did you ever meet him . . .

Miss Lang: No.

Dr. Stephens: . . . or see him?

Miss Lang: No.

Dr. Stephens: Do you . . . did you ever . . .

Miss Lang: I think he was gone long before I came here.

Dr. Stephens: But all this . . . you came in 1904?

Miss Lang: Yes.

Dr. Stephens: And he was active a few years after that.

Miss Lang: Well, I was just a little girl. I wouldn't have known anything about him.

Dr. Stephens: Too little to understand. Did you in later years visit anybody about his land company or the terms of selling land . . .

Miss Lang: No.

Dr. Stephens: . . . or productiveness of the land that he sold?

Miss Lang: Well, all that land along the railroad is productive land. It's wonderful land.

Dr. Stephens: What about . . .

Miss Lang: Of course, that right around St. Paul is not as good as here.

Dr. Stephens: What about north of . . . north of here that's away from the railroads between the river and, say, Taft and Sinton--all this area up to Odem--was that good land?

Miss Lang: Yes.

Dr. Stephens: And then beyond Odem, beyond the railroad.

Miss Lang: There's more sand around Odem, beyond the railroad, west of the railroad.

Dr. Stephens: You mean the texture of the soil changes right about there, along the road?

Miss Lang: Yes.

Dr. Stephens: So it's not as productive there.

Miss Lang: Well, I don't suppose it is. However, farther you get farther west they have some irrigation--around Mathis and over in there.

Dr. Stephens: But they didn't have at that time.

Miss Lang: Oh, no.

Mrs. Sparks: You left in 1914. When did you come back then?

Miss Lang: Oh, we . . . you see, my father travelling as he did we always tried to live where we could have him home more. We lived in Austin when I was in the university there. We lived in Sherman when I was in Kidd Key, and we lived in San Antonio three different times. We were not here all of that time, but we came to Portland nearly every summer to visit my grandfather.

Mrs. Sparks: You came back because of him.

Miss Lang: Well, we just came back in 1937 for good. We'd been coming back all the summers.

Dr. Stephens: You had property here. Is that the reason you came or you just liked the climate?

Miss Lang: No. Portland, you see, when I came to Portland it was the first time I'd ever been allowed to walk around on the ground all I wanted to and pick flowers where I pleased. I'd always lived in a town where you walked on the sidewalk and didn't get on the grass. And if you had flowers, you bought them at the florist. I just went wild when I came here. And this has always appealed to me because of happy childhood experiences here.

Dr. Stephens: Well, did . . . I had a purpose for asking why you came back. Sometimes individuals have said this is a good climate for those who aren't feeling 100 per cent, like consumption . . .

Miss Lang: Oh, yes.

Dr. Stephens: . . . or malaria. And here's a good climate for health seekers.

Did you know any folks like that?

Miss Lang: No, we didn't come for that. The only one of us that came for that was my grandfather.

Dr. Stephens: Yes, other than that, though . . . but did . . . let's see, I don't think we established . . . did he come to this particular part of the country or was he just coming somewhere out west?

Miss Lang: He was looking for a place where he'd feel good (chuckle), and he liked Portland.

Dr. Stephens: Just happened to get here then.

Miss Lang: Yes.

Dr. Stephens: It wasn't the product of anybody going out . . .

Miss Lang: No, he was not a land sucker (chuckle).

Dr. Stephens: Well, did you know any of your . . . your friends or acquaintances later on who said they came because of health so they came to this particular area?

Miss Lang: No.

Mrs. Sparks: Well, didn't the Frenchs come here because of . . .

Miss Lang: I don't know.

Mrs. Sparks: I think so.

Miss Lang: I remember the Frenchs, and Violet and I were about the same age. And I remember Mrs. French's wonderful homemade bread. I liked to go to spend the day with Violet because Mrs. French always had wonderful homemade bread. We'd get bread and butter sandwiches and climb up in the mulberry trees and eat mulberries and bread and

butter (chuckle).

Dr. Stephens: (Chuckle).

Miss Lang: I don't suppose Mrs. Sparks ever climbed up in a tree, did you?

Mrs. Sparks: I sure did.

Miss Lang: (Chuckle).

Dr. Stephens: (Chuckle). Had some . . . I believe this country had some citrus groves or citrus trees, mostly of them just confined to yards. Is that right? You said they didn't have . . . this wasn't much vegetable country. And what about grapefruit or orange?

Miss Lang: Not at that time.

Dr. Stephens: Just for decoration around the home.

Miss Lang: Yes.

Dr. Stephens: That's about all, though.

Miss Lang: Yes, we eat fruit off our orange tree. But it may freeze next winter, you know. You never know.

Dr. Stephens: Where was . . . where was the market place for agricultural products for this area? Was . . . would it be Portland?

Miss Lang: Mr. Bob Arnold had a truck shipping shed next to the depot. My grandfather at one time shipped figs to Houston by train overnight, but they always reported sour because there was no refrigeration. And we got ice off the train, and we got the newspaper off the train. And, of course, the mail came twice a day on the train, and everybody went to the post office twice a day. And, let's see, what else. My grandfather had a wildcat in his back yard for about fifteen years. He found it where some hunters killed the mother. He brought the kitten in and put it in a cage. And, of course, it

outgrew its cage, but he never changed the size of the cage. By the time we got down here it was pretty shackaldy. One day the cat reached out and grabbed one of the turkeys that was running by. The cage just fell off of it. It just sat there and ate the turkey. All the men in town had gone out to the farms, and we couldn't find anybody to shoot the wildcat. We were afraid to just let it run off because it was used to us, and it might come back at night, you know, and grab one of the children or something. So we finally found a Mexican coming in from Gregory, who had a shotgun. He came in and shot the cat. And when Grandpa got home at noon, everybody was afraid to tell him. He used to put his hand in the cage and pet it, you know, play with it. And one day after it got pretty good sized it grabbed him like a cat will and bit into the soft flesh at the base of his thumb. I asked, "What did you do?" And he said, "I just sat there and cussed until he yawned."

Dr. Stephens: (Chuckle).

Miss Lang: He could've torn his hand off.

Dr. Stephens: Well, what about cotton now? Where were . . . where . . . the cotton gin was in Portland.

Miss Lang: They had a cotton gin in Portland and also in Gregory. And my grandfather and Mr. Klespies and Mr. Rachal had a company they called Portland Forwarding Company. They had a wharf at Portland, and shipped cotton out by boat at one time. But there's nothing left of that wharf except a few posts.

Dr. Stephens: When . . .

Miss Lang: I want to ask you something.

Dr. Stephens: Yes.

Miss Lang: (Chuckle).

Dr. Stephens: I was wondering when maize . . . do you remember when maize was started?

Miss Lang: Oh, maize didn't come in until after we came back here and started farming.

Dr. Stephens: Till after you came back.

Miss Lang: They were planting double dwarf when we came about 1938, and it was just too damp, too tight a head to harvest well by machinery. At first we cut it, had Mexican men with sharp knives, and they'd go out and cut the heads and throw them on the ground, leave them then until they had dried for two or three days or a week. Then they had to pick it all up, put it in the trailer and haul it off to some place where someone had a thrasher. But that only lasted three or four years. That was too much trouble. They finally got combines down here. And after they got the combines they found this double dwarf was too wet, too damp, to use their combines so they brought in the hybrid milo maize.

Dr. Stephens: Well, this country then was primarily cotton producing when you . . . when you . . . of your first . . . earliest . . .

Miss Lang: Cotton and cattle, especially, and lots of . . .

Dr. Stephens: Lots of cattle?

Miss Lang: Lots of cattle.

Dr. Stephens: Well, now this was all plowed . . . I thought from Portland to . . . Portland to Sinton, from Gregory to Taft then was mostly all plowed up . . . and put . . . put into some sort of production--either

cotton or some sort of feed or maize.

Miss Lang: Only about a mile back on either side of the railroad. But beyond that it was nearly all pastureland. And I remember one summer we didn't have any rain at all for ninety days, and lots of cattle that belonged to the company died. We'd see the big smoke all day and fire all night where they were burning the dead cows.

Dr. Stephens: This the Coleman-Fulton Pasture Company, you mean?

Miss Lang: Yes. They would pile them up in piles and burn them, and it was terrible.

Mrs. Sparks: Was this about the time when lots of people sold out and left Portland?

Miss Lang: Oh, they had gone before that. See, the company was running everything then. Even a lot of the farmland still belonged to the company, either they hadn't sold it or they took it back.

Mrs. Sparks: You said something about the lack of water in Portland. I think it'd be interesting for you to tell about that.

Miss Lang: Well, the way Grandpa caught his water was in five large cisterns, wooden cisterns, and we never ran out of water. But we were careful of it. Didn't use it like we do now.

Dr. Stephens: The cisterns caught rain water?

Miss Lang: Yes, rain water. He had them around the house and out at the barn and at the mill. He had an old mill, I guess the only one anybody ever had around here. He had a windmill but ran a grist mill with it. He ground corn meal from the corn here on the place. He had been a miller in Illinois. His father was a miller and had a mill in Pennsylvania. Then they moved to Indiana and bought an iron

foundry. And then they went to Illinois and built a flour mill and bought land, a drained lake bottom. Grandpa liked to run a mill so he built a small one here in Portland. He'd get up at 4:00 in the morning and start the mill, and I think he woke everybody in Portland. It squeaked (chuckle).

Dr. Stephens: I see. I thought that's what you said. I thought it was his father. What was the Coleman-Fulton Pasture Company community relations like?

Miss Lang: Well, of course, I was so small I didn't know anything about it only whenever they gave a picnic we were invited. We went to the island on a sailboat. Things like that are what I remember. My grandfather was not very sociable. He liked people and he visited with them when they came to see him but he never put himself out to go any place.

Dr. Stephens: Do you remember this as a sailboat or a motor boat?

Miss Lang: It was a sailboat.

Dr. Stephens: Sailboat.

Miss Lang: Yes, because there were only a few motorboats then. And I remember one time when we went to the island, this little motorboat went round and round the sailboat laughing at us for being so slow. Pretty soon their motor conked out, and (chuckle) we had to tow them back to port.

Dr. Stephens: Yes. Do you remember Joseph F. Green?

Miss Lang: Well, vaguely. I remember his second wife. I knew his first wife but just as a child would. I knew her **children**.

Dr. Stephens: Did you ever go to La Quinta?

Miss Lang: Yes.

Dr. Stephens: What . . . can you describe that area . . . that ground . . . that house?

Miss Lang: That house was beautiful. It had . . . let's see, I don't know how many bedrooms were upstairs, but it looked like about sixteen (chuckle). There was a large entrance hall as large as two or three of our living rooms with a big dining room on the west side and a big living room and . . . I believe they called it the Chinese room on the east side. It had been used as a sort of a museum and library. They had collections of things in there. There was a large veranda in front overlooking the bay and a beautiful greenhouse in the back of the house. It was full of lace ferns and bouganvilla, things of that sort. Being under glass changed the color of the bouganvillas, made them a lighter color, first ones that I'd ever seen that were not just purple. Mr. Green hired an English gardener named Cruckshank. And there was another house, a large place. I think that's where the overseer lived, but I never was inside of it.

Dr. Stephens: Do you remember when President Taft came to visit?

Miss Lang: No, I wasn't here then.

Dr. Stephens: This is 1909?

Miss Lang: We weren't here. We were in San Antonio.

Dr. Stephens: Oh, I see. I thought you came . . .

Miss Lang: We lived in Victoria and San Antonio during that time.

Dr. Stephens: . . . in 1904 and left in 1914.

Miss Lang: Oh, no. We came in 1904 and stayed a while, and then every summer

we came back.

Dr. Stephens: Oh, I see.

Miss Lang: But we didn't actually live here except when my grandfather would have a fuss with one of his sons. And he'd write my mother and want her to come down and stay with him. He never would stay with any of his children, but he wanted them to stay with him. So she broke up the housekeeping three different times and came to stay with him until he made up with Uncle Hugh or made some other arrangements.

Mrs. Sparks: He must've been quite a character, then.

Miss Lang: He was a wonderful man, I think. Not very many people knew it. All the children were afraid of him except my sister and I and one other cousin, and we liked him.

Dr. Stephens: What sort of games did children play then?

Miss Lang: Oh, we had lots of fun in the brush because you could crawl in through a mass of mesquite. It was like a big mound of fern, and you crawled in between the branches to get in under the tree. Inside it was like several rooms, you know. And we made playhouses under there. And then my grandfather had this store, and, of course, the lard barrels always had a little lard left in them, and the empty fruit cans had a little juice left in them. We'd mix those up and make mud pies, I remember. And the Fay boys were here. I don't know what year they came. But Madelyn Fisher and I would make mud pies and grate bricks over the top to make colored frosting. The Fay boys would taste anything we made, and, of course, we'd just sit back with our mouths open watching them taste that mud (chuckle). That's the way children amused themselves. We had swings. And one

of my favorite pastimes was to get up when Grandpa got up and went to the mill; I got up and lay in the hammock and talked to the blackbirds. Do you hear them out there. I shall never forget our first Christmas in Texas. We spent it with my mother's father at Portland. My father came home for the holidays two weeks before Christmas. At that time there were no supermarkets nor Kiwanis Clubs nor truckers selling trees in Portland. Unknown to me, my father hunted through the brush for some kind of evergreen. He found a lovely "Catclaw" tree about seven feet tall. For ten days he laboriously trimmed the vicious little "claws" from the branches. My mother made orangepeel baskets to hold candies, strung cranberries and popcorn for garlands, and used real candles for lights. Heat from the candles brought out the lovely aroma of the oily Catclaw leaves. Of all my seventy some Christmas trees that one was the most deliciously sweet smelling and the most appreciated.

Dr. Stephens: Was this . . . was this where he lived?

Miss Lang: No, no. He lived in Portland.

Dr. Stephens: I see.

Miss Lang: The store that he built was a combination store and house. He had fourteen rooms and the store. The bedrooms were upstairs and living room, dining room, kitchen and store downstairs. All around the house they had tiny abalone shells, you know what they are? They're . . . we called them abalone. They had the same purple pearl color, but they're small and they're real soft. If you put a whole lot of them down and walk on them they become just as hard as concrete and make a wonderful walk. They don't blow like oyster

shells. And, of course, you could go down to the bay then and just scoop up all you wanted of oyster shell or abalone. Everybody got their shell walks from the bay. There were lots of feathers and pretty shells and things of that sort to be found on the beach in those days. The rosiette spoonbill scattered feathers all over our beaches here.

Dr. Stephens: If you came just in the summer, you didn't know about all the duck hunters from other parts of the country.

Miss Lang: Now you'll find that out from Mrs. Stone. Her father was . . . among other things a guide for hunters. And her grandmother ran the hunter's lodge. She had a big long room, looked like a house outside, but it was a big long room that she let the hunters sleep in. That was their headquarters when they came here.

Dr. Stephens: What . . . other than the Mexican dances and then the Anglos using it for dances the rest of the year, what other forms of adult amusement or entertainment did you have?

Miss Lang: Oh, well, the professor always had entertainments at the college, you know. And then I remember we used to go once in a while by boat to Corpus to a concert or a play that they gave over there. And they used to have Chautauqua in Corpus.

Dr. Stephens: Yes, Chautauqua.

Miss Lang: . . . over in Corpus we had to go over there to attend it.

Dr. Stephens: Well, I understand the Coleman-Fulton Pasture Company also brought in some people on Lyceum tours.

Miss Lang: Lyceum, yes.

Dr. Stephens: . . . or sometimes these were concerts, too.

Miss Lang: I never went to any of the company's entertainments. I was in school in San Antonio or Victoria.

Dr. Stephens: I believe they had them at the school building in Taft . . .

Miss Lang: In Taft? There was an auditorium in Gregory in a big brick building that the company built.

Dr. Stephens: . . . that the company made.

Miss Lang: That was later I guess. Was that Coleman-Fulton Pasture Company or the Taft Ranch Company?

Dr. Stephens: Well, same . . . they're the same.

Miss Lang: I know, but I meant before or after it became Taft Company.

Dr. Stephens: Oh, well, after it became the Taft Ranch it was . . .

Miss Lang: Well, see, we were not here very much so . . .

Dr. Stephens: Well, with Joseph Green this is the beginning of that operation as the Taft Ranch. Well, what about weddings and funerals? Did this attract much attention?

Miss Lang: Oh, the Mexican weddings did. They would go to Corpus and be married and come home . . . on the train--the whole party--with the bride in her bridal veil and every one in hilarious spirits. That was very interesting to me. I think they built the Presbyterian church about 1912. Before that, the church services were all held in the college. And Professor, I believe, belonged to Church of Christ? I think it was Church of Christ, and he held services when there wasn't anybody else to hold them.

Dr. Stephens: Oh.

Miss Lang: And they always had Sunday School. And the bell rang, and you could hear it all over Portland. They rang two bells--one was to

start and the other was to get there (chuckle). The same bell rang for school every morning.

Dr. Stephens: Well, you said that you attended Bayview College for two years.

Miss Lang: About two years.

Dr. Stephens: About two years and then you attended Kidd Key College in Sherman
. . .

Miss Lang: Yes.

Dr. Stephens: . . . about two years. Can you compare the two schools?

Miss Lang: Oh, there wasn't any comparison, of course. Bayview was a school that met the needs of the community. And, of course, Kidd Key at that time was the best musical institution in all of Texas.

Dr. Stephens: So it was the superior school . . .

Miss Lang: It was a larger school but a girls' school.

Dr. Stephens: Would you . . . would you consider it to be a superior institution?

Miss Lang: So far as academic work was concerned, no.

Dr. Stephens: Oh, no?

Miss Lang: I think Professor was a better teacher probably than some of those they had at Kidd Key. But Kidd Key at that time trained the girls to give church bazaars and to have big weddings.

Dr. Stephens: Oh.

Miss Lang: And, of course, they had some good teachers, a good art teacher and wonderful music teachers. And then they had Professor Powell who was a fine mathematician and Latin teacher, but he belonged to the same era as Professor Clark. But the two schools were entirely different.

Mrs. Sparks: Did you go to Corpus to school at any time?

Miss Lang: No.

Mrs. Sparks: I thought somebody said you had.

Miss Lang: Madelyn Fisher Stone went to Corpus.

Mrs. Sparks: Yes.

Miss Lang: My grandfather, of course, was a widower, and he had an old maid daughter who was very efficient about everything. He wanted her to come here and live with him. She came and tried. While she was here one of her brothers came to visit. He had a small child, a baby. The baby waked up in the night and wanted a drink of water. There was no fresh water in the house so Aunt Margaret got up and saddled a horse and rode to Gum Hollow to get some spring water--there's a spring out there some place. (Chuckle) I think she started packing the next day and left and would never come back to Texas again. She said there was nothing here but rattlesnakes and tarantulas and no water (chuckle). But that's how short they were of water at times here.

Dr. Stephens: Did they try to dig wells?

Miss Lang: Oh, you can't find water here that's drinkable.

Dr. Stephens: Good water.

Miss Lang: No good water except right along the bay at Aransas and Ingleside, where that sandy land is.

Dr. Stephens: Why? What's wrong with the water?

Miss Lang: Well, it's full of oil and sulphur, bad-tasting minerals. It was wonderful for the pigs. My grandfather had a well out here at about 150 feet, and the pigs never had any fleas or skin troubles, but the cattle wouldn't drink it unless they were just starving to death.

Dr. Stephens: Well, now, you had all sorts of windmills around. When did . . .
the cattle had to drink the water then.

Miss Lang: Well, I suppose so. Back north of Taft they have water occasionally
and some over about Rincon, but right around here there's no water
that's fit to drink. The Starks down on this little piece of sand
drilled seven wells before they got one they could use. And Will
French drilled one right across the street over here and at twenty-
eight feet it was just a little shallow seepage from somewhere.
He got water that was drinkable. But they came through and
sismographed and ruined the well and never could find it again.
And down here somewhere in the Doyle addition you can get water
about twenty-eight feet or something like that. But, of course,
it wouldn't be pure. You'd have to purify it before you used it.
Steve Marriott drilled a well on their place there. At night when
they got it, it tasted good, and they were all elated. In the
morning when they came out to finish it up, it had gone bad and they
never could use it, never finished it. And one man that I had come
here to work said he could drill a well; he knew he could get
water. He picked the place, and I said, "If you want to work
yourself to death, why, I'll buy the pipe." He worked out there,
and when he got down twenty-five feet he got about a quart of water.
It tasted good so we went up and got Mr. Ichblock to come down and
finish the well for us. It was gone when he got here. Just little
trickles of surface water, I suppose, catch in a piece of clay and
stay there for a while so we have to get water from Calallen through
the Reynolds Company's water line. This water comes from the

Nueces River and is treated at the Corpus Christi treatment plant.