

Talking History of Abilene Series
Interview of Mrs. Dallas (Laura Jewel) Scarborough
Interviewed by John A. (Bro) Mingus
Date: March 15, 1966
Length of tape: 19 minutes

Mr. Mingus: This is the year 1966, Abilene's 85th birthday. As one of the outstanding projects for this celebration, the Taylor County Legal Secretaries Association presents to the Abilene Public Library, for an everlasting record, a talking history featuring the voices of some who have played a big part in the growth of Abilene.

My name is John A. Mingus, better known as Bro Mingus, and the date is March 15th, 1966. This recording is being made in the home of Mrs. Dallas Scarborough at 726 Amarillo.

Jewel Davis Scarborough has truly played an important part in Abilene's growth, along with her husband, Dallas Scarborough. It has been said that, more than anyone else, they stimulated public interest in the great issues and projects affecting Abilene's development.

Mrs. Scarborough, we're happy to be here talking with you, and first, we know that you played an important part in government in Abilene and the state of Texas, and I know that in 1945, you were secretary of the Texas State Democratic Electors, but what other role did you play in this field?

Mrs. Scarborough: In 1945, I was elected chairman of the Democratic Party of Taylor County, the first and only woman to hold that office, and was one of the two women to be chosen Democratic electors for the state of Texas. The other woman's name is Clara Driscoll Severe of Corpus Christi. As you know, the Democratic Electors held in Austin, Texas. I was elected secretary.

Mr. Mingus: Mrs. Scarborough, among other things, you were founder of the John Davis chapter of the DAR, which was named for your ancestors, John Davis. Who were some of the early members of this organization?

Mrs. Scarborough: The early members. Some of the early members were Miss Emma Taylor, librarian of the so-called library, Carnegie Library of Abilene, Miss Victor Hartmiller, Miss Eileen Wrath, now Mrs. Victor Harkrider, Mrs. D. C. Edwards and her daughter, Ruby, now Mrs. Elmo Jones of Tuscola, my twin sister, Louie Davis Lacy, [*spelling of some names?*] now deceased, and my youngest sister, Mattie Bell Davis, now Mrs. Howard Ward, Miss D. M. Willis and her sister, Mrs. George W. McDaniel, Miss Dana Slaughter Miller, who was a teacher at Simmons College, and Mrs. J. H. Pickens who would transfer. We needed twelve members for our chapter. The other members were supplied by Mrs. Harry Hyman who was state regent at that time in 1914.

Mr. Mingus: Mrs. Scarborough, before we go any further, I think we should hear from you about your education. Could you tell us something about your education? Early education?

Mrs. Scarborough: When we first came to Abilene, I was only 19 years old, but I'd already graduated at Jeff Davis College in Pittsburgh, Texas, with a BS degree and at West End College in Macon, Georgia, with a BA degree and at the University of Texas with a BA degree. At West End College, I graduated magna cum laude at the age of seventeen. I was only fifteen when I graduated at Jeff Davis College.

Mr. Mingus: And, now that we've talked about something about your education, I would like to go back and ask you something about the one college here in Pittsburgh that you graduated from. Is it still in existence?

Mrs. Scarborough: No, it's not. It's now Pittsburgh High School. It's now called Pittsburgh High School.

Mr. Mingus: All right. Mrs. Scarborough, when did you first come to Abilene?

Mrs. Scarborough: We came to Abilene for my mother's health. Oh, she was never happy here and we always regretted bringing her here. She missed her old friends in East Texas where she was born, in Jefferson, and she could never understand why this area had so few flowers when they grew so abundantly in East Texas where she was born.

Mr. Mingus: All right and then your first home in Abilene?

Mrs. Scarborough: My first home in Abilene was just where it is today, though it was then known as Davis Street.

Mr. Mingus: You mean Amarillo was known as Davis Street then?

Mrs. Scarborough: No, South 7th Street was known as Davis Street. I married on the corner of South 7th Street, what is now known as South 7th Street, but at that time, it was known as Davis Street because we had to plow down the pasture fence when we built. It later became known as South 7th. Our friends thought we'd made a terrible mistake to build on the south side because at that time, the north side was the popular side of town.

Mr. Mingus: Well, you certainly have a beautiful home here and I noticed that even this table where the recording equipment is on here, I believe, you said it belonged to your mother?

Mrs. Scarborough: Um hum.

Mr. Mingus: Ah, Mrs. Scarborough, when did you marry?

Mrs. Scarborough: On June 4, 1907.

Mr. Mingus: And who was it that married you?

Mrs. Scarborough: The pastor of the First Methodist Church married us, although we did not belong to the First Methodist Church.

Mr. Mingus: Well, you did not belong, but I believe in those early days, you did teach a Sunday school class at the First Methodist?

Mrs. Scarborough: That's right. Mr. H.A. Tillett [*spelling of name unclear*] was superintendent of the Sunday school and when he asked me to take that class; I protested that I didn't even belong to the Methodist Church. He said "You graduated West End College, a Methodist institution, and I happen to know that four years of Bible are required for graduation at this Methodist College."

Mr. Mingus: Yes, and you did have the four years of Bible. How many children did you have?

Mrs. Scarborough: I only had two children. John Davis Scarborough, who was born in 1909, and Larry Scarborough, Charles Lawrence Scarborough, now deceased.

Mr. Mingus: Davis Scarborough is now one of the outstanding attorneys here in Abilene.

Mrs. Scarborough: Yes.

Mr. Mingus: And he's made a fine mark for himself here. How about grandchildren?

Mrs. Scarborough: Well, I have two grandsons, Frank Ellis Scarborough, and Charles Davis Scarborough, and Charles Davis Scarborough has recently married, and my daughter-in-law gave a party yesterday for his bride.

Mr. Mingus: And your great grandchildren? Yes.

Mrs. Scarborough: Frank had two children, two little girls, who are my great granddaughters, Marian and Julia.

Mr. Mingus: Mrs. Scarborough, why were you called the "Mother of Recreation?"

Mrs. Scarborough: Mainly because I tried to have the Abilene people interested in recreation and that is why I received a decoration for being an organizer of the first recreation program in Abilene. Our very first program was undertaken under the WPA and it was a summer program, participated mostly by the service clubs in Abilene. I was the author of Abilene's amendment to the state charter, providing for a Parks and Recreation Board, the only one of them in months to carry. I've been a member of the Parks and Recreation Board for fifteen years.

Mr. Mingus: Fifteen years on that board and you've seen a lot of development going on in that time, have you not?

Mrs. Scarborough: Yes.

Mr. Mingus: In checking the files of the *Abilene Reporter-News*, I learned that during World War I, you served as the organizing president of the YWCA movement in Abilene. Who were some of the women that served on that first YWCA board with you?

Mrs. Scarborough: Mrs. M. H. Compere, Mrs. E. G. Betcher, Mrs. R. L. Fosset, Mrs. M. B. Hanks, Mrs. O. H. Cooper, Mrs. Abdon Holt, Mrs. H. N. Hickman, Mrs. Ed Compere and Fenton S. Lewis. [*Spelling of names?*]

Mr. Mingus: Are you still working with the YWCA Board in Abilene?

Mrs. Scarborough: No, but I've been honored by them.

Mr. Mingus: Yes, and I've noticed some of the names here, like Leltie Fosset, she was society editor of the *Abilene Reporter- News* for a number of years, was she not?

Mrs. Scarborough: And Mrs. Hanks is still alive.

Mr. Mingus: Yes, Mrs. Hanks is still living. Her husband owned the *Reporter- News* for years and she's the president now, I believe. Tell us some of the things that happened when you organized the Taylor County Equal Suffrage Association. That was back in 1918, I believe, wasn't it?

Mrs. Scarborough: I became interested in the Equal Suffrage Association while serving as chairman of the old 28th San Antonio District.

Mr. Mingus: And, Mrs. Scarborough, what is this organization known now as, what?

Mrs. Scarborough: The League of Women Voters.

Mr. Mingus: And it's a very strong and fine organization here in Abilene to date. During the growth of Abilene, you assisted in establishing the Taylor County Red Cross Chapter. What were some of the early day activities of the Red Cross?

Mrs. Scarborough: Civilian relief, of which I was chairman, military relief, of which Mrs. J. M. Wagstaff was the chairman, and membership, Mrs. L. H. Bradfield.

Mr. Mingus: Mrs. Scarborough, who were some of the workers in the early part of the Taylor County Red Cross Chapter?

Mrs. Scarborough: Mr. Mayer of Abilene, E. N. Kirby was interested, and Mr. A. E. Ellis of the Episcopal Church were some of the early members.

Mr. Mingus: All right. You also helped establish the Abilene Pan-Hellenic Association and the West Texas Historical Association. Tell us something about these organizations, like the Pan-Hellenic now.

Mrs. Scarborough: Well, Josephine Clark, Mrs. J. Frank Clark, was the first president of the Pan-Hellenic, although I organized it at the same time I organized the American Association of University Women.

Mr. Mingus: Uh huh. All right. After, let's see. What about... After World War II, you and your husband took the lead in organizing the Good Government Association, but first, what about the Texas Historical Association? Have we gone over that?

Mrs. Scarborough: The West Texas Historical Association.

Mr. Mingus: It's the West Texas Historical Association.

Mrs. Scarborough: Well, we organized at the court house in, I've forgotten the year, but it's been organized more than 40 years and I was present at an organizational meeting and a man from Sweetwater was the president and I was the secretary.

Mr. Mingus: After World War II, you and your husband did take the lead in organizing the Good Government Association here in Abilene. Now what was the purpose of this and how did it function?

Mrs. Scarborough: Well, the purpose of it was to get good people to run for office. How did it function? Well, it was supposed to function as a unit.

Mr. Mingus: Well now, we're still trying to get qualified people to run for office today and I guess we'll always have that problem in there. We want qualified people but they're hard to get at times, are they not? Say, it's been said, now I don't know whether to bring this up or not, but it's been said that you and Judge Scarborough would gladly give your opinions on many different subjects, but at times, that the two of you could not agree on the same subject and you had different opinions. Is that true?

Mrs. Scarborough: Yes, that's true, but it was a friendly argument.

Mr. Mingus: Well, I had the pleasure of knowing Dallas Scarborough quite well, and his files show that he was mayor of Abilene in 1919 to, I believe, 1923, wasn't it? What were some of his accomplishments?

Mrs. Scarborough: Well, he was the first person to recognize the importance of parks and recreation for the city of Abilene and he appointed the first committee, although it was not an executive committee of the City of Abilene.

Mr. Mingus: Among other things, what about, was there any paving or anything in Abilene then on the streets? Were they paved or?

Mrs. Scarborough: No, he instituted a [word unclear] paving program and he was interested in the public schools of Abilene and he was the instigator of many of the public schools in Abilene and worlds of the paving projects.

Mr. Mingus: A few years ago, when the old post office was where the same one is now but before they rebuilt it, behind it there, there was a little bandstand. I recall, Mrs. Scarborough, we haven't discussed this previously, but I recall several different occasions where you and Judge Scarborough were up there on this bandstand making speeches and arguing points in there of interest to the people. Is that right?

Mrs. Scarborough: Yes, that's right. [Laughs.]

Mr. Mingus: And a lot of people would come down there that was before TV or anything like that, and would come hear a band and hear speeches made there. Mrs. Scarborough, your connection with the Taylor County Tuberculosis Association has spanned a number of years. From the beginning, tell us something about this organization.

Mrs. Scarborough: I was the president of this organization for 26 years. Some of the early board members were W. H. Reed, Mrs. Lawrence Hall, Mrs. [first name unclear] Stevens, Mrs. Martin Metzger.

Mr. Mingus: Well, now, in your opinion, who are some of the people who have helped in the growth of Abilene?

Mrs. Scarborough: My friend, Miss Lynn Fossett, who was the society editor of the *Abilene Reporter*.

Mr. Mingus: She did do a lot for the cultural growth and other things of Abilene. Mrs. Scarborough, back in 1953, you gave a lifetime, rare library collection to McMurry College. About how many books did you give at that time?

Mrs. Scarborough: About 5000 volumes. [Mr. Mingus: And a...] In memory of my father and mother who were early day Methodists.

Mr. Mingus: Yes, uh, then in 1964, you received the Doctor of Humane Letters degree from McMurry College. Is that right?

Mrs. Scarborough: Yes, that's right.

Mr. Mingus: And speaking of books, I understand that you have written several books.

Mrs. Scarborough: I've written four books called *Southern Kith and Kin*, which is a record of my children's ancestors, or part of a record of my ancestors, and a part of Dallas's ancestors.

Mr. Mingus: And I understand that many of those books are in different libraries all over the country. Isn't that right?

Mrs. Scarborough: Yes.

Mr. Mingus: And you did have something to do about writing or recording on paper here the early cemetery records, did you not, of the old cemetery?

Mrs. Scarborough: Yes. With the Genealogical Society, we compiled an early cemetery record of Abilene from 1882 to 1960, inclusive.

Mr. Mingus: Mrs. Scarborough, after looking over some of your files here at your home, I noticed that you had written an article, "A History of the Heavenly Rest Episcopal Church" here of Abilene. Isn't that right?

Mrs. Scarborough: Yes, that's right.

Mr. Mingus: Among other things that interested me a great deal is an article that you wrote back in 1961 about Captain Jeff Maltby. Is it pronounced Maltby?

Mrs. Scarborough: Maltby, yes, of Callahan County.

Mr. Mingus: It starts off saying "Captain Jeff Maltby was commander of Company E Frontier Battalion of Texas State Rangers in 1874 which protected the counties of Brown, Coleman, Runnels, Taylor, and Tom Green," and down here, I noticed it said "Captain Jeff lived in Callahan County, near the geographical center of the county, and called his home "Mountain Dell." I wonder, I don't know exactly where that home would be, I mean, the location would be in Callahan County now, but I'm sure that a lot of people would remember that about, and it was a very fine article. And back in January, the 18th of this year, I believe, 1966, you received a letter from Dr. Rupert N. Richardson and he'd read this and he said, "Dear Mrs. Scarborough, I thank you for the interesting and informational article on Captain Maltby. Captain Jeff was a staunch old character and he contributed a worthy share in winning the west and his memory ought to be preserved. I congratulate you on this article. Sincerely, Rupert N. Richardson." You have done a great deal for the development and growth here of Abilene and for many things that pertain to our entire state and to our government, Mrs. Scarborough, and I want to thank you for having a recording part in the "Talking History of Abilene" on it's 85th birthday. The name Scarborough has always been associated with the great families of Abilene. We want to thank you, Mrs. Dallas Scarborough. This is Bro Mingus reporting and thanking our engineer, John E. Turner, for this 85th anniversary birthday recording.