

Bair Farms:
A Porción of Edinburg

Discovering the Rio Grande Valley

Reports from the

Community Historical Archaeology Project with Schools Program

Report # 1

The Norquest Family: A *Porción* of Edinburg

Report # 2

The Cantu Family: A *Porción* of Edinburg

Report # 3

Atwood Acres: A *Porción* of Edinburg

Report # 4

The Eubanks Family: A *Porción* of Edinburg

Report # 5

Bair Farms: A *Porción* of Edinburg

Report # 6

The Roegiers Family: A *Porción* of Edinburg

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Bair Farms: A Porción of Edinburg

A report prepared for
The Bair Family

And for UTRGV and the CHAPS Program class titled:

Discovering the Rio Grande Valley: The Natural and Cultural History of South Texas

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Dedication

This report is dedicated to the memory of Mrs. Shirley Bair who passed away on April 14, 2016, prior to the publication of this report. She was the wife of Dwayne Bair and was very supportive in the development of this publication. Dwayne and Shirley were married for 62 years. She is survived by her husband, two sons, two daughters, seven grandchildren and six great-grandsons. (see Appendix J)



Dwayne and Shirley Bair at the Captain's reception on a cruise in 1994

This report is also dedicated to the original homestead of Lee Martin and Dorothy Bair built in 1926 that stood for 90 years on Chapin Road, Edinburg, Texas (Located between Business Highway 281 and US Highway 281)

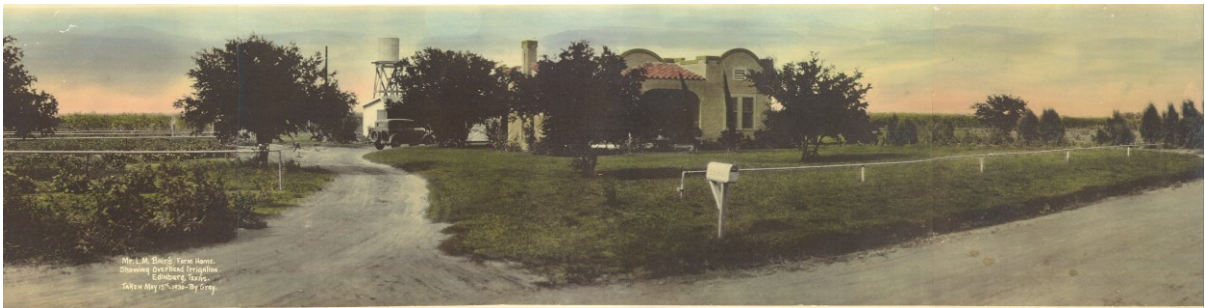


Photo taken on May 13, 1930. Courtesy of Dwayne Bair.

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Foreword

As Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV), I am honored and delighted to highlight and support the work of the Community Historical Archaeology Project with Schools (CHAPS) Program. Their outstanding and extensive work focuses on the establishment, growth, and development of the Rio Grande Valley, specifically the City of Edinburg. Faculty, students, and staff in the CHAPS Program have studied, reviewed, and captured the evolution of the history, culture, environment, and politics of this expanding and diverse region we call the Rio Grande Valley.

This important volume presents the *Bair Farms: A Porción of Edinburg*. This is a continuation of a series of ongoing work by the CHAPS Program, including reports on the Norquest, Cantu, Atwood, and Eubank families. With this report, CHAPS marks the 5th consecutive year of producing these comprehensive studies of pioneer farming families in UTRGV's hometown of Edinburg, Texas. We certainly look forward to many more volumes in this series for years to come.

The CHAPS Program is a community engagement entity at its core. The CHAPS team conduct extensive multidisciplinary projects not only through research of land title documents, archival photographs, and other primary and secondary sources, but also through biological, geological, and archaeological evidence. New primary sources are also created by conducting, recording, and transcribing thorough oral history interviews, which are housed in UTRGV's Border Studies Archive's permanent Spanish Land Grant Collection. These interviews capture the history of each family's farming experiences as well as the cultural traditions they brought to the Rio Grande Valley.

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley's core priorities focus on expanding educational opportunities and research that impacts the Rio Grande Valley and beyond, and community engagement, among others. These priorities are integral to the CHAPS Program. UTRGV places great importance on engaged scholarship; the CHAPS Program has been a leader in this initiative from its inception under the auspices of our legacy institution, The University of Texas - Pan American. The CHAPS Program continues to grow and thrive and make significant contributions to the Rio Grande Valley and beyond. In recognition of their outstanding work, the CHAPS Program was recognized in 2016 with the *Chairman's Award for Community Education*, by the Texas Historical Commission. This is an excellent accomplishment and recognition for the exceptional work that characterizes the CHAPS Program.

We know you will enjoy learning more about our significant history in the City of Edinburg. Happy reading.

Havidán Rodríguez, PhD
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Preface

Nearly one hundred and ten years ago in 1908 Dennis Chapin and John Closner founded what today is Edinburg, Texas about twelve miles north of the Rio Grande in Hidalgo County. What was open range land was, by the second decade of the twentieth century, a platted community and county seat, served by a railroad, and irrigated with water from the Rio Grande. Soon it would become a prosperous part of the Magic Valley where citrus, cotton, sorghum, and vegetables were grown in abundance for consumers in the Midwestern United States and beyond.

Among those early arrivals was the Bair family of College Springs, Iowa. In 1920 they joined others, including the Heacocks who had arrived in 1913 and made the Rio Grande Valley their home. The families who were bonded together in the marriage of Dorothy Heacock and Lee Martin Bair were entrepreneurs in retail hardware and agriculture. They experienced droughts, hurricanes, and freezes with their attendant economic shortcomings which changed and often shortened lives. Their son Dwayne Bair would lead a life that included farming, citrus production, and banking. This is his story but also one of many others that called the Rio Grande Valley home. Now as we push forward into a new millennium, the agricultural way of life which epitomized the Magic Valley in the twentieth century is fading. Instead of growing fruits and vegetables we are growing housing developments and strip malls. Soon, like the Bair family home on Chapin Road, those who participated and their memories will be gone.

We on the CHAPS Program team are honored to provide primary information on local geology, archaeology, fauna, flora, and history while telling the story of Dwayne Bair's and other families. Thanks are extended to the Norquest Family, Dr. Lisa Adam and the Museum of South Texas History, Ruby de la Garza and the USDA, Dr. Margaret Dorsey, Curator of the Border Studies Archives at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and our many donors for their on-going support of the CHAPS Program. We hope you will enjoy this "Porción of Edinburg," and in it find a story which resonates across the disciplines and the decades providing a snapshot of our changing world in south Texas.

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Introduction

The Bair family arrived in Edinburg from College Springs, Iowa in 1920 during the great influx of Anglo settlers who traveled via train from Midwestern cities in search of a successful life of subtropical farming in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. They were contemporaries with other migrants including the Norquests, the Cantus, and the Atwoods. Here they found in what was dubbed by land developers and promoters as the “Magic Valley;” a place where fool-proof, year-round farming was guaranteed. While the Bair family grew, they also experienced a myriad of natural disasters including freezes, floods, and hurricanes. These experiences only proved to build the character of their lives as farmers.

When we first met the Bair family in 2013 their homestead on Chapin Road and the acreage that surrounded it was still owned by the Bair family, but by the time we initiated our study in August of 2015, the property was sold. With Dwayne Bair as our informant and the oldest living descendant of Lee Martin and Dorothy Heacock Bair, we were able to capture the essence of everyday life on Bair Farms through document research and oral history interviews. This shift in methods enabled us to create a more thorough investigation into the history of Edinburg as a town and push/pull aspects that drew families to leave their homes behind and venture to this new agricultural frontier. By adding the peripheral images to the canvas of the broader historical landscape, this and previous projects preserve a series of snapshots of local history before the descendants of the early 20th century pioneering farming families sell their properties and these lands are transformed into 21st century suburban neighborhoods, or strip-malls, thus losing these histories forever.

The following report is based on Dwayne Bair’s perspective and recollections of the life his family experienced through the years since his paternal grandparents (Alexander B. Bair and Mary Ida Bair) arrived in 1920 and his maternal grandparents (Joseph W. Heacock and Fanny Knowles Heacock) arrived in 1913. With Dwayne Bair as our sole participant, this report serves as his biography and an overview of his family history as pioneer farmers and local business owners. Here are the accounts of Dwayne’s grandparents and their journey to the Rio Grande Valley, of his life growing up on his parents’ farm and his married life living in a home down the road from his parents’ place. Dwayne Bair was very much an integral part of the community of Edinburg, Texas and the Rio Grande Valley as a whole. He is a devoted son, brother, husband and father who became (and remains today) a well-respected businessman and local agriculture advocate in a community that he happily served throughout his life.

Chapter 1

From Indigenous Roots to Anglo Settlement: Texas and the Heacock and Bair Families

Ismael Aleman, Santiago Lopez, Selina Ramos and Ray Ruiz

Natives in Texas and Spanish Introduction (1528-1749)

Thousands of years before Europeans claimed the area that would later be known as the Rio Grande Valley on behalf of the Spanish monarchy, indigenous groups, namely the Coahuiltecans, occupied south west Texas (Figure 1).¹ These bands of Native Peoples “lived largely by hunting, fishing, and gathering and generally moved about rather than settling into permanent residences.”² Their nomadic lifestyle was born out of necessity. The Coahuiltecans moved from place to place searching for resources that would ensure their survival. Armed with bows and arrows, they communally hunted wild game.

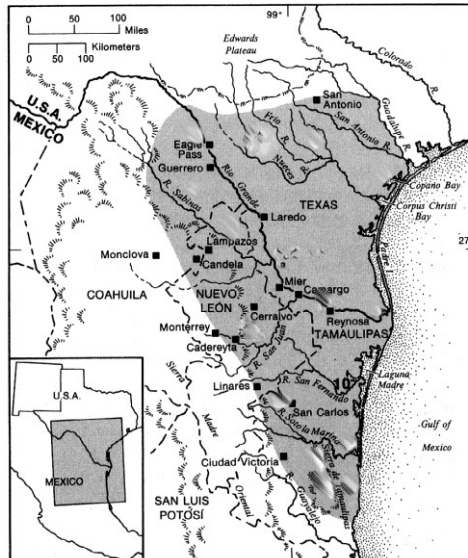


Figure 1 Map of Coahuiltecan settlement region

Coahuiltecans did not live in the stereotypical teepee, but instead “lived in small, movable huts made of bent saplings covered with red mats or hides.”³ These shelters could be quickly dismantled and the mats would then be recycled when the Coahuiltecans settled in a new area.

In 1528 the remnants of the failed Narváez Expedition and Coahuiltecan people came face to face with one another. Eventually led by Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, the Spaniards interacted with the Coahuiltecans who were among the “poorest of all Indians,” and they “would be the only group genuinely accepting of missionary efforts by the Spanish.”⁴ Two

¹ R. E. Moore, “The Texas Coahuiltecan Indian Groups,” Texas Indians, accessed December 14, 2015, <http://www.texasindians.com/coah.htm>.

² Randolph B. Campbell, *Gone to Texas: A History of the Lone Star State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 15.

³ Ibid., p. 18.

⁴ Ibid., p. 19

hundred years later, the Spanish took it upon themselves to convert the supposedly uncivilized natives by establishing missions. At the Roman Catholic missions, the Coahuiltecan relinquished their centuries old traditions in order to adhere to their new religion, social organization and economy based on ranching and agriculture.⁵

Spanish Land Grants (1767 - 1821)

King Ferdinand VI de Borbon in 1749, the reigning monarch of Spain at the time, sought to colonize the Northeastern section of Mexico (Nuevo Santander) situated on both sides of the Rio Bravo (Grande). José de Escandón, who had been given the task of recruiting colonists, went on to establish Villas del Norte. Colonists who chose to join Escandón were given land grants. They [the colonists], who were eager to secure higher positions in society, enthusiastically agreed. From 1767 until 1821 the Spanish Kings Ferdinand VI, Carlos III, Carlos IV, and Ferdinand VII, issued royal decrees that the original settlers as well as the new settlers were to be granted porciones, which were portions of land awarded to them for their loyalty. Military officers were granted two times the amount of livestock and land as other Spaniards for their military service. According to Levinson (2014), “each settler received a portion amounting to a minimum of 4,428.2 acres” of land.⁶ Porciones facilitated a ranching tradition in South Texas that lasted until heirs of the original grantees had their land either sold or confiscated in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Furthermore, the Bair and Heacock families purchased property in the early twentieth century that had previously been a part of the San Salvador del Tule Land Grant. The original owner of the porción was Doña Rosa María Hinojosa de Ballí (a.k.a. The Cattle Queen of Texas), who upon the unfortunate deaths of both her husband and father, applied for a piece of land that spanned about seventy-two leagues with the intention of bequeathing it to her son Juan José de Ballí; by 1794, she was legally awarded the property, which is where the University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley campus and the properties of the Bair and Heacock families on Chapin Road in Edinburg, Texas are located.⁷

Although there is a misconception that woman during this time period were never granted enough legal status to justify owning property, Spanish Common Law enabled Mrs. Ballí to petition for a Spanish land grant. By English Common Law during that period, women were not deemed capable of being rational executors of their own dowries (an estate that a woman brought with her into the marriage), which were made up of either some form of wealth or property. Because of the Law of Coverture, when two parties become a single legal entity upon taking marriage vows, the man in the relationship gained control of the wife’s dowry since she would be deemed unable to control her own estate and lacked the ability to appear in court. Spanish Common Law differs from this, because women were considered capable of making sound monetary decisions and had the privilege of dictating their dowries. Women retained the rights to property accumulated during the marriage upon becoming a widow, which is how Doña Ballí had the legal right to purchase or acquire property upon the death of her husband.

⁵ Russell K. Skowronek and Bobbie L. Lovett, “Two: Coahuiltecan of the Rio Grande Region,” in *The Native American Peoples of South Texas*, ed. Bobbie L. Lovett, Juan L. Gonzáles, Roseanne Bacha-Garza, and Russell K. Skowronek (Edinburg: CHAPS at University of Texas – Pan American, 2014), 14.

⁶ Irving Levinson, “About The West: The Contours of a Very Special Border,” *Journal of the West* 53, no. 3 (2014), 69.

⁷ Armando C. Alonso, *Tejano Legacy: Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas, 1734-1900* (Albuquerque: New Mexico University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 58.

With the influx of Anglos into the area during the second half of the 1800's, many of them sought to purchase and develop land. The problem with Anglos venturing to purchase land in the region was the lack of available lots. Since the era of Spanish colonial rule, land grants were issued. Many of the descendants of the original grantees maintained and owned the land that their ancestors had been given, so Anglos wanted to run them out. The San Salvador del Tule land grant had been occupied by the Ballí family since 1794, but Anglo settlers did not consider the claim legitimate.

For example, in 1852 the legality of the Ballí family grant was questioned on the grounds of the 1811 abandonment of property during Indian raids.⁸ Even though the family continued to live on the property, the legal process dragged on until 1904 when the Ballí family was officially recognized as the legitimate claimants of the property that had been previously granted to them in accordance with Spanish law by the King of Spain. The Ballí's were an outlier in a sense, because they were allowed to keep their land perhaps due to their lasting influence, while others were stripped of their land grants allowing for Anglos to further inhabit and exploit the region through farming.

Mexican Independence

At the beginning of the nineteenth century during the Napoleonic Wars, French forces invaded Spain and deposed Borbon King Carlos IV and replaced him with Joseph Bonaparte, brother of Napoleon. Carlos IV along with Crown Prince Fernando VII of Spain were placed under house arrest in Southern France. The Spanish people tired of Napoleonic rule and engaged in guerrilla warfare to oust the invaders. Politically, enlightened Spanish created juntas in the name of the exiled Fernando VII. These juntas were used to draft legislation, creating a quasi-constitutional monarchy. The juntas in Spain prompted the creation of juntas in the Spanish colonies as well. The Iberian Peninsula was freed of the Napoleonic rule with combined forces of Britain and Spain. Once freed King Fernando VII quickly put an end to the Spanish junta's rule, then went after those established in Latin American.

The audienica in Mexico City consisted of two factions. Those men who wanted total independence from Spain, and those who favored more local autonomy yet retain loyalty to the Spanish Crown. In 1810, Father Hidalgo took advantage of the situation and subsequently started a race war. He led the poor population of Criolles, Mestizos, Indigenes, Black, and a myriad of Castas. Hidalgo's followers ransacked and destroyed homes of the wealthy, also executed wealthy land owners. Royalist forces ended Hidalgo's revolt. A decade later, the Viceroy of New Spain would be overwhelmed following years of civil unrest. Jose Maria Morelos student of Father Hidalgo continued the insurgent fight in southern Mexico.

The struggle for independence in Mexico/ New Spain engulfed the nation, and many plans of action (platforms) arose, both liberal and conservative. The Plan of Chilpancingo 1813 was the first free plan of action for a new country; all men can vote, Slavery abolished, Casta system should abolish, and independent from Spain. The plan of 1813 had some

⁸ Armando C. Alonso, "Mexican-American Land Grant Adjudication," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed December 14, 2015, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/pqmck>.

common ground with the conservatives: State religion (Roman Catholic), no judicial torture, and lastly no title of nobility for office. The plan was the first of many for the new country battling to have its independence from a failing empire. With the return of the Bourbons, the 1812 Spanish constitution was ended. Back in Mexico two conservative generals devised a new plan, the Plan of Iguala (plan of 3 grantees): Mexico will be independent, Mexico will have a king, and Mexico will be a Catholic nation. The Federalists (radical and moderate liberals, who favored a weak central government, and a prominent local, regional autonomy) battled the centralistas (conservatives who favored a viceroy in Mexico City, and weak local self-government.), which is a lesson learned by Medieval Spain is one in power never tries to rid of local self-government; this was not knowledgeable since the constitution of 1824 didn't address it. Moreover, more plans and constitutions will be up for debate for a little less than a century. The results of Mexican independence from Spain started as a caste revolt, led by Father Hidalgo and Father Morelos. Soon after it became a period of counter-revolutions conservatives and liberals engaging in coups for control of the government; causing mass civil unrest for centuries to come. Spain inevitably granted Mexico its independence on August 24, 1821.

Moses and Stephen F. Austin (1820 – 1830's)

In the year 1820, Moses Austin received a portion of the province of Texas in the area of Mexico, and soon after established a colony. Following his death in 1821, his son, Stephen F. Austin (a.k.a. The Father of Texas) sought to increase Anglo presence in the area and led expeditions to settle the region on his father's behalf (Figure 2). This introduction of Anglos into Spanish Texas then resulted in a pattern of "Anglo-Americans ... seizing land owned by Mexican Americans."⁹

Either by pressuring decedents into selling their grants, implementation of intimidation tactics, murdering *vecinos* (owners), engaging in intermarriage with Mexican families, and unfairly ceasing the properties by posting notices in English, Texas became overrun with Anglos that continually wanted to seize more land for themselves. Because of increasing numbers of Anglos, cultural tensions arose, especially since Mexico abolished slavery in 1829. Due to some of the settlers relying on slave labor to cultivate their plants, they greatly opposed the idea of slavery being illegalized. This would later play a factor in Anglos wanting to declare independence from their national benefactor Mexico.

⁹ Alonso, *Tejano Legacy*, 70.

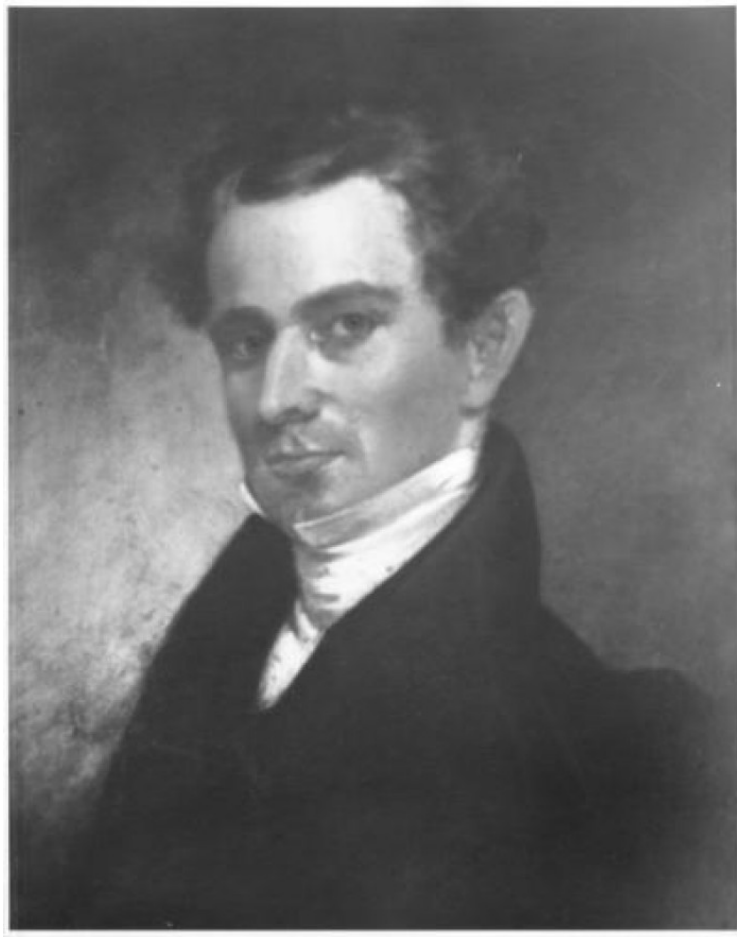


Figure 2 Portrait of Stephen F. Austin, photograph, Date Unknown;
(texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth1832/: accessed October 19, 2016), University of North Texas
Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Fort Bend Museum.

Texas Revolution (1835 - 1836) and the Republic of Texas (1836 - 1846)

San Felipe de Austin established as the first Capitol of the first provisional government of Texas. On November 7, 1835, Texans met and declared their support for the Mexican Constitution of 1824. The first Governor and other officials were appointed. On December 20, 1835, at Goliad, the first declaration of independence was signed. March 2, 1836, the Declaration of Independence is enforced.

In October 1836, the first Texas Congress meets in October 1836 in Columbia, Texas and Sam Houston elected President of Texas (figure 3).

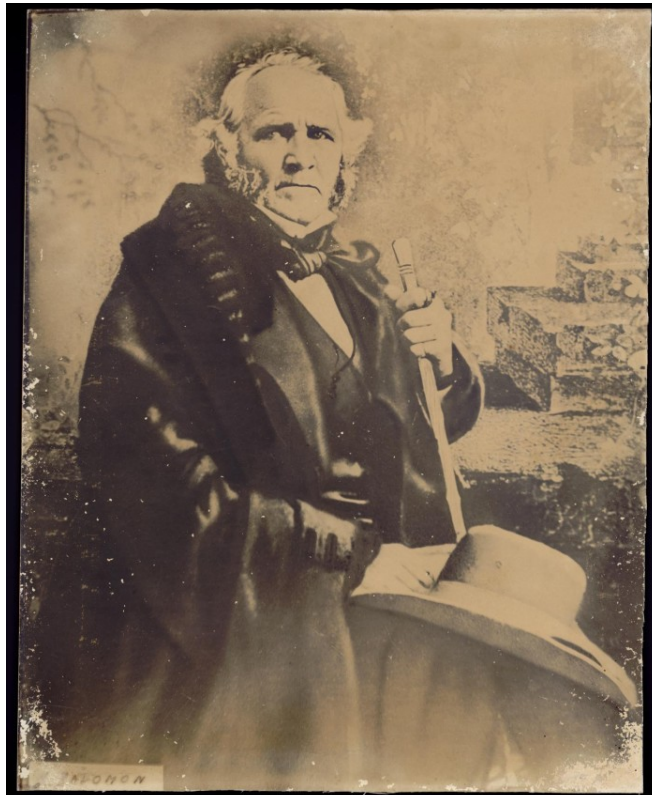


Figure 3 Portrait of Sam Houston, Date Unknown; (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph31927/: accessed October 19, 2016), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Star of the Republic Museum.

The War of Anglo-Texan Belligerency or as more commonly known as the Texas War of Independence was the most costly of these revolts, the other revolts in Mexico's south would later cede to Mexican central authority while Texas would never again become Mexican territory (and contested until the Mexican-American War 1846-1848). The combined effort of resilient Tejanos and dissident Anglos pushed a revolt in the Texas territory for autonomy with the hopes of later becoming annexed to the United States.

In American history textbooks, the "heroic Texans" die at the Alamo. Stirred with the battle cry "Remember the Alamo," Houston and his army defeated the Mexican Army at San Jacinto. Santa Anna cedes the lands north of the Nueces River to the insurgents and for the next decade, Texas and Mexico will continue to battle over the boundaries of the Republics. Texas independence. The Mexican-American War would finally settle the dispute in 1848.

Mexican-American War (1846 - 1848)

The Mexican-American War a direct attack on Mexican sovereignty by the expansionist James K. Polk. President Polk wanted a conflict with Great Britain over the Pacific Northwest boundary between Canada and the U.S.A. He also had his eye on Texas and the Southwest. Mexico was not ready to give up its quest to regain Texas. Once the United States annexed Texas in 1845, disputes over the southern border ensued. Mexico claimed the Texas border ended at the Nueces River. The Republic of Texas and the United States argued that the border was at the Rio Grande. The first battle occurred along the Rio Grande at Palo Alto in 1846. Convinced that the loss of American lives on American soil Polk

gladly signed the declaration of war against Mexico. The American army invaded Mexico near Veracruz and captured Mexico City. The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo made the Rio Grande the international boundary.

Hidalgo County Founding (1852) and Chapin Founders (1884 - 1927)

In 1852 the State of Texas established the county of Hidalgo. The namesake of Hidalgo County came from the famed priest Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla who called for Mexico's liberation from the Spanish crown. He became a Mexican icon through his proclamation, known as Grito de Dolores, in 1810, which led to the Mexican War of Independence.

Hidalgo County, attractive to settlers because of its cheap land prices and tropical weather that was suitable for agriculture. These [Anglo] new settlers saw opportunities to gain financial wealth through the development of this region. This land was very attractive to land developers, whose introduction to Hidalgo County would profoundly impact the Rio Grande Valley. Men such as John Closner, Dennis Banks Chapin, and William Frederick Sprague were responsible for creating the town of Edinburg at the beginning of the twentieth century. These men's business prowess enabled them to understand the potential benefits of transforming the region into an agricultural hub.

John Closner has the honor of being deemed one of the founding fathers of Edinburg, Texas based on his contribution that led to the establishment of the same town originally called Chapin, Texas. Closner recognized South Texas' likelihood to be prosperous region when railroads were built to the Valley.

Born on March 24, 1853 in the town of New Glaris, Wisconsin, John Closner and his parents moved to Minnesota. Later, they moved to Iowa and finally settled in Texas in 1870. John Closner worked at Fort Griffin Rail Road Company in 1871. In 1883, he moved to Rio Grande City. With limited funds at his disposal, he found a job as a stagecoach driver with Pena station. After this successful job, he gained enough funds to purchase land. As a prominent business man, he recognized the significance of purchasing land.¹⁰

Thereafter, John moved to Hidalgo, Texas where he was later appointed to a seat in the Hidalgo commission. He then went on to be appointed to the position deputy sheriff by James L. Dougherty. This was a time of instability due to attacks by Comanche Indians, so there was a definite need for law and order. The local Indians were refusing to give up their lands without a fight.

In addition to the Native Americans prevalent in the area, there was also a significant amount of Mexican outlaws at this time. Regardless of the challenges, Dougherty and Closner were able to maintain order. John Closner was one of the most notable sheriffs of Hidalgo County. He finally brought peace and order to a county considering that over the year's eight sheriffs resigned under threats of assassination. Closner survived two assassination attempts and a bounty placed on his head by Mexican bandit's worth between 10,000 to 20,000 Mexican pesos.¹¹

¹⁰ Verna J. McKenna, "Closner, John" *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed December 14, 2015, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fcl33>.

¹¹ Garcia, Janette. *Images of America Edinburg*. Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2011, p. 63.

Besides being an effective sheriff, Closner was also one of the most prosperous land owners in Rio Grande Valley. He owned several thousands of acres. He instinctively knew that irrigation was necessary for the region to flourish, and he initiated the construction of the irrigation and canal systems in the area. In 1893 John Closner created a canal system from the Rio Grande to his fields where he grew an assortment of crops including alfalfa, banana, cotton, and tobacco. With the success of his irrigation efforts others began to follow suit and the establishment of an irrigation network ensued, which enabled the citizens to maximize their crop production.

Yet another thing that John Closner excelled at that profoundly impacted the area was with the creation of the railroad industry in Chapin. Because he was business savvy and had a growing reputation, he influenced other business men such as William Frederick Sprague to develop what would become Edinburg. Based primarily on Sprague's wealth, the two men established business ties. Both of the ambitious entrepreneurs (Closner and Sprague) built a branch line of the railroad from San Juan Plantation's to the town of Chapin, which resulted in a surge of wealth in the region since produce and other goods could be transported effectively. The ability to trade goods far and wide became a crucial element to stimulate the town's economy. According to Edinburg.com "During this time of growth and prosperity, rapid development could be attributed to John Closner and W.F. Sprague. Trade blossomed in Edinburg and Hidalgo County which had been predominantly ranching until 1915."¹²

Through the merger of Closner and Sprague the creation of the rail road ensued. The construction of the rail road system attributed to the explosion of people settling in the area. Soon there was a need for day labors that worked in agricultural fields in order to aid local farmers. After the railroad tracks were installed, the regions agrarian sector was booming. To give some insight into how important the railroad industry was the Rio Grande Valley, the following quote paints a picture of the mood people were in as a result.

On January 11, 1927 history was made when the train whistle blew as it arrived into Edinburg. Thousands gathered for the grand ceremony school children took the day off to witness the driving of the "golden spike". Dignitaries from throughout South Texas and from Southern Pacific, rode the train from Lull to Edinburg, as bands played and food was prepared for thousands on the tow square. The Edinburg Southern Pacific Depot operated out of a rail car until the depot opened its doors on August 1, 1927. Before the time of the Southern Pacific. Edinburg had been served by the San Antonio-Rio Grande Valley Railroad. Later service was provided by Missouri Pacific.¹³ (Edinburg.com)

As previously mentioned, another pivotal founding father was Dennis Banks Chapin. Through his growing influence, Chapin eventually a county seat holder. Due in large part to the urging of Closner and Sprague, the developing town was named Chapin. Chapin, a prominent politician, essentially was at the helm of the political arena at the time, so it makes sense that Closner and Sprague would be in favor of naming it after him to further their political agenda.

¹² Verna J. McKenna, "Closner, John" *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed December 14, 2015, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fcl33>.

¹³ Ibid.

Chapin, Texas (1909), Edinburg, Texas (1911), and the Courthouse Controversy (1908)

In regards to the year the name was bestowed on the town, in 1909 the area was given the name of Chapin. As an homage to another founding father, politician, and judge, Dennis Banks Chapin was honored by becoming the town namesake. Because of his massive political influence and position as a magistrate, Dennis B. Chapin was the obvious choice. The town of Chapin underwent a name change, due to Chapin's being charged with the murder of a Texas Ranger. Although found innocent in court, the citizens of Chapin opted to change the name, because they did not want their town associated with the controversial namesake. In 1911 the townspeople decided to formally rename Chapin to Edinburg, which was the birth place an important entrepreneur in the region named John Young, who was born in Edinburgh, Scotland with a slight variation to the spelling.

Because of Edinburg's location, the county courthouse was in constant jeopardy of flooding thanks to the Rio Grande's propensity to flood, and subsequently the constituents of the county were asked to vote on which town would be the next to house the county court house. The town that was preferred was Mercedes, Texas due to its high elevation. The aforementioned founding fathers would not allow the move to happen. According to author Janette. Garcia (2011),

“on October 13, 1908 men showed up with ox carts at the courthouse and began loading wagons with the deed records, court books, in the afternoon and traveled through the night reportedly reaching Chapin very early on the morning of October 14. They celebrated the move by shooting guns into the air and with freely flowing drinks as the place the records into the tents, which guarded day and night until a brick vault could be built.”¹⁴

Because the town was the site of the county courthouse, the founding fathers wanted it to stay in the town of Chapin at all costs, so they moved it to an adjacent building near the original. According to local lore, it is said that the town's founding fathers themselves were the ones who organized this illegal transfer of the courthouse.

Period of Instability (1910 - 1915)

Chapin/Edinburg stands on lands which originally were granted to the Ballí family in 1794. Then after the abandonment of the property by the Ballí descendants in 1811, the questioning of the legitimacy of their claim in 1852, and finally the confirmation of their legal right to own the property in 1904, Edinburg's Townsite Company was established when the town of Chapin founded in 1908. Afterwards, the Edinburg Townsite Company bought and retained the titles until Anglo families like the Heacock and Bair families moved into town. In 1910, the government of Porfirio Diaz collapsed and Mexico was thrown into a civil war. The war spilled across the international border into Texas.

Known as the Bandit Wars (1910-1915), there was a conflict between the United States and Carrancistas and Seditonistas Mexican rebel factions. Repeated guerrilla style attacks were made on the American side. In 1915 Basillio Ramos was captured in McAllen,

¹⁴ Garcia, *Images of America: Edinburg*, 9.

Texas with a controversial document in his possession known as the Plan of San Diego; this document was a “grite” or call for a race war between the Anglo and Mexican populations in an effort to reclaim the Mexican territory lost to the United States after Mexican American War (1846-1848).¹⁵ To forestall this rebellion, Texas Governor [who] ordered the Texas Rangers to put an end to the conflict. They did so by targeting Mexican Americans. It is said they shot first and asked questions later.

New Beginnings: The Heacocks and Bairs

It was in the milieu that the Heacock family arrived in the Valley by car in 1913. The Heacock family migrated from Quorn, Iowa. Joseph and Fanny Knowles Heacock, Dwayne Bair’s maternal grandparents, eventually bought their properties, which were lots one, two, and three from block two hundred twenty-five (figure 4). Originally Joseph purchased lot two in 1915, and lot number one and three were purchased together in 1916. These properties, which eventually housed the old bookstore at the University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley campus, were they erected small houses for workers to rent. When they came to the Rio Grande Valley, they had already become parents to Dorothy Heacock, who was Dwayne Bair’s mother in 1902. She subsequently grew up and was educated here in Hidalgo County. According to Dorothy, her parents set up a tent on the property before allocating the funds to erect a house of their own.

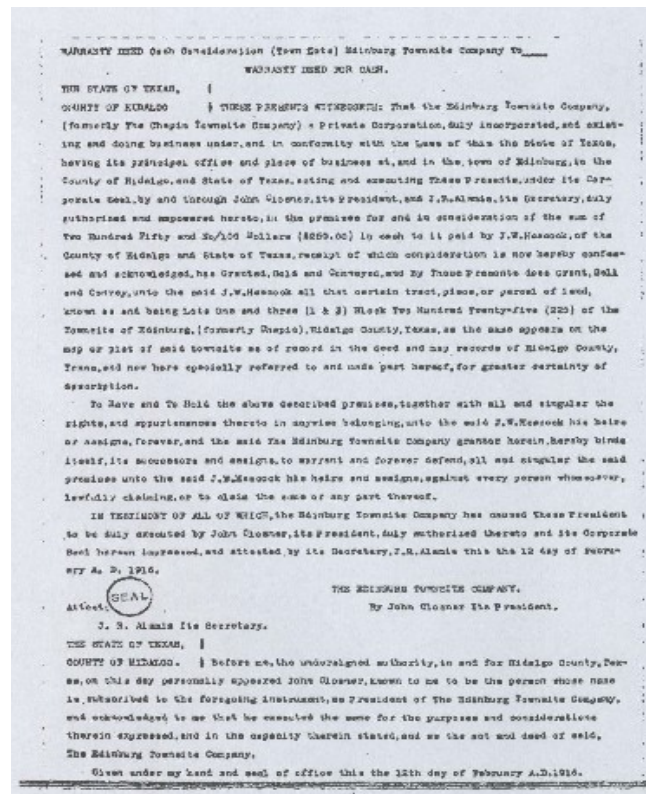


Figure 4 Warranty Deed – J.W. Heacock land purchase Edinburg, TX

¹⁵ Blumenthal, Ralph. “New Charges Tarnish Texas Rangers’ Image and Reopen Old Wounds.” *New York Times*. Accessed December 14, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/31/us/new-charges-tarnish-texas-rangers-image-and-reopen-old-wounds.html?_r=0.

The Bair family arrived in Edinburg in 1920 from College Springs, Iowa. They came to the region in a relatively quiet period. Alex B. and Mary Ida Bair, Dwayne Bair's paternal grandparents, left their homestead in Iowa for the chance to farm in the "Magic Valley." They were drawn to the Rio Grande Valley by Anglo land developers who whispered sweet nothings into their ear about the fertile soil and moderately warm climate in order to convince them to travel to South Texas. After careful consideration, Alex and Mary Ida Bair migrated to Edinburg, Texas in the hopes of capitalizing on the warm climate that allowed for multiple growing seasons.

Since the Bandit Wars were over for about five years by the time the Bair family moved to the region, the Bair's were not exposed to the internal conflict in the area that the Heacock's faced upon settling in this area. They purchased property east of the original Business Highway 281 on Chapin Road in Edinburg, Texas. Alex Bair originally bought lot one and two from block two hundred and forty-one formerly owned by the Gossage family in 1927 (figure 5).

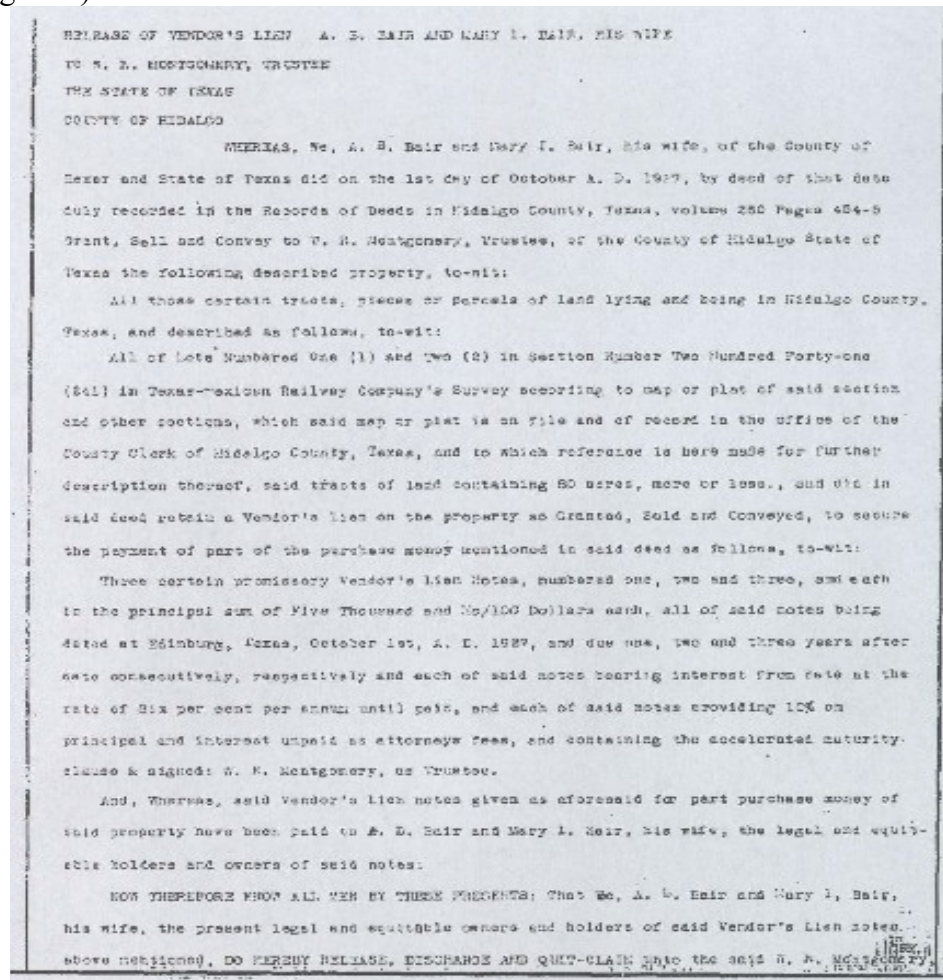
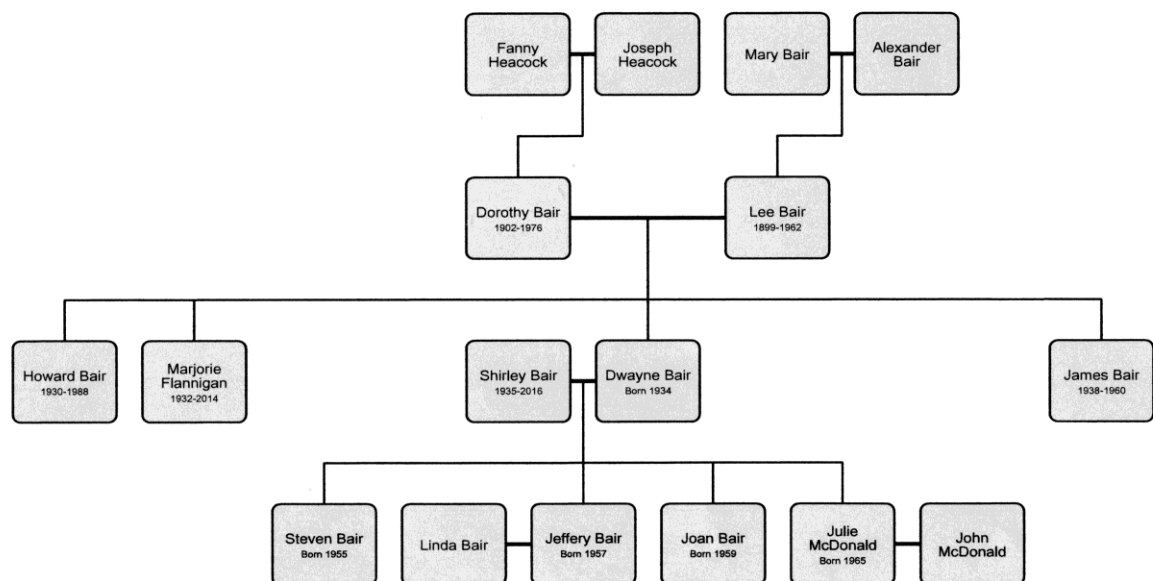


Figure 5 Vendor's Lean – A.B. Bair and Mary I. Bair

In regards to their son, Lee Martin Bair (Dwayne Bair's father) was born in 1899. He went on to purchase lot eight of block two hundred forty-one where the family house was built. Over the years the house underwent renovations, however in 2015, the house

demolished after Bair family sold the property (figure 7-8). The Bair family patriarch owned the property until his untimely death after the freeze of 1962. From then on his widow, Dorothy Ann had the title until she bequeathed it to her oldest son and then to Mr. Dwayne Bair upon the brothers death from cancer. On December 30, 1976, his [Dwayne Bair] mother Dorothy Bair deeded lot six of block two hundred forty-six over to Dwayne and his

Dwayne Whigham Bair Family



Printed from Family Echo - <http://www.familyecho.com/>

wife Shirley Bair.

Figure 6 Dwayne Whigham Bair family tree which includes his maternal grandparents, paternal grandparents, brothers and sister and his wife and children.

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the above described premises, together with all and singular, the rights and appurtenances thereto in anywise belonging unto the said

DWAYNE BAIR and SHIRLEY BAIR, their

heirs and assigns forever; and I do hereby bind myself, my

heirs, executors and administrators, to Warrant and Forever Defend all and singular the said premises unto the said

DWAYNE BAIR and SHIRLEY BAIR, their

heirs and assigns, against every person whomsoever lawfully claiming, or to claim the same, or any part thereof.

Witness my hand at Edinburg, Texas this 21st day of

December, A.D. 1976

Witnesses at Request of Grantor:

Dorothy Bair
Dorothy Bair

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

THE STATE OF TEXAS,
COUNTY OF HIDALGO

BEFORE ME, the undersigned authority,
in and for said County, Texas, on this day personally appeared

DOROTHY BAIR,

known to me to be the person whose name is subscribed to the foregoing instrument, and acknowledged to me that he executed the same for the purposes and considerations therein expressed.

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND SEAL OF OFFICE, this 21st day of December, A.D. 1976

(L.S.) *Thomas G. Julian*
Notary Public, Hidalgo County, Texas
My Commission Expires June 1978

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

THE STATE OF TEXAS,
COUNTY OF

BEFORE ME, the undersigned authority,
in and for said County, Texas, on this day personally appeared

known to me to be the person whose name is subscribed to the foregoing instrument, and acknowledged to me that he executed the same for the purposes and considerations therein expressed.

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND SEAL OF OFFICE, this day of A.D. 19

(L.S.)
Notary Public, County, Texas
My Commission Expires June 19

CORPORATION ACKNOWLEDGMENT

THE STATE OF TEXAS,

Figure 7 Page 2 of Warranty Deed where Dorothy Bair sells and undivided 43% interest in and to the West Seven acres of the East one half of Lot No. 6 in Section No. 246. Deed of Records, Hidalgo County Court Records Vol. xx, page 878.

A-96
No. **35665**

WARRANTY DEED

With General and Corporation Acknowledgments

FROM

DOROTHY BAIR, a widow,

TO

DWAYNE BAIR, ET UX

FILED FOR RECORD

THIS DEED FILED FOR RECORD THIS DATE, A.D. 19...

At 11/18 o'clock AM.

DEC 30 1976

County Clerk.

By SANTOS SALDANA, Deputy.

County Clerk, Hidalgo County, Texas

By [Signature], Deputy.

A.D. 19...

By _____, County Record

of _____ Book _____

Page _____

County Clerk,

By _____, Deputy.

Recording Fee \$ _____

This instrument should be filed immediately with the
County Clerk for Record

MARTIN Anthony Co., Inc.
W. L. McDonald & Stewart
P. O. Box 330
Edinburg, Texas 7853

879

Figure 8 Page 3 Warranty Deed where Dorothy Bair sells and undivided 43% interest in and to the West Seven acres of the East one half of Lot No. 6 in Section No. 246. Deed of Records, Hidalgo County Court Records Vol. xx, page 879.

Since the Bair family were farmers, they owned and sold multiple properties over the years. The properties were the original homesteads in the region. The property on lot eight is where Dwayne Bair and his brothers spent their childhood working and playing. Although the properties have changed hands over the years, the legacy the Heacock and Bair families are preserved in oral histories of Mr. Dwayne Whigham Bair recorded herein.

Conclusion: The Spanish colonized Texas and the Rio Grande Valley

Settlers who were accompanied by José de Escandón were rewarded for their pilgrimage by receiving Royal Land Grants. Descendants of the original recipients and heirs sold or lost this land. In turn it would be sold to the Bair and Heacock families and thousands of others in the early twentieth century. Coming from Iowa, the Bair and Heacock families established roots in this region by buying property and cultivating the land as farmers. For more than seventy years, the family followed this traditional occupation, until Dwayne Bair warned his children of the inherent risk associated with being a farmer. As natives of south Texas, the Bair and Heacock family history is interwoven within the fabric of the Rio Grande Valley.

Chapter 2

Family Life

Michael Johnson, Karla Lira, Carl Neeley, Miguel Calvillo, Ryann Fink and
Jesus Gutierrez

The Rio Grande Valley, located in the southern tip of Texas, is home to 1.3 million people.¹⁶ Dwayne Bair and his family call it their home. But unlike some people who have more recently began to call the Rio Grande Valley their home, Dwayne Bair's family has been here since the early 1900s. What makes their residence in the Rio Grande Valley even more interesting is the fact that Dwayne Bair's family is not native to the land. The Bair and Heacock family, Dwayne Bair's paternal and maternal family, made their move here in the early 1900s. In a pivotal time where the configuration of cities was still an ongoing process and railroads had not become a widespread phenomenon across the Rio Grande Valley, the Bair and Heacock families gravitated towards the area in hopes of a more prosperous life. While it is still a little uncertain as to why both families decided to make the move, an interview with Dwayne W. Bair himself, has given us some insight on the mystery along with a better view on why people, like the Bair and Heacock families, may have left everything they knew in order to gain everything.

Land developers were a huge part of the Rio Grande Valley's history. Their influence into the region is what drew many settlers towards the Magic Valley and is most likely why the region is as successful as it is today. The nickname, "Magic Valley," was given to the area by these land speculators in order to convince people outside the region, mostly outside the state, to leave their homes in order to start a fresh life in an unknown land filled with "opportunities."¹⁷ The job of land speculators was to lure potential buyers in by pitching the wonders of the area and what it had to offer. In some cases, many land developers made deals with clients before their clients even had a chance to see the land. As mentioned earlier, the target clientele for this land were people who were not from around the area. Echoing this point, Dwayne Bair, assumes that this is what led both the Bair and Heacock families to the Rio Grande Valley. "I have to assume that some of these land speculators and developers used to go up into the northern states and gather people and tell them about the Magic Rio Grande Valley and how beautiful it was...and they'd usually probably go up when there was snow and ice everywhere."¹⁸ Land speculators played a big role in the early development of the Rio Grande Valley. Mr. Bair stresses this point later on in the interview with him by saying, "These developers really created a lot of sensation up there. I'm sure they showed some pictures and told them about the wonderful weather."¹⁹ According to Douglas R. Littlefield in *Conflict on the Rio Grande: Water and the Law*, speculation in the Rio Grande Valley "erupted shortly after the 1904 compromise had been

¹⁶ US Census Bureau, www.Census.gov, accessed October 26, 2015.

¹⁷ Jennifer R. Nájera, "The Borderlands of Race and Rights," in *The Borderlands of Race: Mexican Segregation in a South Texas Town* (University of Texas Press, 2015) 20.

¹⁸ Dwayne W. Bair, CHAPS Class, Family Group Oral History Interview, University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, October 9, 2015, 1.

¹⁹ Ibid.

reached.”²⁰ This compromise was a part of the Reclamation Act of 1902 which was a law funded and allowed access to irrigation for farmers.²¹

Around this time, the railroad began to fully take shape which was going to connect between bigger economic cities like Corpus Christi and San Antonio with the Rio Grande Valley. In *The Borderlands of Race: Mexican Segregation in a South Texas Town*, Jennifer R. Nájera pinpoints the influence of the railroad by highlighting the fact that the Rio Grande Valley “began to experience much more traffic, thus significant social and economic changes.”²² Nájera then goes on to say that “the railroad facilitated the shift from ranching to farming as a primary regional industry.”²³ This was the case for Mr. Bair’s father, Lee Martin Bair, and his side of the family because they were farmers in Iowa. Once they heard about the Magic Valley from land speculators, they “brought all their farm equipment on a train and their mules, which they used to farm with, on a train and started farming out here in north of Edinburg.”²⁴ The Rio Grande Valley seemed almost like a haven for farming due to its weather conditions, access to irrigation systems and agricultural land. The region is not necessarily a valley, but more of a delta containing alluvial soil, which varies from sandy and silty loam through loam to clay.²⁵ The farming conditions attracted a vast amount of farmers to the Rio Grande Valley. Mr. Bair thinks this may have been the deciding factor for his father’s family to move in 1920 because “they told him he could plant three crops a year. You know, up there, there’s just corn and soybean.”²⁶ This was appealing not only for the Bair family, but for many northern farmers, like the Norquests, where the weather conditions yielded severe freezes more often than in the Rio Grande Valley.²⁷ The area has seen its share of freezes in 1949, 1951, 1962, 1983 and 1989,²⁸ but the citrus fruit culture has survived them all. In the eyes of a farmer, severe weather conditions are a nightmare because they depend upon these crops in order to fulfill orders and to, most importantly, provide for their family. Up north, it must not have been working out since many people were planting the same type of crops to survive the weather conditions. Since there must have been an abundance, the need for certain crops may not have been as high. Once you introduce an irrigation system into the mix, you are looking at a very intriguing and convincing area to farm in. The Rio Grande Valley is no stranger to droughts, but with the Rio Grande being a part of the landscape, the area seemed like a prime area for farming and starting a new life.

²⁰ Douglas R Littlefield, "The Reclamation Service Begins Work," in *Conflict on the Rio Grande: Water and the Law, 1879-1939* (Norman- University of Oklahoma Press, 2008) 150.

²¹ Theodore Roosevelt Center Blog. “The Arid West and the Newlands Reclamation Act of 1902”, June 17, 2013. Accessed October 26, 2015.

²² Nájera, Jennifer R., "The Borderlands of Race and Rights," in *The Borderlands of Race: Mexican Segregation in a South Texas Town*, 20.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Dwayne W. Bair, CHAPS Class, Family Group Oral History Interview, University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, October 9, 2015, 9.

²⁵ Vigness, David M. and Mark Odintz, "Rio Grande Valley," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed October 28, 2015, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ryr01>.

²⁶ Dwayne W. Bair CHAPS Class, Family Group Oral History Interview, University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, October 9, 2015, 1.

²⁷ Hernandez-Salinas, Sandra, et al. *The Norquest Family: A Porción of Edinburg*. A Report Prepared for the Norquest Family and for The University of Texas-Pan American’s Community Historical Archaeology Project with Schools Program, Edinburg: University of Texas-Pan American Edinburg: The University of Texas Pan American, 2012.

²⁸ Vigness.

Dwayne Bair's mother, Dorothy Heacock, and her family moved here in 1913.²⁹ According to Mr. Bair, he assumes his mother's side of the family was "excited about going somewhere new, and into a new, developing area. Now obviously I wasn't there in 1913 when my mom came, but that's one of the reasons they came down, I believe."³⁰ Besides farming, the area was seen as a fresh start for people due to the increase in commerce brought on by the railroad as well as the opportunity to start businesses. "...when my mother's family came, they bought land where Pan-Am is over here...then they built their house where the Pan-Am bookstore is on the northeast corner of 4th Street and University Drive. [Figure 9] They owned a half a block there, and they had five little rent houses and a house there."³¹ The Heacock family owned a small portion of block 225, which was later turned into the University of Texas Pan-American bookstore.

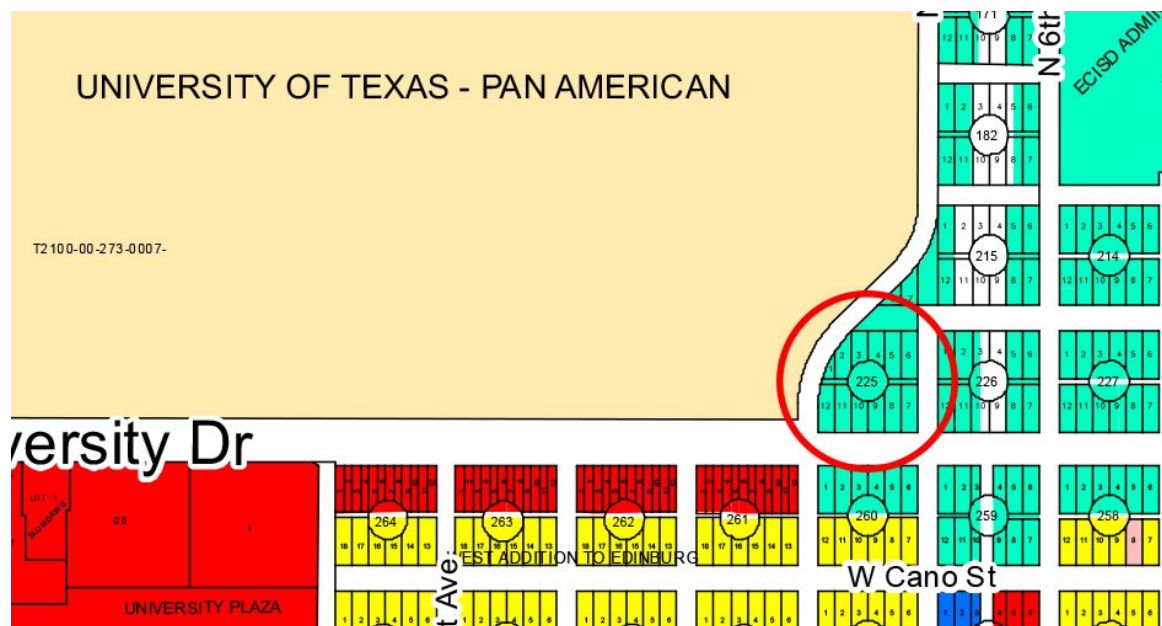


Figure 9 The property circled is block 225. This is where Mr. Heacock purchased lots 1, 2 & 3 to be used as rental houses.

According to the Hidalgo County Clerk records, Joseph W. Heacock purchased lot 2 of block 225 in January of 1915 (figure 9).³² A little over a year later, lots 1 and 3 were also purchased by Joseph Heacock.³³ Along with the land purchased in block 225, Mr. Bair also elaborated on another piece of property purchased by the Heacock family. "My grandpa built a hardware store downtown (figure 10-11). He was in the feed and seed store business."³⁴ This building still stands at the south west corner of 12th and Cano Streets.

²⁹ Dwayne W. Bair CHAPS Class, Family Group Oral History Interview, University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, October 9, 2015, 1.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Hidalgo County Courthouse, County Clerk's Office, Land Title Records, Warranty Deed, 01/21/1915; 00052, p. 428.

³³ Hidalgo County Courthouse, County Clerk's Office, Land Title Records, Warranty Deed, 02/12/1916; 00053, p. 17.

³⁴ Dwayne W. Bair CHAPS Class, Family Group Oral History Interview, University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, October 9, 2015, 2.



Figure 10 Photograph taken from the inside of the Heacock family hardware store located in downtown Edinburg, c. 1915.

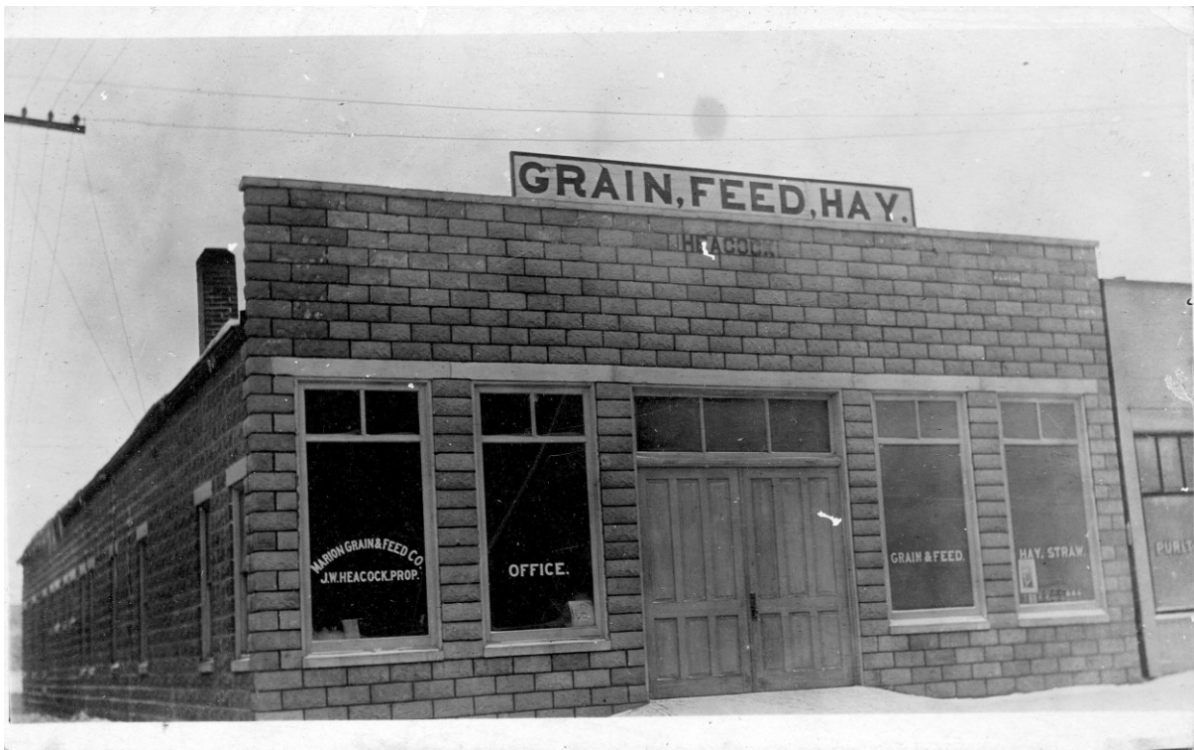


Figure 11 Photograph taken from the outside of the Heacock family store, c. 1930.

Mr. Bair's grandfather was a miller (figure 12).³⁵ He produced flour by using a water wheel in a nearby creek. Along with this, he would also ground up different types of grain for his business.

³⁵ Ibid.

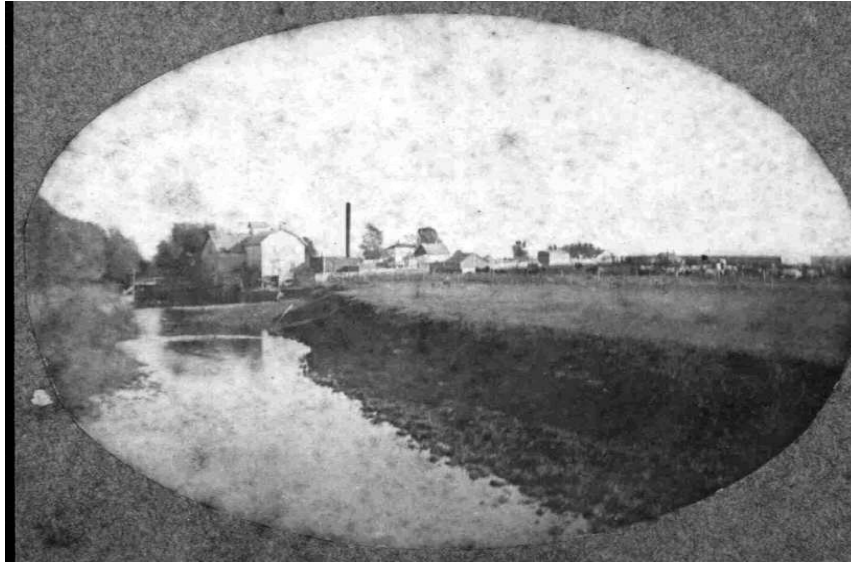


Figure 12 Photograph taken of the Heacock Mill in Quorn, Iowa.

The Rio Grande Valley appealed to people from all walks of life. People had a “pioneer spirit,” Mr. Bair said, to go to a new place in order to start from the beginning in the hopes of flourishing.³⁶ These pioneers must have had doubts. When asked if his grandparents had doubts about moving to the Rio Grande Valley, he was sure in saying that there had to have been. “There’s got to be questions. Anytime anybody pulls up stakes and moves, there’s got to be, you know, a lot of questions. Is this the right thing to do? What’s going to happen, you know? Good or bad. And I’m sure there’s a lot of questions in people’s mind but they just had to have the determination and that’s what they wanted to do, so people did it.”³⁷

These were the pioneers of the Rio Grande Valley in the era of commercial agriculture. Both the Bair and Heacock families took a risk. They moved everything they had in order to start a new life in an unknown area. This was a lot harder than what it may seem like. To move to a developing area that was still learning how to walk and leave everything you know behind, takes courage and determination in order to fully succeed. When asked about the adjustments to new life in the Rio Grande Valley he points out that “there was a lot of shock. I mean, different climate conditions and, you know, just many conditions were different than what they had before.”³⁸ This was what these pioneers had to deal with. In some cases, this transition was not a smooth one and many farmers and business people were discouraged as soon as times got tough, but the Bair and Heacock families stuck through it all and found a way to flourish from the endless possibilities they had by taking the risk. This risk proved to be the right move, as Dwayne Bair and his family are still here and have been partly responsible for the success of citrus and agriculture in the Rio Grande Valley.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

Education

One thing that has helped facilitate the success of the Bair family is their devotion to education. Mr. Bair and various members of the Bair/Heacock families have attended The University of Texas Pan American. Names of various businesses, streets and even universities change through time. The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley has had name changes as well, and to understand the following information we will provide a brief background of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley's (UTRGV) previous names. In 1927-1933 UTRGV was called Edinburg College. It was known as Edinburg Jr. College between 1933 and 1948. In 1948 the name changed to Edinburg Regional College until 1952. Pan American College was the name from 1952-1971. From 1971-1989, the name of the school changed to Pan-American University. Many today, know the university by University of Texas Pan-American, this name was valid from 1989-2015.³⁹ The current name of the university beginning in August of 2015 is the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley.⁴⁰

Dwayne Bair is the son of Lee Martin Bair and Dorothy Heacock Bair (figure 13). The Bair family moved to the Rio Grande Valley in 1920 and education was not always possible for everyone. According to Dwayne Bair, his father Lee Martin Bair was not able to attend college and began to farm when he moved to the Rio Grande Valley. His mother, Dorothy Heacock Bair did manage to attend college (figure 14). She attended Texas State College for Women in Denton and graduated from University of Texas at Austin. She participated in school sports such as women's basketball and tennis. However, she never told her children until they found a moth-eaten Longhorn shirt. When she was asked about it, she told them and showed them pictures of the women's basketball team with her in them. After her husband passed away in 1962, she went back to school and attended Pan-American College. After graduating she taught at Robert E. Lee Elementary School. Knowing the value of education, their children were encouraged to attend college. Howard Lee Bair, the oldest of the children attended Edinburg Jr. College in 1952. Despite his attempts to graduate he went into the Army Reserve and the Korean War broke out and was not able to finish his college career even after returning home. Dwayne Bair, attended Pan-American College in 1952, the first year it became a four year college. He attended three semesters until "Uncle Sam knocked on the door."⁴¹ He and fifteen others from that same college were called to the service in the middle of the semester. He was able to complete the semester by asking permission in the recruitment office and they agreed for them to finish the semester and received credit.

³⁹ Garcia, Janette, et al. *Atwood Acres: A Porción of Edinburg*. A Report Prepared for the Atwood Family and for The University of Texas-Pan American's Community Historical Archaeology Project with Schools Program, Edinburg: University of Texas-Pan American, 2014, p. 79.

⁴⁰ University of Texas-Pan American, "History and Traditions." UTPA. 2014 Accessed October 26, 2015 [Http://www.utpa.edu/about/history-tradition/](http://www.utpa.edu/about/history-tradition/)

⁴¹ Dwayne W. Bair CHAPS Class, Family Group Oral History Interview, University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, October 9, 2015, p. 3.

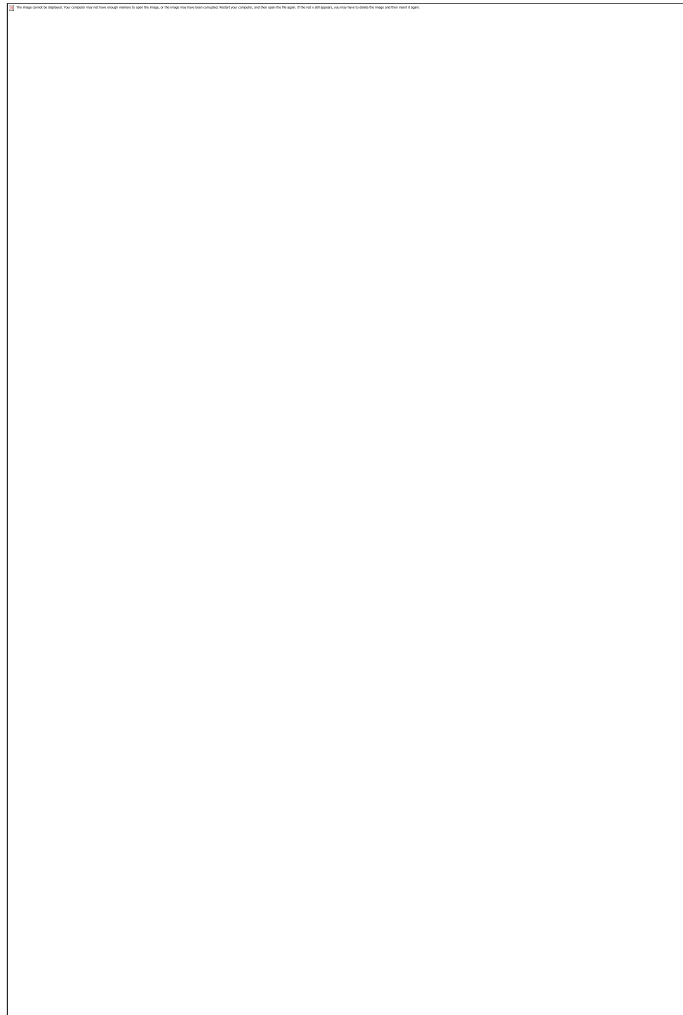


Figure 13 Lee Martin Bair and Dorothy Heacock Bair.
While in honeymoon in San Antonio, March 17, 1929.
(Courtesy of Dwayne Bair)



Figure 14 Dorothy Heacock Bair c. 1920.

When he returned, his father suffered from a heart problem and saw it upon himself to help his father on the farm instead of continuing his college career. Along with his brother Howard, they helped their father and after a couple of years his father passed away. However; he does not regret his decision. Dwayne's older sister, Margie Maureen Bair did attend South Western University. She pursued a degree and was able to graduate from that same university. Dwayne Bair also had a younger brother, James (Jimmy) Edward Bair. James attended Texas A&M for one year and then decided to attend Pan-American College for another year. However, as fate would have it "he'd been riding bulls one night over at the Sheriff's Posse Arena and got in the back car seat had a wreck and was killed in his twenties."⁴² He never got to finish his degree.

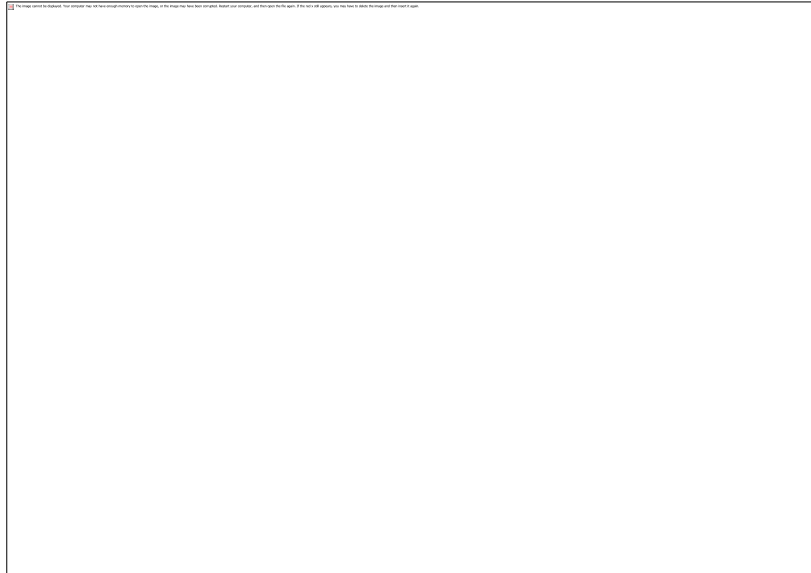


Figure 15 Dorothy, Jimmy, Lee, Dwayne, Howard and Marjorie Bair in front of family home c. 1940 (Courtesy of Dwayne Bair)

Dwayne W. Bair knew the importance of an education despite his brief time in college. He passed on that lesson to his children and encouraged them to pursue a degree. "A degree doesn't guarantee a darn thing. It might open a door, but once the door is open you gotta perform."⁴³ This saying was heard a lot in the Bair residence. His children heard this and grew up knowing that an education was one thing that could not be taken away from them. Steven Bair, Dwayne Bair's oldest son, upon graduating high school he told his father, "Dad, I don't want to spend your money and my money and my time." Dwayne's response to his son was to get himself a job and start digging ditches. Steven, started working at North Alamo Water Supply. When he grew tired of that he got interested in aviation and decided to become a pilot. "In those times you needed two years of college to be an airplane pilot but Steven aced all the tests and got his license. He then flew charter and became an instructor and then was an airline pilot for over thirty years."⁴⁴ Soon after, he was able to work for McAllen Aviation and Piper Dealer. Without any college education Steven Bair was able to

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Dwayne W. Bair CHAPS Class, Family Group Oral History Interview, University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, October 9, 2015, 5.

live a comfortable life and as Dwayne Bair puts it “made big money” and now retired.⁴⁵ Dwayne’s son Jeffrey Scott Bair, went to Texas A&M. While working in the computer department on campus he really enjoyed working with computers. After graduation, the university wanted him to continue working for them and is now Senior System Engineer for Computer Services Inc. He never really utilized his degree but knew that he had job security. “Dad, as long as they got mainframe, I got a job,”⁴⁶ was something he said to his father and is now two years away from retiring. Dwayne Bair’s oldest daughter, Joni Bair. She was able to attend Pan-American College. After graduation she became a teacher and is now teaching in Los Fresnos. Julie Bair, Dwayne Bair’s youngest daughter attended Pan American and obtained a master’s degree in speech and hearing therapy. Currently she is working in the McAllen School District.⁴⁷



Figure 16 Dwayne and Shirley Bair’s children: Julie, Steven, Jeffery Scott and Joni c. 1996
(Courtesy of Dwayne Bair)

At the time Dwayne was in school, there were different mentalities and philosophies for educating young minds. “I’m sure that (education) has improved. There are a lot more subjects that are studied today,”⁴⁸ Dwayne Bair states. This is proven to be true. Education has improved a lot since Bair was in school. However, he feels that despite the progress in the education system is good, “one thing that everyone needs is just the basic reading, writing and arithmetic.”⁴⁹ The philosophy that Bair seems to believe is that education is more important than a degree. “I would say that there’s more types of professions available than there probably used to be. Even though they’re focusing on the science, math and things like that now a days that specialize to help get into that business.”⁵⁰ Bair did not manage to graduate because he chose to help his father on the farm. This shows a strong set

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Dwayne W. Bair CHAPS Class, Family Group Oral History Interview, University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, October 9, 2015, 5.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 5.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

of morals on his part. A piece of paper stating that you went to school implies that someone took that extra step into improving their life and were willing to pay for classes to achieve that. A diploma is a great achievement for those deserving of it. Several times, there are students who acquire the diploma but cheat their way through classes and cannot “perform” once the “door is open.”⁵¹ A man like Dwayne, with a good work ethic along with education can do a lot more than someone with a degree and an inability to perform in the field in the long run.

The way someone is treated in school can also affect the way you learn and the way you feel towards school. Disciplinary manners can also become variable for students to attend school in the future or if a student will drop out. Every student has a different point of view and can either shrug a punishment or be completely affected by it. When Bair was asked about the punishment system at his school growing up he laughed and replied, “Aw man, we got whipped all through junior high school.”⁵² If someone would do something wrong and “nobody told who did it, everyone would get whipped they’d take us out and they would whip every one of us.”⁵³ During this time the children would get whipped with wooden paddles and asked to bend over and hold their ankles. “Oh, we got whipped all the time, I mean hard too,” Bair states. “Corporal punishment”⁵⁴ is what Bair called it. Despite the hard discipline he said that it was “no big deal”⁵⁵ and that it taught him respect for authority. “Today, I see a lack of respect for authority.”⁵⁶ This could very well be because of the changes in discipline through the years. The student has a lot more power than a teacher in regular schools. If a teacher hits a student or as so much says something the student feels uncomfortable with, the teacher could lose his job. In some cases it is better to give the teacher some power over the students but with today’s regulations it can be hard find the boundaries for discipline.

The improvement of education at the college level, diplomas and discipline are important to someone’s school career. Just as important are the early years of education, such as elementary. There were limited amounts of grade schools in the Edinburg area. Bair explains, “There were two different grade schools. Stephen F. Austin and Robert E. Lee.”⁵⁷ With Mexico right across the border there were a lot of immigrants who also studied alongside Dwayne Bair. However, despite there being Hispanic children in schools there were not too many speaking in Spanish.⁵⁸ Bair explains, that with two grade schools the one in “East Edinburg mostly it was people that spoke Spanish.” They were not being segregated from one another with that purpose. As Bair puts it, “it was just the way it was.”⁵⁹

Education has always been a big part of Dwayne Bair’s life. While he may not have been able to earn his college degree he did very well for himself. He encouraged his children to have good morals and work ethics while growing up. The Bair family has faced many

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 6.

⁵² Dwayne W. Bair CHAPS Class, Family Group Oral History Interview, University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, October 9, 2015, 6.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Dwayne W. Bair CHAPS Class, Family Group Oral History Interview, University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, October 9, 2015, 7.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 6.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 7.

challenges but not one of them has given up. Today, the Bair family is happy and successful. Dwayne Bair's philosophy about how "a degree may open doors, but once they are open you have to be able to perform,"⁶⁰ is a very powerful message for everyone who feels that having a degree is the only way to be successful. Dwayne Bair is living proof of success coming from within and how a degree is just another tool to get to where you want to be in life.

Religion

The founders of Edinburg searched for a place to worship in the year 1908. The Methodist Church was established as the first Protestant Church of Edinburg. The first seminars were conveyed in a small square school house near where the Catholic Church is now established. Masses were detained in the building for almost a year up until the Lipscomb Store was completed and services were then held in the room upstairs. The first pastor of the Methodist Church was Charles Godwin and the second was Reverend Goddard. A big gathering of about 40 people gathered for the big event. "In the group it was found that there were two Methodist in Edinburg."⁶¹ It was concluded that construction of a church would be created and Mrs. A.Y. Baker held out a single envelope on that same day and took down the names of the people that would join the church. The forefather of the church was Mrs. Baker, a Methodist, so it was determined that the "church would be Methodist in Denomination."⁶² The pastor went every 2 weeks with his saddle bag on a horse and earned around 50 dollars a year. During 1910, the town site establishment bestowed three lots where you could find the Christian Church which now stands on W. Herriman Boulevard, and there the Edinburg Methodist Church was constructed.

The building in earlier years was being operated as a Christian Parsonage and Pastor W.R. Keathley was the first reverend of the Church. The second was Reverend E.H. Mays. This was the primary building where they used the praying station by numerous denominations. A Presbyterian priest went over frequently to the Church from San Benito and a Lutheran priest went regularly as well and was a Baptist Preacher. In the primary Church building their Sunday school was being conducted for the entire congregation. Mr. W.A. Thompson who was the postmaster was also the First Methodist supervisor of Sunday school. The First Methodist Church was revealed as a piece of McAllen in 1913. Due to the influx of people moving to Edinburg, it was essential to construct a bigger place to worship. In 1914, the church, which was then the Christian Church was founded by the affiliation and the residency of the town and was used as further Protestant denominations, along with the Methodists. Until 1921, it was possible for numerous denominations to leave and they went on to improve and complete their own groups by constructing church buildings of their own.

Reverend E.A. Potts was the first tenant pastor for the Methodist church in Edinburg around 1914 and during his ministry the first evangelist organization was prepared. In 1923 Reverend H. Goodenough went to Edinburg as a pastor and ministered for 4 years, meanwhile he was pastor the contemporary church building on 10th avenue was created. According to Dwayne Bair "They had a church there and then we sold it. We didn't have any room to park during the week for the women's organizations."⁶³ During the deal

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 6.

⁶¹ Edinburg Methodist Church archives, founding papers/files, church database.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Dwayne W. Bair, CHAPS CLASS, Family Group Oral History Interview, University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, October 9, 2015, 12.

members discussed to save the steeple due to the new proprietors going to destroy the old church and construct a bank in its place. Those church associates placed the steeple on the ground near Mon Mack Street and Bair became head of the project group and chose to construct a prayer garden around it. The history of the Methodist Church in Edinburg began while the town was still called Chapin.

The Methodist Church is a Protestant movement and dates back to 1729 when an Anglican priest named John Wesley broke from the Church of England. Methodists worship the historic Christian faith in God as Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit. There is a big emphasis on grace and laity. Laity is known to the people as non-clergy and are people that go to church but are not priests, instead they are worshippers. The Methodist Church does not believe that the priests and pastors are any better than the laity's but that they are the same. If someone needs help they can contact a laity or a priest because there is no hierarchy. The Methodist Church also stresses on the social justice, for example the building of hospitals and schools. Many hospitals and schools in Texas start with "United" and that is because the United Methodist Church was involved with the founding of those places. There is also importance on the small groups that are divided up by sexes and classes because they want the people from these sexes and classes to feel like they relate to one another. For example, if someone is having a problem with school someone from their same class can relate to them as well and give them some advice because this would be their safe place to keep accountability for their struggles. The Methodist Church also allows women to get ordained while other churches do not and this has been going on for about 50 years.

John Wesley who is the first founder of the Methodist Church believed that the main principle of living for the Christian faith was shown in 4 main policies that helped people appreciate and comprehend their religion. These 4 policies were the "Scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason."⁶⁴ The United Methodists share with other Christians the belief that Scripture is the main foundation and principle for the Christian policy. The legend of the church reveals the simplest appreciation of tradition and the long-lasting pursuit of God's Spirit altering human existence. Tradition is the antiquity of that ongoing atmosphere of mercifulness in and by which all Christians live by. Some aspects of human involvement challenge their religious intelligence and numerous people who believe in God dwell in fear, starvation, isolation, and poverty. A new knowledge of these experiences can council their annexation of biblical truths and polish their appreciation. By reason the Methodists read and construe the biblical scripture. By reason the Methodists decide whether or not their Christian spectator is unblemished and well-defined. Lastly, by reason the Methodists ask questions of religion and pursue to comprehend and appreciate God's actions and commands.

The First United Methodist Church choir was where Dwayne Bair could express himself vocally since music was a big part of his life growing up "Anyway I enjoyed music fact my mother made all of us, my oldest brother had to take violin and piano for one year, my sister took violin and piano for one year, they got to me and I had to take piano for one year, my little brother had to take piano for one year."⁶⁵ During 1920, the Methodist church

⁶⁴ "What United Methodists Believe," *The United Methodist Church*, accessed 2015, <http://www.siouxcityfirst.com/283125>.

⁶⁵ Dwayne W. Bair, CHAPS CLASS, Family Group Oral History Interview, University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, October 9, 2015, 12.

had recruited 25 choir members 9 of which were the Heacock family, Miss Ester Heacock, Dorothy Heacock, R.K Heacock, J.W. Heacock, Mrs. J. W. Heacock, Ester Heacock, Dorothy Heacock, and Mary Heacock. The Heacock's are connected to Dwayne Bair from his mother's side of the family. One of the earliest church programs is dated back to May 14, 1945 where they had an annual commencement and included the choir which sang the song Legend of the Bells. The same annual commencement also had other programs such as May Songs by: Onata Klossner, Significance of Little Things by Edythe Haas, Helen Keller, A Modern Miracle by: Idah Jones, Music by: High School Orchestra, Benediction by: Rev. E. L. Jones, and Stepping Stones in the Building of Character by: Charles Potts.

Throughout the years the First United Methodist Church has developed projects for their society, which include In His Steps shoe bank to assist the school children of Edinburg have new shoes, and Back to Bethlehem which is a seasonal outdoors performance of the first Christmas for all to run through and appreciate the Angeltree endeavor with presents for the children that are less privileged in the neighborhood. Back to Bethlehem is another project for the community and "is designed to help everyone rediscover the beautiful story of Christmas,"⁶⁶ which is through a part of the church hall and has been redecorated to portray a town in the Holy Land as it would have looked over 2,000 years ago. The First United Methodist Church allows all people from different religions to go and view the presentation and is free of charge. Another recent project that the First United Methodist Church has participated in was donating 179 stuffed animals in an attempt to assist the children that have been living in the domestic violence shelter managed by Woman Together or also known as Mujeres Unidas.

Flying

Mr. Bair is a devout man, but he and his family also like to have a good time. Mr. Bair recounted many stories of how his family spent their leisure time when they were not hard at work on the farm.

One of Mr. Bair's favorite pastimes is flying. There was a clear excitement about him as he began to recount his experiences with aviation, from his childhood up to the present day (figure 17). When asked when he first became interested in aviation, Bair handed a black-and-white photo across the table of a small boy standing in front of a metal toy airplane, one big enough to be ridden. "Does that answer your question?" he replied with a smile. He was all of one year old and captivated by the magnificent vehicle.

⁶⁶ "What United Methodists Believe," *The United Methodist Church*, accessed 2015, <http://www.siouxcityfirst.com/283125>.



Figure 17 One-year-old Dwayne Bair with toy peddle-car airplane, 1935.

As a young man growing up on a farm in the 1930s, he did not have a lot of free time. When work and chores were done, the young Dwayne Bair devoted his time to keeping up on the latest aircraft. As World War II loomed, the young Bair acquired a guide book of all the planes being used by the United States and the other Allies, as well as Germany and the Axis powers. He took it upon himself to study and memorize each of these aircraft.

During the war, the young Dwayne Bair was fortunate enough to live near Moore Field, an Army Air Forces airfield used to train pilots for the war. On some evenings, Bair's father would take him to the airfield to watch the planes take off and land. Unfortunately, this is not an option for present day aviation enthusiasts. Although it is no longer a military airfield, the base has a long history in Hidalgo County.

First established in 1941, Moore Field was a United States Army Air Forces training base named after Houston native Frank Murchison Moore. Frank Moore had served as a 2nd Lieutenant in the US Army and was killed while fighting in the First World War. (Wallace 2010) The AT-6 Texan and the BT-13 Valiant, both two seat trainers, were the primary aircraft operated out of Moore Field during the Second World War. By the time that the base closed in October of 1945, over 6,000 airmen had received their training there.

After the war, Moore Field became the Tri-Cities Municipal Airport, serving McAllen, Mission and Edinburg. This role was short lived. Due to Cold War tensions, Moore Field

was reactivated and rechristened as Moore Air Force Base (AFB) in 1953.⁶⁷ This name change reflected the Air Force's new status as an independent branch of service. The venerable AT-6 Texan returned, as well as a variety of jet aircraft. Pilot training continued there up until 1959. By 1960, the base was closed once again and the land transferred to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).⁶⁸

Under the USDA, the installation became Moore Field Airport and has since played a crucial role in the Rio Grande Valley's agriculture industry. Moore Field became the USDA's primary facility for their Screwworm Eradication Program, which ran from 1960 until 1981. Today, the USDA's Mission Laboratory and Mexican Fruit Fly Rearing Facility are located at Moore Field, along with their aircraft and equipment operations.⁶⁹

Moore Field is also the subject of rumor, or some may say an urban legend, among the Rio Grande Valley's aviation community. Some believe that Moore Field Airport is actually the site of clandestine military activity. The area is fenced off and closed to the public, and residents near the field report sounds of jet aircraft taking off under cover of darkness. One of the theories about the airfield is that there is a military jet interceptor that is kept on round the clock standby in one of the hangers there. While the veracity of this theory is unknown, it does not necessarily strain the boundaries of reason. In the post-9/11 world, the idea of the government keeping a military aircraft in place at a nondescript airport owned by a federal agency near an international border may be less bizarre than it sounds.

In our interview, Mr. Bair recounted his own strange experience with Moore Field. "A friend of mine bought a new airplane and he wanted me to go fly with him, play around with it and one day we come in and did a touch-and-go. When we got back to McAllen, tower said 'you need to call this phone number.' When he did, he got chewed out. 'You can't go into that airbase,' we got all that traffic."⁷⁰

Mr. Bair is an experienced pilot in his own right, and the former owner of a Piper PA 22/20 and a Maule M-5 235. The Piper P.A. 22/20 had been converted from a tricycle airplane to a "tail dragger". Bair prefers this arrangement for its rugged versatility, "I love that tail dragger because you can land them anywhere...in other words, you can land in rough terrain whereas a tricycle plane, you land in rough terrain you can snap that nose gear off. With a tail dragger, you come in and the fulcrum point is farther to the front so if you land on soft ground it won't flip necessarily as it would with a tricycle gear."⁷¹ Bair could see the benefit of improving the airport as it was an important asset to the City of Edinburg (figure 18).

⁶⁷ Leeda Wood, "Plant Protection and Quarantine Moore Air Base: Past, Present, and Future," *United States Department of Agriculture / Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service*, <http://swfrec.ifas.ufl.edu/hlb/database/pdf/00001948.pdf>.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 17.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Dwayne W. Bair, CHAPS Class, Family Group Oral History Interview, University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, October 9, 2015, 18.

⁷¹ Dwayne W. Bair, CHAPS CLASS, Family Group Oral History Interview, University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, October 9, 2015, 13.



Figure 18 Dwayne Bair, December 2015 at South Texas International Airport.

Flying runs in the Bair family. Mr. Bair's son, Steven Bair, had a distinguished career as a commercial airline pilot. In fact, Steven taught his father how to fly himself in 1980. After graduating from flight school, Steven Bair began flying for Emerald Air, a small commuter airline that flew out of McAllen in the early 1980s.⁷² He quickly moved up to a larger carrier, Muse Air, which was later known as Trans Star Airlines.⁷³ Steven would also fly for American West and eventually complete his career with US Airways, a major carrier, retiring just a short time ago after over 30 years in the cockpit.

Mr. Bair's uncle on his mother's side of the family was also a distinguished aviator. 1st Lieutenant Joseph Wilson Heacock Jr. was a pilot in the US Army Air Forces' 33rd Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron during the Second World War (figure 19). Lt. Heacock flew a P-38 Lightning on photo reconnaissance missions over Nazi occupied Europe, for which he was awarded the Air Medal. Heacock participated in Operation Overlord on June 6, 1944 and personally witnessed, from his cockpit, the Allied landings on the beaches of Normandy as he flew overhead. Joseph Heacock died when his P-38 crashed shortly after takeoff from the airbase in Chalgrove, England on July 7th, 1944. He is buried in the Cambridge American Cemetery in Cambridge, England. His name appears on the Hidalgo County Veterans War Memorial outside the courthouse in Edinburg, Texas.⁷⁴ Mr. Bair still has in his possession Lt. Heacock's wings that were earned upon graduation from flight training, which he had given to young Dwayne.

⁷² "Emerald Air –June 1984," *Timetablesonline* (blog), <http://airlinetimetables.blogspot.com/2012/11/emerald-air-june-1984.html>.

⁷³ Keli Flynn, "Muse Air," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/epm03>.

⁷⁴ United States Airforce Archives, 33rd Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron Online "Joseph Wilson Heacock, Jr." <http://www.33rdprs.photorecon.org/html/history/JWHeack.html>.

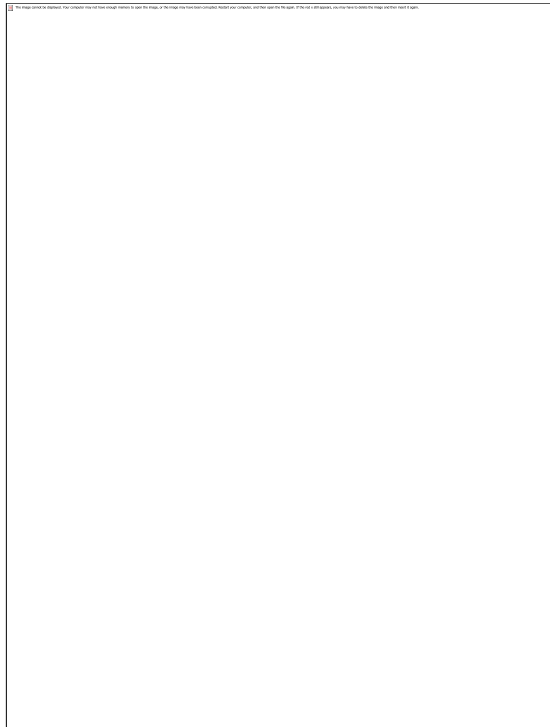


Figure 19 1st Lieutenant Joseph Heacock, U.S. Army Airforce, October 31, 1943 (Courtesy of Dwayne Bair)

Aircraft and aviation have been a lifelong fascination for Dwayne Bair and other members of the Bair and Heacock family. The year that the picture of a one-year-old Dwayne Bair standing with a toy airplane was taken in 1935. In the time since, the state of aviation in the Rio Grande Valley has changed more than many people of that time could have imagined.

The Rio Grande Valley has a rich history of aviation, going back to 1915. In that year, the United States Army launched the first aviation combat mission in US military history when the Army's token bi-plane took off from Brownsville to monitor the troop movements of Pancho Villa's revolutionary army in Mexico. The plane was spotted by the enemy and fired upon, sustaining moderate damage.⁷⁵

In 1929, Pan-American Airlines leased the entire Brownsville Airport in order to operate a fleet of Ford Tri-motor passenger planes and as a stopover point on flights to Latin America, which was an arrangement that would last for 30 years. Brownsville Airport would also host aviation pioneers Charles Lindbergh, Amelia Earhart and Howard Hughes at various times throughout the Golden Age of American Aviation.⁷⁶

As of 2015, the Rio Grande Valley is served by three major commercial airports, four municipal airports and its one federal use airport, Moore Field.⁷⁷ In 2014 the commercial spaceflight company Space X began construction on the Rio Grande Valley's first spaceport

⁷⁵ "The Valley's Little Known Aviation History," *Texas Less Traveled*, <http://texaslesstraveled.com/valleyaviation.htm>.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 13.

⁷⁷ "Texas Airport Directory," *Texas Department of Transportation*, <http://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/division/aviation/airport-directory-list.html>.

at Boca Chica Beach. The company anticipates commercial satellite launches to begin sometime in 2016.⁷⁸

Located approximately 5 miles north of Edinburg is the South Texas International Airport at Edinburg (figure 20). According to Mr. Bair, after its use with the military, it was just an old beat up runway. In 1984, he joined the board and the government gave the committee the ultimatum to “lose it, or use” the land. It was from this point forward, the slowly but surely built and expanded on the airport. Currently, Mr. Bair explains the airport received a two million dollar project which the staff is “putting in two twelve thousand gallon fuel tanks and new hangers, and we got forty people waiting on hangers. One of the fastest growing airports in the Rio Grande Valley, and certainly the closest to Mr. Bair’s heart, is one that is not very well known to even some of the residents of the city it belongs to. It is the South Texas International Airport or as it’s also called by some, the Edinburg Airport. This airport was originally used by the military for training jet pilots during World War II and also during the Vietnam War and was once an auxiliary airfield that was once a part of the Moore military airbase.



Figure 20 Front of the South Texas International Airport, Edinburg, TX, photo courtesy of Carl Neely, 2015.

After the war ended it ceased to be used by the government and was left unattended for approximately twenty years before the city of Edinburg began to clean it up and utilize it. Compared to other airports, it may be relatively smaller, but that is due to the fact that it is not an airport meant for transporting people. Some people, mostly businessmen who own twelve passenger planes use this airport as a takeoff and departure point between Edinburg and Mexico. Mr. Bair became a board member of this airport in 1984 and has remained there for many years. He also shared that this airport, although it is used by businessmen for

⁷⁸ Mike Wall, “SpaceX Breaks Ground for Private Spaceport in Texas,” *Space.com*, <http://www.space.com/27234-spacex-texas-spaceport-groundbreaking.html>.

travel, is mainly used for transporting cargo and for recreational flying as well as flight training for amateur pilots.⁷⁹

South Texas International Airport also serves a purpose for emergency personnel in case of natural disasters and the like due to "... its strategic position next to U.S. 281, a higher elevation that protects it from flooding and an abundance of nearby land available for expansion."⁸⁰ Highway U.S. 281 is the evacuation route, which allows for quicker response by emergency personnel coming in via the South Texas International Airport, and any V.I.P.'s needing to leave during an evacuation could also leave via the airport if they used it to land their planes (figure 21). Mr. Bair also brought up during the interview that a customs building was created due to the number of businessmen wanting to use the airport as a landing and takeoff point.



Figure 21 Front of customs building at South Texas International Airport, Edinburg, TX, photo courtesy of Carl Neely, 2015.

The customs building will allow pilots and their passengers to land at this airport and check in their instead of having to use a larger airport with more traffic.⁸¹ There was also a plan for the South Texas International Airport to build an aircraft rescue and fire station which could help the military and in public safety.⁸²

Earlier this year, there was a push to attain more funds for the South Texas International Airport in order to build more hangars, among other things.⁸³ Although the expansions

⁷⁹ Dwayne W. Bair, CHAPS Class, Family Group Oral History Interview, University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, October 9, 2015, 20, 21.

⁸⁰ Jared Janes, "Edinburg pushes airport runway extension," *The Monitor* (January 19, 2013), accessed October 24, 2015, http://www.themonitor.com/news/local/edinburg-pushes-airport-runway-extension/article_570f7a28-61c5-11e2-8d22-001a4bcf6878.html.

⁸¹ Dwayne W. Bair, CHAPS Class, Family Group Oral History Interview, University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, October 9, 2015, 19.

⁸² Janes, "Edinburg pushes airport runway extension".

⁸³ Taylor, "Expansion plans announced for South Texas International Airport."

made to South Texas International Airport may seem as if they are trying to compete with larger passenger airport, they have stated that they are not interested in competing with larger airports and are instead focusing on cargo traffic more than anything else.⁸⁴ South Texas International Airport has also been making more accommodations for safety personnel. The mayor of Edinburg has stated “DPS is now housed there. I think our big focus for the future is going to be concentrated on borderland security or homeland security and border protection at the airport, with more accommodations for our law enforcement at our airport.”⁸⁵ The airport has also seen some use by some important people such as Mr. McRaven, the chancellor for UTRGV in Edinburg,⁸⁶ and the Governor of Texas, who regularly uses this airport whenever he comes down to the Rio Grande Valley.⁸⁷

Some may wonder where the money used to expand the South Texas International Airport comes from. The money comes from a gas tax. Many may know of the gas tax placed on fuel used in cars that is then used to help build and maintain highways. The same principle applies for aviation. The fuel used for aircrafts is taxed and the money that is saved up due to this tax is later used to expand and improve airports. Typically ten percent of the money given to the airport for improvements comes from the city, while the other ninety percent of the money comes from the state government. All of the movement of money involved with aircraft gas tax is done through the Texas Highway Department Aviation Division.⁸⁸ Expanding the airport and adding more hangars increases the opportunities the airport will have for business as well as the opportunities of federal funding from the government. The mayor of Edinburg has also stated, “Now that we have the customs facility we can reactivate our foreign trade zone. What is important about a foreign trade zone? It gives you tax exemption status for up to six months. Whenever you have products shipped in, you can store them and then you can ship them out. As long as you ship them out within six months there are no taxes. So, you can do some manufacturing in Mexico, ship it here, store it and then ship it out and pay no taxes”. He is also hoping to have the foreign trade zone set up in under two years. The South Texas International Airport already has fifty thousand feet of cargo space just waiting to be used and they hope that having space for more cargo will open up opportunities to expand even further than they already have.⁸⁹

In 2010, the city of Edinburg hired a lobbyist to help bring in more money from the federal government toward the airports new two mile long runway. The runway alone cost approximately fifty million dollars but there was a plan to spend 234 million in total. The city itself spent about three million dollars in order to secure the property around the airport in preparation for expansion.⁹⁰

Mr. Bair pointed out that some improvements to the South Texas International Airport are very important, such as the length of the airstrip. Longer airstrips are necessary

⁸⁴ Janes, “Edinburg pushes airport runway extension.”

⁸⁵ Taylor, “Expansion plans announced for South Texas International Airport.”

⁸⁶ Dwayne W. Bair, CHAPS Class, Family Group Oral History Interview, University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, October 9, 2015, 16.

⁸⁷ Taylor, “Expansion plans announced for South Texas International Airport.”

⁸⁸ Dwayne W. Bair, CHAPS Class, Family Group Oral History Interview, University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, October 9, 2015, 20.

⁸⁹ Taylor, “Expansion plans announced for South Texas International Airport.”

⁹⁰ Jared Janes, “Edinburg hires lobbyist to bring federal dollars to airport,” *The Monitor* (January 24, 2010), http://www.themonitor.com/news/local/edinburg-hires-lobbyist-to-bring-federal-dollars-to-airport/article_12d02383-d89a-5b8e-8710-7957bea727f2.html.

depending on the climate and season. During the summer the atmosphere is denser and the air itself is a bit thinner and lighter as well. These changes during the summer require longer airstrips so that airplanes can properly land and take-off from the airport. At the time of the interview, it was also stated that a seven thousand foot runway is planned to be built in South Texas International Airport. The land has already been obtained for this expansion, but they still require the money to go ahead with the building of it.⁹¹

This little airport, seemingly unknown to many of Edinburg's residents has come a long way to becoming a pretty important part of this city. This airport has brought opportunities for business and perhaps even jobs, as well as created a place that will assist those who serve and protect the people from disasters. This little airport has slowly but surely grown into a place that deserves recognition and a place where those who love aviation can perhaps one day learn to fly.

Community Service

Aviation enthusiast Dwayne Bair shares his contributions in community life with a smile on his face, as he explains why he was involved in many organizations such as TexaSweat, Texas Produce Association, Texas Citrus Mutual, Texas Vegetable Association, Texas Citrus Association, Texas Produce Association, Texas A&M Kingsville Citrus Center Weslaco, Texas Valley Citrus Committee, Edinburg Airport Board, and First National Bank, "most of these I got involved with because I want to help, whatever you're involved with, you need to be involved, make some changes, do something."⁹² He was chairman of the board for all of these committees except for TexaSweat. Thus, the section of the chapter will cover the role Dwayne Bair played in the community by analyzing organizations in his civic life (figure 22).



Figure 22 Texas Citrus Exchange Board of Directors circa 1970. Pictured left to right Clyde Witte (Head Accountant), Gene Goodwin (Director), Brad Crockett (Director), Dwayne Bair (Director) and Jay Holford (Manager)

⁹¹ Dwayne W. Bair, CHAPS Class, Family Group Oral History Interview, University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, October 9, 2015, 21.

⁹² Ibid, p. 9.

Formerly Texas Produce Association, now, Texas International Produce Association (TIPA) was established in 1942; an association which key role is to promote and enlarge the citrus business. As the citrus industry grew, in 2012, there focus amplified by also including to promote marketing solutions, and importation of overseas citrus shipped into Texas. A member ship in TIPA allows for business connections to grow and the group has a presence in state legislation in Austin. Annually, the organization holds election for seventeen to nineteen members to play a role as board of directors to strategy goals for the group.⁹³ When helping the community, Mr. Bair extends the community to be the country. While being part of TIPA, and after the tragedy of September 11, 2001 struck, the organization gathered grapefruit and put them into gift boxes to be delivered to the fire department in Washington, DC. He explained with gratitude they shipped the fruit to the people in need to “showed them we cared.”⁹⁴

Founded in 1966, TexaSweat is an advertising agency in charge of promoting citrus retail from the Rio Grande Valley. TexaSweat focus with the public providing them with information about citrus, recipes, and has a section for parents and teachers. An interesting story Mr. Bair shares is the story of the advertiser who used to market for TexaSweat. The gentleman bought samples of an upcoming airline by the name of South West Airline. Dwayne Bair excitingly remembers some of the pictures the gentleman bought had girls in short shorts, or as Mr. Bair explains, “Hot Pants”, and blue and orange colors everywhere. The gentleman bought permits and samples of photographs and marketing, however, no planes. He remembers this because he thought it was interesting to see a company with all the advertising without a plane.⁹⁵

A grower’s organization, Texas Citrus Mutual established in 1958. Their mission represents Texas citrus growers and their interests, with a focus in aspects surrounding citrus, they deal with topics such as irrigation, pesticides, property taxes, and improvement of the citrus industry.⁹⁶ Texas Vegetable Association is an organization supporting local farmers, TVA lobbies in congress with issues dealing in water, land, production, and pesticides.⁹⁷ Before it was Plains Capital Bank and First National Bank, Mr. Bair served in National Bank of Commerce board for a number of years before the bank had an economic downfall. He was also member of the Production Credit Association, a lending agency helping farmer borrow money. Mr. Bair also mentioned in his interview, he sang choir for the Methodist church in Edinburg for over sixty years.⁹⁸

Texas Valley Citrus Committee, is made up of fifteen different board members and managed by Texas Produce Association in an effort to “administer the federal marketing order which was created by referendum of the citrus industry in 1966 to regulate the movement of fresh grapefruit and oranges from Hidalgo, Cameron, and Willacy Counties.”⁹⁹

⁹³ “About Us-Welcome To TIPA,” *Texas International Produce Association*, accessed October 19, 2015, <http://texipa.org/about-us-2/>.

⁹⁴ Dwayne W. Bair, CHAPS Class, Family Group Oral History Interview, University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, October 9, 2015, 11.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 11.

⁹⁶ “Valley AG Online,” *Texas Citrus Mutual*, accessed October 22, 2015, http://www.valleyag.org/tcm_index.html.

⁹⁷ “Valley AG Online,” *Texas Vegetable Association*, accessed October 19, 2015, http://www.valleyag.org/tva_index.html.

⁹⁸ Dwayne W. Bair, CHAPS Class, Family Group Oral History Interview, University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, October 9, 2015, 12.

⁹⁹ “Texas Valley Citrus Committee,” *Texas A&M Horticulture Program*, accessed October 22, 2015, <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/citrus/tvcc.htm>.

Some of the projects Mr. Bair worked on while being in the committee was the sterilization of the Mexican fruit fly. The Texas State Department of agriculture first did away with the screwworm fly because of its danger to cattle. They sterilized the screwworm fly by exposing them to radiation and as a result, reproduction was not possible. Mr. Bair then explained the method used to sterilize the Mexican fruit fly. The fruit flies were sterilized, then the flies were put into boxes (the boxes had a bulls eyes, which kids used to play with by shooting B.B guns at the targets) and then the boxes were dropped on top of the citrus field. Since the fruit fly was sterile, no damage was caused and the population dwindled.¹⁰⁰

Texas A&M Kingsville Center, formerly Texas A&I College in Weslaco, Mr Bair served in the board for thirteen years. Historically, some of the activities Texas A&I aided with is it offered classes the general public could take with a focus in entomology, soils, and horticulture. Statistics show that almost 900 students finished courses in the college as of November 1957.¹⁰¹ Mr. Bair explains some of the research he witnessed and its impact when he served in the committee. The amount of lycopene in grapefruit and its importance. According to Mr. Bair, “White grapefruit has no lycopene, pink had little, red a lot more then it progressed on, the redder the fruit was, the more lycopene it had in it.” Found in plants with red coloring, Lycopene aids in lowering risk for different types of cancers such as lung, breast, liver, and prostate cancer. Its main function in plants is to protect them from heavy light and helps for better usage of the sun for energy. Other research he saw being completed was the movement of chromosomes from one citrus tree in the Rio Grande Valley and inserting the chromosome to a citrus tree in Israel.

To celebrate and promote expansion of citrus in a tropical region during December, The Young Men’s Business League along with Paul Ord created the Texas Citrus Fiesta in Mission on December 1932. Picking a King and a Queen the nominees are special candidate heavily involved with agriculture, land, and the citrus industry to become “The Citrus King” and Queen Citrianna by choosing of former kings. Since then the festival has been celebrated annually with two exceptions. One the following year it was established since there was a major hurricane in 1933 and throughout World War II. As a result from a life time and dedication to planting citrus, in 1992, Dwayne Bair received the prestigious award for excelling in the industry.

A humble man with a humble heart, Dwayne Bair has participated in organizations related to agriculture and citrus for the main reason of helping the community. His heart and soul belong to the fields as he shared various experiences with the soil such as the passing of his father. As he sheds a tear when reminiscing this story, we are reminded the time here is limited and we need to capture the history of the area which is drastically changing. Dwayne Bair explains, “Whatever you’re involved with, you need to be involved, make some changes, do something” thus the section of the chapter covers the impact and his long trajectory with civic life.

¹⁰⁰ Dwayne W. Bair, CHAPS Class, Family Group Oral History Interview, University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, October 9, 2015, 17.

¹⁰¹ Casto, Stanley D. *A History of the Valley Training Center*. Kingsville: Texas College of Arts and Industry, August 6, 1963.

Chapter 3

God Made A Farmer...

April Wilson, Evan Berg, Gabriel Rodriguez, Mariana Watson and Octavio Ortiz

Macedonio Vela (Don Chano) lived in Mexico as a member of the wealthy elite prior to the founding of the Laguna Seca Ranch in 1867, located north of Edinburg, Texas (figure 23).



Figure 23 Aerial image of Laguna Seca Ranch c.1964
Courtesy of York University, Canada

In gathering experience and building his reputation, he sought to buy a “portion” of the land originally granted by the King of Spain to Captain Manuel Gomez and Doña Salome Balli.¹⁰² In a later change of faith, Doña Salome Balli became the wife of Don Juan (John) McAllen, and it was in this particular time that the agreement for what would soon be Laguna Seca Ranch was reached. Don Juan Epomucuno, under contract agreement, was to clear and work the land for seven years. For his hard work, a payment of one thousand dollars and the deed to four thousand four hundred and twenty-eight acres would be handed to him.¹⁰³ The old Spanish ideology had basic beliefs in order to prove a person was a true landowner: they had to clear the land, pay it off in seven years’ time, and prepare the land for farming. Don Chano paid the fee of \$1500 in only three years and the land was given to him. The County Records Office in Edinburg, Texas has this original title on file. The origins of the name of the ranch came from “Charco Seco” or “Dry Puddle”, however after the area was heavily trampled by cattle and horses, the area of what was once called a puddle expanded to the size of lake. Still vaqueros, or cowboys in Spanish, would take their herds to the lake to find it “Dry” and the name “Laguna Seca” was born (figure 24).¹⁰⁴

In 1871, citrus was introduced in South Texas for the first time. This product lead to being one of the highest profitable crops in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV). Macedonio’s fifth child, Carlita Vela, planted orange seeds from the oranges given to her by a Spanish traveling priest.¹⁰⁵ Her actions were responsible for opening the doors to the citrus industry in the RGV. The Vela family introduced citrus into the RGV as a personal consumption, subsistence crop, but did not launch it as a commercial crop.

¹⁰² Vela, Roberto. *Memories of Laguna Seca*. 1978.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 6.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

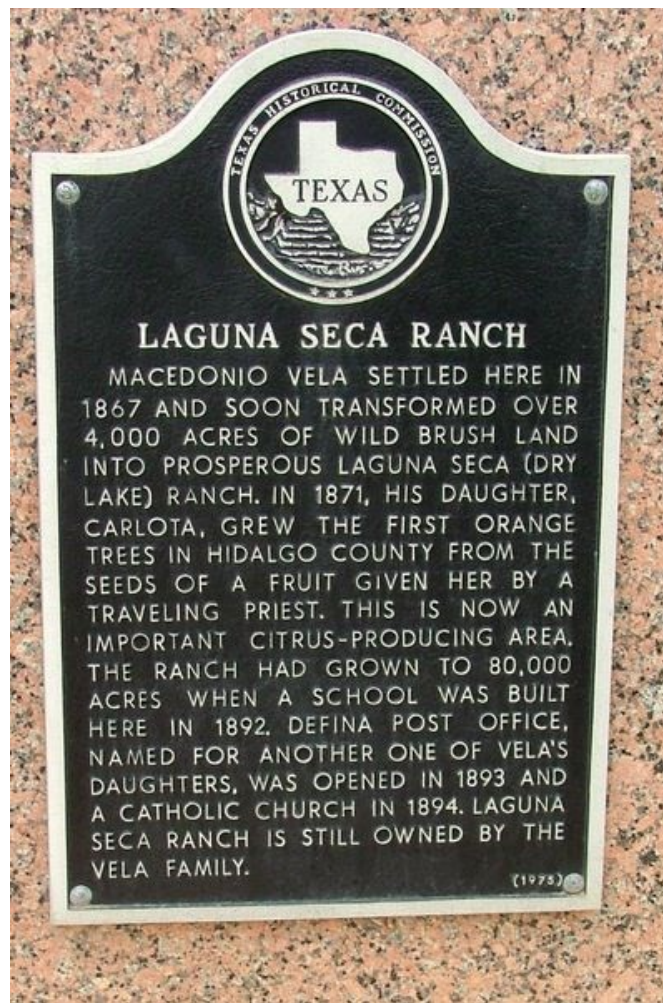


Figure 24 Texas Historical Commission Marker

The introduction citrus also brought the Anglo influence to the RGV, which occurred as a repercussion of the Mexican American War of 1846-48; an investment that was paid handsomely by the military to men like Mifflin Kennedy, John McAllen and William Neale for their efforts in supplying the troops during the war. These soldiers were offered land at an inexpensive price to move down to the RGV, which shows how wars influenced the RGV through ethnic violence and socioeconomic conflict.¹⁰⁶ The Anglo-American soldiers and their families did not want to destroy the socioeconomic status of the RGV, but instead became immersed in the local culture. Eventually, the Anglo-Americans obtained a prominent place within the society. While the land speculation and development, as well rapid expansion of commercial agriculture between 1904 and 1920, had become the dominant economic activity, the RGV brought thousands of Mid-Westerners, as well as New Englanders, down to become farmers. Rhode Islander William Frederick Sprague was in love with the Wild West idea, and decided to relocate to Texas. Sprague invested his wealth into 130,000 acres and named it La Coma Ranch, located south of present day Edinburg. Sprague, with the help of John Closner and Dennis B. Chapin, set forth the foundation Edinburg.

¹⁰⁶ Irving Levinson, "About the West: The Contours of a Very Special Border," *J. O. W.* 53, no. 3 (2014).

In particular, the Bair family of German origin was lured to the “MAGICAL VALLEY” in the early 1920s from College Spring, Iowa. Lee Bair, the patriarch of the family, married into the Heacock family who had relocated to the RGV around 1913. The Heacock’s owned a hardware store in Edinburg. Lee Bair’s son, Dwayne Bair, later married Shirley Martin. To be a farmer means having respect for the land, investing time in nurturing the land, and having a large investment to defeat the forces of nature and stand up strong after the storm has blown over.

Citrus in the RGV

After the introduction of citrus in 1867 to the RGV by the Vela family of Laguna Seca ranch, others soon realized that the crop would survive the semi-arid climate. Oranges were first introduced into Texas since 1830 at Morgan’s Point, just east of Houston. By 1838, Orange, Texas was established, but soon devastated by freezes in 1894 and 1895, then a severe freeze 1899 which helped push the citrus industry down to the RGV for commercial reasons.¹⁰⁷ The RGV was isolated from the rest of the state, in essence, but once the St. Louis, Brownsville, Mexico Railroad was completed in the 1920s, isolation was no longer the problem.¹⁰⁸ “The St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico became part of the Missouri Pacific Lines on January 1, 1925, but continued to operate as a separate company until it was merged into the Missouri Pacific Railroad Company on March 1, 1956.”¹⁰⁹ The citrus industry began to expand: from 600 trees in 1920, to 122,500 by 1945 and after World War I, where grapefruit trees made up at least two-thirds of the citrus industry in the RGV.¹¹⁰

Grapefruit has a lineage in Texas that begins with the Marsh Pink Seedless in 1929 which is a mutated branch from the white fleshed Marsh from Florida. Dr. JB Webb from Donna, Texas planted grapefruit then was hit by a freeze, but instead of giving up, Webb preserved a shoot and nursed it to health into a deep red seedless grapefruit known as the Webb Red Blush.¹¹¹ Dr. Richard Hensz of the Texas A&I Citrus Center worked hard to create a redder grapefruit, and, after all his hard work, in 1970 the Star Ruby was born, followed by the Rio Red in 1984.¹¹² After all the hard work, Texas has the sweetest grapefruit which cannot be emulated anywhere else because of the soil quality found in the RGV.

Other Crops Found in the RGV and How They Shipped and Canning Versus Fresh

Growing citrus takes a toll on most farmers because the crop does not yield a proper amount until it is four to five years mature, so citrus was not the only crop grown. Also, the first year of citrus farming is the most expensive because the farmer has to buy the trees.¹¹³ The RGV is known around the world as a grower of citrus with a sweet quality. This statement is no doubt true. However, citrus was and is not the only thing that farmers in the

¹⁰⁷ James Edwin Hill, Jr, *Texas Citrus Industry*, Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, Inc, 1963, 9-10.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 12.

¹⁰⁹ George C. Werner, “St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed December 5, 2015, (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/eqs30>).

¹¹⁰ James Edwin Hill, Jr, *Texas Citrus Industry*, 13-14.

¹¹¹ Hill, p. 60-63..

¹¹² “Texas Grapefruit History,” TexaSweat, 2015. Accessed November 23, 2015. <http://www.texasweet.com/texas-grapefruits-and-oranges/texas-grapefruit-history/>.

¹¹³ Hill, p. 54.

RGV grow, fruits and vegetables were commodities also harvested. Fruits and vegetables that were popularly grown in the RGV included cabbage, tomatoes, potatoes, carrots, beets, onions, corn, beans, watermelon, cucumber, cantaloupes, and turnips.

Shipments of the first vegetables were said to be in 1907 as railcars shipped onions and cabbage from the Mission, Texas area until the 1920s when beets and carrot production became popular with Mercedes-Weslaco district.¹¹⁴ Ice houses were located along the Southern-Pacific Railroad, a merge between the St. Louis, Brownsville, Mexico Railway and the Missouri-Pacific Railway, for ease of shipping produce out of the RGV. One such icehouse was located north of Edinburg in Lull, Texas, which is now just a rundown building in a neighborhood off of Monte Cristo Road and Flores Street.



Figure 25 Bracero Camp in Lull, Texas along the former St. Louis, Brownsville, Mexico Railroad. Now an incorporated part of Edinburg, this icehouse played an essential part insuring produce was shipped from the RGV and kept fresh. (note: icehouse is in the background) Photo courtesy of April Wilson, 2015.

According to Dwayne Bair, ice houses would have a chipper in some railcars that sprayed chipped ice over the produce such as cabbage and carrots because they could handle the cold and had wooden crates (figure 25). Other carts had an ice block that was hoisted into the bunker and as the train rolled, fans would blow to cool the produce. Though they became more high tech, shipping produce began to expand not only intrastate and interstate, but also international. Mr. Bair recalled a time that he had grapefruit shipped to Japan and Germany in shipping containers on container ships. They were kept cool in a refrigerated container which allowed for fresh produce to arrive overseas¹¹⁵. Trucks left the RGV more often than trains, trucks did not stop often so goods were fresher when arriving and most local trucking companies were bonded, so farmers felt more secure with their goods.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Agriculture, File S Farms and Ranches, Farm General, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas-Pan American.

¹¹⁵ Dwayne Bair, interviewed by Agriculture Group, *Oral History on Agriculture*, 17 October 2015.

¹¹⁶ James Edwin Hill, Jr, *Texas Citrus Industry*, 112-113.

Farming has grown as an industry since the 1900s, and has been profitable for many farmers in the RGV. Farmers like Dwayne W. Bair, have made a career out of farming in the RGV, however it was not easy with the many variables that come into play when you are a farming. Farmers in the RGV are able to grow different crops, and this is due to the climate and soil that is found in the area. With the ability to grown multitudes of crops, farmers are able to widen their margins for success. Growing different crops throughout the season was not a luxury, it was a necessity in order to give farmers some flexibility in their season. Although Mother Nature does not allow farmers to have leeway in their season, farmers can have season expectations, and a storm could come through and completely destroy one of the crops, leaving the farmer completely dependent on the other crops to keep their farm afloat.

Like many farmers in the RGV, Dwayne W. Bair, grew different crops throughout the season to keep his farming alive. The crops that he spoke greatly about were tomatoes and carrots. Other crops were grown as well, but these crops had significant impacts to his farming.

Mr. Bair planted several varieties of tomatoes, which include Homestead for fresh and Chico III for processing tomatoes (figure 26). With its introduction in February of 1969, the Chico III tomato made a large impact in the RGV. Created by Paul W. Leeper at the Texas A&M University Agricultural Research and Extension Center at Weslaco,¹¹⁷ the Chico III tomato was revolutionary because it was designed to be more resilient than the other tomatoes. This meant that this particular tomato was created to flourish in the RGV and less product would be trashed due to the tougher skin, which prevented bruising or general damage of machine harvesting. Mr. Bair also stated that the tonnage on the Chico III was tremendously higher than the varieties that came before it. Mr. Bair and other farmers in the RGV were able to bring in more using the same amount of acreage.



Figure 26 Man harvesting tomatoes with a harvester. Courtesy of Fender Unacoma in Italy

¹¹⁷ Agriculture, File S Plants and Animals, Tomato, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley.

As for carrots, Mr. Bair also farmed different varieties, some for fresh market included Imperator (for fresh) and Chantenay (for canning), and carrots that were used for processing were Danvers (figure 27).

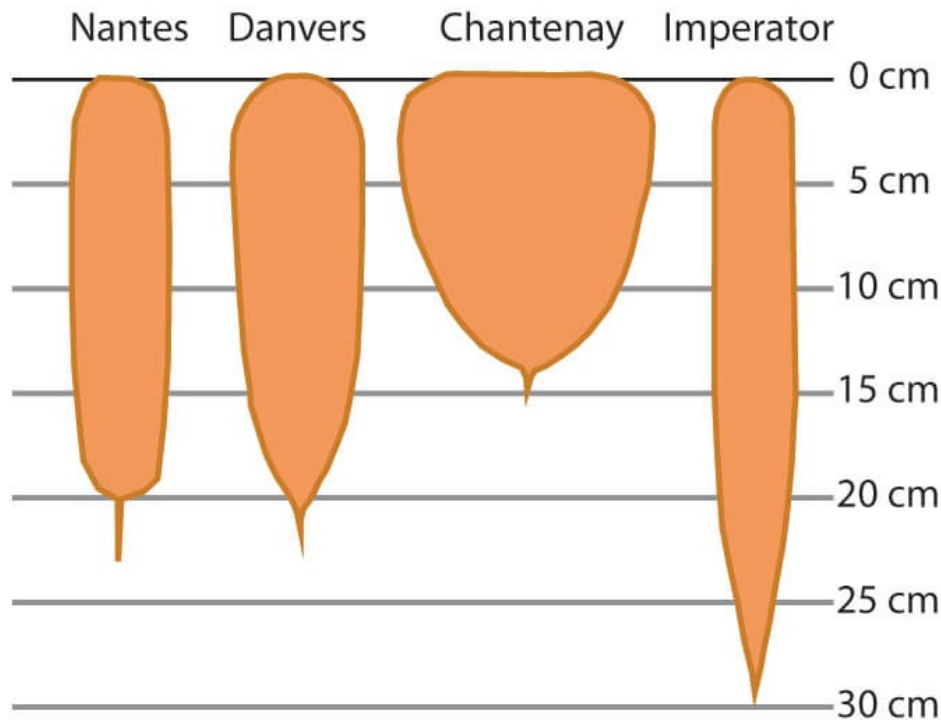


Figure 27 Carrot Chart shows the different lengths and girth of carrots used for canning or sold fresh in markets. The Danvers allows for a better color when processing the carrot for canning. Image courtesy of West Coast Seeds

Mr. Bair spoke about the differences between the processing and fresh carrots. Fresh carrots were longer and needed to be picked by hand because a harvesting machine would cause too much damage to the profitable crop. Fresh carrots would not produce a vast amount of tonnage, but the sold for a much higher price than the carrots used for processing. Danvers were shorter which produced more tonnage, and were able to be harvested with a machine because they had a tougher skin. The canning carrots also kept a better orange color when sliced for canning compared to the fresh carrot varieties.

Pesky Pests and Preventions

Land preparation was, and still is, greatly important to farmers and the success of their farms. A farmer knows that to have a good season, his land must be ready for the crop that he is planning to grow, which includes planting a crop that will complement the land and restore the nutrients into the soil. Mr. Bair stated that he would plant sorghum to restore the soil back to top shape. Another method Mr. Bair would use to prepare the soil for crops was deep plowing the field. Deep plowing would go as deep as six to ten inches into the ground which would reduce the formation of root rot. *Phymatotrichum* or *Ozonium* root rot, also known as cotton root rot, is a fungal disease and is destructive while limited to the

Southwestern region of the United States.¹¹⁸ After the harvest of cotton, farmers like Mr. Bair were likely to deep plow to stop or prevent the growth of root rot and would allow other crops to flourish.

The Citrus Rust Mite, or *Phyllocoptruta oleivora*, are normally located on the east side of the tree on the lower leaf. These mites cause the fruit to be a size smaller and drop the grade down by one, making the fruit unappealing for market. The Rust Mite is dormant during winter, and emerges in the spring to lay the eggs on the citrus trees.¹¹⁹ To rid a crop of rust mite, there are three methods that can be used. 1) Syringing – spraying the tree with a forceful stream of water, 2) Organic – introduce a predatory insect such as a Western Predatory Mite to eat the Rust Mite, or sulfur and canola oil mix, and 3) Mechanical – for heavy infestations, use Miticide, a specific chemical that is appropriate for fruit trees.¹²⁰

A devastating problem to farmers who grow corn is Aflatoxin, a naturally occurring toxin produced by the fungus *Aspergillus flavus*.¹²¹ When a plant stresses from drought, severe heat or damaged caused by insects, the fungus grows. Aflatoxin is very harmful, and poisonous to warm-blooded animals, so factories that purchase corn crops inspect the corn thoroughly before buying.¹²² In 1989, Mr. Bair stated that he had a beautiful corn crop ready to be harvested, but one day, an extremely warm southern wind blew in. With the corn ready to harvest, the warm air was unwelcomed, but Mr. Bair hoped for the best. When he harvested the corn, the buyer ran the product under a black light to inspect for Aflatoxin contamination. After the inspection, Mr. Bair found that his corn had been severely damaged by the warm winds and the Aflatoxin levels were too high for consumption.¹²³ There are no known preventative methods for fighting Aflatoxin since it is caused by weather shifts and decaying materials, but fungicides may be used to lessen the fungus.

Farming would not be successful if not for the equipment. The technology changed from hand work to animals for assistance, to tractors and tillers that did all the harder work.

The Advancement of Farming Technology

When it comes to agricultural work, the equipment used is just as important as the fertility of the soil and the availability of water to provide the farmer the necessary tools to create a sustainable and eventual economic lifestyle. At the turn of the century there was a great divide from various such industries as the agricultural industry in this case in point. This divide is in regard to the switch to machinery as opposed to the standard traditional way of draft power in which the use of animals such as mules, horses, oxen, cows, and etc. were used to cultivate, plow, and till the land because of their strength as plowing animals (figure 28).

¹¹⁸ Plant Disease Handbook, "Cotton Root Rot," *Texas Plant Disease Handbook*, accessed November 9, 2015, <http://plantdiseasehandbook.tamu.edu/problems-treatments/problems-affecting-multiple-crops/cotton-root-rot/>.

¹¹⁹ Texas A&M University A & I Department, *Guide for Citrus Production in the Lower Rio Grande Valley*, (College Station: Texas A&M Publications, 1965), 21.

¹²⁰ Audrey Lynn, "How to Get Rid of Fruit Tree Mites," *SF Gate*, accessed December 5, 2015, <http://homeguides.sfgate.com/rid-fruit-tree-mites-63990.html>.

¹²¹ Paul E Sumner and Dewey Lee, "Reducing Aflatoxin in Corn during Harvest and Storage," UGA Extension, accessed 28 November 2015, <http://www.extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.cfm?number=B1231>.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Dwayne W. Bair, interviewed by CHAPS Agriculture group, October 6, 2015, interview 1.



Figure 28 Mules were used by farmers to plow fields for farm circa 1920.
Courtesy of Monticello News, Georgia.

In fact many times, people who migrated from one place to another had to bring their animals along, as Dwayne Bair and his family did (figure 29).



Figure 29 Lee Bair, Dwayne's father, on a cart pulled by the family's mules c.1925. Courtesy of Dwayne Bair

He was quoted as saying:

but they brought their farming tools from Iowa and if you are gonna farm you got to have plows to turn the soil, and you gotta have planters to plant the soil, and you have to have cultivators. Now I cannot tell you any more than that those are the basic tools you need to have. Then, of course you had something to pull those tools

with, and that happened to be animals. Poor animals when they got to South Texas, it's hot down here.¹²⁴

This divide could perhaps also have been seen by various factors like the large cost of money it took to buy new implements. In addition to the large sums of money it took to acquire these new implements, people were already skeptical in the sense that they had already afforded the implementations needed (i.e., mules, horses, cows, oxen, etc.) to cultivate the land and saw no sense in obtaining new implementation. However as time went on and farming went to places such as the RGV, mule based technology was not enough as farming expanded beyond their community's needs to an exportation of crops statewide and eventually around the world; as such farming technology had to grow and change to accommodate for the demand for agricultural needs. In the 1920s when the Bair family moved from Iowa to the Rio Grande Valley by way of the railroad, they had to sell off their land and some equipment. This sacrifice was made in order to pay for their passage, essentials, and equipment to make it down from such a long distance of travel. They did keep the mules and other farming equipment, which they knew would get them through the tough road they had ahead of them in starting out anew in cultivating their new lands. Some of their essential equipment included their typical draft power of choice which was the mule and other implements such as plows and tillers. It was around the 1900's where farming technology would begin its step into the modern world and it all started with the Ford tractor.

While many people believe that the Ford Company mainly produces quality trucks and vehicles, Ford, ironically enough, also was a manufacturer of tractors. It was 1915 when Henry Ford decided upon producing tractors. The company (first called Ford and Son) utilized what they had learned from producing cars and, with it, the production of their tractors began to take shape. The Fordson F tractor was the beginning of modern farming technology as it was a:

standard-tread tractor with about 19 belt horsepower and a 2-plow rating. It had a vertical, 4-cylinder Hercules engine which started on gasoline and ran on kerosene, a 3-speed transmission, and a worm-gear final drive. The engine, transmission case, and the final drive served as the frame. Ignition was provided by magnets on the flywheel and a thermo-siphon system circulated water to cool the engine.¹²⁵

The reason that the Fordson tractors became popular has to do with Henry Ford's utilization and appliance of what he learned from his car manufacturing business. While many other companies were trying to sell big tractors that were more expensive by the financial standards of the 1900s, the genius of the Fordson came from:

The Fordson was revolutionary first and foremost because it was a smaller design than many of the tractors produced by other companies at the time. These other companies were operating under the mistaken belief that bigger is better. The smaller design of the Fordson allowed the tractor to be affordable and easy to produce.

¹²⁴ Dwayne Bair interviewed by: Agriculture Group Appendix B, October the 6th 2015, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in Edinburg.

¹²⁵ Larry Gay, "History of the Ford Tractor," Brassworks, accessed November 19, 2015, <http://www.thebrassworks.net/history-of-the-ford-tractor.html>.

Especially important to that goal, the new Ford tractors lacked a conventional frame. Instead, the engine, transmission, and axle housings were all bolted together to form the basic structure of the tractor. With the small size and innovative frame of the first Fordson, the tractor was well-suited for the mass production Ford had brought to the Model T. As a result of this, the machine could be sold at a much lower price affordable to average farmers. Just as Ford had brought the car to the middle class through assembly line production, the tractor was now also within reach.¹²⁶

And it was that smaller design that appealed to many farmers who needed a much smaller tractor to move through their fields such as Dwayne Bair's family did. When asked about some of the brands that his family used on the farm he said "some of the early tractors my Dad had, he had an Oliver-Hartpar, you probably never heard of it but it was a huge big old tractor, you couldn't move the wheels and he used that for plowing and for disking and then he bought several Ford tractors. Ford tractors were very prevalent."¹²⁷

The Fordson tractors would continue production until 1928 when an economic agricultural crisis would slow production in America. During this small crisis another important tractor company would be born and would eventually overshadow Fordson to become the main staple of tractor technology, and that company was John Deere. John Deere originally began as a company that repaired plows for farmers, but the eponymous John Deere felt that as a blacksmith he could do better than just repairing ineffective plows, and with some elbow grease which included the moving to Illinois and employing the use of British steel, he began to quickly produce plows, which helped the Deere company to garner a foothold in the agricultural technology business.¹²⁸ In 1912 the company would move towards farming technology production in Waterloo. During an interview about tractors, Bair said:

I was fortunate to go and visit the John Deere Factory in Waterloo, Iowa watching them produce all these big tools and tractors. We created some of them, but most of them we purchased. We might improve on them [tractors], add something to them, or weld something to them. Most farmers had their own welders, torches and everything. We might decide to change something and do it ourselves, but most of the tools were purchased.¹²⁹

In 1923, the Deere Company, now headed by Charles Deere after the death of John Deere in 1886, would embark upon the production of their own tractors; the first popular tractor being their Model D. What was it about the Model D that helped to put John Deere on the map when it came to farming technology? One of the reasons was behind their design and the roughly affordable price since the Model D utilized "The two-cylinder kerosene-burning engine produced 15 horsepower at the drawbar and 22 at the belt. It also featured a high-tension ignition and an enclosed drive train. In the mid-1920s, a farmer could obtain a Model D for about a thousand dollars".¹³⁰

¹²⁶ "History of the Ford Tractors," SSB Tractor - Parts, Manuals, Toys, Implements & More, accessed November 19, 2015, http://www.ssbtractor.com/features/Ford_tractors.html.

¹²⁷ Dwayne Bair interview, October 17, 2015.

¹²⁸ "John Deere Biography," Biography.com, accessed November 19, 2015, <http://www.biography.com/people/john-deere-9269591>.

¹²⁹ Bair interview, October 6, 2015.

¹³⁰ "John Deere Model D Tractor," The National Museum of American History, accessed November 19, 2015, http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_1275887.

While the Model D was one of the first Deere tractors, they did not stop there when it came to improving upon their designs and their tractors. John Deere hit their stride with the Model 20 series of tractors that would soon become some of the most popular tractors of the 60's and from there the John Deere name became synonymous with quality and dependable tractors that still rings true even now.¹³¹

The versatility and the durability of the tractor underlies its importance to the modern farmer even during the 1900's. While the tractor was often an expensive piece of equipment, it was the tractor's ability with implements to become various tools that lasted far longer than necessary. These tractors paid for themselves showing by how integral those machines would become to the economy of agricultural business.¹³²

Irrigation

With the tractor as a means of technology there is, of course, another technological powerhouse that continues its reign across the agricultural landscape. Irrigation is a technique using a system to water crops when the crops are not near an ample water source. There are many different styles of irrigation, but the one that was the earliest used and often the still used is the flood-irrigation style. Flood-irrigation occurs when a farmer floods the area where his crops are, thus allowing the plants to gather both nutrients of the soil and the water, and allowing crops to soak up these nutrients much more deeply than other types of irrigation which is why it became a preferred style of irrigation for many crops, including citrus.¹³³ While tractors and other tools have been work aids with farming, it is irrigation that has really helped to keep the farmer on track through the agricultural way of life from the earliest times throughout the past and into the future.¹³⁴

Business Side of Farming: Selling Crops

When crops were ready to be harvested Dwayne W. Bair dealt with the business side of farming. With having twenty-five percent of his yearly crops used for canning Bair had to do business with several canning companies around the RGV. Canning companies that included, L.H. Moore Canning Company, Renown Foods Company, and Alamo Canning Company. Unfortunately, these canneries are no long operating, but these companies did contribute to Mr. Bair's farming career. During the interviews Mr. Bair mentioned that in order to do business with someone you must have trust. For instance, one year Bair was one of the only farmers that had carrots, but the carrots he had ready for harvesting were going to towards a contract he had with the L.H. Moore Canning Company. Mr. Bair had the chance to sell them as fresh carrots, but he did not want to do it without Mr. Moore knowing. He went to Mr. Moore and explained to him why he would like to sell the carrots fresh, because Bair lost most of his citrus in the storm. Mr. Moore was understanding and

¹³¹ "John Deere," Antique Farming, accessed November 19, 2015, <http://www.antiquefarming.com/johndeere.html>.

¹³² "Why Farm Tractors are So Important to Today's Modern Farmer," National Machinery, accessed November 19, 2015, <https://nationalmachinery.wordpress.com/2011/04/17/why-farm-tractors-are-so-important-to-today%E2%80%99s-modern-farmer/>.

¹³³ H. K. Wutscher, "Flood Irrigation of Citrus", accessed November 19, 2015, http://irrec.ifas.ufl.edu/fle/citrus/pdfs/short_course_and_workshop/second_international_citrus/Wutscher-Flood_Irrigation_of_Citrus.pdf.

¹³⁴ Morris E. Bloodworth and Paul T. Gillett, "Irrigation," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed November 19, 2015, http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ahi01_.

released Bair from his contract. Bair was so thankful with this he offered to give Mr. Moore some money, but he refused to take any money. Instead, Mr. Bair asked his wife, Shirley Bair, to paint a portrait of a Mallard Drake and hen for Mr. Moore. Mr. Bair presented this to Mr. Moore as a token of gratitude. This gesture of kindness just goes to show you how much trust and respect when into farming, “You have to also deal with yourself. So word is very important.”¹³⁵

Harvesting of crops involves a couple of different methods depending on which type of produce (citrus or vegetables) is being harvested in order to take the crops to market. Some of these methods include contracting out to companies which deal with just harvesting. The process of this method involves manual labor as the driving force to harvest the crops. This method of harvesting is directed towards the vegetable and citrus industries. These two systems are fairly similar to each other in regards to the methods of harvesting. Many pack houses provide all the crews (labor force) and equipment (crates, bins, pallets, trucks, etc.) needed to harvest the land in order to take the loads to the pack house. Other buyers/harvesters in the market consisted of canneries such as L.H. Moore Canning Company, Renown Cannery, Safeway, and Wallace Fruit and Vegetable Company. These canning companies would pick up what was left from what the crews of a harvesting company would deem unfit for their picking standards. In this instance this was usually from a harvest of tomatoes as noted from Mr. Bair’s interview. Some but not all produce was done in this fashion but also as Mr. Bair has stated before in which he specifically planted specific types of vegetables designed towards the canneries market, for example shorty carrots also known as Danvers, and Chico Tomatoes.

The most typical system/method for payout was through tonnage. Many farmers would get a net total payout depending upon a standard set amount determined by a particular product and the total tonnage a parcel of land could produce. Although there was a standard price to pay per tonnage of various produce, the market does fluctuate and the net amount will go up or down depending on where it stands at the moment you cash in. One would be wise to know what the market share price is, before and at the time of delivery in the agricultural business so a farmer does not get swindled in any way, just like how Mr. Bair stated in his interview when he almost got taken for a ride by a harvester who didn’t know he knew what the market price was. The harvester was attempting to short change Bair on his onion crops that year, and Bair would not sit by and take the deception on cost.¹³⁶

Another method for growing and selling crops is the landlord system. The landlord system is where farmers cultivates crops or raises cattle by renting the land owned by someone else. The birth of this form of a share cropping system was born right at the end of the Civil War 1861-1865. Factors that come into consideration on this style of farming are following what the market is buying or demanding and the costs that you need for the harvest. The costs are estimated based on the amount of seed needed, the manpower, pesticides and the harvest. Also Bair went into detail on the importance of contracts for the crops and the type of long term as short term contracts involved.¹³⁷ Another consequence of tenant farmer is conservation of the land and keeping it in good condition year after year.

¹³⁵ Dwayne W. Bair, interviewed by CHAPS Agriculture group Appendix B, October 2, 2015, interview 2

¹³⁶ Bair Interview, October 6, 2015.

¹³⁷ “Tenant Farming.” *Gale Encyclopedia History*. 2000. Encyclopedia.com (December 4, 2015) <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/.62=3406400929.html>.

The Bairs had many landlords during their years in farming. Throughout all the acreage represented in this map, the Bairs planted corn (yellow squares), cotton (green squares) and set aside other plots (pink squares) for further uses. (see appendix I)

Bair and his brother served in the military before taking over the family farm. At this time, his father had about 250 to 300 acres. According to Bair, “We had to cut the pie into more pieces,” as the land increased, more families depended on it.¹³⁸ To acquire more land for farming, Bair farmed on land owned by Winter Texans who asked the Bair brothers to farm their land. At that point they had 200 acres of citrus in addition to the citrus Bair grew for his contracts. In Bair’s recollection of a freeze that took out vast amounts of the citrus that they were caring for, the land owners from up north would decide to sell their property to the Bair brothers after the citrus was destroyed. This is how Bair acquired more plots to farm. Mr. Bair recalls his son Scott saying “Dad, I’d like to farm,” and Mr. Bair replied “Son, there’s too many hands in that pot right now.”¹³⁹

Another obstacle that Bair had to deal with was the plots were scattered throughout Edinburg. As the roads became more developed and narrow for tractors, the challenge to plow, fumigate, and maintain the land with the equipment was more difficult. He recalls how the farmers in McCook had all their land together and did not struggle with scattered form of land.¹⁴⁰

When farming for a landlord, there were fees to pay. The standard practice on cotton and corn was one fourth after harvest because these crops cost more money to maintain.¹⁴¹ One of Bair’s largest land lords wanted \$50 an acre down before harvest, after harvest he would give him another \$50 to make up for the \$100 and acre. This money was guaranteed to the landlord, so a bond made of trust would form, yet this relationship required for the farmer to invest more in the beginning. When grossing \$400 per acre, a fourth would be \$100. The estimated cost of harvest to the owner would be \$25, and the farmer’s would be \$75. This meant that the owner, or landlord, would only receive one fourth the crops harvest price and the farmer would make three-fourths. Mr. Bair recalls the factor of the importance on price listing in the market as well as what was on demand. Bair liked planting tortilla corn, Asgrow seed which he sold to Azteca Maseca, with whom he had a contract. The production of 595 acres of Asgrow corn showed a net profit of \$147,000 after the deduction of rent.¹⁴²

Mother Nature Rears her Vengeful Side: Devastating Floods and Freezes

Texas is known to many as a state that is impacted by hurricanes. Some of the most devastating storms, such as the 1900 Hurricane in Galveston or Hurricane Alicia of 1983, destroyed Texas towns along the Gulf Coast, but one storm that still brings terror to those in the RGV is Hurricane Beulah. Hurricanes bring in their high winds and to demolish anything in their path. In September 1967, people in the RGV were hit by Hurricane Beulah with winds as high as 136 miles per hour, and a storm surge hitting South Padre Island of

¹³⁸ Dwayne W., Chaps Class Agriculture Group Oral History Interview 1 Appendix B, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. October 6, 20015

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Dwayne W. Bair, interviewed by CHAPS Agriculture group Appendix B, October 7, 2015, interview 1, transcript.

18-20 feet. Beulah brought with her the torrential rainfall and a record 115 spawned tornadoes that devastated the citrus industry and other crops were washed away or flooded. Mr. Bair recalls how his dad's farm was under water for a few weeks and how the crops were washed away.¹⁴³ But hurricanes are not the only force Mother Nature throws against farmers, a freeze could devastate the crops and cause a severe loss to the farmer after all his work.

Freezes impact farmers and their crops because of the severe drops in temperatures. Citrus trees are normally approaching harvest time when a freeze comes in, so it is important for the farmer to save what he can. The freezes that impacted the RGV the most are dated from 1962, 1983, 1985, and 1989. These freezes have direct negative implications towards the destruction of crops for RGV farmers, such as Bair. In 1962, the RGV was impacted by a freeze that brought with it temperatures as low as 8° F which destroyed around seven million trees on 36,000 acres throughout the area.¹⁴⁴ The freeze of 1962 brought sorrow and loss, not only to the citrus industry in the RGV, but the patriarch of the Bair family worked, who himself too hard protecting his crops. According to Bair, Lee Bair and his sons worked diligently in the field in order to save the citrus trees before this freeze. But, to no avail, Lee Bair fell ill and soon passed away leaving Bair and his brother in charge of the farm (figure 30).

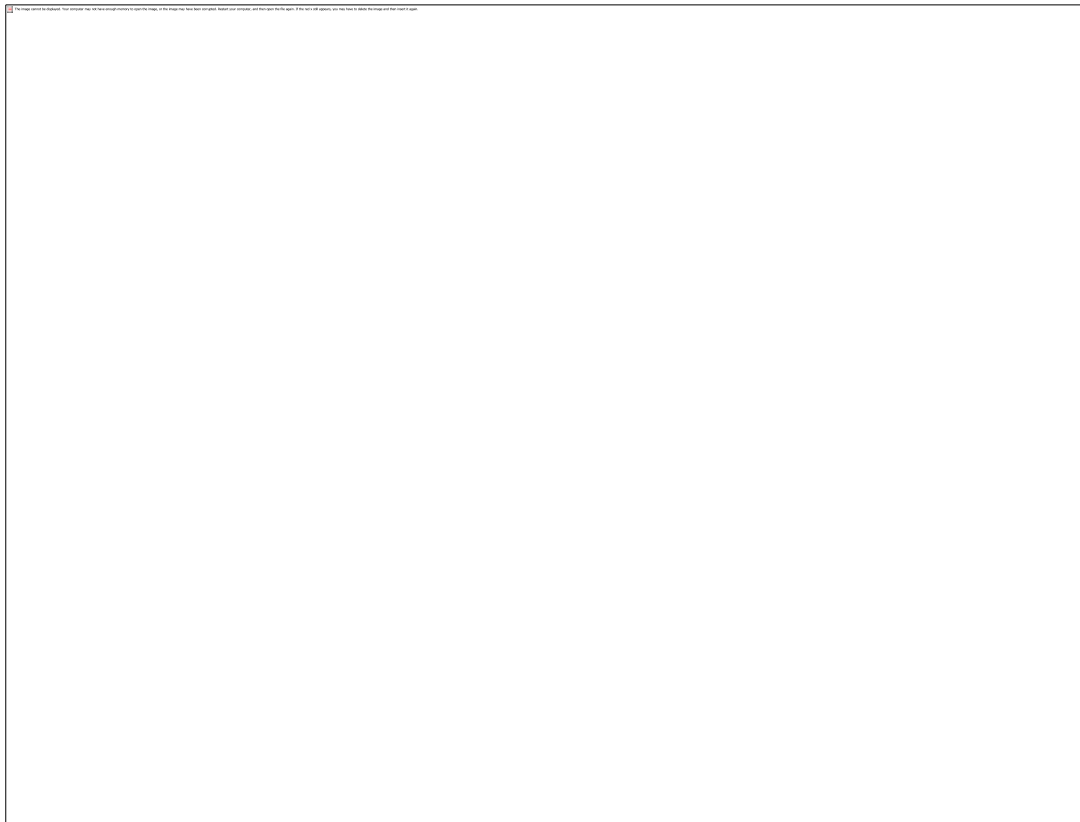


Figure 30 Lee Bair with his sons Dwayne and Howard Bair (Courtesy of Dwayne Bair).

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Hill, *Texas Citrus Industry*, 16.

In an interview with National Geographic in 1971, Dwayne Bair commented that because of the unpredictable weather in the Rio Grande Valley, it was not advisable for a farmer to “put all his eggs in one basket.”¹⁴⁵ He planted many other crops in addition to his citrus trees. He felt that it was better to have a hurricane pass through the region instead of a freeze “because at least the hurricane will leave water in the dams. A freeze just leaves dead fruit.”¹⁴⁶ Not only dead fruit remains after a freeze, but the task of removing dead trees and replanting new ones.

Most citrus trees take about five years after planting to begin producing fruit again. Twenty-one years following the '62 freeze, another freeze hit the Rio Grande Valley in 1983. This freeze destroyed seventy percent of the citrus industry which was estimated to be about 69,200 acres before the freeze, to about 22,000 acres after the freeze. Because of this devastation there was no citrus production for the 1984-85 season, and only a minimal amount the following year. With such little time to fully recover and just minimal amounts of citrus being produced every harvest period, the 1989 freeze devastated Bair Farms. According to Bair, the RGV citrus industry never truly recovered after the 1989 freeze. Dwayne Bair decided to get out of the farming business in 1989.



Figure 31 Newspaper article showing Dwayne Bair as King Citrus, 1992. Queen Citriana was Lori Jackson, a student at Texas A&M in College Station. Bair tells of how he first met Lori in the Agriculture Oral History Interview from October 6, 2015.

¹⁴⁵ Allard, William Albert, “Two Wheels Along the Mexican Border”, *National Geographic*, Vol. 139, No. 5, May 1971, p. 635

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

Life After Being a Farmer

Just because Bair decided to get out of farming, does not mean that he completely got away from the citrus industry. In 1992, Dwayne Bair was elected as King Citrus of the Texas Citrus Fiesta; an event held in Mission, Texas since 1932¹⁴⁷ (figure 31). With the annual tradition, farmers and communities alike participate to fashion and sample their products. To be King Citrus requires that the nominees were and are active in the citrus industry and have made an impact as well.

Texas is ranked within the fourteen most patriotic state in the United States of America. The rules, or stipulations, that are used to measure this is the following: National Historic Landmarks per Capita, Veterans per Capita, Money Spent to Fund Veterans, Percent of Residents, and the percentage that Voted in the Last Presidential Election. On September 11, 2001, 19 militants associated with the Islamic extremist group Al-Qaeda hijacked four airliners and carried out suicide attacks against targets in the United States. Two of the planes were flown into the towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, a third plane struck the Pentagon just outside Washington, D.C., and the fourth plane crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. Often referred to as 9/11, the attacks resulted in extensive death and destruction, triggering major U.S. initiatives to combat terrorism and defining the presidency of George W. Bush. Texas Sweet Citrus Edinburg growers, that included Dwayne Bair, donated 4,000 boxes of Citrus to the New York Police Department on December 10, 2001 (Appendix K). The citrus was received with joy as the volunteers and servicemen welcomed the gratitude from the farmers of the RGV.

As the times change, it is inevitable that the world changes, too. As Bair attests, "...nothing's forever in the farmin' business."¹⁴⁸ Farming is a multi-million dollar industry now, and farmers like Bair hardly exist in the business. A farmer now cannot just own several parcels of land; they must own large amounts of land in order to be successful in today's farming economy. As Bair stated, "I don't know how anybody can start farming today unless you hit the multi-million dollar sweepstakes."¹⁴⁹ Small farming families, like the Norquests, also found it difficult to keep up with the changes of farming. They, like other families, had to find ways to adapt and bring in money for their families.¹⁵⁰

Farming is one of the toughest careers in the world. Having to deal with the uncertainty of nature, while still finding a way to provide for your family. You may have a prosperous year, then all of a sudden the next season a storm could hit and all of your crops are lost. A farmer works year round. They must hope for the best, but plan for the worst. When Bair was asked to reflect on his career as a farmer and he stated, "...I sit down and think what have I done in my lifetime, and between my brothers and I, and the men on the farm, we raised millions of pounds of fruits and vegetables every year our farm, millions of pounds, and the satisfaction knowing that."¹⁵¹ Farming to Bair was a large part of his life.

¹⁴⁷ Texas Citrus Fiesta Staff, "History of the Texas Citrus Fiesta," last modified 2014, accessed November 18, 2015, <http://www.texascitrusfiesta.org/>.

¹⁴⁸ Dwayne W. Bair, interviewed by CHAPS Agriculture group Appendix B, October 6, 2015, interview 1, transcript.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Lupe A Flores, Sandra Hernandez-Salinas, et.al, The Norquest Family of Edinburg: A Century-long Perspective on Life in the Rio Grande Valley (Edinburg: Studio Twelve01 Production, 2013), 64.

¹⁵¹ Dwayne W. Bair, interviewed by CHAPS Agriculture group Appendix H, October 17, 2015, interview 2, transcript.

Bair knew that he was not just farming to bring in money for his family. Farming was also how he contributed to the world, because he crops were distributed throughout the world. After dedicating 37 years of his life to farming and the citrus industry of the RGV, and the freeze impact of 1989 coupled with the Aflatoxin issues, Dwayne Bair sold his equipment and the family farm land. He and his wife, Shirley, live a happy and cozy life in Edinburg, but Bair remains active in the citrus industry. As Paul Harvey said in his speech in 1978 to the FFA

"Somebody who'd bale a family together with the soft strong bonds of sharing, who would laugh and then sigh, and then reply, with smiling eyes, when his son says he wants to spend his life 'doing what dad does.'" So God made a farmer."¹⁵²

NOTES

ⁱ In 1904, Edinburg was established by the name Chapin, named after Dennis B. Chapin. After an incident in 1911 in San Antonio, Texas where Chapin was accused of murdering a patron in a bar, citizens decided to change the name to Edinburg in honor of another founder, John Young, whose birthplace was Edinburgh, Scotland. Mr. Young was the former spouse of Doña Salome Balli. *Edinburg: Story of a Town* has details on the event.

ⁱⁱ Winter Texans are annual visitors to Texas. These visitors come from regions in the upper Northwestern states and Canada during the winter months. They do so to avoid the terrible cold and storms in the north and enjoy the warm winters offered in South Texas.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hurricane Beulah held the record for most hurricane produced tornadoes until Hurricane Ivan in 2004. Ivan produced 120 tornadoes. To read this article, go to the Weather Channel website at <http://www.weather.com/storms/hurricane/news/tornadoes-hurricanes-ivan-beulah-frances-rita-andrew-20130815?pageno=2#/1>.

^{iv} Texas Citrus Fiesta was hosted annually beginning after World War II. The committee, headed by John Shary, decided that during the war, the efforts should be more focused on supporting the cause. For more information, visit the Texas Citrus Fiesta website at <http://www.texascitrusfiesta.org/> or the Mission Historical Museum.

¹⁵²Paul Harvey, "God Made a Farmer" Speech, FFA Convention, 1978.

Chapter 4

Environmental Factors that Govern the Lower Rio Grande Landscape

Ana Hernandez, Cesar Cepeda, Christopher Munoz and Pedro Guajardo

Droughts, freezes, floods and hurricanes are very important in the development of agriculture throughout the Rio Grande Valley region. How natural disasters form? What kind of damage do they cause? What people do to prepare for and how do they recover after the disasters? What are the financial costs with regard to income when a natural disaster affects a farming family? And what are the impacts of natural disasters on native flora and fauna found in the lower Rio Grande Valley?

Droughts

What is a Drought? A drought is a prolonged period of abnormally low rainfall; a shortage of water. The way that droughts are formed are a result of prolonged shortages in water supply, whether atmospheric, surface or ground water. Also a drought can last for months or years, or may be declared after a few days.¹⁵³

Research shows that droughts were somewhat common during the summer months in the Rio Grande Valley such as June, July, and August (figure 32).¹⁵⁴ Since the droughts would typically happen during those summer months when there is little rainfall in the Rio Grande Valley it should be clear that droughts are somewhat common. In some years they can be uncommon due to a rise in temperatures in the summer to an average high of between 103-109 degrees Fahrenheit. Droughts have affected the Rio Grande Valley numerous times over the years, with little and drastic consequences on plant life. For instance, two species of weeds, Johnson grass (*Sorghum halepense*), and Carelessweeds (*Amaranthus palmeri*), according to Dwayne Bair¹⁵⁵, survived temporary droughts, witnessed by Mr. Bair himself on his property. Drought conditions, as clarified by Mr. Bair, had no damaging effects towards the seeds of these weeds that remained inside the soil. No doubt, Johnson grass and Carelessweeds can even survive powerful herbicides, especially Johnson grass, which is resistant to triazine herbicides. Mesquite trees, notably the Honey Mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*) has been known to survive droughts. But unlike these two weeds and the Mesquite trees, other plants are not resistant to droughts, such as the drought that occurred in the 1950s, in which it not only harmed several plant species in the Valley, but affected citrus trees and vegetable production as well. An example can be the common Sunflower plant (*Helianthus annuus* L.), located in loam or clay soils in several habitats among the Rio Grande Plains, and Coastal Prairies, in which because of the drought that took place, the Sunflower's growth and productivity were decreased, resulting to the diminution of its leaf water potential. Citrus trees (Rutaceae) during a drought, as clarified by Mr. Bair: "...The serious thing with the drought is the citrus. We have to have water all the time because of those droughts, I remember one summer when the water well companies were drilling wells all over the Valley to put water on the citrus even though it was salty, it was wet, and so

¹⁵³ Dwayne W. Bair, Oral History Interview with CHAPS class Agriculture team, University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley, October 15, 2015.

¹⁵⁴ The USGS Water Science School, "Questions and answers about droughts," *U.S. Geological Survey*, <http://water.usgs.gov/edu/qadroughts.html>.

¹⁵⁵ Dwayne Bair, interview by Cesar Cepeda, CHAPS Class Oral History Interview Irrigation and Natural Disasters (Pg 6, lines 1-4), University of Texas - Rio Grande Valley Edinburg, Texas, (October 14, 2015), 2-3.

droughts become quite a problem, but thank goodness that we have two dams on the Rio Grande River.”¹⁵⁶



Figure 32 Corn crop failed due to drought in the Rio Grande Valley, H2O for Texas, 2015.

Therefore, the way to prepare for droughts is by building dams to capture the accumulating river water over years that can supply the local farmer's with water during a drought to water their trees, orchards, and citrus and to use the water for bathing necessities. Some dams like the Falcon Dam in Zapata, Texas is used today during drought conditions when there is not enough water for the crops and orchards. The reservoir can also be used as a water reserve to properly provide water to irrigation systems that people from nearby counties can use when in need of water.

Hurricanes

What is Hurricane? A Hurricane is a storm with a violent wind, in particular a tropical cyclone. Hurricanes begin as tropical storms over the warm moist waters of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans near the equator. As the moisture evaporates it rises until enormous amounts of heated moist air is twisted high in the atmosphere.¹⁵⁷

Hurricanes, and often heavy rains, in the Rio Grande Valley have been common in the past. Hurricane damages may not be quite as severe as damages from a freeze that affects plants, and generally, crops, but it is still also considered a devastating natural disaster. On September 19, 1967, Hurricane Beulah struck the Valley bringing 25 inches of rain in one day, then 10 inches of rain during the rest of the week affecting families and animal life, such as the Cantu family, who suffered Beulah's presence when their crops and livestock were destroyed.¹⁵⁸ Plants were affected in numerous ways, with little to hardly any damage. The Champion Montezuma Baldcypress tree (*Taxodium mucronatum*), a native plant

¹⁵⁶ Dwayne Bair, interview by Cesar Cepeda, CHAPS Class Oral History Interview Irrigation and Natural Disasters (Pg 2, lines 21-24), University of Texas - Rio Grande Valley Edinburg, Texas, (October 14, 2015).

¹⁵⁷ Bair, Oral History Interview, October 15, 2015, 2.

¹⁵⁸ Alaniz, Jenrae et al., eds., *The Cantu Family: A Porción of Edinburg* (Edinburg: The University of Texas Pan American, 2012), 32, line 19.

species of the Rio Grande Valley, was able to withstand Hurricane Beulah's strong winds. The African star grass (*Hypoxis hermerocallidea*), planted by the Norquest family on their property, and survived Hurricane Allen in 1980.¹⁵⁹ According to a report written by N.E. Flitters, after Hurricane Beulah took place, Hibiscus (*Hibiscus martianus*) plants lost their foliage and had stopped growing, but bloomed proudly.¹⁶⁰ The larger leaves of plants, for example monstera vine (*Philodendron monstera*) and elephant's ear (*Philodendron vars*), had only burns on their foliage, influenced by the winds of Hurricane Beulah. Dwayne Bair remembers of the events that occurred on his property during Beulah's presence:¹⁶¹

"...Our citrus were able to withstand the wet conditions. We had some of our old citrus land that our dad had installed drains. You can only stand so long that trees suffocate and have to have air, fortunately our citrus trees made it through alright as far as that. I planted a hundred and fifty acres of carrots on a Friday and when we got a lot rain on Saturday morning... [After Hurricane Beulah] it was too wet to plant for months, I had some fields that I couldn't get into for over three to four months because it stayed wet. I couldn't get in the fields with the equipment so I hired a helicopter to spray naptha on the careless weeds. You can kill them with naptha and naptha wouldn't hurt the carrots."

Other plants were not so fortunate to survive, for instance, in 1961, a series of heavy rains severely destroyed cotton plants (*Gossypium*, a member of the Malvaceae family) in the Valley. In 1980, the property of the Norquist family were greatly affected by Hurricane Allen more than during Hurricane Beulah in 1967, when the storm annihilated buffalo grass (*Bouteloua dactyloides*) in the pasture on their property, along with damage to their house.¹⁶² Hurricanes formed off of the coasts of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans and made their way through the RGV during the months of June, July, and August. The best way to prepare for a hurricane is to stock up on food, board up the windows, stay away from the window and anything sharp, and have flashlights and backup batteries in case the lights go out.

Floods

What is a Flood? A flood is an overflowing of a large amount of water beyond its normal confines, especially over what is normally dry land. Heavy rainfall is not the only cause of a flood. Other phenomena, particularly in coastal areas where inundation can be caused by a storm surge associated with a tropical cyclone, a tsunami or a high tide coinciding with higher than normal river levels.

Flooding here in the Rio Grande Valley doesn't happen very often. It only happens a few times during the rainy season or more precisely during the hurricane season which runs between July to August and sometimes during fall months of September and October but typically we don't get a lot of rain during the fall season. The only time that the Rio Grande Valley floods is when there is heavy rainfall or at least a category 5 hurricane. Occasionally

¹⁵⁹ Hernandez-Salinas, Norquest Family: A Porcion of Edinburg, p. 35.

¹⁶⁰ N. E Flitters, "Hurricane Beulah. A Report in Retrospect on the Hurricane and Its Effect on Biological Processes in the Rio Grande Valley, Texas," *Int J Biometeorol International Journal of Biometeorology* 14, no. 3 (1970): 225, lines 18-19.

¹⁶¹ Dwayne W. Bair, interview by Cesar Cepeda. CHAPS Class Oral History Interview Irrigation and Natural Disasters Appendix E (Pg. 163, lines 21-34), University of Texas - Rio Grande Valley Edinburg, Texas, (October 14, 2015).

¹⁶² Hernandez-Salinas, p. 35.

the RGV gets heavy rainfall that floods our streets and agricultural farmland but it only lasts at the most maybe two days. The best way to protect your home or business from floods and flooding in the streets and in agriculture is by trying to put some barriers of sand bags stack on top of each other so the sand can absorb the water and the water and block the flood waters from advancing.

Freezes

What is a Freeze? A freeze is a period of frost or very cold weather. Freezes occur when surface temperatures are below freezing or below 32 degrees Fahrenheit. Mr. Bair spoke of several freezes that hit the RGV during the years (1949, 1951, 1962, 1983, 1989, and 1985).¹⁶³

“Ok freezes. Freezes many losses of trees and crops, obviously when you have a freeze they are going to kill your trees and we lost a lot of citrus trees and a numerous reasons forty nine, fifty one, sixty two, eighty three, ninety nine and also eighty five was also a bad freeze, so uh you lose your crops plus uh citrus trees and it is a hard enough freeze which is a really disastrous to a grower which take five years to replant and get back into commercial production again.”

These freezes were so severe that farmers lost crops, trees and citrus (figure 33). The results were so negative that many people lost their crops and means to provide for their family. Freezes usually occur during the winter months of December through and February where the temperature drops between 28 to 36 degrees Fahrenheit. The way to be prepared for a freeze is by listening to the weather forecast and getting the essentials things done to protect your crops and your home.



Figure 33 Citrus tree with mature fruit with icicles from severe freeze, Citrobio, 2015.

Cold, short winters in the lower part of Texas have overcast skies and are usually followed by strong cold fronts. Killing frosts are not common so many animals and tropical

¹⁶³ Dwayne W. Bair., interview by Cesar Cepeda. CHAPS Class Oral History Interview Appendix H, (University of Texas - Rio Grande Valley Edinburg, Texas, (October 14, 2015), 2.

plant extant in to the Valley from inner Mexico. The occasional killing frost that can be a short term or long lasting do occur and this is the reason the area cannot truly be a tropical zone. Snow is a historical event only having happened twice in the last 100 years. The first was in the year 1880 that dropped about one to two inches of snow in Matamoros setting the all-time record.¹⁶⁴ The second time it happened was in December of 2004. Even though it didn't break the record, the event was memorable to many because it happened on Christmas Eve and did not melt until Christmas on noon. For locals this was a fun day but the effect of the low temperatures have had major negative impact on the Valley. Ruben Cantu Sr. from the Cantu Family was devastated by the freeze of 2004 with the loss of all his crops and hard work as well as their new home.¹⁶⁵ Of all the three natural disasters such as hurricanes, droughts and freezes, the killing freezes are the ones that have a bigger effect on both the wildlife and agriculture business.

The Freeze of 1962

The Rio Grande Valley has survived a series of natural weather events throughout the years that have devastated agricultural production, leaving many smaller farms to become unprofitable. The winter of 1962 was a unique one that would be recorded in the weather annals of the country. The month of January in particular was a major month that cause an impact. "It will be forever remembered as the month of great anti-cyclones when arctic air masses were carried in a three-pronged invasion of the nation's major citrus-growing sections."¹⁶⁶ The Rio Grande Valley, the coastal areas of Southern California and the Florida peninsula which are semi-tropical parts of the country suffered freezes due to the anti-cyclones that were of great magnitude. There was a number of cyclones that pass by the regions and poured down icy blasts. The freeze in the lower part of the Rio Grande Valley happened between January 9 and January 13 1962, where temperatures dropped to an all-time low record of ten degrees above zero. Weather was so intense that the Galveston Bay froze 100 feet from shore. The Valley was one of the hardest hit section of the south and had an estimated of 7.5 million boxes of oranges and grapes fruits that froze on the trees.¹⁶⁷

Citrus trees are a major crop grown in the lower Rio Grande Valley which are easily killed or damaged by freezing weather. Citron, lemons and limes are some types of citrus that are killed by temperatures in the high twenties. Oranges and grapefruits are cold hardy and require temperatures in the mid-twenties for major damage to start to occur. These cold temperatures refer to the damage done to the leaves and wood which are more cold-hardy then the citrus fruits that easily freeze at 26 to 28 degrees when these temperatures occur for several hours.¹⁶⁸ The underground temperature can be lower when there is no presence of wind compared to the temperature around the canopy. The temperature of the ground can also radiate upward into the canopy and change the canopy's temperature by 5 degrees. The critical temperature that is most important is the one on the leaf or fruit and not the air. Therefore the young trees that have no fruit are more cold-hardy then trees with good fruit and have a higher probability of survival. Dwayne Bair mentions with so much emotion that

¹⁶⁴ Timothy Brush, *Nesting Birds of a Tropical Frontier: The Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2005), 12.

¹⁶⁵ Alaniz et al, The Cantu Family: A Porcion of Edinburg, p. 17.

¹⁶⁶ "January, Winter 1961-1962 Strikes all Sections," *Weatherwise* (2010) Vol. 15 #2, accessed October 24, 2015, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00431672.1962.9925128?journalCode=vws20Museum,1980>.

¹⁶⁷ "Cold Freezes Texas Valley Citrus Fruit," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 13, 1962, 6.

¹⁶⁸ William Johnson, "Understand How Cold Temperatures Affect Citrus Trees," accessed October 24, 2015, http://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/newsletters/hortupdate/2011/mar/citrus_freeze.html.

in one of the freezes he and his family spend hours out in the freezing temperature covering the young trees with dirt to minimize the damage done to them in order to save some of the trees.

“Now in regard to other disasters which was freezes we had young citrus trees and we would wrap them with the tree wrap to protect the main trunk of the tree and uh then Sixty two came and my dad told us “boys we gotta cover the whole tree up with dirt” so we actually went out and my dad, brother, and I and our farm workers on the farm covered thirty acres of baby citrus trees all the way with dirt, we worked on that cold weather for days. Because my father was right when we got up to seventeen degrees and we did save the young trees but we lost the rest of our crops and other larger citrus trees, but we did save those thirty acres, thank goodness. Save the trees but lost my dad. He worked himself to death in that freeze”.¹⁶⁹

Many farmers also fought to save as much as they could by wrapping trees and burned smudge posts night after night. To prepare for a freeze in order to save the plants and/or crops, there are several methods that can be applied by farmers in the Valley. Methods include elevation, in which the elevation in the soil that the plants reside in (according to the respective locations throughout the districts in the Valley), is manipulated in order to have a moderate temperature than the temperature of the extreme cold climate. The second method is “Wrapping”, in which the plants are wrapped with such a material fastened tightly on their trunks in order to be protected from the freeze. For example, during the 1962 freeze that occurred in the Valley, Dwayne Bair, his brother and father were able to save young citrus trees on their property by wrapping their trunks, and applied the soil of the earth onto the covered wrappings of the plants and crops in order to sustain the temperature of the plants and crops from the freeze that occurred, but unfortunately, not all the crops on Mr. Bair’s property survived, including larger citrus trees. Because of the Wrapping method, it resulted in the preservation of the 30 acres on Mr. Bair’s property. Another method that Mr. Bair used was to create a cloud of fog above his citrus crop to protect it from the high temperatures as he mentions,

“Unfortunately, I mean we had our own citrus nursery and we tried to protect the nursery and keep water running all night, and in the ’62 freeze I remember driving a pickup all night. We had anything like a big fogging machine. My dad bought it at an Army surplus store and put a barrel of diesel in there and drip in into this, it’s like a big hot muffler. It had a little engine. He kept it real hot. You dripped the diesel and made a fog, so I drove all night around our nursery. We had two blocks 10-15 acres another one 10-15 acres of citrus trees. If you have a cloud layer the heat goes up and comes back down. If you have a clear sky, you’re gonna freeze the heck out of stuff. If you got a cloud layer, the heat don’t dissipate. It stays in there, so I was makin’ a cloud layer. Next day in town somebody said did you see that cloud last night? ‘Cuz we lived over in North East Edinburg (laughing) so anyway the Northern was blowing it all over town. We also burned tires. We stacked up used tires on the up wind side, so the heat would blow over the trees. We had tires all around the nursery, but you couldn’t put ‘em around your whole citrus grove. We had about

¹⁶⁹ Bair-Appendix E, Irrigation Interview 2015, 162.

ninety-five acres citrus in '62. So uh we tried to save it. If we couldn't save them then we had to push the trees out.”¹⁷⁰

Despite numerous efforts that can be applied to save the plants and crops from the freezes, unfortunately, many have suffered greatly. In the 1983 freeze that transpired, black mangroves (*Avicennia germinans*), one of the many native plant species in the Valley, were greatly damaged. Many citrus trees (Rutaceae plant citrus family) were destroyed, especially in the years 1962, 1983, and 1989, in which the majority of the farmers in the Valley lost a great amount of profit in their agricultural business. For instance, after the events of the 1962 freeze, the agricultural businesses in the Valley would take a period of five years to regrow the citrus trees and restart profit. During the 2004 freeze, crops planted by the Cantu family, notably by Ruben Cantu Sr., were damaged severely, affecting Cantu Sr. greatly.¹⁷¹

Crops are not the only things effected by the extreme freezes. The diverse wildlife found in the Rio Grande Valley is also effected in major ways. Migratory birds and other animal species can be found in the Valley that are affected by the severe freezes but fish have been by so far the most effected by the cold weather. As we can see when a freeze occurs hundreds of sports fish can be found along the Texas coast. The worst happened during 1983 when the severe freeze named the “Big Chill” killed many fish and had a major effect on the state’s multimillion dollar commercial fishing industry¹⁷². The loss to the fishing industry was put at \$300 million dollars.¹⁷³ In the Laguna Madre area, ice slush formed in the water and even though some fish moved out to sea for warmer waters many red fish, trout and drum were stunned or killed by the extreme temperatures. Records show that about two million pounds of fish were killed by the freeze and an estimated of about 65 to 80 percent of fish were left in the bay.¹⁷⁴ But even though many negative things happened there was a positive outcome that came from the excessive temperatures and benefit the farming community. The effects that the severe weather had on the aspect of pest was good news to the cotton farmers when it came to cold weather and the boll weevil. After the freeze many of the farmers noticed a decline in the population of the boll weevil. “Well it killed some bad insects when we had the freeze. It would kill some that weren’t dying in the soil”.¹⁷⁵

Boll Weevil

The Boll weevils (*Anthonomus grandis*) are insects that are found in the cotton field that are about the size of a pencil eraser (figure 34). They are about ¼ of an inch and have a prolonged snout. Their color is a grayish brown and as they matures they turn a darker color. They are two distinct spurs on the lower back of the first segment of the front leg that distinguish it from other weevils.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁰ Dwayne W. Bair, Oral History Interview “Genealogy, Chain of Title, and Land Title History,” (University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley, October 15, 2015), Appendix F, p. 188-189.

¹⁷¹ Alaniz et al., p. 33.

¹⁷² G.W. Bormar, *Texas Weather* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 162.

¹⁷³ Joe Hermosa, “The Valley can get cold,” *Valley Morning Star*, http://www.valleymorningstar.com/news/article_f6591fb6-9ff7-5894-a7e7-25e60047aa0e.html.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Bair-Appendix E, Irrigation Interview 2015, 163.

¹⁷⁶ Castro, B., Cattaneo, M., & Sansone, C. (2007). Managing Cotton Insects in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Texas Extension The Texas A&M University System, 3-15.



Figure 34: Adult Boll Weevil in cotton bud (Courtesy of Free Stock Photo)

This tiny beetle can only reproduce in the cotton plant and when its flower buds are big enough to complete the full development of the weevil. The flower buds are the main source of food for the larva stage of the boll weevil. The egg of the weevil are place by egg-laying punctures into the cavity and secured by a wart like plug. After the egg has been in the cavity from 3 to 5 days of being lay it hatches into a larva and feeds on the bud. It was first introduced in Texas on October 1894 by Charles W. DeRyee from Corpus Christi.¹⁷⁷ From there on the beetle proved to be one of the most devastating pest to be introduced to American agriculture.

The weevil is very susceptible to low temperatures. And shows a high mortality rate if exposed for 24 to 48 hours in temperatures that falls below 20 degrees. A decline in its population can also be seen in the year of the next harvest season of cotton that follows the harsh winter. Not only does the winter freeze effect the weevil itself but also the overwintering of its food sources contribute to its decline. This proves why after a freeze there was a noticeable decline of boll weevils that Mr. Bair mentions to have noticed. “Well, uh, over uh winter a weevil, some of them died, and which was good for us, but if not, some were buried in the soil, so, I, I would say it was, it was beneficial probably because some of the insects had been eliminated.”¹⁷⁸ But that does not mean all of them have been eradicated as Mr. Bair also mentions some may have stayed in the soil. The weevil may survive a winter freeze by hibernation and later emerge in the spring and feed on the young cotton plants.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Frank Wagner, "Boll Weevil," *Texas State Handbook Online*, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/teb01>.

¹⁷⁸ Bair-Irrigation Interview 2015, 7.

¹⁷⁹ Frank Wagner, "Boll Weevil," *Texas State Handbook Online*, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/teb01>.

Historical Account and Ecological Overview of Selected Invasive Plants in the Rio Grande Valley

The Rio Grande Valley is host to a myriad of invasive plant species ranging from ornamental cultivars that adorn many South Texas gardens to the more inconspicuous species among them. Each of these species has a unique pathway by which the plant has come to be so well distributed in this region—a pathway to invasion. Invasive plants are species which do not naturally occur in the particular region that they occupy rendering native plant species' either physiologically or ecologically threatened and which do not contribute to the support of native wildlife. Here we trace the origins and distribution of some of the most infamous and environmentally detrimental invasive plants of the lower Rio Grande Valley Region.

Invasive plant species are more than just unwanted pests; otherwise, they would be indistinguishable from the weeds in our gardens. No, an invasive plant is a plant species which has gained notoriety and status for its adverse effects on the wildlife that occupy a particular ecosystem. The reality is that many of the plants in the Lower Rio Grande Valley and areas northward which are commonly referred to as weeds are often native species further characterizing the south Texas landscape—like the ball moss (*Tillandsia recurvata*) of the Texas hill-country or the underappreciated Chisme (*Portulaca pilosa*).

If there was ever a prerequisite for human-induced environmental disaster, it is ignorance. All too often, we remove native plants disguised by our own ignorance as weeds in our own gardens. Ralph Waldo Emerson understood this. “What is a weed?” he said “...a plant who's virtues have not yet been discovered.”¹⁸⁰ But, when an exotic plant is being introduced to a foreign environment, it is difficult to predict and foresee the environmental repercussions. This particular breed of ignorance is, unfortunately, nearly impossible to avoid. In one way or another, invasive plants make their way into the backcountry of an otherwise foreign land. There is a recurring theme, however, wherein humans catalyze the introduction and propagation of invasive plants. The journey from native to foreign rangeland for an invasive is almost always associated with human activity because many invasive plants begin their invasion by either agricultural or horticultural means.

The ‘Brazilian Pepper’ or ‘Peruvian pepper’ plant (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) exemplifies a popular horticultural plant that has made its way into the wild scrubland of south Texas. This species is native to Brazil but was transported to the southernmost parts of the United States because of its vibrant red fruit which, like a holly plant, ripens to a brilliant crimson during the winter months.¹⁸¹ The seeds of the Peruvian Pepper were widely distributed by birds culminating in an immense invasive range from southern Florida to southern California. The extent of an invasive species' adverse effect on an ecosystem is based on the competitive pressures it imposes on native species.

The Peruvian Pepper dominates native plant species by developing a dense canopy of foliage which renders the underlying vegetation devoid of sunlight. Another competitive mechanism that the Peruvian Pepper employs against native plants is a type of chemical

¹⁸⁰ R. W. Emerson, *Fortune of the Republic* (Boston, MA: The Riverside Press, 1878).

¹⁸¹ Richardson, Alfred, and Ken King in *"A Field Guide to the Woody and Flowering Species"* N.p.: Everbest Printing Co., 2011. Print.

warfare called allelopathy. The Peruvian pepper exudes a series of chemical compounds known as allelochemicals which inhibit the germination process in some native species thus stymieing the propagation of those species. The Peruvian Pepper has spread throughout both Hidalgo and Cameron County.

Another species that can be found throughout the wild lands of Cameron and Hidalgo counties is the Chinaberry Tree (*Melia azedarach*). Though the Chinaberry Tree is an attractive member of the Mahogany family (*Meliaceae*) and its fruit is utilized by some native bird species, its net effect on the local environment is regarded as malign. During the mid-19th century, the Chinaberry Tree was introduced to the Americas from the Asian Himalayas and was commonly planted as an ornamental plant for the garden and was widely purported to possess extracts for use in natural pesticides (Invasive Plant Database).¹⁸²

The Chinaberry Tree is resistant to local diseases allowing for the plant to outcompete the more vulnerable native species. In addition, when the leaves of the Chinaberry Tree are deposited onto the surface, they are subsequently broken down into soluble chemicals which alter the soil acidity such that the growth, development, and germination of native plants is greatly hindered. This plant is commonly seen along drainage canals but is still a considerably typical ornamental tree in many Rio Grande Valley yards.

Salt Cedar trees (*Tamarix*) have evolved adaptive traits that allow for them to thrive in areas with intermittent fires. One of these evolutionary mechanisms is the development of a considerably deep taproot which extends well into the water table. This root system tampers with the already delicate ecological dynamic of aquatic systems. The Salt Cedar diminishes native plant life that is so heavily relied upon for both shelter and sustenance by local wildlife while providing no significant source of food for native animal species. The historical account of this genus' introduction to the United States begins on the east coast in 1823¹⁷.

The plant was then brought to the western United States to be used as an ornamental tree. Rio Grande Valley farmer Dwayne Bair recalls that these trees were being used in rows in the countryside that were adjacent to grape farms in order to protect the grapevines from strong winds. Driving north toward San Antonio from the Lower Rio Grande Valley gives way to a spectacle of tall, well-established, Salt Cedars occurring in distinct rows along fence lines in the ranch country. According to Alfred Richardson and Ken King, prominent south Texas biologists, these Salt Cedar stands that occur along property lines are the result of using Salt Cedar lumber as posts. Once the fence posts were laid, as if to propagate a plant from cuttings, the fence posts ultimately developed into the sizable trees we see along south Texas highways.

Of all of the invasive plant species in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, the 'Giant Reed' or 'Carrizo' (*Arundo donax*) is the most well-distributed. The plant can be seen growing along resacas (oxbow lakes), canals, the Rio Grande River, and even in vacant lots throughout the Valley. Giant Reed poses a major threat both native plants and animals. It dominates native plant species—often crowding and enveloping them in its dense thicket. Giant Reed is a riparian species, meaning it thrives along bodies of water such as resacas and rivers. Its

¹⁸² "Invasives Database," *Texas Invasives.Org*, accessed October 25, 2015, http://texasinvasives.org/plant_database/.

presence along these bodies of water often reduces aquatic habitat for many native fauna including the endangered 'Least Bell's Vireo' (*Vireo bellii pusillus*)¹⁷. Because this species efficiently reproduces vegetatively—meaning that the plant does not rely heavily on seed dispersal and reproduction- Giant Reed invades with ease. Giant Reed is a water guzzler—when compared to its native counterparts, *Arundo donax* was shown to transpire 37,500 acre-feet of water than certain native species over the course of one year.¹⁸³

Due to its 5,000 year long history of cultivation east of the prime meridian, Giant Reed's native origins are largely unspecified. Some scholars believe that this species originates in India and others speculate that it hails from tropical Asia.¹⁸⁴ Giant reed was first introduced to the United States and ultimately the Rio Grande Valley as a biological mechanism for controlling erosion and was subsequently used as an ornamental. There are even different breeds of Giant Reed such as a variegated variety which exhibits distinct alternating bands of green and yellow on the leaves.

A multitude of plant and animal species which assign the Rio Grande Valley its biological identity can be truncated and compromised by the introduction and subsequent distribution of invasive plants. The Peruvian Pepper, Chinaberry, Salt Cedar, and Carrizo represent a modest portion of the ever-imposing number of invasive species that threaten this region. As the general public becomes increasingly informed about the nature of this issue, we equip ourselves as stewards of the Rio Grande flood plains which we occupy and grant ourselves a greater measure of clarity when observing and understanding the wild spaces which adorn this area.

¹⁸³ United States Department of Agriculture, "Field Guide For Managing Giant Reed in the Southwest," *USDA Forest Service Southwestern Region*, http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5410114.pdf.

¹⁸⁴ Csurhes, Steve, "Invasive Plant Risk Assessment: Giant Reed *Arundo Donax*," *Queensland Government*, accessed October 25, 2015, <http://www.daf.qld.gov>.

Chapter 5

Irrigation and the IBWC

Javier Ramirez and Harry Rakosky

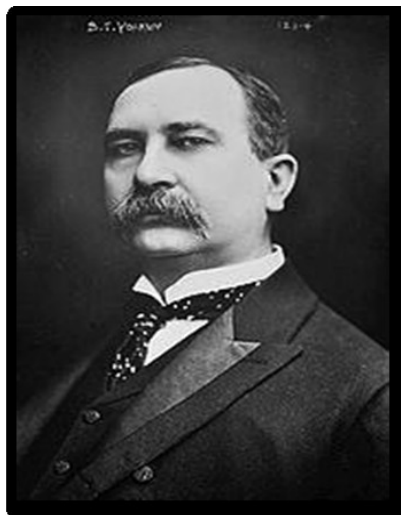
The Lower Rio Grande Valley, consisting of the four counties of Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy and Starr, has twenty seven separate irrigation districts consisting of more than two thousand miles of underground pipelines and canals. Seventeen of these irrigation districts currently extend into Hidalgo County.¹⁸⁵

The purpose of an irrigation system is to provide water for agricultural use. The source of irrigation water for the Valley is the Rio Grande. Apart from the river, there would be no irrigation. The river, therefore, is the lifeblood of the Valley.

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, cattle production dominated the economy of the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Although attempts were made to irrigate the land prior to 1904, none were commercially successful until a number of important factors lined up, including: (1) the introduction of a rail line to transport goods, (2) the availability of efficient centrifugal pumps, (3) sufficient investment capital to build the irrigation systems, (4) the arrival of farmers, and (5) cheap farm labor.¹⁸⁶ Once these factors merged, an agricultural boom (primarily involving investment in large scale sugar cane plantations) took place, creating the need for private land and irrigation companies that could supply water to the crops.

The First Boom (1904- 1915)

The railroad, whose arrival was summoned by individuals who recognized the tremendous potential of irrigation, had a huge impact on the Valley. The individual most responsible for bringing the railroad to the Valley was Benjamin F. Yoakum, a true visionary and one of the largest railroad magnates of the 1900s (figure 35).



¹⁸⁵ Lila Knight, "A Field Guide to Irrigation in the Lower Rio Grande Valley" (Prepared by Knight & Associates for Texas Department of Transportation Environmental Affairs Division, Historical Studies Branch, 2009), 4-6.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Figure 35 Benjamin F. Yoakum c. 1900.

It was during Yoakum's time here in the 1880s, while working for Jay Gould's International & Great Northern Railroad, that he became enamored by the potential productivity of the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) and realized that transportation was the missing link between the region and the rest of the commercial world. Subsequently, Yoakum met with groups of investors and large landowners to share his dream of bringing a rail line to the Valley and by July of 1903 construction of the railroad had begun. This was followed in August 1903 by the creation of what would become the largest and most successful irrigation company in the Valley – the American Rio Grande Land & Irrigation Company -- chartered by Benjamin Yoakum and Thomas Carter. On July 4, 1904, the first train arrived in Brownsville¹⁸⁷ (figure 36).



Figure 36 1904 photo of Locomotive No. 1 of the St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway. Courtesy of Norman Rozeff.

Although early Spanish settlers tried to build irrigation canals, they lacked the technology (i.e., pumps) needed to pull the water up over the river's embankment. As a result, the earliest "successful" attempts at irrigation in the Valley did not begin until the 1870s. George Brulay, who introduced sugar cane to South Texas, is credited with being the first person to irrigate in the Valley, having built a pumping plant on his plantation in 1874.¹⁸⁸ Beginning in 1893 John Closner, one of the RGV's largest land developers, attempted to irrigate lands in Hidalgo County, as well.¹⁸⁹

Beginning in 1902, private irrigation and land companies, often sharing the same directors, began forming in the Valley. Although usually created as separate entities, some companies such as the American Rio Grande Land & Irrigation Company, served the purpose of supplying both land and water. Owners of large tracts of land would often subdivide and sell their property, either outright or on a commission basis, to these land companies. The purchased subdivisions would then be sold to individuals, typically in blocks of ten to 150 acres, although many of the companies were more interested in creating

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 21-23.

¹⁸⁸ Mary Margaret McAllen Amberson, James A McAllen, and Margaret H McAllen, *I Would Rather Sleep in Texas: a History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley and the People of the Santa Anita Land Grant* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2003). (Note: Knight identifies Louis Brulay, son of French immigrant George Brulay, as having not taken over the plantation's operation until 1904. She also identifies 1876 rather than 1874 as the year the pump was installed, yet seems to use Amberson as her source.)

¹⁸⁹ Terri Myers and Karen J. Weitze, "Louisiana-Rio Grande Canal Company Irrigation System," (PhD diss. National Historic Landmark Nomination, 1995) (National Register Files, United States Department of Interior, National Park Service), 37.

larger farms for investment purposes. Not surprisingly, and to their enrichment, local political figures often served as real estate agents, connecting out-of-area investors with local landowners.

To provide irrigation water to the farmlands, steam-powered pumping plants costing an average of \$40,000 to \$70,000 were installed along the river (figure 37).¹⁹⁰ These plants would use large pumps to lift the water over the river banks, pouring it into large earthen canals that had been dug by cheap Mexican labor. Early workers used mule-drawn “fresnos,” or large scrapers, that scooped up the soil and deposited it on the canal’s edge as an embankment.



Figure 37 Canal construction the Rio Grande Valley in 1908 (Courtesy of UTRGV Special Collections Library).

Later canal workers used ditching machinery that threw the dirt over the sides using a conveyor belt. Due to the delta’s gentle slope to the northeast, most of the “main canals” were laid northward along the west edge of the irrigated land.

Bair described this sloping concept further, explaining that the Rio Grande Valley is actually a delta rather than a valley. He remarked that the town of Hidalgo, site of a river pumping station that served his properties, is 126 feet above sea level, whereas the University grounds in Edinburg were probably around 85 or 90 feet above sea level. “Actually, we’re lower than the river,” he said. Similarly, he noted that the town of Peñitas, where one of the other river pumps that served his properties, is 144 feet above sea level. Referring to a geodetic survey map, he remarked, “You see the elevations from here to the coast, and they gradually flow northeast. That’s why the county’s Main Drain (which carries floodwater through Willacy County to the Laguna Madre), if you ever see it on a map, it goes to the northeast. That gives you natural flow, just like the irrigation system from the river ... natural gravity flow.”¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Knight, 29, citing James Nagle, “Irrigation in Texas.” Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910.

¹⁹¹ Dwayne W. Bair, CHAPS Class Natural Disasters & Irrigation Group oral history interview, University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley, October 14, 2015, Appendix E, 175.

Subsequently, smaller “laterals” were constructed off the main canals, extending to the various properties as they were sold. In general, the physical construction of an irrigation system took only a couple of years to complete, but the associated fundraising efforts could push the timeline far beyond that. A canal system, apart from the pumping station, typically cost the companies \$100,000 to \$200,000 to build.¹⁹²

In 1902, there were only four irrigation companies in the RGV: (1) the Brownsville Land & Irrigation Company, (2) the Rio Grande Canal Company, (3) the Hidalgo Canal Company, and (4) the La Gloria Canal Company. The very first irrigation company in the Valley, the Hidalgo Company – established in 1896 – had already failed. By 1906, two years after the arrival of the railroad, five more irrigation companies were in the process of being built: (1) the Arroyo Canal Company, (2) the San Benito Land & Irrigation Company, (3) W.T. Adams, (4) the Louisiana-Rio Grande Canal Company, and (5) the American-Rio Grande Land & Irrigation Company. By 1910, at least 20 irrigation companies existed in Cameron and Hidalgo counties, although by the end of the decade a series of events would drive most of them out of business.¹⁹³

The first company to install a “permanent” pumping plant in the Valley was the Brownsville Land & Irrigation Company, built in 1902 with its river facility located about six miles from Brownsville. With its solid foundation and a brick embankment built along the river, its owners were able to install large engines without fear of needing to move them inland during flooding events. As a result, their pumps were able to move 80,000 gallons per minute compared to the 5,000 gallons or so that other pumping plants at the time were able to transport. As the first large-scale land company in the Valley, the Brownsville plant irrigated over 7,000 acres of rice in 1904, the same year the railroad arrived.¹⁹⁴

One of the important lessons learned during this time, a problem later encountered by the Bair family, was that a lack of adequate drainage resulted in a buildup of excess salts and alkalinity, rendering the land unsuitable for crops. As a result, in 1905 the first drainage district, Cameron County Drainage District No. 1, was created to address this problem. Concurrently, sugar cane began supplanting rice production. This was partly due to the alkalinity issue, but also because federal government subsidies were being offered to increase domestic sugar supplies.

With regard to the salinity issue, Bair explained that his family’s citrus groves were able to withstand wet conditions better than would otherwise have been the case because his father had installed drains on their properties. “You can only stand (accumulated water) so long,” he said, “the trees suffocate and have to have air. Fortunately our citrus trees made it through alright as far as that.”¹⁹⁵

Bair stated that his father, Lee Martin Bair, “was real conscientious about (soil) conservation,” including proper water use and methodologies applied to reduce salinity in the ground. “My Dad, I know, was active in the Hidalgo County Soil Conservation Service,” he said. The government conservation people tested their soils and came up with

¹⁹² Knight, p. 29.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 17-18.

¹⁹⁵ Bair, 5.

formal conservation plans for them to implement. Bair followed in his father's footsteps by exercising a similar devotion to good land stewardship and the use of prescribed conservation plans.¹⁹⁶

Bair described one of the more innovative techniques that his father implemented in the late 1940's or early 1950's. "He'd tile drain it all, which helps take care of the salt problem. With tile drainage you go down about eight feet, and you have these (segments of abutting concrete) pipes about every hundred feet across the field," he explained.¹⁹⁷ The field workers would then tie these six- to eight-inch pipes into a larger eight- to ten-inch manifold pipe (or header) that ran perpendicular to the first set of pipes. "And then they put hay over them to keep dirt from falling in on the connections, so that the water could seep into these pipes," he said.¹⁹⁸ "They would all go into another pipe, and then that header would go into a drainage ditch. And that way you got the water flowing and flushing your soil all the time. And I know my Dad, on most of his land that he had, he tile drained it, and it made a terrific amount of difference because it helped get rid of the salts in the soil."¹⁹⁹

A 1992 Soil Conservation Service document defines a subsurface drain (also known as "drainage tile," or simply "tile") as a "perforated conduit, such as tile, pipe or tubing, installed below the ground surface to intercept, collect, and/or convey drainage water. Subsurface drains are designed to remove excess water from soil,"²⁰⁰ with the tile normally made of burned clay, cement, or similar material.²⁰¹ In the case of Bair's tile drain system, the space that existed between the unattached pipe ends served as the point of perforation.

Virginia Norquest, likewise, recalled that Carroll Norquest Sr. installed a major system of tile drainage under all of his property beginning in the 1920's or 1930's. He explained that "the whole idea is that when you drain, when it is properly drained, after a while even land that is salty will what they call 'sweeten up'" and return to fertility.²⁰²

Carrol "Kelly" Norquest Jr. provided additional details regarding salinity issues and how his family incorporated a subsurface drainage system on their land, with workers digging six- to eight-foot trenches during the off-seasons. He noted that in the late 1940's or early 1950's the Soil Conservation Service provided substantial assistance to encourage farmers to install drain tiles that would feed into the larger "drain ditches" with the intent of leaching the minerals out of the soil. He also noted that, whereas these drainage ditches were initially constructed with an objective of subsurface soil leaching, they were later utilized for urban surface drainage purposes, largely in response to the destructive flooding effects of Hurricane Beulah.²⁰³

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 38.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 22.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 36.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 37, (along with a December 5, 2015 telephone conversation with Bair clarifying various points).

²⁰⁰ Soil Conservation Service (SCS), https://www.michigan.gov/.../deq-wb-nps-sd_250900_7.pdf, apparently extracted from an untitled SCS document dated December 1, 1992. (Note: According to the NCRS website (www.nrcs.usda.gov), the name of the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) was changed to the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) in 1994.)

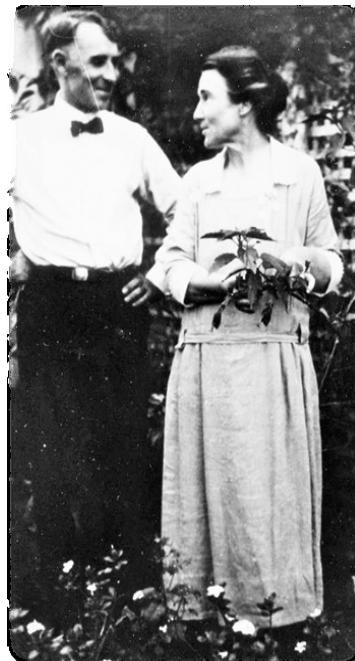
²⁰¹ USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Drainage Guide for New York State, June 2008, p. 83.

²⁰² Hernandez-Salinas et al, Appendix G, F-3.

²⁰³ Ibid., Appendix G, A-8, A-27 and C-28.

Bair noted that tile drainage was especially important during periods of drought, when it might become necessary to use well water containing a high saline content to irrigate the orchards. “Which is not good,” Bair exclaimed, “but it’s wet. And when you got a citrus grove you have to irrigate it. You want some water on it to keep it alive.”²⁰⁴ Tile drainage also proved its worth after major flooding events, such as occurred with Hurricane Beulah in 1967. Bair recalled flying over his fields in its aftermath, noting that he could actually discern where the tile drainage had allowed his soil to begin drying out in rows, whereas other fields without drains remained water-logged.

The first agricultural boom lasted from 1904 until after World War I, when the land developers could no longer withstand the triple economic hits of natural disaster (i.e., droughts and freezes), war (i.e., the Mexican Revolution), and a depressed agricultural economy. During this time, many undercapitalized irrigation companies were forced to reduce expensive system maintenance, along with their service to the farmers. In turn the farmers, who were not getting enough irrigation water, were unable to make enough profit to pay the irrigation companies. This created a vicious cycle for both farmer and water supplier, causing many of the land and irrigation companies to fall into receivership. These hardships resulted in a transfer of the control of irrigation water from privately-held companies to publicly-owned entities. This transition was accomplished through the Irrigation Act of 1913, which allowed for the establishment of “irrigation districts,” granting them the authority to issue bonds for the purchase and improvement of those systems, along with the right of eminent domain. The Act also created a formal process for the appropriation of surface water in Texas, prioritizing water rights by the order of filing, although it preserved the existing Common Law method recognized in the Valley.²⁰⁵ The year 1913 was noteworthy for another reason. It was the year that the Heacock family – including Dwayne Bair’s mother (Dorothy Ann Heacock) and maternal grandparents (Joseph Wilson and Fanny [Knowles] Heacock) – arrived in the Rio Grande Valley from Quorn, Iowa (figure 38).



²⁰⁴ Bair, 22.

²⁰⁵ Knight, 41-42.

The First Bust

By 1915, the first land boom essentially collapsed, in large part due to Mexican banditry, connected to the Mexican Revolution, driving investment interest, Mexican labor, and many of the farmers out of the area. It also resulted in 50,000 National Guard troops being stationed along the border through 1916. This was followed by the U.S. declaration of war on Germany in 1917. That same year, a conservation amendment (the 1917 Irrigation Act) authorized the creation of “water improvement districts” by which farmers, or the irrigation districts they formed, could purchase financially distressed irrigation systems and their water rights for a mere fraction of their worth, issuing long-term low-interest bonds to pay for them. As a result, four water improvement districts were formed in Cameron County, whereas one was created in the county to its west – Hidalgo County Water Improvement District No. 2.

By 1920, all but one of the irrigation companies existing in the first decade of the century had disappeared, having been purchased either by the newly created water improvement districts or by new irrigation companies as the old entities defaulted on their loans. Only the American-Rio Grande Land & Irrigation Company survived during this period of adjustment.²⁰⁶

1920 was also the year that Dwayne Bair’s father (Lee Martin Bair) and paternal grandparents (Alex and Mary Ida Bair) left their farm in southwest Iowa to settle in the Rio Grande Valley. Dwayne’s father would have been about 21 years old at the time. The 1920s also marked the arrival of two other CHAPS Program families whose stories have been told -- the Atwood family (with Dewey and Jewel Atwood arriving from Cleburne, Texas in 1922)²⁰⁷ and the Norquest family (with Peter and Mary Norquest arriving from central Kansas in 1925).²⁰⁸

The Second Boom (1925-1929)

It did not take long for the regional economy to get moving in the right direction again. While many, in 1915, were fleeing the area due to Mexican banditry, people like John Shary – “Father of the Texas Citrus Industry” – actually moved to the Valley (figure 39).

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 47.

²⁰⁷ Garcia, Janette et al, Atwood Acres: A Porcion of Edinburg, 11.

²⁰⁸ Hernandez-Salinas, 5.

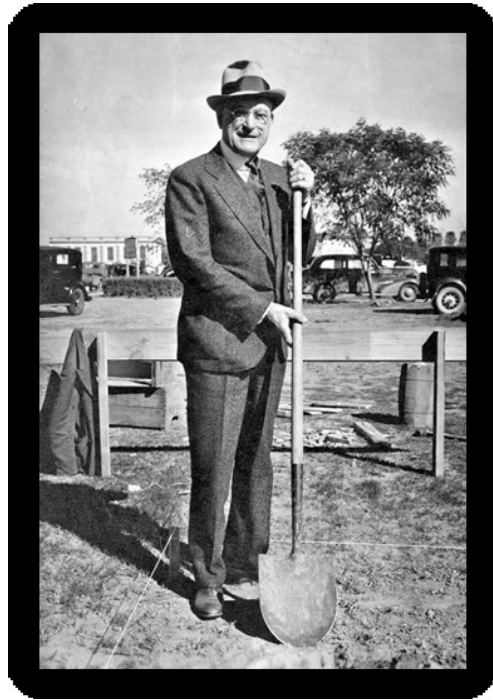


Figure 39 John H. Shary, circa 1920. Courtesy of UTRGV Special Collections Library.

Shary recognized the Valley's superior economic potential and by the end of the decade he, along with other land developers, began initiating lavish land excursions for prospective buyers, replete with visits to extravagant club houses, entertainment, and promises of easy money (figure 40).



Figure 40 Shary-Shivers Estate built in 1917. (Courtesy of UTRGV Special Collections Library)

Accordingly, a second agricultural boom followed in the mid-1920s, accompanied by a drastic growth in the Valley citrus industry, which reached its peak in 1928 and 1929. During this second boom, a 1925 revision to the irrigation district laws allowed for the establishment of “water control and improvement districts” with the power of taxation, thus providing the capital needed to maintain and improve their districts. Land developers were also permitted to use the irrigation districts as a means of issuing bonds, which helped lead to the construction of a large number of new irrigation systems during the 1920s and early 1930s. This, in turn, led to a corresponding increase in the value of the irrigated land. Hidalgo County Water Improvement District No. 6 and Hidalgo County Water Control and Improvement District No. 6 were added at this time, along with seven others in Cameron County. By 1929, there were 28 irrigation districts in the Valley, including 12 in Hidalgo County, with 370,000 acres of land being irrigated.²⁰⁹

Also during this second boom, the emphasis was on cotton and winter truck crops in Cameron County, while in Hidalgo County citrus was king. Sugar cane, the main crop raised during the first agricultural expansion, had been entirely abandoned due to a crash in prices. It was during this second thriving period that the term “The Magic Valley” was coined, alluding to the wonderful fertility and culture of the area that was being marketed to potential investors, and pulling families into the Rio Grande Valley.²¹⁰ Among these investors and families were some of the same soldiers who had been stationed in the Valley during the mid-teen bandit days. They saw firsthand the potential of the area and were now beneficiaries of a 1919 federal law that allowed them to buy farms as large as 320 acres, with Uncle Sam fronting sixty percent of the funds and providing repayment terms of up to forty years.²¹¹ Several other investors came from the Midwestern states, including folks such as the Bair family, about whom this story is being written.

The Second Bust

This second agricultural boom continued until yet another economic disaster – The Great Depression – arrived. The 1929 stock market crash and resulting Great Depression knocked off the last of the privately-owned irrigation companies. Even the well capitalized American-Rio Grande Land & Irrigation Company sold out to farmers a year later. Additionally, the debt incurred to form irrigation districts in the 1920s, along with the various taxes, created a huge burden for Valley farmers during the Depression years and caused many to lose their properties. Adding insult to injury, a hurricane hit the Valley in 1933 that caused catastrophic agricultural losses. Fortunately, a number of New Deal programs, such as the Public Works Administration, provided work for unemployed laborers and led to the rebuilding and strengthening of the Valley’s floodways. Workers also lined many of the existing irrigation canals with concrete, reducing water loss due to seepage.

The Third Boom (1942-1949)

A third agricultural boom began in 1942 and led to the building out of the farm lands within the irrigation districts. A number of agricultural disasters, however, brought on by

²⁰⁹ Knight, 61.

²¹⁰ Ibid, 48.

²¹¹ Ibid., 48, citing “Members of A.E.F. to Become Farmers if They So Desire,” (1919).

droughts, hurricanes and freezes – beginning in the late 1940s and lasting throughout the 1950s – resulted in the near destruction of agricultural production in the Valley, including the loss of millions of citrus trees. It would take more than a decade to fully recover.

The International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC)

One bright spot during this trying time was the 1945 ratification of a treaty on “Utilization of Waters of the Colorado and Tijuana Rivers and of the Rio Grande” (hereinafter Treaty or 1944 Water Treaty),²¹² an international agreement with Mexico which led to the construction of the Falcón and Amistad reservoirs and dams. These critical assets would ensure a regulated flow of water for the irrigation districts, whereas previously most of the river water had either substantially bypassed their pumps and emptied into the Gulf of Mexico or, alternatively, become completely unavailable during periods of drought. The organization responsible for implementing this treaty is the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC). Established as the “International Boundary Commission (IBC)” through the Convention of March 1, 1889, its original purpose was to apply border agreements.²¹³ Today, this organization is responsible for applying both boundary and water treaties between Mexico and the United States, settling differences that arise in their application through an amendment process called “minutes.” For the United States, the President approves or disapproves any proposed minutes.

Organizationally, the IBWC consists of a U.S. Section and a Mexican Section. Each section has four treaty officers assigned to them – a Commissioner (appointed by their respective presidents), a Secretary, and two Principal Engineers. The current (2015) Commissioners are Roberto Salmon of Mexico and Edward Drusina of the United States. The U.S. Section of the IBWC maintains its headquarters in El Paso, Texas and operates under the foreign policy guidance of the U.S. Department of State. The Mexican Section has its main office in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua and is overseen by Mexico’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Although several water- and boundary-related agreements have been concluded over the years, the international agreement that most affects the Rio Grande Valley is the 1944 Water Treaty. This Treaty distributed the waters of the Rio Grande from Fort Quitman (located 89 miles downstream of El Paso) to the Gulf of Mexico, with the U.S. receiving one-third of the water from six named Mexican tributaries in an average annual amount of not less than 350,000 acre-feet in a five-year cycle. The last 5-year cycle ended October 2015, with Mexico ending in a deficit (something that happened twice previously during a period of drought from 1994 to 2003). On its part, the U.S. is required to deliver to Mexico an annual volume of 1,500,000 acre-feet of water from the Colorado River, which represents about ten percent of the river’s average flow.²¹⁴

It was the 1944 Water Treaty that added the word “water” to the title of the organization, changing its name from the International Boundary Commission (IBC) to the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) as a reflection of its expanded jurisdiction and duties, which included authorization to: (1) address border sanitation

²¹² “Treaty Series, No. 994: Utilization of Waters of the Colorado and Tijuana Rivers and of the Rio Grande,” Treaty Between the United States and Mexico, 3 February 1944, 59 Statute 1219 (hereinafter referred to as the Treaty or the 1944 Water Treaty) accessible at <http://www.ibwc.state.gov/files/1944Treaty.pdf>.

²¹³ “Treaty Series, No. 241: Water Boundary,” Convention between the United States and Mexico, March 1, 1889, accessible at http://www.ibwc.state.gov/files/TREATY_OF_1889.pdf.

²¹⁴ Nicole T. Carter, Clare R. Seelke, and Daniel T. Shedd, “U.S. Mexico Water Sharing: Background and Recent Developments” (Congressional Research Service, November 10, 2015), 2.

problems, (2) initiate flood control works, and (3) construct, operate and maintain up to three international storage dams on the Rio Grande. Only two storage dams were actually built. The first, Falcón Dam, was completed in 1954 and is located near Falcón Heights, Texas. The second, Amistad Dam, was completed in 1969 and is located about twelve miles upstream of Del Rio, Texas. Their associated reservoirs, with a combined conservation capacity of over five million acre-feet, store water for use by both countries and provide for flood control. Each country possesses hydroelectric power plants, with the power generated equally.

In addition to the international storage reservoirs and dams, four flood control projects were also completed, one of which focused on the Rio Grande Valley. The U.S. portion of the Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project, with its field office in Mercedes, is responsible for 270 miles of levees, 30,000 acres of interior floodway, 420 drain structures, 180 irrigation structures, and six bridges (figure 40). The project covers 180 miles of river from Peñitas to the Gulf of Mexico, with the inlet to the interior floodway beginning at Banker Weir near Granjeno. The Main Floodway branches into the North Floodway and the Arroyo Colorado Floodway near Mercedes. The North Floodway then extends northward to La Villa before turning eastward to Willacy County, draining into the Lower Laguna Madre. The Arroyo Colorado, itself, is a 90-mile natural channel whose headwaters begin southwest of the City of Mission; it also drains into the Lower Laguna Madre.²¹⁵

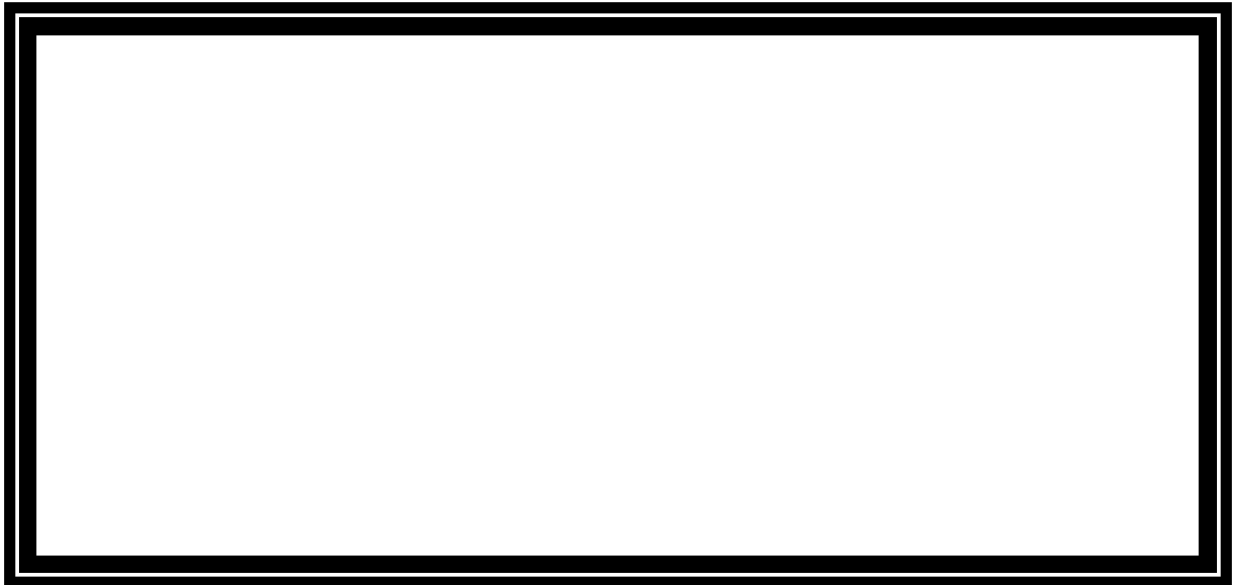


Figure 41 Hydrographic map showing RGV floodways and Arroyo Colorado (Texas Coastal Watershed Program)

²¹⁵ International Boundary and Water Commission, United States Section, Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project, undated pamphlet.

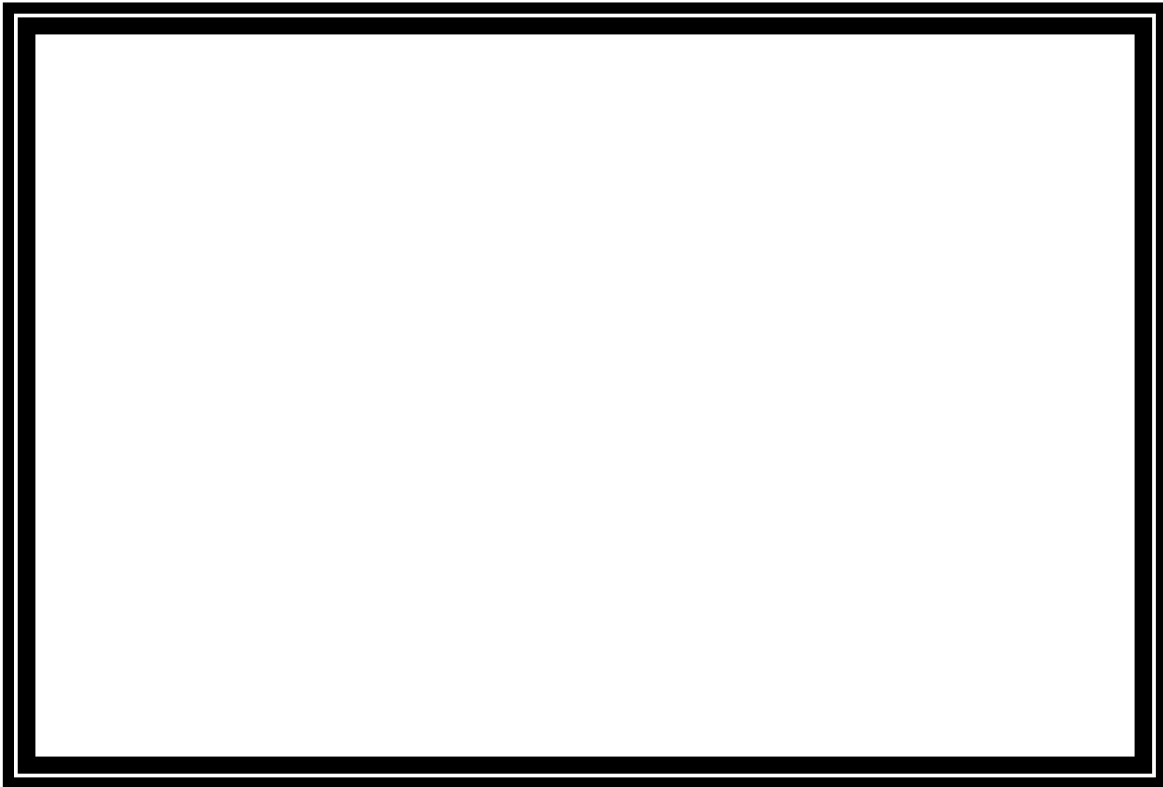


Figure 42 Anzalduas Dam, October 2, 2007. Photo courtesy of US International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC)

The IBWC's flood control project also maintains two "diversion dams" – Anzalduas Dam and Retamal Dam. Completed in 1960, Anzalduas Dam is located in Mission, 11 miles upstream of the Hidalgo-Reynosa International Bridge (figure 42).

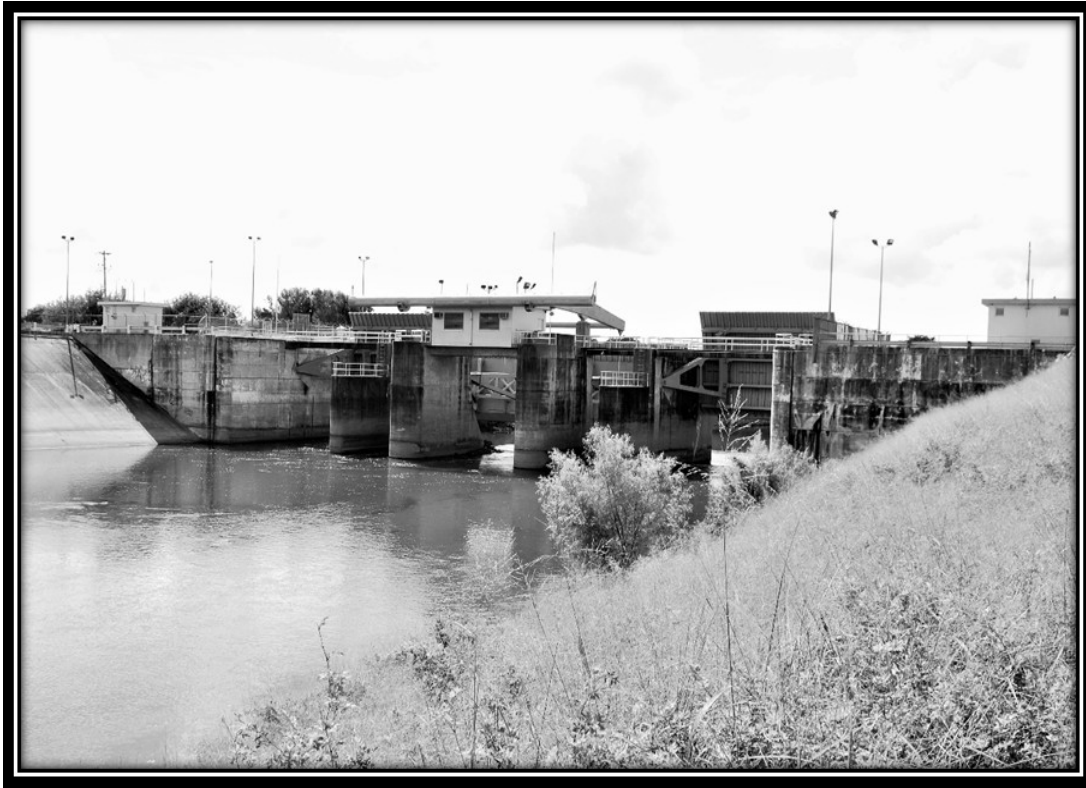


Figure 43 Retamal Dam, September 29, 2007. Photo courtesy of USIBWC.

The concrete structure is 524 feet long and has six 75-foot cylindrical gates that divert the U.S. share of floodwaters to the interior floodway. It also enables the channeling of water into Mexico's main irrigation canal and releases water to downstream users in both countries. Anzalduas Dam is staffed 24 hours a day, with the operators from the two countries sharing a single control room. Retamal Dam was completed in 1975 and is located 38 miles downstream of Anzalduas Dam, southeast of McAllen (figure 43).



Figure 44 Falcon Dam, August 21, 2007. Photo courtesy of USIBWC.

Its purpose is to limit flood flows at Brownsville and Matamoros, and enables Mexico to divert its share of floodwaters to its interior floodway. It is 200 feet long and has three gates, with the control house located at the center of the dam.²¹⁶

The 1953 opening of Falcón Dam and Reservoir, specifically, was a turning point in the Valley's agricultural development (figure 44). To make room for the reservoir on the U.S. side, the village of Lopeño (along with four other small communities) and the 181-year old border town of Zapata had to be relocated several miles to the east. At the time of its opening, Falcón Reservoir was expected to irrigate 1.3 million farm acres once completed, and its \$48 million dam was to provide flood control, irrigation water, and hydroelectric power for the Valley's citrus, fruit, cotton and cattle raising areas.²¹⁷

The reservoir and dam possessed important water conservation and agricultural planning functions, while also serving as an essential platform for various forms of recreation – such as hunting, boating and fishing – that provides a vital source of revenue for the local economy.

Reflecting on his thoughts at the time the United States entered into the 1944 Water Treaty, Bair exclaimed, "Great decision! Great decision for the whole Valley! Not just agriculture, but all the cities (because it) allowed for the growth of the cities, and allowed for irrigation of the crops." When asked if his evaluation had remained constant over the years, he replied, "Oh, yes. That was a great idea! Thank goodness they did it." Bair recalled that the Valley had gone through a drought period in the late 1940's and pointed out its detrimental impact on agriculture, in general, and citrus production, in particular. "Thank goodness that we have two dams on the Rio Grande River," Bair concluded, "The serious

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Laurence Burd, "Eisenhower Dedicates U.S., Mexican Dam," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 20 October 1953, Part 1 – 1-2, final edition.

thing with the drought is the citrus. We have to have water all the time because of those droughts.”²¹⁸

Bair’s identification of two of the Treaty’s beneficiaries – municipalities and agriculture – align perfectly with the Treaty’s own stated hierarchy of uses for the IBWC-controlled water: (1) domestic and municipal uses; (2) agriculture and stock-raising; (3) electric power; (4) other industrial uses; (5) navigation; (6) fishing and hunting; and (7) any other beneficial uses which may be determined by the Commission.²¹⁹ The construction of Falcón Dam brought back fond memories for Bair. He recalled the summer of 1953, when President Dwight D. Eisenhower arrived to the Valley for the dam’s dedication ceremony. The President, in winding up his 5-day, 5,000-mile trip through the mid- and southwest, arrived at Harlingen Air Force Base on Saturday afternoon, October 17, 1953. Eisenhower spent the weekend at the Shary-Shivers Estate, where he was hosted by Governor Alan Shivers, son-in-law of John H. Shary, “Father of the Texas Citrus Industry.” (Insert picture of Shary with Shivers at Falcón Dam or at Shary-Shivers Estate) On a cloudy Monday morning on October 19, the President and his motorcade left the mansion for Falcón Dam, some 72 miles away.²²⁰ Bair recounted that a friend of his with “a pretty souped-up ’47 Ford” said, “Let’s get behind the convertible Eisenhower is in!” So Bair and two of his friends ventured forth in an attempt to slide directly behind the President’s vehicle. Unfortunately for the youthful adventurers “There was about three Secret Service black Fords behind the President’s car. We tried to pass,” Bair recounted, but the Secret Service pointed their Thompson machine guns at us.” Bair went on to explain that they then got in behind the Secret Service agents and went all the way to Falcón Dam. Upon arrival, Bair remembered seeing U.S. Army troops from Ft. Hood on the U.S. side of the dam, while soldiers from Mexico took position on the Mexican side of the dam. The presidents of both countries then presented their dedication ceremony speeches in the middle of the massive structure. “It was quite an exciting thing for obvious reasons,” Bair concluded, “It was a pretty exciting day.”²²¹

It is interesting to note the political and historical context in which the Falcón Dam ceremony took place. The building of Falcón Dam, reportedly the world’s longest at the time, commenced in 1950 under the authority of the 1944 Water Treaty with Mexico. It was named after Captain Miguel de la Garza Falcón, a Spaniard who explored the region some 206 years before. The ceremony occurred 105 years after the 1848 signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe, the agreement that ended the Mexican-American War. The International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC), the agency responsible for the construction and operation of the dam, had been established in 1889, or 64 years before the dedication.²²² World War II, during which Dwight D. Eisenhower was a five-star general and Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe, lasted from 1939 to 1945, ending eight years before this commemorative event took place (figure 45). The Cold War tensions between the Western Bloc, led by the U.S., and the Eastern Bloc, headed by the Soviet Union, began soon after that war ended. Concurrently, a nuclear arms race ensued in which the United

²¹⁸ Bair, 2-3.

²¹⁹ 1944 Water Treaty, Article 3.

²²⁰ Burd, Part 1 – 1-2.

²²¹ Bair, 14.

²²² Burd, Part 1 – 2.

States and the Soviet Union, along with their respective allies, competed for supremacy in nuclear weaponry. It was at this time in history that the two presidents met.



Figure 45 Dwight D. Eisenhower in motorcade on US Highway 83 on way to dedication at Falcon Dam in 1953. Courtesy of Hidalgo County Historical Commission

During his dedication speech, Mexican President Adolfo Ruiz Cortines urged world disarmament to save mankind from the disaster of atomic war, a scenario bearing “threats of total destruction.” Eisenhower, on the other hand, called for “a structure of abiding peace” in the face of the “blustering threats” of totalitarian communism. He made no mention of disarmament. The dedication ceremony was Dwight D. Eisenhower’s first trip outside of the United States since his inauguration as President of the United States. Each president visited the other country during their appearances. After the ceremony President Eisenhower stopped briefly to address several thousand Americans who could not be accommodated at the dedication site, giving an inspirational message to the people in the crowd that day. “You own America” he told them. “Many of you have 60 years ahead of you. If I’m lucky, I have about 15 more years. You have the chance to work for peace and carry this country and the world to greater progress than they have ever known.” President Eisenhower died on March 28, 1969 ... 15 years after he gave that speech.²²³

At the time of President Eisenhower’s arrival, construction of the Falcón Dam was about ninety percent complete. The power generating plant, whose output was to be divided equally among the two countries, had not yet been constructed. It was anticipated, however, that “from identical power plants on each side of the river will come 250 million kilowatt hours of energy each year for industry and homes in each country. And most importantly, Falcón Dam, through its flood control and conservation of water, will eventually provide

²²³ Burd, Part 1 – 1-2.

irrigation for some 600,000 acres on the American side of the river and about 700,000 in Mexico.”²²⁴

As for the reservoir, Bair recalled looking down from atop the dam and seeing, “There was nothing in the river hardly. It was dried up.” In fact, he remembered everyone thinking that the lake would never fill up. Well, Bair entered military service that next year and, while he was gone, Hurricane Alice came for a visit, making landfall just south of Matamoros on June 25, 1954. Up to 35 inches of rain fell in a 24-hour period.²²⁵ Whereas some had expected it would take ten years to fill that reservoir, Alice managed to complete the task in a single week. 1954 was a good year for the reservoir, and it was a good year for the Bair family, too. Dwayne and Shirley Bair were wed that year, followed by delivery of their first child, Steve, in 1955.²²⁶

The Third Bust

As noted earlier, a number of agricultural disasters, beginning in the late 1940s and lasting throughout the 1950s, nearly destroyed agricultural production in the Valley. It would take a decade for Valley farming to get back on its feet.

Recovery & Transformation

Valley agriculture finally did recover in the early 1970s. By then, it had essentially been transformed from its pre-war setting, in which small farms of 100 or less acres were the norm, into a large-scale farm model in which agricultural lands were consolidated and larger farm tracts began to dominate the area. This trend, coupled with the region’s growing population and ever-increasing urbanization, blended with efforts to further diversify the area’s economy, has resulted in a fundamentally strong competition between agricultural and urban interests for possession of the land and water that exists in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. A chronological glance at topographic maps over the last century foreshadows the fact that urbanization will only increasingly dominate agriculture in the RGV (figure 46-47).

²²⁴ United States Information Service (U.S.I.S.) film entitled Falcón Dam, quoted from Texas Archive of the Moving Image, http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/2013_00972, “Falcón Dam Dedication (1953) – International Boundary and Water Commission.”

²²⁵ “Hurricane Alice (June 1954),” *Wikipedia*, accessed December 5, 2015, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurricane_Alice_\(June_1954\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurricane_Alice_(June_1954)).

²²⁶ Bair, 12-13.



Figure 46 1963 topographic map of Mission area showing multiple orchards



Figure 47 2002 topographic map of Mission area showing increased urbanization

Irrigation Districts & Irrigation Systems

As noted earlier, the Lower Rio Grande Valley has 27 separate irrigation districts, 17 of which currently extend into Hidalgo County. Of these, three supplied water to Bair's farm properties; they were: (1) Hidalgo County Irrigation District No. 1, (2) Hidalgo County Irrigation District No. 2, and (3) Santa Cruz Irrigation District No. 15.²²⁷

²²⁷ Bair, 17.

Most of Bair's properties were supplied by water from Hidalgo County Irrigation District No. 1, the district responsible for the Edinburg Main Canal. This district, which covers approximately 36,000 acres, consists of an area shaped like an upside-down "L" that begins near Palm View Golf Course in McAllen and extends northward toward Monte Cristo Road (figure 48). It then turns eastward until it reaches the City of Elsa.

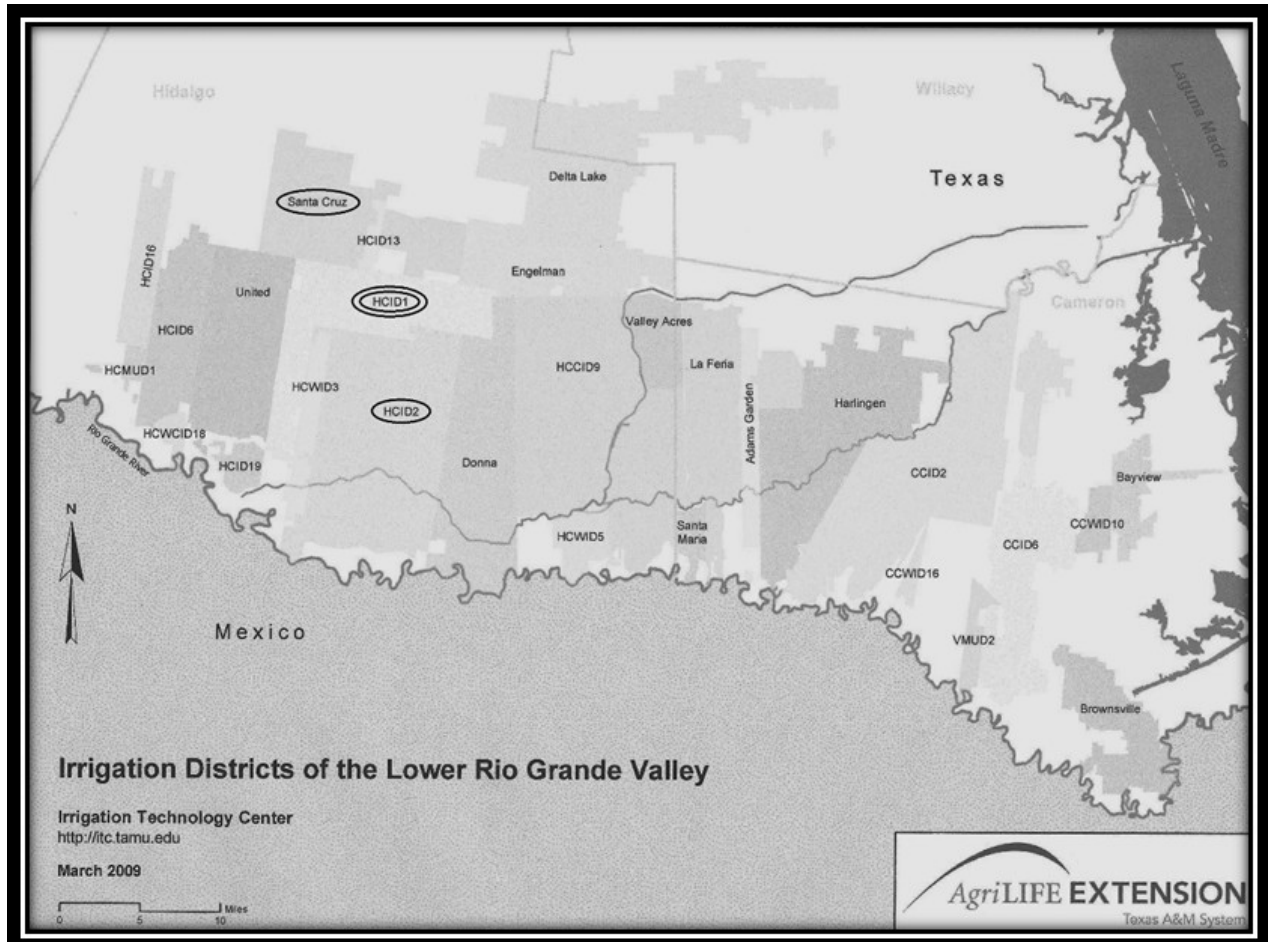


Figure 48 Map of irrigation districts, with the three serving Bair circled. Courtesy of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.

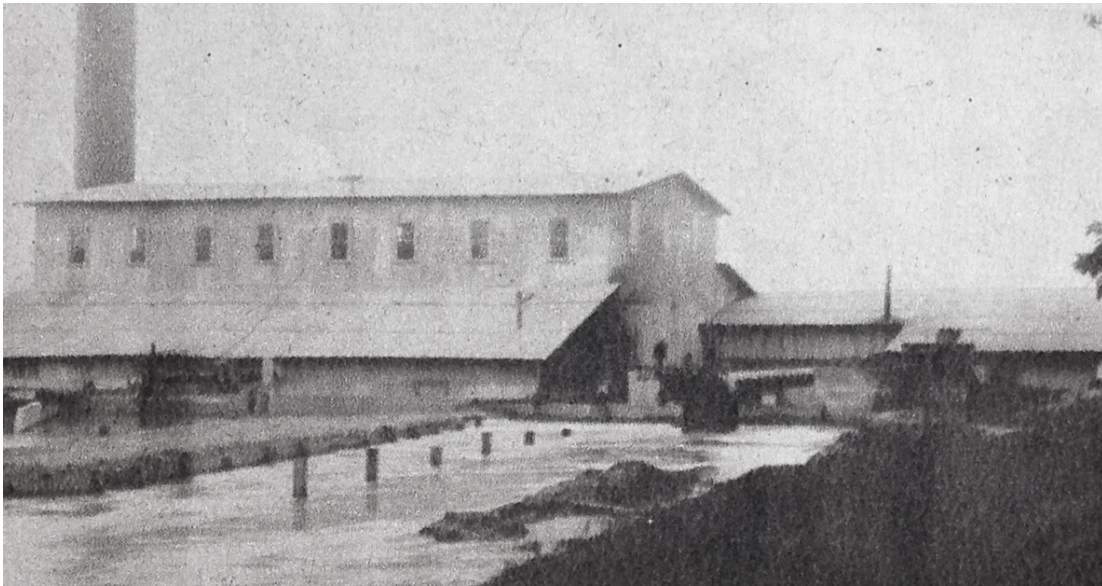


Figure 49 Hidalgo (Edinburgh) Pump House c. (Courtesy UTRGV Special Collections Library)

Its water is pulled directly from the Rio Grande through the Peñitas pumping station. Bair remembers that it used to have a “big old gas engine, but I believe now they are all electric engines.” He noted that there are also two “lifts,” or secondary pumps, in the canal way. He said these are used when a “lomita” (“little hill”) or ridge is encountered. “Not all is constant down flow,” Bair explained, “You got to have a lift pump to get it back up over that.” He advised that most of the irrigation districts have a similar system.²²⁸

Irrigation system features are basically divided into four main components: (1) diversion, (2) conveyance, (3) distribution, and (4) delivery. Diversion components include the pumping plants and the associated main headworks that control the flow into the canal. They also include secondary and tertiary lift plants that divert water over natural obstructions. Conveyance components move the water from the river to the farm field and include canals, laterals, pipelines, flumes, resacas, settling basins and reservoirs. Distribution components control the movement of the water through the system and include the dams, check gates, head gates and smaller take-out gates, as well as weirs and division boxes. Finally, delivery components transport the water from the main canals and laterals to the agricultural fields and include sub-laterals, tertiary laterals and privately owned pipelines, standpipes and gates associated with final delivery of irrigation water to the field.²²⁹

One of the irrigation districts serving Bair – Hidalgo County Irrigation District No. 2 (HCID #2) – is of particular interest because its predecessor has actually been designated a National Historic Landmark (figure 49). Its story provides a glimpse of the glory days of irrigation in the Rio Grande Valley. In 1910, real estate developer John C. Kelly and Louisiana sugarcane magnate Henry N. Pharr, along with his brothers Eugene and John, formed the Louisiana-Rio Grande Canal Company (precursor of HCID #2) with the intent of

²²⁸ Bair, 18.

²²⁹ Knight, 93-94.

promoting 45,000 acres of irrigated land. A second company, the Louisiana-Rio Grande Sugar Company, was used to actually sell the land. Perhaps because John Closner had already built an irrigation canal through his San Juan Plantation, Kelly and Pharr purchased his operation and expanded his single lateral to include six major irrigation canals. More than 4,300 men and up to 40 teams of mules and wagons dug the main canal and 31 small laterals that stretched more than 17 miles.²³⁰ Teams of about 100 men chopped mesquite, cactus and brush by hand, using the wood later to stoke the pump house boilers. Canal gradients were designed to control water flow between 1.6 and 2.1 feet per second, fast enough to keep the canals clean and free of silt deposits. During the 1930s, many of the canals were lined with concrete to prevent water seepage, and many have since been replaced by underground pipes to further control evaporation. The canal system remains essentially as engineered between 1910 and 1935, with 80 miles of earthen canals, 32 miles of concrete-lined canals, and 200 miles of underground pipes. One hundred twenty miles of drainage ditches and 85 miles of pipe drains supplement the system²³¹

Unlike many other river-based systems, the irrigation systems in the Lower Rio Grande Valley use lift stations to divert water into its canals, often incorporating second and third lift stations to overcome elevations or ridges encountered along the way. By mid-1910, the company built two first-lift pump houses (containing boilers, steam engines, and pumps), drawing 40,000 gallons of water per minute from the river and pumping it into the irrigation canals. The equipment was changed out a number of times over the years and, in September 1983, the first-lift was abandoned following a major flood caused by Hurricane Allen. An all-electric pumping station was built a mile downstream and now serves as its replacement. Significantly, the original pump house has since been turned into a museum – The Old Hidalgo Pump House – with its ownership transferred to the City of Hidalgo. This original facility is the only Hidalgo County pump house that retains its historic machinery – four steam engines, two centrifugal pumps, and three boilers installed from 1912 to 1914.²³² The Old Hidalgo Pump House was also chosen to be an environmental and economic focal point as one of the Rio Grande Valley’s popular World Birding Centers.

A second-lift (or re-lift) station was also built on the main canal about six miles north of the first-lift station in order to make the waters accessible to farmlands beyond a geological formation known as “the ridge.” As with the first-lift station, electric pumps have since replaced the boilers, steam engines and pumps.²³³ Bair was intimately familiar with irrigation district procedures for ordering and scheduling water delivery, as well as participating in the actual delivery of water onto his fields. “We would go to the water office first and pay so much an acre to irrigate. And then we had to pay so much for a bond tax. The bond tax was used to repair the canals all the time; they had constant repairing going on.” He continued, “You’d tell them how many (acre-feet of water) you wanted, when you wanted it, and they told you when they could get it to you, because they can’t always get it the day you want it, depending on who else is irrigating. If someone is ahead of you, you wait your turn.”²³⁴

²³⁰ Myers, 53-56.

²³¹ Ibid, 23-24.

²³² Myers, 18, 53-56.

²³³ Myers, 54, as cited from a narrative and application for a Texas Historical Marker, June 1, 1988, entitled “Hidalgo Irrigation Pumps, Hidalgo, Hidalgo County, Texas” submitted by Robert E. Norton and Spurgeon Brown.

²³⁴ Bair, 23.

Bair explained how “water allotments” are distributed to farmers within the district. “Like in District One,” he said, “I can build up to three irrigations. We can build our allotments. It’s like having money in the bank; we can put three irrigations in there. Unless you got a rain or they release more (no-charge) water up above, or unless I bought some (water) from another person.” When asked if a farmer was limited to only three irrigations, he clarified, “Well, no. You maintain three irrigations. But in the meantime, if it rained, you could build that back up. It was a moving target. Not just three for a year.” At the same time, a farmer was not permitted to roll over the allotment to the next year. “Once you build up to three, that’s it,” he said, at least in that particular district.²³⁵

A landowner could, however, buy water from another property owner. He remembered one year, after a number of citrus groves were killed by a freeze and no longer needed water, he went to the water office and said, “Look, I’d like to purchase their allotment ... so I started purchasing water from all these guys so I’d have enough water for our citrus that has to be watered all year. And I did that. I made a lot of phone calls and was able to transfer in that office, with their permission through paying them, to my account so that I’d have water.” Bair said that there was usually no need to coordinate with neighboring properties when it came to ordering water, although a neighbor might say, “When you get through, let me know so I can take the water and go on down without having to stop it all here, and go back through the whole system. We’d work with our neighbors on that.”²³⁶

Bair continued, “So you pay so much per acre and then you get in touch with your ditch rider – a “canalero” we called them – the guys who knew that system out there. In other words, I had one ditch rider for this area, maybe, and then another one over somewhere else. Before I’d leave the water office, I’d call (the canalero) and say, ‘I’ve got water coming on a certain day and a certain time. Can you help me?’ because there are a lot of gates that need to be closed in order to manipulate the water where you needed it. But then during the middle of the night, you might need to change from one area to another area, so in order not to waste any water, he’s got to go and plan ahead on the water because it’s already flowing. So we couldn’t work without (the canaleros) because they have to know where all of these gates (e.g., turn-out gates, cut-off gates, check gates) are. And they handle most of the larger gates, and we would handle some of the smaller gates right on the farm.” Bair explained that the gates on the irrigation canals are owned by the irrigation districts, whereas “once you got into our property we had our own gates and valves, of course.”²³⁷

Bair said that he used “gated pipe” on his fields. “My brother and I had a quarter mile of gated pipe, 12-inch PVC pipe, with sliding gates that you could hook up to a bonnet. We would call it a ‘tortuga’ (or turtle),” he explained. “You just slide your gates out, which is a pretty nice way, since you don’t have to make ditches or anything.” He said this type of arrangement is also useful because the land does not have to be level since “the plastic 12-inch pipe will actually bend with the flow of the land.” “Of course,” he added, “it’s a job when you finish. You have to pick them up and carry all those pipes across a quarter mile. Each piece is about twenty-something feet long. Anyway, one man can carry them.”

²³⁵ Bair, 22.

²³⁶ Bair, 20.

²³⁷ Ibid.

Today, he said, farmers use a similar technique employing collapsible rolls of blue tubes. He said the product is made of quality material, is significantly less expensive, and is much easier to transport and handle.²³⁸

Bair is a huge proponent of irrigation farming. “If you can just get the moisture through the ground through irrigation,” he said, “it’s best if you never got a rain on most ... I guess any crop.” As for citrus, “Well, it’s better if you get it on the ground” and into the root system and not all over the trees, the exception being if there is dirt build-up or something that the grower needs to wash off.²³⁹

Bair described some of the improvements and changes that have been made to the irrigation systems over the years, with perhaps one of the most significant being that “many of the open ditches or open canals now have been put into a pipeline to get it down under the ground.” This not only conserves water by cutting down on losses due to seepage and evaporation, but also allows the area to be paved over for roadway use. Along with that, “The biggest change, I would say, in saving a lot of water is the ‘drip system’ in citrus groves. A lot of the larger growers now have their own little lake or reservoir and let the water sit out, and let the dirt and everything settle down so the water can be as clean as possible. Then they run (the water) through filters and have a drip system in the groves where they lay a line with little emitters. This way instead of flood irrigating, where you put a lot of water on the ground, you use a drip system and put it on more constant, but not with as much volume.” In doing so, a farmer is able to save tremendous amounts of water. “Nowadays, they meter their water, so they pay based on the meter system,” Bair said, rather than the previous technique of saying, “You’ve got two hours to get a head of water on every acre. This has been a big savings, and it has also helped the production of citrus by controlling the water flow through the drip system. Not only citrus, but crop plants.”²⁴⁰

Looking Back – Looking Ahead

Bair is justifiably satisfied with the contributions he made during his years as a farmer. “We raised a lot of fruits and vegetables and we fed a lot of people in this world. And I am proud of that. Good food, too.”²⁴¹

The Bair family’s farming adventure began and ended during the heyday of the small farmer in the Rio Grande Valley. Three generations successfully overcame adversities and disasters, both man-made and natural, and adapted to the changing economic trends and realities of their day.

When asked what he would have done differently, Bair replied, “Oh, gosh. I probably would have utilized some of the newer methods of planting and irrigation ... drip systems and closer plantings ... maybe tried to buy some more land, or borrow some more money, and invest a little more at the time ... but I don’t know, I never put much to it, because I did what I did. And you take your best shot and go down the road.” He continued, “We all have our opportunities in life ... You just keep your head down and keep going and ... you don’t ever give up. You know, there’s going to be some things that come along in your life,

²³⁸ Ibid, 25.

²³⁹ Ibid, 34.

²⁴⁰ Bair, 24.

²⁴¹ Ibid, 28.

there's going to be roadblocks, but you just can't give up. You just got to pick up and go again. I mean, watching these freezes and going through it, it's pretty disheartening when you spend a lot of time and money and effort to grow a crop, and you see it wiped out. And you go out and pick an orange or a grapefruit, and it's so hard that you can't even cut it with a knife. And then you know, you know you've lost it all. But, anyway, that's life. Nobody guarantees it. That's one thing about farming that I've told people – nobody guaranteed you anything when you decided to farm. That's part of the gamble you take. And I never blamed God – 'God, how come you did this to me?' No. He created this earth and things happen, and that's the way it is. You can't look at yourself as a victim. You just go on. You pick yourself up and go on down the road."²⁴²

²⁴² Ibid, 30.

Chapter 6

The Progressive Dwayne Bair

Colin Newton, Rafael Soto, Eduardo Pichardo and Victor Limon

The Rio Grande Valley was once an agriculture powerhouse. The landscape of the Valley for most of Dwayne Bair's life was composed of agriculture fields and orchards. In fact, Bair was born and raised in that setting. Bair's upbringing helped shape his views and approach to those who worked in the fields and packing plants. He was raised around the workers and they became extended family for Bair. This was one of the reasons he was always ahead of the tide of progress for workers in the agriculture industry. He was not someone from up north who came to the Valley to exploit the cheap labor like many had done early in the twentieth century. He was a product of the Valley and understood the plight of the workers. He was a pioneer in the agriculture industry, always fighting for a fair deal for those who worked for him. He had the respect of those who worked for him as well. This seemed to be because they identified with him. He never looked down upon them and he always treated everyone fairly. The roots set in place during his childhood helped Bair in his successful career in agriculture. Alongside Bair were the Atwood-Evans Family, Cantu Family and the Norquest family of Edinburg who shared his interest in the forward progress.

Anyone that has driven by a field lately may have noticed the people working in the fields. From picking citrus and melons to planting new fields full of sugar cane, the jobs are hard labor and not pleasant, especially in the hot sun. History has taught us that workers did not always work under the best of conditions. They faced discrimination and suffered many injustices at the hands of many of the agriculture land owners in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV).

This however, was not always the case with all field hands. A few lucky ones had a good relationship with their boss. In some cases there was a familial atmosphere between the two. However, surrounding farmers would experience bad encounters with their workers. "Some would lose large amounts of their crops because the workers would steal from them, but as discussed by Carol Norquest in his book *Rio Grande Wetbacks*.²⁴³ He speculated that those farmers who treated their workers unfairly got what they deserved."²⁴⁴

Bair was one of those benevolent few who grew up working on his father's farm. He understood that the farmworkers did not make enough money because he himself once left home to work on someone else's farm driving a cotton picker because he was not making as much money as he would on his father's farm. This experience allowed Bair to identify with the conditions of the laborers.

In 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt signed an agreement with Mexico for the Bracero Program.²⁴⁵ The program allowed Mexicans to migrate to the United States where

²⁴³ Carrol Norquest, *Rio Grande Wetbacks: Mexican Migrant Workers* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1972).

²⁴⁴ Hernandez-Salinas et al, p. 69.

²⁴⁵ Bracero program 1947-1964 was an agreement with Mexico to bring in Mexican nationals to work in the United States during World War II.

they were granted temporary residency to work. Mexico originally did not allow Mexican to be hired in the state of Texas because of the racism that Mexicans faced in Texas. With the closeness between Mexico and the Rio Grande Valley it was inevitable for workers not to find their ways into the Rio Grande Valley. However, in 1961 the Bracero Program came to Texas bringing with it 117,368 workers with a large majority of them ending up in the Rio Grande Valley.²⁴⁶ Bair felt “it was a wonderful program.” Under the bracero program, he was able to bring in two families to live on his farm. Each family consisted of six family members. They were provided with small home with water and electricity. Like the Bair family, the Cantu family and the Norquest family also allowed settlers to live in their land. The Bair family never charged them any rent.

One of the Bair family’s other gestures towards the two families was to help them obtain a permanent residence status. The Norquest family was also able to bring in some families and remembered that “many became their friends and part of the family.”²⁴⁷ Bair worked side by side with this ranch hands. He felt comfortable around his workers and around Mexican people in general, because of his local upbringing. The two families worked Bair’s farm for many years. He recalled that many of the people he hired through the Bracero program came to look for other work, “they had their own ranchito in Mexico they just came to make some money.”²⁴⁸ In addition to the family that Bair had living on his farm, he hired people to irrigate his properties. “I would go down to the bodega to pick up workers, they would see my truck and come running over, and because they knew that they could make more money from irrigation than from picking vegetables.” Generally, the Bair family and the Bracero Program worked the farm but when they needed extra hands during harvest season he gladly hired more Mexican-American people. When the Bracero Program ended in 1967, the farmers of the Rio Grande Valley did not lose their good neighborly ways, for example “Rogelio Sr. of the Cantu family would still renovate storage facilities on their land to provide homes for their workers to live in while they toiled for the Cantu Family”.²⁴⁹

One of the issues that many farm workers faced was that they did not have bathrooms at many times in the fields. Bair recalls at time when we was harvesting green beans for Renown Foods in McAllen, Texas. He had three hundred and fifty people working on that harvest. That was a problem that they quickly solved and were able to because not having proper facilities “really bothered me” said Bair,” but we got that straighten out by bringing in portable outhouses.”²⁵⁰ Demonstrating once again Bair’s desire to do what was right for his labors.

The relationship between the Bair family and the workers was good. Bair recollected the Castro family as one that really stood out. This was one of the families for whom they built a home for on the farm. After several years, the family of six would eventually find better opportunities in California and Bair quoted, “I just wished they would have let us know ahead of time, we would have wished them well.”

²⁴⁶ Alaniz et al, p. 18.

²⁴⁷ Hernandez-Salinas, p. 68.

²⁴⁸ Dwayne W. Bair, "CHAPS Interview," Interviewed by Colin Newton, Victor Limon, Eduardo Pichardo and Rafael Soto. October 14, 2015.

²⁴⁹ Alaniz et al, 18.

²⁵⁰ Bair, 29.

The name that most impacted Bair the most during his interviews was Florencio Hernandez. During the freeze of 1962 the Bair farm lost all of its citrus leaving them with no harvest and no money to re-plant. This led to a humble gesture made by one of his workers Hernandez. Hernandez had money that he had been saving for some time he offered Bair his life savings which amounted to four thousand dollars. It is a very emotional memory for Bair and even though the family had no money as a result of the freeze, he refused to take Hernandez's savings. "I was so grateful for the offer, But did not take the money" Bair recalled. The story demonstrates the strong bond between Bair and those who worked for him.

During the 1960s through the 1980s, there was a strong surge of upheaval in the agriculture industry. The civil right movement in America went hand in hand with the farmworkers labor movement. Huelga! (Strike) was and still is the famous farmer's labor rights outcry that brought better pay and better working condition to many agriculture laborers in the 1960's to the period when Bair closed his citrus produce plant in the late 1980's. The word stands for the meaning "strikes" in which many Mexican-American labors and minority workers like Filipinos call out when they step outside the growing fields of California to challenge their patrons (plant owner). This labor movement was led by two famous activists' leaders, who came to impact the local strikes of the Rio Grande Valley, which Bair witnessed in his life time. One of this leaders was Cesar Chavez , who along with his is co-founder Dolores Huerta, founded the Union of Farm Workers (UFW) in 1962 with the support of Filipino organizer Larry Itliong. Itliong founded the labor rights organization called Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee.²⁵¹ The UFW also produced another labor leader by the name of Antonio Orendain. Orendain was a key organizer in the RGV and later establish his own organization called Texas Farm Worker Union (TFWU) in the mid 1970's.

Bair did not recall the word Huelga. The reason Huelga did not impact Bair was that much of this labor strikes only affected the agricultural farmers closer to the Rio Grande instead of the farms in the center of the county . His fields were closer to the centerpoint of Hidalgo County and around the city of Edinburg, Texas.²⁵² When ask about Cesar Chavez, Bair, had recollections of Chavez but he never meet Chavez or had any relationship with him nor with any other labor rights activist of the RGV. His good relationship with his workers was critical to fending of any activism.

During Bair's career in agriculture, he participated in many governmental committees on the local, state, and federal level. He testified in front of a Subcommittee on Migratory Labor in Texas in 1967. "Bair recalled Paul Fannin from Arizona chaired the committee, and for some reason we did not want it to fall under."²⁵³ Bair and other local farmers were opposed to legislation that was being debated at the time. They felt the unfair bureaucratic red tape the proposed bill would have created would have hurt farmers and their laborers.²⁵⁴ Bair was later thanked for his participation by Senator Edward Kennedy and Representative Kika De La Garza for his participation in the various labor relation

²⁵¹ Susan Ferris and Ricardo Sandoval, *The Fight in the Fields Cesar Chavez and the Farmworkers Movement* (United States of America: Paradigm Productions. Inc, 1997), 71.

²⁵² Bair Social and Political interview.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

boards. Bair recalled, that he had correspondence with various political figures well into the 1970s dealing with the same issues that stemmed from his 1967 subcommittee participation.

De La Garza was one of the good guys according to Bair.²⁵⁵ The Congressional Representative was always looking out for the local farmers. In 1982, Bair flew to Washington D.C. along with the chairman of the Texas Citrus Mutual Association to appear before a committee. Bair and other farmers were fighting for an insurance program for citrus trees that would protect the farmer in the event of a loss due to a natural disaster. “Kika came to bat for us,” Bair recalled. Bair felt the support from De La Garza aided in the passing of the bill.²⁵⁶

Though Bair’s life and citrus production plant was not impacted by the labor strikes he does give recognition to the many hard working people that did benefit from the advocating efforts of this organized union. He believes their stories should be shared. By demonstrating how the farmer’s labor rights activists establish themselves in South Texas. The history of La Huelga is important to the region.

Cesar Chavez and the UFW were victorious in the famous Grape Strike of Delano. The strike was based in California in the mid-1960s and throughout the 1970s. They picketed for better pay and better living conditions for migrant laborers and their families. In the RGV, the first influence of the UFW involvement was in the 1966 with a strike known as La Casita in the Starr County. This strike was organized by local melon field laborers and led by Eugene Nelson. Nelson was sent by Chavez and the UFW and to help the strikers known as the Sons of Zapata, who were under the umbrella organization called the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC) of the UFW. Their demands were similar to those in California as they requested a pay increase to one dollar and twenty five cents from fifty cents per hour.²⁵⁷ Many of Chavez’s grassroots tactics were learned when he was a community organizer with the Community Service Organization (CSO). His community organization skills were influenced by his mentor Fred Ross. The struggle of la huelga maintained one of Chavez’s key elements of organizing to fight for justice. The non-violence tactic was implemented and utilized by farm workers across the nation similar to the ones being used in the states of California, Texas, Arizona, Colorado, and Oregon.²⁵⁸

One example of this was seen in the Rio Grande Valley in the early 1970s in Chavez’s effort to organize the RGV chapter of the United Farm Workers of American (NFWA). At this time the NFWA was the national name for the UFW which had spread across the country and established headquarters in cities like the one in San Juan, Texas. The local NFWA were led by community organizers such as Rebecca Flores, Eugene Nelson and Antonio Orendain.

Chavez’s tactic of non-violence was of great benefit to the community of RGV. In February of 1971, Chavez visited farm workers in this region of South Texas who were organizing another strike. However, a horrifying incident occurred before Chavez arrived in

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ David M. Fishlow, “Sons of Zapata: A Brief Photography History of the Farm Workers Strike in Texas,” *UNITED FARM WORKERS ORGANIZING COMMITTEE, AFL-CIO*, (1967), 4.

²⁵⁸ Ferris and Sandoval, 40.

South Texas. In the city of Pharr, Texas, Alfonso Loredó Flores, an innocent bystander, was killed. He was shot in the head by Edinburg Deputy Robert Johnson during the incident known as the Pharr Riot of 1971. The Pharr Riot took place in the city of Pharr Texas on February 6, 1971. The riot was initially a protest organized by members of MAYO (Mexican American Youth Organization), to attract attention to the police for brutality against Mexican Americans during that time period. Segregation existed in the Rio Grande Valley and was very much present in the city of Pharr, Texas. Racial groups were segregated using the city's rail road tracks. Whites lived south of the tracks in paved, well lit, and well drained subdivision where large houses on large lots were common. Mexicans and African Americans, on the other hand, lived to the north of the tracks in run-down neighborhoods that often lacked paved streets, electricity, and running water. In addition, Mexican neighborhoods had an abundance of cantinas, drugs, and crime that overflowed the northern part of the city. The Pharr police station was situated on the north side of the railroad tracks for obvious reasons, but was run by police officers who took advantage of their power and would abuse the Mexican Americans.²⁵⁹

As time passed, Mexican Americans became infuriated with the brutality of the police officers and they decided to act. The protest was initiated by a dozen Mexican Americans that gathered outside the city of Pharr's police station, it later escalated into a two hundred person protest. The riot did not begin until the Edinburg Fire Department was called to break up the protest by spraying water on the people outside of the station. The Edinburg Police Department was also called in to render support to the Pharr Police Department, immediately appointing Alfredo Gonzales, Edinburg's Police Chief, as the interim Chief of police that night. Once tensions escalated between the police and the protestors, the Edinburg and Pharr police began to fire their weapons in the air to try to disperse protestors, however as recalled by Bair, one bullet ricocheted off a metal sign near Ramos Barber Shop which stands two blocks north of the police department. That bullet, shot by Edinburg Deputy Robert Johnson, struck Alfonso Flores and killed him. He was the only casualty of the event, although there were several protestors, police officers, and fire fighters transported to the Edinburg hospital for injuries sustained in the riot. For several days after the incident, Edinburg and Pharr police officers patrolled the city, mainly focusing on Mexican Americans, to keep another riot from initiating. To this day, Bair is uncertain as to how the incident escalated so quickly and how Alfonso Flores was killed, although there are many who may argue that the incident was no accident. Bair is certain though, that there were many bad things happening then, and all he wanted was for people to get along.

After the riot, civil rights activist Cesar Chavez gave a speech from the back of a pickup truck to a crowd of eight hundred people in Edinburg, memorializing the man who fell victim to the violence that took place on February 6, 1971. Today the RGV is no longer segregated but the difference between the neighborhoods just north of the railroads and those just south of the railroads are still evident, with the southern neighborhoods more elegantly structured than those on the north side. Chavez decided to spend more time in the RGV to help quell the wave of anger that had overcome the community. He would go on to visit Pan American University to speak to the faculty and the students. There were an estimated one thousand-two hundred people in attendance for his speech. In his speech he reminded everyone that "non-violence is a very powerful method of struggling".²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ Ned Wallace, *Studies in Rio Grande Valley History* (Brownsville: The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College, 2005).

²⁶⁰ Gary Garrison, "800 in San Juan Hear Chavez Plea," *The Corpus Christi Caller*, February 9, 1971.

Although Chavez and the UFW tried to establish a farmers union in Texas, they were never able to build a strong foundation in the Valley. It was difficult for the group to encompass California to Texas, they simply did not have the resources or support necessary. Conflict between Chavez and Orendain did not help matters either. Chavez would go on to create LUPE, an indigent community outreach organization created in California around 1989 and eventually find its home in San Juan, Texas at the turn of the twenty first century in 2003. The organization is now led by local activist Juanita Cox.²⁶¹

Another leader of the farmer labor right's that Bair recalled was Antonio Orendian. He had only heard a few things about him and never had acquaintance with Orendian. Bair did recalled that he had influenced local farm labors to organize to challenge the farm growers of the lower part of the Rio Grande for better pay and working conditions for their labor force. Antonio Orendian was also part of the leadership foundation of UFW in California led by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta. His first encounter with RGV was during La Casitas crisis in Starr County back in late 1960's after Eugene Nelson could not fulfill the goals of raising the minimum wage nor organize the movement to the UFW standards.²⁶² Orendian was seen as an impetus leader and a high rank community organizer with Chavez. He took up many challenges that effected labor right that were diversified between the leadership of Chavez in which Orendian was a more aggressive leader, some people look at Orendian as radical organizer even though he also believed in a the non-violence method of protesting.

Orendian helped to organize strikes, reorganize the laborers, and protested on the International Bridge of Roma, Texas. Orendain would subsequently lead a group of huelgistas to the International Bridge at Roma on October 24, 1966, two years after the end of the Bracero Program, to forcibly prevent the importation of Mexican nationals. It was here that Orendain received his first chance to publicly demonstrate himself as a huelgista. This tactic was the way Orendian help prevent "scab" labor from crossing the Rio Grande and led to conflict with Chavez in 1968. Orendian and others in the UFW believed that non-violence was the way to protest, Orendian vehemently opposed the use of religion or religious imagery in the movement and thought a highly publicized, pious image of Chávez would be detrimental to the union. This led to animosity between Orendian and Chavez.²⁶³

Eventually this would lead Orendian to establish his own union named Texas Farm Workers Union (TFWU) in 1975. Orendian felt that TFWU would have a faster impact on RGV labor forces and community. Learning from his mistakes with the UFW, Orendian led a long labor march of 420 miles from San Juan to Austin the state capital in the year of 1977. From there they continued the march with few others to Washington D.C. where they yielded the crusade for justices on the steps of Lincoln Memorial.²⁶⁴ Other famous

²⁶¹ Juanita Cox, Lupe Oral History Project Mexican American Studies Department University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, interview by Valeria Anna Cerda, November 2, 2014.

²⁶² Timothy P. Bowman, *What About Texas? The Forgotten Cause of Antonio Orendain and the Rio Grande Valley, Farm Workers: 1966-1982* (Austin: Texas University of Austin, 2005), 20. Timothy Paul Bowman, "What About Texas? the Forgotten Cause of Antonio Orendain and the Rio Grande Valley Farm Workers, 1966-1982," M.A. thesis, University of Texas Arlington, 2005.

²⁶³ Ibid, 53.

²⁶⁴ Abel Orendian, Antonio Orendian Rio Grande Valley Heroes of Yesterdays, interview by Rafael Soto, February 22, 2015.

involvement of TFWU was that of Raymondville, Texas Onion strikes in 1979. At this point Orendian recognized without monetary resources, the union could not succeed. As a great labor activist, Orendian did much to educate his community through radio broadcasts, *La Voz de Campesin*, membership drives, and local fundraising. TFWU would eventually fade with the course of time in the RGV leaving Chavez UFW and Orendian TFWU into a broken friendship that never reconcile between these great leaders.²⁶⁵

Many of these battles of farm labor activists did achieve varying degrees of victory in the RGV. Some examples were the defeat of the short hand tool, field latrines, pay increases, and better living conditions of migrant workers in the RGV and across the nation. Bair witnessed this period of conflict and social upheaval, and was on the forefront of change to create better conditions for farm workers. The fact that Bair identified with his workers and treated them with respect and dignity may have been one of the reasons he had little to no involvement with the likes of Chavez and Orendain. While they were fighting for better working conditions, Bair had already begun implementing them. As the union fought for better wages, Bair was doing the best that he could do for his workers. As they were protesting, he was testifying in front of government committees in Washington D.C. He remained a champion for workers' rights until the closing of his citrus (plantation) in 1989.

All of this seems to stem back to his childhood. The city of Edinburg, like many of the neighboring cities of the Rio Grande Valley, was segregated by ethnicity in which the Supreme Court in 1954 overturned this segregation as unconstitutional with the case of *Brown v. Board*. Anglo students attended separate schools as Mexican Americans and African Americans to maintain a separate but equal community, even if separate was never equal for students and members of the community. He recalled there being two separate elementary schools, Jefferson Elementary for Mexican Americans and Sam Houston Elementary for Anglo students. He does not recall how city officials separated the city but he was aware that something was not right when he and other students were separated. Bair also remembers that even the transportation system was unfair because while he and other Anglo students were provided with a school bus, and the Black students in the other elementary had to walk to school and back home.²⁶⁶ According to Bair, incidents like these were considered normal back then because that was what everyone was brought up to believe, but he is now proud that there is equality for everyone because although he did not know at the time what was wrong, he knew that things would eventually change for the better.

“Mexican Day” at the public pool was the day that Mexicans and Mexican Americans were allowed to use the public pool. . “Mexican Day” was used as a way of keeping Mexicans and Anglos segregated. Unfortunately, Mexican Day came the day before the public pool was scheduled to be cleaned meaning that Mexican Americans bathed in filthy water. Bair recalled there being public pools in neighboring cities such as Mission, and San Juan that did not permit access to Mexican Americans, which he saw as unjust. Raised as a farmer amongst the Mexican American community, Bair preferred swimming with his closest friends at nearby canals where anyone and everyone was welcomed to have a good time.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Bair Social and Political Interview, Appendix G.

Bair's upbringing allowed him to transcend racial prejudice. If anything he was the odd one out being the "gringo." Bair never understood the trends of segregation early in life. He considered the people being discriminated against as friends and believed they deserved the same respect the whites were given. The image of a young man swimming in a canal with his friends embodies everything Bair stands for. Whether it was in school, on the farm or testifying before a government committee, Bair always fought for what he felt was the right thing to do.

Chapter 7 Healthcare

Colin Newton, Samuel Ayala and Stephanie Chapa

Health care in the South Texas border region has come a long way from the days of handful of traveling physicians. In Dwayne Bair's, lifetime the region has grown into a diversified hub of health care services. When Bair was born in the family home which stood on Schunior Road, he was delivered by a physician that made house calls. He was raised on a mix of home remedies and a bit of good sense. The healthcare landscape and type of medical treatment available to Valley residents has expanded, especially in the second half of the twentieth century. Today there are pharmacies with retail clinics, hospital owned retail clinics, free standing emergency rooms, and specialty hospitals in the region. The local healthcare options have flourished in Bair's lifetime.

Bair recalled that Edinburg had two drug stores on the main square of the city, both of which were privately owned by the druggist. Another pharmacy, Bair recalled was located on Main Street in McAllen. He remembered the name of that particular drug store to be Faulkner's.²⁶⁷ Faulkner's also served food and soda pop. It was one of the main places people would gather to socialize in the mid- twentieth century. Today pharmacies are more limited to corporate chain stores such as Walgreens, CVS, and those you find in big box stores such as Walmart, and H.E.B.

There are only a handful of small, privately owned pharmacies still in operation today, however due to underpayments by insurance companies, and competition with corporate pharmacies the days of these smaller pharmacies may become a thing of the past. Bair discussed the ownership and proximity of pharmacies to clinics. In the earlier part of the twenty-first century retail clinics have been opening within "big box" stores and pharmacy chains as a means to increase prescription volume as well as bring health care to underserved areas. Or at least that is what is claimed by the corporations implementing them. Bair recollected one of the pharmacies located within the town square had a clinic above it, but unlike the retail clinics of today, it was two separate owners to his best recollection.²⁶⁸ The issues surrounding the proximity of pharmacies and clinics continue today as pharmacies rely on clinics for prescription volume.

One of the hospitals that Bair remembered was Grandview Hospital in Edinburg. The hospital opened in 1927. Before Grandview hospital was built, the first hospital in town was located in the residence of a W.R. Montgomery.²⁶⁹ However, population growth called for a larger and more permanent facility. Two years earlier, the city of McAllen built its own city hospital that opened in 1925. The hospital had a forty bed capacity. With the town populous growing, a larger hospital was needed. In 1927 a larger facility was opened adjacent to the original built in 1925. The smaller 1925 facility was then converted into a nursing home.²⁷⁰ The opening and expansion of two hospitals around the same time period is interesting to

²⁶⁷ Dwayne W. Bair, CHAPS Interview Appendix G, interview by Colin Newton et al., October 12, 2015.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ "Edinburg History," *Edinburg Chamber of Commerce*, <http://www.edinburg.com/history.html>.

²⁷⁰ "History of the South Texas Health System," *South Texas Health System*, <http://www.southtexashealthsystem.com/hospitals/history-of-the-south-texas-health-system>.

note in history. It reflects the growing population in the region as a result of the booming agriculture industry. It also shows the relative competitive undertones of health care economy. When one hospital chain or group expands into a new field or market another will do the same. This can be seen today with hospital owned retail clinics and free standing emergency rooms. The Valley Care Clinics, and The Clinic by Knapp Medical Center are both free standing clinics developed around the same time by competing hospital groups. The same can be seen with the creation of free standing emergency rooms which are often in close to proximity to another competing entity. This can be seen in present day Mission Texas with the opening of a free standing emergency room within the same block of a hospital owned by a competitor.

The McAllen city hospital underwent expansions again in 1954 and 1960. The 1954 expansion included the demolition of the original building that housed the nursing home. In the 1960 expansion, the hospital grew to having a capacity of two hundred beds. This was a big difference from the original forty bed capacity of the 1927 building. The hospital was closed after McAllen Medical Center was opened in December 1985.²⁷¹

Not long after the opening of Grandview Hospital, Edinburg General Hospital was constructed to help care for the growing population. This hospital would undergo two expansions before being acquired by a subsidiary of Universal Health Services in 1994. This company would expand the hospital once again in 1997, and change the name to Edinburg Regional Medical Center. In March 2006 the same organization which runs a majority of the hospitals in the Rio Grande Valley, known as South Texas Health System opened a children's hospital adjacent to Edinburg Regional on Trenton and Sugar Roads. South Texas Health System would also acquisition other smaller hospitals to incorporate into their network these include Charter Palms Behavioral Center now known as the South Texas Behavioral Center, and McAllen Heart Hospital²⁷². Acquisitions of competing health care entities occur as commonly as they do of other business ventures. Another hospital group includes Doctors Hospital at Renaissance, this hospital was opened in 1997 on the border of the cities of McAllen, and Edinburg.²⁷³ It operates as a physician owned hospital that continues to grow exponentially and is now the teaching hospital for the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Bair has witnessed all these changes in his lifetime. Fortunately, he has managed to remain healthy for the majority of it. Therefore, many of his memories stem from the change in the Edinburg and McAllen's landscape. What started as farm lands had become hospitals and pharmacies.

Along with pharmacies and hospitals, Bair witnessed an evolution in the dental industry as well. Just as our bodies are susceptible to disease, so is our mouth. Since the beginning of time there have been tooth aches caused by infection and damage of the teeth and gums and from there have come different ways of treating the pain and disease in our mouths. Throughout time, many civilizations have chronicled their medicinal methods of treating tooth decay and other diseases from simple warm compresses on the side of the cheek to the spiritual aspect of rituals and prayer for healing. Many of those treatments seem strange to us now but during that time the methods seemed effective. History of medical

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ "History," *Doctors Hospital at Renaissance History*, <https://www.dhr-rgv.com/About-Us/Historia>.

healing practices in the U.S. and specifically in the Rio Grande Valley is quite hazy and almost nonexistent until the 1960's and 1970's.

In the early years in the United States, the best and most effective treatment for tooth pain would be to remove or extract the tooth. Bair and his family like the majority of the Valley were indeed lucky as they all survived the home remedy for a loose tooth.²⁷⁴ They did not need a dental practitioner that would also remove the affected tooth with much more skill and less side effects along with some medications to help with healing and for pain. There were also many different treatments that "faith healers" or "curanderos" would employ to help heal the tooth, this was much more common in early times due to the lack of access to modern medicine in many parts of the developing country.

Other things that would also affect oral health would be oral hygiene practices and oral hygiene education. Just as modern medicine and idea of washing our hands to promote good health and cleanliness was new, so was the idea of washing the mouth or brushing on a consistent basis. The use of toothbrushes for oral hygiene was fairly new and even so the education behind it was lacking. These aspects in the Rio Grande Valley were desperately lacking as very few families had the funds to spend on the toothbrushes and the education on oral hygiene was very sparse if not absent. The Bair family was lucky enough to partake in tooth brushing rituals. However, they did not make frequent trips to the dentists as it was an emerging practice.

In the Rio Grande Valley healthcare had always been somewhat difficult to access and many people relied on home remedies and local "curanderos" with no formal medical training to help them with any illnesses that may arise. As time passed and healthcare began to be easily accessible, so did dentistry. The mass acceptance of the general public to actually visit the dentist began around the 1930's when more modern equipment and methods become more widespread. Also the large numbers of individuals joining the military were having to pass health exams which included visiting the dentist which made more people more aware of the benefits and necessity of visit the dentist regularly and they passed onto their families. Bair recalled that he did not remember using health insurance for dentistry when he was growing up because there really was not any available.²⁷⁵ Along with healthcare benefits, insurance also became more widely used and accepted by the families and also by the dental offices. As this wider acceptance of dental care increase so did the demand for dentists and the dental schools in Dallas and Houston were graduating over 100 dentists per year and adding to the existing dentists practicing in the Rio Grande Valley.

The Bair family did just fine with a toothbrush. Bair does not recall any major issues dealing with his teeth until his later years. There simply was not a need for a dentist when he was growing up. One of the only early dentist visits he recalls was when he enlisted in the military. Even without utilize dentistry through his childhood and adolescence, his teeth were deemed in good shape by the military doctor, he recalled.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁴ Dwayne W. Bair, CHAPS Interview, interview by Colin Newton et al., October 12, 2015

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

The Bair's relied mostly on home remedies and good ol' down on the farm medicine growing up.²⁷⁷ Residents of the Rio Grande Valley have had a rich history in home remedies. Home remedies are known for being a quick go to solution for common sicknesses, such as the common cold, stomach aches, skin irritations etc. Home remedies can save a sick person some serious money. When you want to save some money and a trip to the doctor's office, they can be the answer to your problem. Home remedies can be very effective for certain ailments. Bair recalled that people did not go to a doctor often if at all.²⁷⁸ Instead, they depended on home remedies to do the job. Nowadays it is safe to say that we still find home remedies to be effective and very practical.

Aloe Vera is a plant that is very commonly found in the Rio Grande Valley. It has been used as a long time remedy as folk treatment for such illnesses as constipation and skin irritations. It has been one of the most popular plants used as a home remedy and has been used for thousands of years. People have used the gel from Aloe Vera leaves for many skin related conditions. Aloe Vera can be used for a number of things which include gastroesophageal reflux disease, clear skin conditions, for weight loss, burns and many other things. Bair shared the story of sneaking some Aloe Vera into a hospital for a friend that had a terrible burn. He recalled his friend was in dire need of relief and what his doctors were doing was not helping. The Aloe Vera however, immediately helped ease his pain. In another instance, he recalled picking up some very hot steel and burning his hands and put some Aloe Vera on the burns on time and his hands never blistered and never left a scar. This handy home remedy really works just as well if not better than medications issued by a doctor he recalled.²⁷⁹ Just like their neighbors the Cantu family also used the Aloe Vera plant as a home remedy. Ruben Cantu Sr. recalled always using it because it provided a soothing relief to the affected area. He said it was easy to grab a stalk off the plant, cut a piece and apply it directly to the skin. That lends to the credence to the powers of this natural medicine. It can really work a miracle in a time of need.²⁸⁰

Another natural home remedy used quite often was herbal tea. Bair didn't mention much about using tea as remedy another local farming family did. The Cantu family would use two main teas, one was mazanilla (chamomile), and the other was estafiate (Mexican wormwood).²⁸¹ Both were used to soothe upset stomachs, help calm nerves, and as a support of the immune system.

Vicks is another popular home remedy. It can be used to treat a common cold and to decongest the chest. If Vicks is applied on your feet in the nighttime before bed, the sick person has a high chance of keeping the cough away and sleeping through the night. If applied on the temples of the head it might help get rid of headaches as well. Bair recalls his mother putting Vicks on his and his sibling's feet and she would also rub it on their chest and put a hot towel on their chest while also breathing in a pit of steam.²⁸² Another odd use for Vicks was its ability to get rid of nail fungus. "I bet you did not think Vicks would be a home remedy for fungus," Bair recalled.²⁸³ These days Vicks vapor rub is still being used,

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Alaniz et al, 51.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Dwayne W. Bair, CHAPS Interview, interview by Colin Newton et al., October 12, 2015

²⁸³ Ibid.

mostly for its popular use of helping to aid a common cold. Vicks was another home remedy utilized often by the Bair family.

There were some ailments that Bair recalled being a big deal at specific times in the past. Boils were common when he was younger. He has a theory that the use of canal water in his home led to members of the family experiencing boils. The remedy for boils was salt water. He recalls his parents taking him and his siblings to Boca Chica beach and soaking their boils in the water then poking them with a toothpick and squeezing the puss out, after doing that he would put Ichthammol ointment on them and let it work its magic causing them to disappear.²⁸⁴ We do not experience this much anymore, but if anything these days we can use salt water at home to help with this issue.²⁸⁵

There were a number of common sicknesses and illnesses in the valley in the past that we do not really hear much of these days. The only one that we do need to worry about is the common cold which we all still experience till this very day. Small pox was of great concern but thanks to medical advances a shots was created and also administrated to prevent the disease. Bair recalls people from Mexico coming over to the Rio Grande Valley with small pox. Measles was another disease that was of great worry when he was younger. Chickenpox is another disease that was common. A disease that his kids experienced was the mumps.²⁸⁶ Mumps can cause your cheeks to swell. The vaccine for mumps is called MMR (measles-mumps-rubella) and in most cases can be 78% effective.

Another health concern for the Bair family was the 1940's Poliomyelitis epidemic. Poliomyelitis which is better known as polio is a highly contagious disease caused by a virus that attacks the nervous system. Children younger than 5 years old are more likely to contract the virus than any other group. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), one in two hundred polio infections will result in permanent paralysis. However, the disease has been largely eradicated thanks to the development of a polio vaccine. This disease has a number of symptoms that can be very common to other diseases. The symptoms include headaches, sore throats, slight fevers, vomiting, and just general discomfort. In 1948 the state of Texas experienced a number of polio cases, most of the cases were pinpointed to the Rio Grande Valley. Bair says you could tell when someone has had polio because they walk with a big limp. He recalled that his brother in law had the disease at some point in time.²⁸⁷ He said he walked with a limp, and you can tell when someone has had polio because of the limp they develop. People were regularly treated for polio with a preventative vaccine. Due to that vaccine, polio has become part of the past.

Though Bair has remained healthy for most of his life, one thing that he has noted has been an increase in health care cost.²⁸⁸ All the hospitals and pharmacies that have emerged in his lifetime have come with a price. Not only have many of them rid the landscape of the farm land of yester year, they have also caused a large hit to the pocketbook. Bair has nothing but kind words about hospitals and doctors that he has had experience with. However, he does note the sky rocketing cost of prescription drugs. Luckily for Bair, he is from a unique region because of its close proximity to Mexico. People in the Rio Grande

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

Valley have found a way to get around spending a large amount of money on doctor's visits and on medication purchases. Since Mexico is our neighbor, we have the luxury of driving or even walking across the border to visit a doctor or to purchase medicines at a substantially lower price. One popular medication that Rio Grande Valley residents seem to always purchase in the border cities of Reynosa and Progreso, Tamaulipas are antibiotic pills. These medications were acquired for health issues and would take care of the problem without having to pay a visit to a doctor. These pills are a big money saver. Bair has made many trips to the city of Progreso to purchase the medications in recent years;²⁸⁹ as often as every couple of weeks. He also recalled purchasing medications from Mexico when he was younger as well. Z-Packs have been another popular medication that can be found at a very inexpensive price in these neighbor cities. Bair did his homework at a young age and noticing that the drugs being offered in Mexico were the exact same cost as identical drugs in the United States.

Though he remained healthy through most of his life Bair offers a portrait of someone living in the Rio Grande Valley as it evolved from rural land into settled cities. From doctors making house calls to doctors' hospitals, Bair has seen it all. His upbringing provided an insight into the credibility of home remedies that have been used for many generations passed down through tradition and which still continue to be utilized across the Rio Grande Valley today.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

Conclusion

Time and Tide Waits for No Man

Roseann Bacha-Garza

As we complete this, our fifth year conducting local research of pioneer farming families of Edinburg, Texas, we are grateful to have had the opportunity to get to know, not only the Bair family, but all the families involved in our research to date. Since the initial launch of this project in 2011 and the study of the Norquest family, we have been steadily recruiting neighboring farmers to participate. With the help of Kelly (Carrol) Norquest, Jr., we have been able to have our hardworking and dedicated students work with a growing number of farming families. As a result, we have been able to preserve a small piece or a “*porcion*” of Edinburg’s history for the benefit of future generations of historians.

The study of Bair Farms occurred during the fall semester of 2015. This was a marquis year for our new parent university, The University of Texas - Rio Grande Valley, which grew from the legacy institutions The University of Texas - Pan American and The University of Texas-Brownsville. 2015 also marked the 5th consecutive year of the CHAPS Program’s interdisciplinary class’s community engagement project of the study of human-land interaction in Edinburg.

This report on the Bair Farms was conducted through the perspective of Dwayne Bair, son of Lee Martin Bair and Dorothy Heacock Bair, grandson of Alexander B. Bair and Mary Ida Bair and Joseph W. Heacock and Fanny Knowles Heacock. In April of 2015, Russell Skowronek, Kelly Norquest and I had our initial meeting with Dwayne Bair in his current home on Ann Street in Edinburg. After the meeting, we ventured a few miles north to the Bair homestead on Chapin Road. We did not realize that the entire property would soon be leveled to make room for a neighborhood development. Fortunately photographs of the homestead and the adjacent orchard (figure 50 and 51) were taken. We then ventured on our way and prepared the syllabus for the upcoming semester’s class.

During the summer of 2015, Dwayne informed us that the family property had been sold and we would be unable to conduct archaeological, biological, and geological surveys of the property. This changed our approach as in the past our students would spent three weeks ‘in the field’ conducting this sort of hands-on field research. Not to despair.....we created ‘plan B’.

With Dwayne Bair to provide our only perspective, we created groups of students within the class to focus on particular issues with respect human-land interaction throughout time. This report is a result of extensive research into Spanish land grant history, the history of Edinburg and townsite development, the Bair Farms agricultural experience, irrigation and water issues, cultural history and medical history of the region as experienced by the Bair family. Each group conducted extensive oral history interviews of Dwayne Bair and as

a result, we have presented the reader with an extensive, detailed history of the land owned and occupied by Bair Farms and the Bair family. Dwayne Bair was a gracious host, a proper gentleman and a perfect participant. He always greeted us with a smile and made a wonderful first impression by bearing a gift of honey for everyone in our class. It was always a priority for Dwayne to treat others well. He was so kind to continue his participation with our research as his loving wife, Shirley fell ill and needed long term care. It was a pleasure working with Dwayne Bair and it is an honor to know that he is and always will be our good friend.



Figure 50 Bair Homestead on Chapin Road as seen in April 2015



Figure 51 Photo of property where the Bair Homestead once stood taken September 2016
Located on Chapin Road between US Business 281 and US Highway (Expressway) 281
(Courtesy of Roseann Bacha-Garza)

Appendix A

Chain of Title for Bair Property

Rosa María Hinojosa de Ballí

- Original Owner:
- Awarded San Salvador Del Tule Land Grant (1794)
- 72 leagues of land
- Applied for grant under her sons name

Juan José de Ballí

- Original Owner with mother:
- Bequeathed to him/Grant was done under his name

Joseph Wigum Heacock & Fanny Knowles Heacock

- Original Properties of Heacock family:
- Texas Mexican Railway Lot 1, 2, 3 Block 225 on Chapin Road Edinburg, Texas

Alex & Mary Ida Bair

- Original Properties of Bair family:
- Texas Mexican Railway Lot 1 and 2 Block 241 on Chapin Road Edinburg, Texas

Lee Martin & Dorothy Bair

- Lot 8 241 is where the Bair family home was located
- Deeded to oldest brother/Dwayne later bought it

Dwayne Wigum Bair & Shirley Bair

- Original Properties of Bair family:
Texas Mexican Railway Lot 6 Block 246 Texas Edinburg, Texas
- Previously owned by Dorothy Bair (paternal grandmother/widow)/Given to Dwayne & Shirley (1976)

Name	Land Grant	Lot	Block	Year
Rosa Maria Hinojosa de Balli	San Salvador Del Tule	-	-	1794
Juan Jose de Balli	San Salvador Del Tule	-	-	1794
Balli decedents	San Salvador Del Tule	-	-	1811 (temporary abandonment of property due to Native American Raids)
Balli decedents	San Salvador Del Tule	-	-	1852 (legality of Balli grant rejected by Bourland Commission in Texas)
Balli decedents	San Salvador Del Tule	-	-	1904 (Balli family occupied the property/legally recognized as Balli property)
Edinburg Townsite Co.	San Salvador Del Tule	1 & 3	225	ca. 1908 (Chapin/Edinburg founded)
Edinburg Townsite Co.	San Salvador Del Tule	2	225	ca. 1908
Joseph W. Heacock	San Salvador Del Tule	2	225	1915
Joseph W. Heacock	San Salvador Del Tule	1& 3	225	1916
Fanny Knowles Heacock	San Salvador Del Tule	1, 2, 3	225	1958 (husband's death)
University of Texas - RGV	San Salvador Del Tule	1, 2, 3	225	unknown - Present

Name	Land Grant	Lot	Block	Date
Rosa Maria Hinojosa Balli	San Salvador Del Tule	-	-	1794
Juan Jose de Balli	San Salvador Del Tule	-	-	1794
Balli decedents	San Salvador Del Tule	-	-	1811 (temporary abandonment of property)
Balli decedents	San Salvador Del Tule	-	-	1852 (legality of property challenged)
Balli decedents	San Salvador Del Tule	-	-	1904 (legally granted to Balli family)
Edinburg Townsite Co.	San Salvador Del Tule	1 & 2	241	ca. 1908 (Chapin/Edinburg founding)
Blaser Charles	San Salvador Del Tule	1 & 2	241	Unknown
W. H. Gossage	San Salvador Del Tule	1 & 2	241	Unknown
Alex B. Bair & Mary I. Bair	San Salvador Del Tule	1 & 2	241	1923
Montgomery W R Trustee	San Salvador Del Tule	1 & 2	241	1930 (release of lien)

Appendix B

Interviewee: Mr. Dwayne Bair

Interviewers: April Wilson, Mariana Watson, Professor Roseann Bacha-Garza, UTRGV Archivist Jeannette Garcia, Mr. Dwayne Bair, and Octavio Ortiz

Date: October 6, 2015 2pm

Location: Troxell Hall, Edinburg, Texas

Roseann: I'll fill this out while we're talking, and you're going to ask questions? One person's going to ask questions?

Octavio: We're going to take turns (Marianna and April agree in unison)

Roseann: Okay. Then I have some extra questions if we have some time...

April: Okay

Roseann: And then, um, yea.

April: Since Gabriel's not here, his are the first fifteen that are going to be asked, (Roseann, okay) so that's why I put them on there, and made a copy for everybody. Oh, I didn't bring enough though (everybody laughs).

Roseann: That's okay though, she and I will share (points to Jeanette)

April: and that way we can write notes, too.

Roseann: Okay so I'm going to push record. Hold on, we're not recording yet (starts all the other recording devices in the room). Okay, just so I'm looking for, yea, if this turns red, I'm gonna have to turn it down, it's not turning red. That's capturing everything. Okay. And this, okay backup. Okay... ready (pauses) Okay, I think we're recording now. Today is October the 6th, Tuesday, 2015. We're at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in Edinburg, Texas in Troxell Hall in the CHAPS office interviewing Mr. Dwayne Bair for the CHAPS class, and, um, we can begin now.

Octavio: Do we introduce ourselves?

Roseann: Yes

Octavio: Okay, Octavio Ortiz

Marianna: Marianna Watson

April: April

Jeanette: Jeanette Garcia

Roseann: Roseann

Mr. Bair: Dwayne Bair

Octavio: Okay, we'll start with the first question, um, among the fifteen hundred acres not owned by you personally, how did you keep track of what was planted on certain parcels of land and how did you keep track of other maintenance requirements of the different agriculture products planted?

Dwayne: I kept maps because of the many parcels of land I farmed, I used this water district map because it was already laid out and most of my farming was in a Tex-Mex subdivision land area. So, I used these every year and tried to color code them to help keep up with what's being planted because I not only had a lot of pieces of land, I had fifty landlords, and you have to keep track of every landlord, all the production, all the income. You can look at anything you want to. Inside of these, you'll see that the first thing on the corner, there's a number. Every farm has a number from the government, because if you plant, cotton or anything, the government controlled,

you'd have to have a farm number. So I have the farm number, here's a lot and block, and where it was, where the property was, I needed, all this information to farm their crops. That's how I kept track of the landlords. This is how I kept track of where the ground was planted, what crops were planted, in what area. Now this would change each crop year. Here on the map the green is cotton and yellow is corn. The spring is when you plant cotton and corn, and then the fall we'd plant vegetables, so I'd have another map. But this is an example of how we had to keep track of our crops. This was my Bible. I had to keep this with me all the time. When I moved from the country, into town, which was twelve years ago, I lost some books from all the years I'd been farming, I had daily logs that I wrote down every day about what happened as far as planting, and fertilizer, and keeping track of the different blocks we had sprayed because it became more and more important using chemical sprays because we were very much controlled on that. In fact, we had to go to school every so often and get a refresher course on different subjects.

Octavio: Very well, uh, second question, Mr. Bair. How did you come to about one thousand five hundred acres?

Dwayne: Well, uh, we continuously tried to pick up more land. I started farming, when I got out the service. I started Pan American College and Uncle Sam needed me. And when I got out, my mom told me "your dad is not well". And she asked me to stay on the farm, and I did. Then when my brother got back from Korea, we started farming my father's land which was probably 250 acres or 300 acres and he farmed some other land at that time too. Well, as we had more families living off of the farm, we had to cut the pie into more pieces, so eventually we needed more land. We then had people ask us to farm their land because they didn't have the equipment to farm their land. A lot of these people were retired, some were winter Texans, people that lived up north that would come down here in the winter time and we took care of their property. At one time we had a, had almost 200 acres of citrus ourselves, and we took care of other citrus for other landlords, we called them, from up north until it froze. Then we pushed the trees out and wound up farming their land. Or in some cases buying their land. My brother and I ended up buying four 40 acres blocks from different people that were up north and wanted to sell their land, so we'd buy it. Anyway, that's the way we gradually acquired more land. One of my kids said "Dad, I'd like to farm" and I said "Son", I said "there's too many hands in that pot right now". And you know, you'd have to farm too much more land. This is not the best way to be efficient (point to the map), you can see how spread out we are. And today there's more traffic on the roads, and I had six row equipment, which eventually we had to buy a trailer and set it back up on it and turn it sideways to carry it down the road because you can imagine traveling down these roads could be very dangerous. I always admired the fact that McCook farmers, they had many areas of land, big sections 640 acres. I thought, "Man, how neat to be able to farm a big piece of land like that!" But, that isn't how I got started, so we have to do it this way. Pick up pieces wherever you can, people that want you to farm their land, you do a good job and they generally they want you to stay.

Octavio: Okay, question number three: what processes did you use to acquire the contracts or agreements to farm the land?

Dwayne: The norm, the standard practice was on, cotton and corn was one fourth after harvest. And on vegetables, it was one fifth after harvest because vegetables cost an awful lot of money. Nowadays it's around \$1500 an acre; it's an investment to grow a crop. You know, that is what we used to buy land for. But, that's the basic

payments: it's either one fourth after harvest for cotton and grain and corn and then, vegetables one fifth after harvest. Now, I had one, my largest landlord, he wanted \$50 an acre down and then we proceed with the crops and see how they turn out. And say, for example, maybe his fourth on the cotton crop would have been \$100 an acre. Okay, and after we finish the crop, I give him another \$50, you know, to make up for that \$100 an acre. But he was guaranteed that he was going to have enough to pay off his taxes, which is, smart, in a good way. It required more investment earlier for us, but, ya know, he was a good landlord. He was a good landlord that stayed with us, and he was the largest landlord we had.

Roseann: These parcels that you have her (points to the map) indicated in green, and pink, and yellow on the map, what's the average sized parcel? What are they?

Dwayne: Well, first of all, each one of these squares is a 40 acre block. Alright, it starts out like one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen and sixteen. There are sixteen. 40 acre blocks which make up 640 acres, which is a $\frac{1}{4}$ section. If you'll notice these circles, that's the section number. So in order to identify your property and this is all Texas-Mexican railroad survey, all of this area here. It's pretty much north and south lines and east and west lines. They did a pretty good job many years ago doing their survey. So, if you look at these, most people would own a five or a ten, or a twenty or 40 acre block. And in some cases, an 80 acre block. Here's a block right here. Dad and his family moved to this 80 acre block, when they came from Iowa in 1920.

Roseann: So, if you had a piece here that represented, let's say, a 20 acre piece, and you were planting something that you just mentioned was a quarter return (Dwayne: uh hum) or a fifth return (Dwayne: uh hum), what does that mean exactly?

Dwayne: Well, if, for example, take an easy figure. If there's \$400 an acre I grossed, okay? A fourth of that will be a \$100, but after harvest, and that harvest might cost, uh, it might cost \$25, so there might be \$75 dollars left.

Roseann: Okay, so the farmer gets \$100 per acre, I mean the owner gets \$100 per acre, and the farmer gets to keep the rest?

Dwayne: No, the landlord gets one fourth. Excuse me. Take whatever the crop is, like cotton, corn, it's one fourth after harvest. See, there's \$400 that's gross, okay? Okay he gets one fourth of that after harvest. So one fourth of \$400 is \$100, but the harvest might be \$25 for that portion. You take the total cost, and ya know, and he pays a fourth of it. Everything had a different price, grain harvest and hauling, we didn't have a combine, but, we had two cotton pickers. So, there's a certain, basic amount we charge for harvesting the cotton. And so, it starts off with a fourth of the crop less what it costs to harvest. Less a fourth of that harvest. It's pretty basic, there's all kinds a ways you can cut it. Does that explain it?

Roseann: yes, thank you

Octavio: Uh, our fifth question, sir. What was your role in the types of crops planted on the acres?

Dwayne: Oh, my brother and I of course, discuss that. And, you had to try and stay up with the market. Then, planning for the year is usually what we had to do for Production Credit Association. Even though I was on a bank board, my brother and I borrowed from Production Credit which is, it's an agency that deals only with farmers and ranchers. For example, here's some crops in here that we wanted to plant, based on our knowledge of what the market may be. In other words, this year here, for example, corn, I was going to plant 595 acres of corn. I had a contract with the

Azteca Maseca over here, which used to be Edinburg Grain Co Op. They now own the whole thing. I had a contract, and we liked growing that tortilla corn; this is all grown for masa. It's a special variety of Asgrow seed. So we knew could make some good production with it. For example, this production here on 595 acres, showed about \$147,000 after paying the rent. I even deducted my rent to see my net amount because I use this budget to borrow the money from. With all these projections, and had to break down all my costs, expenses per month. Taken this, subtract this and see if you have anything left, you know what I mean? Anyway, to answer your question: we talk about what the market might be and which fields would be best to grow certain things. I used to farm just north of the college for the FFA to help them out. But, places like that, you had to be careful where you'd spray because there's houses. So, there's certain places around town you can only plant grain, sorghum because we didn't want to spray to hurt anybody. So that was a determining factor to: the location of that crop which determined what that crop might be. But generally, we look at the market and my brother and I would talk about the best or what might make us more money. We also had to alternate our cotton fields. We could not plant cotton on cotton. In other words, we couldn't continue with cotton from one year to the next because we have something called "root rot". With root rot, you can't plant cotton on cotton because the root rot will take over and kill that crop before it can produce its final crop. But in order to keep from having the root rot problem, this is another reason we had to juggle all these fields every other year. We deep plowed every crop we farmed. We'd turn the soil up after cotton. If you turn it up to the sun and dried it out, it will kill that root rot fungus all the way down. And you wanted to know how much cotton to plant based on the price. But you're allowed only so much acreage you could plant. Did I answer that?

Octavio: Yes, sir

Octavio: Okay, moving on to question six. If you were involved with the citrus industry, how did it differ from the other agricultural management?

Dwayne: Well it, there's all something basic about growing any crop because, it requires you to take care of it. You gotta feed em, you gotta give em fertilizer, you gotta give em water. Certain times of the year, you gotta give em a certain type of spray. In the spring, when the little buds are coming out, we have rust mite; and you have to spray for the rust mite. They damage the fruit when it very small then it's no good for the fresh market. I mean, it's edible, just as good eatin', but it doesn't have the appearance, you can't sell it, so it goes in the juice plant and that is always a lower price. So, citrus required timing on spray, I suppose it a little different, it's something that you had to take care of year, after year, after year. For example, we bought allotment to plant sugarcane at one time, but I only had so much water. And in the late '50's it was very dry. Sugarcane lasts four or five years and then you rip it out and replant. Citrus is forever, well, until a freeze and nothing's forever in the farming business. Anyway, we had to let the allotment go because we were running out of water. And what I did was to spend days out at the water office buying water allotments from people who were not irrigating their property. So, I'd spend a lot of time buying water for my citrus because I didn't have enough for citrus and sugarcane, but then it came to where I hardly had enough for citrus. Until we filled the dam up, back when we had a heck of a rain and it filled the dam up and all my insurance, we called it insurance buying all that water because you can only store three acres, three irrigations per acre, so I lost it all but it was my insurance.

Octavio: Good, okay. Now we'll move on to question seven. How did management of one type of crop differ from managing a different type of crop? Which you kind of answered already, or do you want to add on to it?

Dwayne: First of all it requires different equipment. In the citrus, we had an herbicide rig that would go under the trees and spray to keep the weeds down all the time. So we kept it clean all the time. And the other crops, corn, grain, whatever, we had to put the cultivator in. Ya know, right away when the crop came up, first we'd go-devil, it was a cultivator you can use when the cotton's very small and it throws dirt up so the weeds can't come up. So, you had to be right on top of it. If the rains came pretty soon you would have and then you have a problem. Then we got a rope weeder. It was a bar with cotton rope, kinda hangin' in pieces tied into this tube which was pressurized. And then we had an herbicide in there that was seeping into those ropes, and as we drove over the cotton crop any weeds sticking up or Johnson grass would touch it and kinda wipe it down a little bit like that, and kill it. Anyway, the answer is different equipment takes to maintain citrus versus cotton or corn or grain. And then it takes different planters. For example, we had precision planter for our vegetables. It was precise; it would just put one seed at a time. Seed was very expensive, so the precision planter was a Stan Hay Precision Planter. In other words, it was just made for vegetables and you could be real precise for seeding. You used different types of plates in it for different crops. I guess the answer is, it required different equipment, for vegetables, cotton, grain.

Octavio: Okay, question number eight, Mr. Bair. Which agricultural industry was the most profitable?

Dwayne: Hmm. Well, I'd probably say the citrus was, till it froze. I don't know, it'd take all of em. I lost all my citrus, 60% in a hurricane. I had just planted 150 acres of canning carrots four days before Hurricane Beulah and I wound up selling canning carrots for fresh carrots because Mr. Moore let me out of the contract. So instead of selling canning carrots for \$15 a ton, I got \$285 a ton for fresh carrots. They are a different carrot but, they put them in a bag and called them shorties, but they still carrots. Anyway, it varies, but overall, citrus was the most profitable. Once it got into large production, once you get in twenty, twenty five tons an acre, and you have good, clean fruit, that would be the most profitable.

Octavio: Okay, question number nine, Mr. Bair. Who were your buyers of your cultivated products?

Dwayne: We had a lotta different buyers that bought from us. At one time, Wallace Fruit and Vegetables Company, here in Edinburg had three cotton gins, big packing shed and they bought a lot of different products. I can categorize those into fresh, what I call fresh and canning. In the fresh, we sold to a many people. We had lettuce one year we sold to one company, and cabbage another company and carrots another company. There probably about six different companies that we sold to. Actually, what I like to do is get the buyers out in the field and let them bid on the crop.

Octavio: Okay, moving onto question number ten, Mr. Bair. Did you have contracts with these companies/groups, and if so, was it based on a seasonal aspect or were they long term standing contracts?

Dwayne: They were long standing friendships in seasonal contracts. Not necessarily anything from year to year to year, except for our citrus crops. I was in a Co-Op, Edinburg Citrus Co-Op down on Chapin, fact they still down there. When I went on the board, it was where Pueblo Tires is now next to the train station, I was in my 20's

when I went in on that board. At that time railroad companies owned the property next to the railroads and most of the packing sheds in the Valley and they leased them to the packers. But you had to have trust in that, and if you dealt with one of them and they did something that you didn't like, or you thought was wrong, you just didn't do business with them anymore. I mean, except for Edinburg Citrus Association. We had a contract and they'd do all the harvesting. Dad had been in the cooperative, so we'd stayed with it.

Octavio: Okay, thank you. That leads up to our question number eleven. Were these contracts local or out of the area buyers/companies/groups?

Dwayne: Most of them were here locally. However, like I mentioned before, I grew some crops for out of town companies I grew carrots for Safeway, out of Paris, Texas. Wallace Fruit and Vegetable Company right up the street here, they're gone now. Anyway, they had a deal with Safeway (referring to Wallace) so we'd grow carrots for them which was a really good deal because they'd pay us for the net weight, and not pack out. Most the time when you grew carrots or any vegetable, you get paid on the pack out. You might take a 100 tons in, but maybe 70 tons is all that's good, the rest is graded out and goes to the cows. Our contracts with the canning companies were here locally. Now, they probably had contracts with Campbell's Soup Company or some other large company. Our contracts for our canning crops were with our different canneries here locally. We dealt with about four or five different canneries here.

Octavio: Okay, good. Question number twelve, Mr. Bair. How were these contractual relationships established and maintained in the land buying and management process?

Dwayne: You talking about the buying process of the crops, or we talking about buying land here?

Roseann: Well, I think the Bair's were managing the land by farming for all the landlords that you had. So I think the question has to do with "based on your contracts, did you, um, plant different acreage based on what contracts you had? Did you know ahead of time?

Dwayne: Before we planted, we agreed on a contract. That was established prior to planting. At first it had to deal with land management, I see where you're going with it. Anything to deal with our land, management here (opens the map up with color coding), that's basically what that is. But you had to have trust in them. And if you dealt with one of them and they did something that you didn't like, or that you thought was wrong, you just didn't do business with them anymore. We weren't tied to anybody except Edinburg Citrus Association on citrus we had a contract. We stayed with them. My Daddy had been a cooperative man, and so we stayed with them.

Octavio: The next two question, actually kind of answered on your- during your first one. So we are going to, uh, start on the next set of questions. Starting with number one. Um what when you came to the Rio Grande Valley what tools were brought?

Mr. Bair: To be honest, of course I wasn't here in 1920, but they brought their farming tools from Iowa and if you are gonna farm you got to have plows to turn the soil, and you gotta have planters to plant the soil, and you have to have cultivators. Now I cannot tell you any more than that those are the basic tools you need to have. Then, of course you had something to pull those tools with, and that happened to be

animals. Poor animals when they got to South Texas, it's hot down here. Originally, I understand they brought the mules. There is one picture of the mules there. They brought the mules with them from Iowa on the train along with the equipment.

Roseann: This picture here. That was very common back then they, land developers would sell land to um, people who wanted to come here to farm the Magic Valley. They would sell everything they had back from wherever they were coming from, but they would bring the basic essentials which were farming tools. The trains had carts that transported all of that stuff including the animals, so yes.

Octavio: Okay, second question on tools, Sir. Did the soil in the RGV impact the tools? Or and to follow up on that did you happen to get inventive if the soil broke the tools?

Mr.Bair: Generally speaking, most tools farm tools were created by farmers. I was fortunate to go and visit to the John Deere Factory in Waterloo, Iowa watching them produce all these big tools and tractors. We created some of them but, most of them we purchased. We might improve on them add something to them, weld something to them. Most farmers had their own welders, torches and everything. We might decide to change something and do it ourselves, but most of the tools were purchased.

Roseann: Was there, was there any uh specific characteristic of the land of the geology of the land here that required you to, that you could recall required you to adjust certain tools?

Mr.Bair: Right.

Roseann: The clay soil for example.

Mr.Bair: I never farmed down on the river, they call it buck shot soil. It required a little different farming methods. I never farmed down there. We farm sand, sandy loam type of soil, and of course it would wear greatly on your tools sand really sharpens them up, but it really eats them away. So we finally start using hard surface coating on our plow blades. We had it done at a blacksmith shop and they would hard surface it with a special kind of steel and it would last a long, long time. Then finally John Deere started building their own plow blades with hard surfaced blades. When they wore out you could replace them.

Octavio: Oh okay, this is just the last um, question on farm equipment Sir. Uh, number three. When you became a farmer did you have a particular brand of farming equipment you used?

Mr.Bair: When I started we had uh, several Ford tractors. These were smaller tractors and then we realized as we grew in our farming acreage, we needed larger equipment. So we gradually went to John Deere and I like John Deere equipment.

Octavio: Okay the next topic is canning, Sir.

Mariana: Um, yeah. Uh, these are my questions on the canning industry. Okay, um, the first one, what canning companies did you use when you were farming?

Mr.Bair: It was four or five of them. I mentioned Moore Canning Company, and we grew a lot of carrots for them. And Renown Cannery, we grew a lot of tomatoes for them. We also grew blue lake beans. The blue lake beans were very tender. Then we used Alamo Canning Company. There were about four canneries in Edinburg up and down the railroad track.

Octavio: We do have a second interview.

Mr.Bair: Okay.

Mariana: Um, I just wanted to know, what was your relationship like with those companies? Was it like on a friend basis or was it just work?

Mr.Bair: The word trust.

Mariana: Trust.

Mr.Bair: Trust. A big word. Either they did what they agreed to do or not. For example, I'm gonna tell you a story here. We had a deal with Moore Canning Company for about 150 acres that I started planting just before the hurricane hit. Well I had a contract with Moore Canning Company and most all of those 150 acres were in fact, 130 were canning carrots and 20 acres of fresh. Anyway, it stayed so wet so long the thirty-five inches in that one week meant no one could get into their fields, plant anything. Well because of all of the rain the carrots kept coming up of course, in our beautiful beds that were square. The strong rains beat the beds down and some seed went to the bottom of the furrow. I knew Mr. Moore, didn't have any other carrots so everybody was saying, "sell them fresh, sell them fresh." The salesman from Wallace Vegetables said, "we can sell them for fresh." I mean ship them fresh. Put them in cellophane bags and sell them as shorties. For some reason nobody had any carrots. Well everybody thought, sell them out of your contract, they would do it to you. I said that is not my way. I can't do it there are more important things in life than being a cheat. I didn't even know we had a written contract, we had a verbal contract and that's good enough. Anyways I said I can't do that. We don't do that. So I went to Mr. Moore and said "Mr. Moore," I said you know I understand that these are the only carrots you have. I lost more of my citrus crop. The hurricane winds had blown most of the fruit off the trees, I said I would appreciate it and I would be willing to pay you something if you would release me from my contract, so that I could sell them fresh. I would get \$15.00 a ton for canning price or get \$285.00 a pound for fresh market carrots. He said we we'll think about it. He had three boys Tom, Mike, and Louis Moore. So they sent over their field man O.C. Pearson from Mission. He came to the house one night and he said, "Mr. Bair you gonna sell them fresh?" I said "not unless you release them." He said you going to sell them anyway? I said I have a contract. Our word is worth more than that. So no? He said well okay, so he went back, he didn't say any more and he left, and about a day or two later, Mr. Moore called me and said they would release our contract. They had filed a claim on our seed. He had advanced the seed and he said to pay five dollar to release the lien on your seed and the carrots are yours. That meant an awful lot to us. That's a lot of money, and after losing most of our citrus crops you know it really helped. So I asked him, "Can I pay you anything?" He said, "No." I knew he liked to duck hunt and my wife at the time did a lot of oil painting. So I had her paint a picture of a Mallard duck and hen coming in for a landing over some cat tails in a lake. I took it over to him and he was thrilled.

Roseann: That was a very nice gesture.

Mariana: Mm.

Mr.Bair: You have to also deal with yourself. So your word is very important.

Roseann: You gotta be able to look at yourself in the mirror, and be happy with what you see.

Mr.Bair: Yup. Some of my friends called me pendejo (stupid in Spanish.)
(Room laughs.)

Mr.Bair: Well you know, you gotta do what you gotta do.

Mariana: Yes. Thank you for sharing that story. It was nice. Um, I also have a question on, what was the difference between your regular tomatoes and carrots and the ones you used for canning? The canning tomatoes?

Mr.Bair: We grew a lot of fresh tomatoes too which used to be the Rutgers and the Homestead varieties, which were your big round tomatoes you see in the grocery store. Those are what we call fresh tomatoes. Then, prior to the Chico being created, when we finished our fresh harvest and whatever was left, we would harvest and take to the juice plant. I mean quality wasn't the best if you saw them in a bin. And then they were all excited when they came out with the Chico tomato. It was a pear shaped tomato and it was pretty predominate, which means most of the crop matured at one time and it was tough, hard, you know it could take the abuse of being dumped in the bin and, so it was a very good tomato. We made 25 ton an acre out of those Chico tomatoes. So most farmers converted into that type of tomato after they came out with that new variety. So that's the difference there. A big round tomato for fresh market versus a hard firmer tomato for canning. And then in carrots, mostly fresh market carrots, we called Imperator variety. They were long beautiful carrots you'll see in the store. In fact when we first started farming, we used use to bunch them and tie them. Actually they tie them in bunches with the top on then finally after that they would use a machine. Originally we had the carrot plow that would we had go under the carrot and loosen the soil and the harvest crews would come right behind them grab them and snap the tops and throw them in the basket. Eventually, most farmers went to machine harvest. The Danver canning carrots were carrot shaped like a top and they it made a lot of tons and they were pretty tough. Then there was a Chantenay it grew quite large also. So there were two different types of canning carrots that we grew. You had to have tonnage, because we never really got paid much for canning crops. I mean one time I know it was \$12.50 a ton for carrots.

Mariana: The next one I have, uh how much of your crops would be sold to canning companies? Well you sort of answered that already.

Mr.Bair: Uhh,

Mariana: I don't know if you have.

Mr.Bair: It really varied. I would probably say maybe twenty percent at least twenty percent canning crops probably and the rest were cotton, grain, corn and citrus.

Mariana: Of all your.

Mr.Bair: All. Out of all I would probably say twenty percent.

Mariana: Twenty percent?

Mr.Bair: It varied year to year. You know that is how crops work.

Mariana: Uh, okay. And you also spoke about um, your mother and your wife canning at home. Um, how did your mother and wife learn how to can?

Mr.Bair: Uh, I assume my mother learned from her mother. And my wife learned from her mother.

Mariana: Yea.

Mr.Bair: The county agent had actually classes you could take. In fact if you lived out in Rio Farms, the wives had to learn to can. Rio Farms was a place that soldiers returning from WWII could come to. They would give you a house and so much acreage but you had to go to a class. Husband and wife both had to learn how to farm and learn how to can. And you were required to grow your own crops and

grow a garden. We didn't have a garden every year. We grew a lot of fresh and canning carrots.

Mariana: And uh, was it difficult for your wife to learn? Or was it a difficult process when she would can?

Mr.Bair: I don't know it didn't seem to be. I mean a lot of times families would get together and do things like that you know. It was like a group making tamales every year. A bunch of people get together and make a party of it and made it fun. I don't know how much fun it was but I brought in the vegetables and they did the canning. I came home from the Farm Bureau meeting one night and came in the back door. I had put some shelves up and they weren't as sturdy as they should have been. My wife she had put all the canned goods up there and all the jars had fallen down. Of course it was all broken. I came in and said what's that smell in here, Vinegar?

Mariana: She was a little angry.

Roseann: You built a better shelf next time.

Mariana: Uh, well I guess I had a question for your wife, but I don't know if she would be able to answer it or if she would be up to explaining the process to me, maybe?

Mr.Bair: Yes

Mariana: And I also had some question on your equipment. I know um, some were already asked, but I think they are a bit different. Uh, I just think the first one is different. Um, the, what was the first equipment you used on your farm and how much did it cost you and how did you pay for it?

Mr.Bair: Hm, well when I first started farming my father already had equipment. So the first equipment, my father had already bought. And then as my brother came in, we formed Bair Farms which was my Father, Lee, my brother, Howard and I.

Mariana: oh okay.

Mr.Bair: We had 5 John Deere tractors, 2 John Deere cotton pickers was the 90 pieces of equipment we sold.

Roseann: Did you buy all of the equipment that you used or did you lease any of the equipment?

Mr.Bair: Bought.

Bach-Garza: You bought it all?

Mr.Bair: Bought it all, because one of the things that helped farming or anybody in business as far as I know was the tax investment credit. We could you know buy new tractors after years, over time. I don't know how anybody can start farming today unless you hit the multi-million dollar sweepstakes.

Mr.Bair: So anyways. So I can't really give you a good honest answer. Because the way you questioned it. When I started farming I used my fathers and as we farmed all of us together we bought the equipment. I didn't buy it myself, we bought it together.

Mariana: Okay.

Octavio Ortiz: Does that conclude your questions?

Mariana: Yes.

April: Now it is mine. Mine focuses a little bit more on your pesticides and I was told that you were the Citrus King in the Mission Citrus festival.

Mr.Bair: Well I Was one of them in '92.

April: That is actually my first question. When were you the Citrus King cuz I'm going to go find a picture in Mission archives.

Mr.Bair: In '91 '92 I think.

April: In '92 '91 somewhere around there?

Mr.Bair: '92 maybe I don't know.

April: And do you remember who the Queen was that year?

Mr.Bair: That was Lori Jackson.

April: Did you know her personally or?

Mr.Bair: No. I got to meet her.

Room laughs.

Mr.Bair: I'll tell you when I met her. Another story.

April: Okay.

Mr.Bair: I hadn't met her yet. Actually it was Lori Jackson. It was down in Charro Days, our first parade, so I was standing there and I had never met her in person.

Roseann: Oh okay.

Mr.Bair: Anyway. So this car slides up there and a gal jumps out. She had a plaid shirt on and blue jeans and she starts taking them off. What is she doing? All these people around Charro Days parade were watching, you know. She takes her top off and she has a bikini. And the mother drags a piece of plastic out on the ground. What the heck is going on here? Well anyway she drags her gown out there she takes her jeans off she had a bikini on of course and the crowd was gathering.

Mr.Bair: She walked over and stepped into her gown, pulled it up, zipped it up and was ready for the parade. I introduced myself and we got on the float. We made several other parades. She was going to A&M at the time, I believe. Her mom had picked her and drove right from the airport to the parade.

Room laughs.

April: So what were the requirements to be nominated or even to be accepted as the citrus king?

Mr.Bair: Being involved in the Citrus Business, I was on several Citrus committees. I was on the Texas Citrus Mutual Board which is a grower's organization. I was on the Board of Texas Citrus and Vegetables Association. And then I was on the Texas Valley Citrus committee which set the regulations for the size and grade of the fruit, and I was on the Texas A&I Kingsville Citrus research board. I think what they called it then was the A&I at first then it changed to A&M Kingsville citrus at Weslaco. I guess by my involvement in different citrus organizations at the time was the reason that I was chosen.

April: You were out of the farming business by the time you were the King ?

Mr.Bair: I was out of the farming business, I was barely out, yeah 89 but we still had some citrus.

April: You kind of answered number two I was going to ask you all your involvement like the citrus exchange, so conservation board. Yeah actually I had have quite a few more

Mr.Bair: Well I might of mentioned something about the Texas Citrus Exchange. In late 1969, about ten of us got together that were in the citrus business. We needed to build our own juice plant. We also needed to create some more Co Ops to have enough citrus for our juice plant because at that time, Texsun Juice plant was in Weslaco. We decided that we needed to get together four different citrus Co Op to have enough volume, so we formed Lake Delta Citrus in Weslaco, South Texas Citrus in Edinburg, Rio Texas Citrus Association in Edinburg, and of course Edinburg Citrus Association which had been a Co Op since 1934. We first wanted to buy the old "Texsun" plant in Weslaco, but we didn't have enough capital. A large Co Op from Florida came over here and bought the "Texsun" label. They didn't want the plant, just the label. There was more grapefruit juice sold in the 46 ounce

can than any other label in the U.S. We did not have the money so we came out with "BigTex" label. You have probably seen it on the expressway in Mission. The name of our Co Op was Texas Citrus Exchange. This was not only our juice plant, but we also had our central sales for the fresh fruit for our different packing houses: Edinburg Citrus Association, RioTex Citrus Association, Lake Delta Citrus Association, and later South Texas Citrus Association. Recently the juice plant was purchased by a large company from California by the name of Paramount.

Roseann: The Company was Paramount?

Mr. Blair: It was Paramount called "Wonderful Citrus"

April: That's fine, I guess the next one is going to go towards your pesticides you answered some earlier with Octavio Ortiz asking question, you had pesticides that you had to spray, so my question will be what type of problems that you occur and what pesticides did you use?

Mr. Bair: Most of the pesticides we used were to try and control the cotton boll weevils and bollworm. One of the most common insecticides for cotton was toxaphene and methyl parathion. Most of the insecticides were purchased from Tide Products in Edinburg and American Agri-Service in Elsa.

April: And then two questions that are going to deal with, The first one is going to deal with the freezes but you kind off already answered it a little bit but my question is what type of crop did you loose with some of the major freezes? What was the recovery process? And then the last part was drought; what did you actually plant when you had a drought?

Mr. Bair: In regards to citrus freezes, we had tree killing freezes in 1949, 1951, 1962, 1983 and 1989. We also had a limb killing freeze in 1985. During the 1983 freeze, we had a field of cabbage that was about 6 inches tall. To save the plants, we kept irrigation water going on the cabbage all day and night. Most of the leave died but the plant kept growing and we were able to harvest a partial crop. The price was pretty good because there was not much cabbage left in the Valley. This really helped because we were losing all of our citrus crop and trees. In regard to the drought years, 1949-54, we always deep-plowed our land every year and if we did get some rain, we could save that moisture in the deeper soil. We would, of course, need to keep the weeds controlled.

April: And if there was a drought restriction, did you have to alter what you had to be planted?

Mr. Bair: As far as what crops to plant during a drought, grain sorghum didn't require as much water as would cotton or corn. Vegetables usually required a number of frequent irrigations so you couldn't plan on them. After losing all of our citrus in the 1962 freeze, we couldn't go back to the banks, so we were able to get a FHA loan. Later on the Government sponsored a citrus tree insurance program. If you bought the tree insurance, you could get enough money to plant new citrus trees.

April: it makes sense, Last one is referring to Hurricane Beulah, What damage did your farm receive? O my god, I put crop just found my typo there, crops were your growing that year and what was lost? And my last is a really complex question: Was there any aid given from the government or an agriculture group?? Or anything?

Mr. Bair: After Hurricane Beulah flooded our land, we couldn't plant anything for a long time. We received no government help. We lost 60% of our citrus during the hurricane. The grapefruit was heavier, so naturally we lost a higher percentage of grapefruit than oranges. On the land my Father had owned, however, the land dried

out much quicker than the rest of our land because Dad had installed deep drain tile in his land though the Soil Conservation Service.

Octavio Ortiz: Mr. Bair in your experience as a farmer how would you say did NAFTA affect the Rio Grande Valley Farmer?

Mr. Bair: In regard to NAFTA, I would have to say that it helped the Rio Grande Valley. We did not have a negative impact on our farm from it.

Roseann: Signs off End of the Interview

Appendix C

Interviewee: Dwayne Bair

Interviewers: Mike Johnson, Karla Lira, Jeanette Garcia, Miguel Calvillo, Carl Neely, and
Jesus Gutierrez

Location: CHAPS OFFICE, Troxel Hall, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Date: October 9, 2015

Transcribers: Mike Johnson, Karla Lira, Jeanette Garcia, Miguel Calvillo, Carl Neely, and
Jesus Gutierrez, Ryann Fink, Sorsha Salinas

This interview was conducted in the CHAPS office on October 9, 2015. Mr. Dwayne Bair the interviewee spoke about his family life including topics such as family history, traditions, civic life, and aviation life.

Mike: How did your parents, as well as the Heacock family, hear about this area?

Mr. Bair: I have to assume that some of these land speculators and developers that used to go up in the northern states and gather people together and tell them about the Magic Rio Grande Valley and how beautiful it was or weather is nice. And they'd usually probably go up when there's snowing and ice everywhere. [laughter]

Mr. Bair: And so I think this is what got a lot of people excited up there about coming south into a new area. And different categories, course my father's side was interested in the farming because they told him he could plant three crops a year. You know, up there, there's just corn and soybean. And then other side, my mother's side of the family, just you know excited about going somewhere new, and into a new developing area. I have to assume that. Now obviously I wasn't there in 1913 when my mom came, but that's one of the reasons they came down, I believe.

Mike: Ok

Mr. Bair: In fact, when my mother's family came, they bought land where Pan-Am is over here. And then they built their house where the Pan-Am bookstore is. They owned a half a block there and they had five little rent houses and a house there and my grandpa built a hardware store downtown. He was in the feed and seed store business in Iowa. The other side of the family on my dad's side, there was farming. They brought all their farm equipment on a train and their mules which they used to farm with on a train and started farming out here in north of Edinburg.

Mike: Oh no, that's quite alright. What had been said or what was known about the area at the time? Just basically what these developers had told them or had they already heard some things about the Valley?

Mr. Bair: I'm sure they heard from other people. However, these developers really created a lot of sensation in there. I'm sure they showed some pictures and told them about the wonderful weather in the Valley and again, they probably went in when it was winter time up north and [laughter] ice and snow and man we can go south where we can have better weather. And the pioneer spirit, you know. Had to be something from

that, everybody wants to go somewhere and better themselves. So, that would be my answer. And of course, again, I'm assuming because I wasn't here in '13. My mom's family came in 1913 here and my dad's family came in 1920.

Mike: Ok. Have you heard anything about were there any doubts or reservations on any of their parts about, you know, taking off onto this adventure?

Mr. Bair: There had to have been. Anybody, just put yourself in that situation. There's got to be questions. Anytime anybody pulls up stakes and moves, there's got to be, you know, a lot of questions. Is this the right thing to do? What's going to happen, you know? Good or bad. And I'm sure there's a lot of questions in people's mind but they just had to have the determination and that's what they wanted to do, so people did it.

Mike: Absolutely, alright. Were the areas in Iowa, was Iowa not doing well at that time?

Mr. Bair: I have no idea.

Mike: Ok

Mr. Bair: I have no idea. Like I say, my grandpa Heacock ran a feed and seed store and he was a miller. We called them millers. They had a creek there and they had a, what do you call it?

Mike: Water wheel?

Mr. Bair: Yeah, water wheel, where they put the grain in there and make flour. That's what they called millers. They made flour for people and ground up different types of grain. That's one of the things he did.

Mike: Alright, How was your parent's and your family's adjustment to the area? Did they take to it well?

Mr. Bair: Well, again, like I say, I have to suppose a lot of this, again. But I'm sure there's a lot of shock. I mean, different climate conditions and, you know, just many conditions were different than what they had before. But I'm sure were used to having some change in their life.

Carl: Did you get the one about the cost?

Mike: Oh yeah, I missed that one. Thank you. Do you know how much they paid for the land that they bought?

Mr. Bair: No, I do not. And once we get into this other group, committee, I gave them a bunch of abstracts. You all know what an abstract is? Years ago they used to give us, when we buy a piece of land, we get an abstract and it goes back to the 1800s, back into the Spanish Grant. And of course at one time, you know, this was Mexico and all this, and the King of Spain gave people porciones from land from the river up. That was all this country was like many many years ago. And then, some of these abstracts go way back. I don't know how far back, but anyway, I've looked at some of them and they go way back several hundred years. And in that abstract it will tell how much they paid for an acre. And so we might be able to find that information there, but as far as them telling me how much they paid, they didn't tell me and I never asked them. You know, I never thought about asking them what their property cost was [unintelligible].

Mike: Okay, we'll go on to uh, the subject of education now. What type of education were you and your parents able to receive?

Mr. Bair: Well, uh as far as my dad, I don't think he went to any college. He moved down here and started farming. Uh, mom uh, went to TSCW, then she graduated from University of Texas in Austin.

Mike: Okay.

Bair: And uh, and then one day my sister found a big uh, um longhorn.

Mike: Mhm.

Bair: An old mothy shirt.

Mike: Mhm.

Bair: She said what is that? She said, "Well I used to play for the University of Texas in Austin at a women's basketball team." She'd never told us.

Mike: Oh!

Bair: She pulled out a picture and showed us, and there she was. She'd played for the University of Texas women's basketball team. Really, sports she loved to play tennis and she really liked it. Anyway, she'd never told us but she would roll out a picture and showed us.

Mike: Hmm.

Bair: So, uh she got a degree there and then after my dad died in sixty-two. She went back to college at Pan-American. I went to her graduation down here at Pan Am with another degree and she taught at Robert E. Lee.

Mike: Okay.

Bair: After my dad died. And, uh, so uh she was very well educated as far as that goes. Uh, my oldest brother, uh went to Edinburg Junior College, this used to be a Junior College until nineteen fifty-two.

Mike: So what's now, Pan-Am?

Bair: What is now Pan-Am.

Mike: Or UTRGV.

Bair: And then uh, then he wound up and he got into the reserve program and the Korean War broke out. And (chuckle) and the coach here got all the boys, the football boys, to join the Naval Program

Mike: (Chuckles)

Bair: And went to Korea (chuckles). Anyway so, uh he didn't finish his college either. Uh, I started Pan-American in nineteen fifty-two. The first year it became a four year college.

Mike: Mhm.

Bair: And, uh it had been Edinburg Region before that. No, it had been Region and before that and then Edinburg Junior College. Regional and the Edinburg Junior. College and then Pan-American College. And so uh, I'd gone three semesters and then Uncle Sam says (knocks on table).

Mike: (laughs)

Bair: "We want you" so, we went to the draft board about fifteen others from going to college here and said, "Look can we finish our semester to get our credit? So they let us wait another couple of weeks and we finished and then you know? Went to service (clears throat). So I never got a degree, when I got out of the service my dad had a heart problem, was on the farm. And um, anyway uh, well he was still on the farm and I thought "Well you know?" Dad had a problem so I did uh, I didn't finish my degree I would say. But you know? I don't, I don't regret it, I had to help on the farm. Helped him and a few years later he did die. But uh, my brother got back from Korea and we farmed together for a while, the three of us, and then dad passed away and then my brother and I farmed. Until uh, he passed away with lymphoma in nineteen eighty-eight, he was fifty-eight when he died. But anyway, back to education uh, you wanna go farther than my kids or just, just my brother and I?

*Rustling on table.

Bair: Oh my sister. Yeah, my sister went to South Western University.

Mike: Okay.

Bair: So you understand, she got her degree.

Mike: Okay.

Bair: So, my older brother got several years, my sister got her degree. And I got several years. And my little brother, uh Jimmy, uh went to A&M. He went to A&M one year and came back here to Pan-America a year and uh, he'd been riding bulls one night over there at the Sheriff's Posse Arena and he got in the back car seat, had a wreck and was killed in his twenties so he never got to finish his degree. But uh..

Jeannette: What are your brother's and sister's names?

Bair: Uh, my sister's uh. Howard Lee Bair was my oldest brother, he was born in nineteen thirty. My sister was born in thirty-two Margie Maureen Bair. And uh, my little brother uh, James Edward Bair. He was born, I was born in thirty-four and Jimmy was born in thirty-eight. It's thirty, thirty-two, thirty-four, thirty-eight. You know? But anyway uh so, part of my family got one. So eventually I wanted my kids to have one. Since I didn't but that's another story, I don't guess we're going into that.

Mike: Oh, actually if we could that would be great.

Bair: *cough*

Mike: If we could talk about your uh, your children and you know? Their education.

Bair: Oh.

Mike: Did you kind of move them in that direction?

Bair: Well you know, it's like. Like I told my kids, a degree don't, it doesn't guarantee a darn thing. It might open a door. But once the door is open you gotta perform. But it'll open the doors. It'll give you an opportunity and of course get an education. And it does a lot of things for you too.

Mike: I'm sure.

Bair: But anyway, I wanted them all to get a degree. So when my oldest son, Steven, graduated he said "Dad I don't wanna spend my money and your money and my time." I said then get yourself out and go dig ditches. He went to North Alamo Water Supply and went to work. (inaudible). He fell into aviation and uh, started flying Charter and became and instructor. Uh, (inaudible) and regular instructor and worked in McAllen Aviation and Piper Dealer and flew all over the United States, charted all over Mexico. I've been flying with him if I wasn't real busy, he said "Come on dad, I'll let you get some dual time in a twin engine plane" so he'd take me, taught me to fly in nineteen eighty.

Everyone: No (Laughs).

Bair: that's another category. Anyway, back to Steve. Uh, he said he didn't want to do it then he said "dad I wanna be an airline pilot" and I said "well then go back to college you gotta have at least two years" back then you needed two years of college to be an airline pilot. Well he aced all the tests. Emerald Airlines, I don't know if you remember Emerald Airlines flew out of McAllen, out of Dallas, Houston. He, in his low twenties became a captain in an airline and then he went to other airlines uh America West uh lived in Scottsdale and flew out of Phoenix for America West and then they bought out U.S. Air and then they merged with American. Uh he got, he got my problem with the eye and so he lost his medical. Anyway! That was Steve. Steve didn't get in college but he made big money. Again, there's opportunities out there for people that not necessarily have a degree too, I mean there's a lot of types of jobs you just got to go for it. And then uh, next one Scott. Uh Scott uh went to A&M. Uh Jeffery Scott Bair, he went to A&M and he worked in a computer center

when he was going to college. He liked the computers so he graduated there but he didn't utilize his degree actually, he stayed there and they wanted him to stay there in the computer department. He could have retired two years ago and he's Senior System Engineer for Computer Services Inc. I hope I got that right. Anyway, he handles mainframe he said "Dad, as long as they got mainframe" he said, "I got a job." And he said "and they are going to the cloud or whatever that is"

Everyone: (Laughs)

Mike: Yeah I said the same thing when I heard about the cloud.

Bair: But he said that "they need me there." So anyway, he got a degree and he's out there getting ready to retire. And my oldest daughter, Joni went to college here, got a degree she's a teacher here in Los Fresnos. And then my youngest daughter, Julie got a master's degree here in speech and hearing therapy. She works for the McAllen school district. So uh, two of them are teachers, one of them is computers and one a retired airline pilot.

Mike: Excellent. Okay, Alright. Um, so for the time you were in school here you know, educational philosophies change over time, you know they always have like a common, you know they are coming up with something new all the time. In your opinion has education improved since your time in school or is it not as effective?

Bair: I, I'm sure it's improved there's more subject that are studied today and uh, but one thing that everybody needs is just the basic reading, writing arithmetic.

Mike: Mhm

Bair: I mean you know it's just like today, they just pushing a lot of, I see all the HESTEC signs and everything and you need to get into the science part of it which you need a lot of math. You know? And uh, there's more. I would say there's more uh types of um streamline into certain, certain degrees than there probably used to be. Even though they're focusing in on the science and math and things like that now a days that specialize to help get you into that business. Which there is a big demand for engineers and people in that category. Yes, I'm sure it's improved. Yes, I'm sure it has. But the basics are still there, you gotta get down and do your work and, and decide what you want to do and there's no guarantee like I told my kids, "no guarantee once you get that door open you gotta be able to perform"

Mike: Okay, um as far as punishment in school um what, what did they do when you weren't doing what you were supposed to do?

Bair: Aw man, we got whipped all through junior high school. Our Jr. High was down here where the Edinburg High School was. No, you got in trouble for example in boy's health class if one guy expelled something

Group: (slight laughter)

Bair: Everybody would get whipped they'd take us out and they would whip every one of us. Oh, we got whipped all the time, I mean hard too. In football practice if you did something wrong, "come over here bend over, grab your ankles and whah (imitates wind sound)"

Mike: Wow

Bair: No, there was a lot of, what do you call it? Corporal punishment I think.

Mike: Yes, sir.

Bair: Oh, yeah. We got a lot of that. I mean, we got over that, no big deal. I mean, you know? And I wanna say this, I think that it taught us more respect for authority in those days. Today, I see, I see a lack of respect for authority. You folks know what I'm talking about. Uh, you gotta respect or you're gonna get your ..(butt kicked).

Mike: (Laughs) Alright, uh. So did most of the students at school did they speak uh English and Spanish? Or was everything just taught in English or?

Bair: It was taught in English. In grade school over on the East side of town it was mostly Spanish and English over there. My sister, taught over there.

Mike: Mhm

Bair: She had to learn Spanish to teach. But uh, uh I know ordinarily mostly everybody talked English.

Mike: Oh okay. So they like if you spoke English you were sent to one school, if you spoke Spanish..

Mike: Mhm

Bair: You know where, in East Edinburg mostly it was, it was people that spoke Spanish.

Mike: Mhm

Bair: Most of the time so that school, there was two grade schools in those days.

Mike: Okay.

Bair: There were two different ones.

Mike: Oh, okay.

Bair: Stephen F. Austin and Robert E. Lee. That was the two grade schools we had, it was just the way it was.

Mike: Okay.

Mike: Ok, let's move on to family life. This should bring us up back to your memories, to your childhood. Or, you don't have to just talk about your childhood, but anytime. How was...what did you guys do for leisure time? How was your leisure time spend?

Bair: Well, after we did our chores, see, I grew up on a farm, we all had our work to do. We had four horses, three of them were riding horses and one was a work horse because we had a citrus nursery, and we used the work horse to pull the cultivator through, and so we loved to ride the horses, like I said, after we did chores. We had chickens, we were fattening calves, and we had our jobs, I guess, we milked the cow. So, you did your chores first, then there was leisure time. And, like my grandson asked me, "Grandpa? How much did you get for mowing the lawn?" "Well, I got three meals a day, I got a bed to sleep in," there wasn't any money. We didn't have any money those days and so I said "It was a push mower, too. We did it because we were told to do it." But anyway, I guess to answer your question, it was riding the horses were one of the most fun things, but a lot of people would come out from town in the summer time for a job, I mean, after I was twelve, then forget it, I had jobs after that. But, they'd come out and do sports, I mean, we had a pole vault deal set up and we'd take slingshots and go out shoot birds or something in the countryside. But, a lot of people would like to come out from town to ride our horses, but in my younger days some of the men workers from across the road there, my age, we'd go out, with our--all we'd wear shorts, no shirt, no shoes. We'd take our slingshots and go down the road try to fill our pockets full of rocks, go shoot birds or railroad signs [laughter] on the rail line. But we'd find something to do all the time; there was always something to do and we made our own fun, you know. We played Cowboys and Indians and we'd ride bareback and the guys from town would come out there and we made rubber machine guns, you know, out of rubber, you know, before World War II, we had good rubber, the red inner tubes, so we'd make a machine gun, you know, we'd put a lot of knots in it [inaudible] for we'd make a pistol with a clothespin in it and hook the rubber band. Well, I'd give them a gun and tell them to take off on a horse and I'd just count to a hundred and go track them. We had citrus trees all around, you

see. But then, when I'd find them, they always thought I was a bad shot. I was never trying to shoot them with the rubber gun, but anyways, I'd shoot the horse in the flank and if I hit the horse it would kick up like that and throw them off. [Laughter] And the horse would always run back to the barn. I knew what the horse could do. [Laughter and inaudible speech] So we took advantage of some of the city boys, we had a lot of tricks we could pull on them kids that'd come out there. But anyway, those are some of the things we did. My brother made a sled, my older brother --I have on four years older, one four years younger-- He made a sled and we'd get the old work horse, Old Jim and pull that sled through the grove and go over the borders, Daddy'd get upset if we'd knock the borders, but we created our own fun. There was always things to do on the farm after chores.

Mike: Ok. As kids, with your family, what kind of games--like, did you guys play indoor games like any chess or--

Bair: No, we were never indoors. We were always outside. When the relatives would come over, we had some cousins from down around here west of town that had nine kids in their family, when they'd come over we'd play Red Rover or something like that. The only game I remember is "Red Rover, Red Rover let so-and-so come over", you know, and run through the arms and stuff like that. Yeah, we were never inside. Remember, we didn't have T.V., we didn't have iPhones, [laughter]. But, as far as games, just outside with the things we did.

Mike: Ok. How were holidays spent? Like, what kind of Halloween traditions did you guys have?

Bair: I don't know. I guess mom probably got a pumpkin and cut it open and put a candle in it. That was about it. We didn't have trick-or-treaters in those days, that I remember, anyway, of course we lived out in the country and nobody'd come out there.

Mike: Did you make costumes or anything like that?

Bair: Nah.

Mike: Like, your church, did they have any type of functions?

Bair: Well, I'm sure there was something going on at the church, probably. But we didn't, as far as decorate, that I remember.

Mike: Ok, but pumpkin carving. That was the most....

Bair: [overlapping voices] ...not necessarily, but later when our kids were in it.

Mike: What about Thanksgiving and Christmas?

Bair: Well, Thanksgiving and Christmas, of course, we'd look forward to a big old turkey and usually at Christmas some relatives might come to visit, you know? We had relatives come in and that was a big deal. I know I had a little cousin, and for Thanksgiving one year, I remember, I took some candy corn and planted it one time, to see---of course at the same time I went back and planted the real kernel corn, and I knew he'd be coming back for Thanksgiving. And so, I grew a stalk of corn and Dad helped me, he was just as ornery as I was, I guess, and he got corn cob and he got a whole sack of kernel candy corn and we drilled holes in it, took thread and threaded it through the cob and made a whole ear of candy corn because my cousin asked "If I plant this candy corn will it grow candy?" "Oh, sure it will." Then I planted the corn stalk and when he came back we knew he was so excited. he got out of the car and ran over there and sure enough here's a candy corn on the cob. Kinda noticed the thread holding it all together, but, you know, we had fun with things like that. Nothing to hurt anybody, just having some fun. It was exciting that Thanksgiving.

Mike: Ok, was...like was the story of Santa Claus, was that around yet, or was that something you guys had heard about?

Bair: Oh yeah, I mean. You...we.... you'd keep your mouth shut and wait and see what was there the next morning. But it wasn't much in those days, you know, we didn't have a lot of money or anything. If you got a new shirt, new pair of pants, you got excited, but, we didn't get a lot or expect a lot.

Mike: So it wasn't as a consumer oriented culture as we have today?

Bair: No, it was a need-to basis.

Mike: Did your family adopt any Mexican traditions for the holidays?

Bair: Well, we always got Tamales from the men who worked on the farm. We had three houses on the farm where some of the men who worked for us lived. They always brought us tamales and I guess Mom gave them a pecan pie or something; we had something to switch. But I know my dad didn't like the one with raisins in them. That's the Christmas tradition, I don't know if you all know it or not, but anyway they'd put raisins in [in audible]. But anyway we always swapped the stuff like that.

Mike: Alright. Okay. Umm, If you don't mind let's move from education into civic life. I heard that you were very involved in the community. Umm what, what types of civic organizations have you been involved with?

Mr. Bair: Well, I don't know where you draw the line between civic and business but uhh...

Mike: You can combine them two.

Mr. Bair: Okay, I can combine them two. As far as far civic I have gone in the chamber I think for a year or two. But uh, But most I have an organization been involved in agriculture line because that's what I did.

Mike: Okay sure.

Mr. Bair: And chair of every one of these i'm telling you except TexaSweet. But Edinburg County Bureau. You know we did these things to help farmers Hidalgo County Bureau. Uhh then Texas Citrus Mutual was a growers organization.

Mike: Um hmm.

Mr. Bair: Texas Sweet was an advertising we put our own money in to advertise Texas citrus. Uhh Texas Citrus and Vegetable Association was packing houses, and growers, and later on we had a lot of the importers we had to combine the importers too. There's a lot of importers down here in the valley because in Mexico and uh Texas Produce Association. That's Separate one that had to do with packing houses and anyway everything in that area.

Mike: Um hmm

Mr. Bair: And I was also in the Texas A and I. It used to be Texas A and I Weslaco Citrus Center. Then it became Texas, Texas A&M Kingsville Citrus Center Weslaco. So I was at that board for about thirteen years. Very interesting we'd do a lot of research on new varieties of grapefruit and citrus. That was a really interesting committee to be on because we saw the development go from white grapefruit to pink grapefruit. From pink grapefruit to ruby red grapefruit From ruby red to ray ruby. From ray ruby to rio red grapefruit and by the way part of the research is to study lycopene. You guys need to worry about that. You girls don't but anyway it helps with prostate cancer.

Mike: Oo Okay.

Mr. Bair: The more Lycopene you can take it to fight prostate cancer so anything red like tomatoes, red grapefruit has Lycopene. L-Y-C-O-P-E-N-E. Anyway, we found that in white grapefruit had no lycopene, pink had a little, ruby had a lot more then progressed on up. The redder the fruit was, the more lycopene it had in it. So this is

kinda some of the research we did. They had a, they had a laser tweezer that would take out a chromosome, there's what? Thirty-two chromosomes in a cell. And you can take out a chromosome for example and we wanted to take a tree that could tolerate more salty, soil and all conditions like Israel over there had had a grapefruit and they could grow in very arid conditions. And take the chromosome out and take it over here and put it this other in a cell. You know this is the kind of stuff that is really fascinating to me.

Mike: Genetic Engineering?

Mr. Bair: Yeah, Genetical engineering. Yeah. People get a bad name about it. There's been genetically modified food ever since there has been crops on the earth because the wind moves the pollen

Mike: Or selective breeding.

Mr. Bair: People get all freaked out. Oh Gee, I don't want to eat it. (All Laugh) That's stupid.

Mike: That's to scare the weak.

Mr. Bair: Getting off subject, okay, excuse me, Edinburg Airport board. I have been on that just about 1984. That's thirty one years I have been on Edinburg Airport Board. When I went on the board there was nothing out there but an old beat up runway. Someone in the government federal said "Use it or lose it." So I got on the board and we gradually built it up over the years little by little by little try to keep on improving it over time. That's one that I really enjoy.

Mike: Well, We got a whole section of Edinburg airport later, so yeah you...

Mr. Bair: So I don't know if you call ... I was on National Bank of Commerce. Years ago right by the echo and it was bought out and it became First National Bank. I served on that board for about twenty-something years. Then I was on Production Credit Association which was a lending agency dealing with farmers and ranchers. I sat on that board for a while. I don't remember how many years. But uh, Anyway, most of these, like I say, I served on for many years on my agriculture life. Most of these I got involved, because I want to help, whatever you're involved with you need to serve. Make some change to do something. We made some changes over the years. We got to help farmers

Mike: Oh so that's Okay

Mr. Bair: (cough)

Mike: The majority of these you became board or chair of these you became chairman of the board?

Mr. Bair: I was chairman for most of them.

Mike: Chairman of all of them

Mr. Bair: Chamber, Hidalgo, Mutual, Citrus & Vegetable Association. Texas A&I or A&M, Texas Valley Citrus Committee, Edinburg Airport Board, Chairman still today, anyway, I wasn't Chairman in Texas Sweet, but umm, that's the only one. Interesting is Texas Sweet, side story here. The advertising agency we were using before there was an airplane built, showed us this new airline they were going to call Southwest Airlines.

Mike: Mm hmm

Mr. Bair: He showed us pictures of the airplane colors, blue and orange, and the hotpants the stewardess were going to wear. (All Laugh)

Mr. Bair: Everything Hot. Hot this, hot that. You know, And the blue and the orange. All of the colors and that stuff, he showed us the whole layout, he said, "Here's Southwest Airlines, We've got a permit, but no airplane. But this is the way we are

going to do it.” So it's kind of interesting to get a heads up on an airline that hasn't been created yet.

Mike: They had a vision for what they wanted.

(Mr. Bair looks through portfolio)

Mr. Bair: Yeah, right. But Uhh. I showed the other group get it pass it around. After 9/11, In those days I was managing Edinburg Texas Citrus Association we sent citrus to uh the fire department in New York City,, all the shippers got out together and we all put up a gift box. Uhh to ship off to the people up there. Showed them we care and uhh, So we took pictures and happened to run on some of those.

Mike: Excellent

(Mr. Bair coughs)

Mike: Okay. So is there any community work you keep to yourself like? Any political organizations or anything?

Mr. Bair: No, not political

Mike: Okay.

(Puts pictures away)

Mr. Bair: My time has been if I have anytime like stuff that in the airport. We just recently got a two million dollar project. Out there right now, we are putting in two- twelve thousand gallon fuel tanks and new, new hangers and we got 40 people waiting on hangers.

Mike: Wow

Mr. Bair: In Church, I mean that is not civic but I guess I sang in the Methodist Church choir about sixty years.

Mike: Okay, actually That's the next section

Mr. Bair: Am I getting ahead of myself here?

Mike: Ooh No, not at all perfect segue here

Mr. Bair: Go ahead

Mike: Okay sir, alright, what kind of churches were present in the valley when you were growing up here? Was it you know multi denominational or was it just a few denominations?

Mr. Bair: I think it multi-denominational, I don't think there were any Mormon churches. I don't think there many Mormon churches at the time but mostly other churches were here.

Mike: Okay

Mr. Bair: Yeah

Mike: Uhm, you attended the Methodist church is that correct?

Mike: It's okay take your time, need to take a break maybe for a little bit?

Mike: You were involved with the Methodist church is that correct?

Mr. Bair: Right, right, the original Methodist church is where the Lone Star bank is on the town square now

Mike: Okay

Mr. Bair: They had a church there and then we sold it, we didn't have any room to park during the week for the women's organizations. All of the county people came over and took all the places so we just sold it to move out west of town and Monmack and 107 so we have room. That's why we moved, now they made a nice little church here but yeah uhm that was the church I attended from the time I was a young kid. We went to church because our folks said we're going to church so we went to church.

Mike: So you mentioned earlier that you participated in the choir?

Mr. Bair: Yes I said that, it's been about 60 years that I guess that in high school we had junior choir you know we be singing night and the adults singing in the daytime Sunday. Anyway I enjoyed music. My mother made all of us, my oldest brother had to take violin and piano for one year, my sister took violin and piano for one year, they got to me and I had to take piano for one year, my little brother had to take piano for one year. She wanted to give us a chance to continue. I enjoyed music in high school. I was in the band and I also played all sports. (Laughter)

Mr. Bair: Any way you can enjoy music and still play sports. I'm sure it doesn't matter but I enjoyed it, my mother played violin and piano, my sister played violin and piano. Somebody asked how come I been in so long in church choir I said I'm still trying to get it right. (Laughter)

Mike: So I guess the church related pastimes, I guess that could count as that, alright, any like memorable marriages or baptisms that your family had in the Methodist church there?

Mr. Bair: Almost all of the marriages were in the church. That was the big deal those days getting married in the church so all my brothers and sisters got married in the Methodist church here.

Mike: You and your wife?

Mr. Bair: Yeah.

Mike: Ok, all right...uh, we'll go ahead and move on to, um...the flying. (laughter)

Mr. Bair: Does that answer the question?(laughter)

Karla: Ahhh... (laughter)

Mike: So from an early age... (laughter)

Karla: One year...

Mike: One year, wow...

Mr. Bair: Yeah, I, uh, to answer your question, I guess I was fascinated by aviation when I was a young kid. And I always, I always just loved aviation, uh, I would get on my bicycle and go over to the guy that would, did all our, the spraying on our crops. Just stand there watching, and, you know, hope he'd ask me, take me for a ride or something. (laughter)

Mike: So he was crop-dusting or...?

Mr. Bair: Yeah, and [inaudible], he couldn't take me in a crop plane. Anyway, I just loved aviation, there's something about it, you either like it or you don't I guess. And then my uncle was a P-38 pilot in World War Two.

Mike: Really?

Mr. Bair: He was killed in, in World War II, in fact he gave me his, his, his wings that he got at Randolph Air Base, then on to my dad's brother, uh, in fact he had a little commuter airline at one time and he had a plane and he was a pilot. On my mom's side, there's pilots over there too, so I guess it's in the genetics or something. (laughter)

Mr. Bair: I just always, always loved aviation, and finally in, in about 1990, uh, before that, I bought an airplane, a used airplane the bank had repo'ed and so I got a guy to go in with me and bought an airplane. But, uh, in 1980 my son, Steve taught me how to fly over here at McAllen, and uh, so he said "Dad, I'll get, get you back some of your bean money but you have to pay for the gas and rent the airplane," (laughter) so he did, he didn't charge me to teach me to fly, so, uh, and then when I had a chance he'd call me up "Hey, I got to go down to Mexico", or Michigan or wherever he was flying the plane. And, if I had time I'd hop in the plane with him and, you know, we

had time to be together, and it was a great experience. If there was no one else in the plane he'd let me sit in the left seat, (laughter) and then log in my log book, you know, "twin engine time". So um, anyway, I had that first airplane and, with a partner, and then I sold it and bought another one. I love that tail dragger because you can land them anywhere, put 'em down anywhere, and they're, because a tail dragger, in other words, you can land in rough terrain whereas a tricycle plane, you land in rough terrain you can snap that nose gear off. You know, so a tail dragger you come in and, the fulcrum point is farther to the front so if you land on soft ground it won't flip necessarily as it would with a tricycle gear. So, I, I love tail draggers, I've been to Colorado, I've been to Arizona, my son lived in Scottsdale, I'd fly out to Phoenix. Flew to Colorado over the mountains, and just, just loved it. Just something about getting up there in the sky, and just, peaceful, you know, there's nothing like it.

Mike: So, the 1930's, that was kind of regarded by a lot of people as the golden age of American aviation, you know, with Howard Hughes and all of that. What kind of memories do you have of, you know, growing up during that era with, with aviation in that stage of development?

Mr. Bair: Well, I'd, you know, try to read about aviation. Then during the late 30's, when World War Two started, I had a little book of all of the Allied and Axis airplanes. Allied was the United States and Britain, and Canada and Australia. The Axis was Germany and Italy, you know, they were called Axis. I had a little book of all the airplanes, every one of them that the military had, trying to keep up with it. And, uh, of course that, that's the late 30's. But, uh, of course, in, we got into the jet period, the end of World War Two, in other words, if the Germans would have had those jets a little earlier, the war could have turned out a little different. They were just on the cutting edge of the new jet type aircraft. But, um, anyway, during that, well, next question I'll answer that, ok.

Mike: Um, yeah, what memories of Moore Airfield do you have from the, from the Second World War?

Mr. Bair: Being fascinated by aviation, I would have my dad take me out there, and I think he was interested too, but, uh, take me out to Moore Air Base and just watch the planes taking off and landing. You know, there was a lot of activity, lot of activity, uh, during World War Two. They used training bases in South Texas and Florida because there was, they had a lot of days of sunlight, without cloudy weather to teach the pilots, flying, so there was a lot of activity in AT-6 and BT-13s. That's, AT-6 was an advanced trainer and BT was their basic trainer. And, uh, that's the two planes they had at Moore Air Base. And then, uh, uh, I don't know if I'm getting ahead of this. Ok, uh, Moore had an auxiliary field, which became Edinburg Airport. They used that field just to do touch-and-go's, in other words training the pilots you had to do a lot of practice landing and taking off. So they'd fly from Moore Air Base, and they'd circle around Edinburg Airport out here and do touch-and-goes. So, uh, I'd go out there, my dad would take me there at night, we had to work during the daytime, we'd sit there and watch the planes backfire as they throttled back, and land.

Mike: No, not at all! Not at all.

Janette: Where, where was the Edinburg airport located?

Mr. Bair: It's, it's right up there on 490 and 281, right, just on the east side of the highway there.

Janette: Oh, ok.

Mr. Bair: Uh, it's 490, yeah it's 490, Highway 490 up here in North Edinburg about fifteen miles north of here.

Mike: So, is Edinburg Airport, is in the same, I'm sorry I'm skipping ahead to, but I had...

Mr. Bair: It's ok.

Mike: Is Edinburg Airport in the same location that it's always been or...did they change it?

Mr. Bair: Yes, yes, yes, no it's been, it's been in the same location, now there was a dusting strip out here at the corner of 10th Street and 107.

Mike: Oh, ok, that's what I was thinking of.

Mr. Bair: But that was a dusting strip.

Mike: Oh, ok.

Mr. Bair: Well, uh, I'm with you, I guess it was, could have been called Edinburg Airport at that time, I've never thought about it that way, but they had some dusting companies, Delta Dusting worked out of there, and it was, your, your right. Uh, I don't remember them calling that Edinburg Airport, but possibly they did. I should have done a little research on that, sorry.

Mike: No, no problem at all, it's probably confusion on my part actually; I apologize.

Mr. Bair: Yeah, it came to me, it's all brush right now, but um...

Janette: So, so the older maps have, have that location on 107 as Edinburg Airport.

Mr. Bair: Yeah, yeah, right, exactly, that's right, it was. That was the [unintelligible] the only airport, except, of course the auxiliary field was already out here. But when I went on the board in 1984, as a director of the advisory board at the airport, the, the government said "use it or lose it" so we decided we got to do something to it. So, first thing we did was rebuild the runway. Then we built one big hangar, then we built another room, and then we built some cargo buildings down there. Gradually, I just want to continually see it be improved. It's one of these things that's out of sight, out of mind...out of mind, out of sight, you know. You know, some people don't realize we even have an airport. I've got friends that have been here all of their lives and don't even realize that we have an airport. But we have people come in there, I'm going to tell you another little story.

Mike: Ok, sure.

Mr. Bair: I've got a lot of stories folks, (soft laughter) we can cut all this stuff out I guess...

Mike: No, that's what we're here for, it's interesting stuff.

Mr. Bair: Deborah Melvin is our airport manager, young lady, and she's done a real good job out there for us, and she called me the other day and she said, "Dwayne", she said "there's some jets coming in to the airport Monday morning, I don't know who they are but I have to take my dog to be operated on, it's my 12 year old dog and I've got to be with him while they operate." I said "don't worry about it, I'll go out there and welcome the people in, whoever they are." So, anyway, I go out there and I drive up and there's about three Suburbans backed up, black Suburbans. I walk inside and there's these four guys looking serious and they've got things in their ears, you know, and I'm "hmmm, security", I'm sure they were packing, I didn't see it though. (laughter) But anyway, and I say "Hey guys, you got a big wheel coming in here?" (laughter) Of course, you know, I'm sorry folks, old people just, we just blab things out. (laughter) [unintelligible] (laughter) Anyway, one guy I speak to him, he headed the group up and, and he said "Yeah, we've got some people coming in". And I said, "Well, I'm on the airport board, I just came out to welcome whoever's coming in here", still not knowing for sure who might walk through that door. But anyway, I knew what time the planes were landing, so these three King Air prop-jets

come in there, pull up in there and stop, and the first bunch of women got out and headed to the bathroom. That's what most people do when they get through flying, you've got to go to the bathroom. (laughter) so, anyway, this guy walks up to me and said, "Hi, I'm William McGraven."

Mike: Oh, um, the old, our old chancellor?

Mike: I couldn't tell you, sir.

Mr. Bair: Anyway, he said "I'm William McGraven", I said "Hi, I'm Dwayne Bair." and he says "Well, you work here?" and I said "No, I'm just on the board, I just came to welcome ya'll and thanks for coming in to Edinburg Airport and using our airport." And I told the pilots, I said "You guys be sure and come in here, we got the cheapest fuel, we keep our fuel cheaper than anybody else's." So, we continued to talk a little bit and he said "Well what, what, tell me about yourself." and I said "Well, I spent most of my life farming and then I ran a citrus packing house and then I retired and the last ten years I've worked for the bank." And, he brought his wife over and introduced her to me and I said "You know what? Sixty three years ago I went to Pan-American when it became a four-year college, and I said "but we didn't have all of this celebration like ya'll have got going now." Finally I realized "This guy's the big wheel," I didn't know how big. Anyway, and he said, uh, he said "Why don't you come with me and we'll go to this celebration." That's when ya'll had your big deal, about two weeks ago, had all those big wheels come in and recognizing the new, new, uh, Pan-American, RGV.

Janette: McCreedy?

Mr. Bair: No, no, no, no... anyway, so I got on Google as soon as I left there. (laughter) He was the head of SEAL Team Six, he's the one that got Osama bin Laden, that created the plans for Osama bin Laden, he was a four [star] admiral...

Mike: Ah, I know who you're talking about.

Mr. Bair: He served 37 years in the service; he was ya'll's chancellor for the whole University of Texas System. (laughter)

Mike: I know the gentleman you're talking about now, I can't think of his name though.

Mr. Bair: It's not Hargrave, it's something like that, sorry.

Mike: He was an admiral I believe...

Mr. Bair: Anyway, but real likeable guy, just here he is asking me, and I'm embarrassed I didn't know who he was, I would have thanked him for his service and everything, the things he did. He was the head of DESCON in Europe; he did a lot of things you know. Now he's Chancellor of the whole University of Texas and he's asking me to ride to the celebration with him because I didn't have one. (laughter) And I said, "Well thank you but I never finished college" and he said "Oh, you didn't?" and I said "No", I said "Uncle Sam needed me and so he took me out of school and I never finished college, and, uh. But anyway, he asked me to come to this big celebration and I'm embarrassed later on thinking about it. But, uh, he was a gentleman, and he was, you know, if you've done a lot of things, you don't have to brag about it, you know, you'll learn that people who have done a lot of things, they don't have to brag about anything that they've done. He's done so many things in his lifetime and now he's down here, chancellor of all University of Texas, and he sees me. Did you look it up in Google? (laughter)

Karla: I can look it up in Google.

Mr. Bair: It's driving me crazy. I'm sorry ya'll, when you get older, you can't remember things for squat. I just... ah.

Karla: So, he was...

Mr. Bair: Chancellor, University of Texas, write it in there. (coughing) Excuse me.

Karla: William McGraven?

Mr. Bair: McGraven, McGraven, McGraven, yeah.

Karla: (laughter)

Mr. Bair: McGraven, he's sitting there and I thought I told him "Yeah, I think I've seen your name in the papers". (laughter) Ah, anyway, but anyways, he's a decent guy. Um, let's see, getting away from that, what was the next, uh...

Mike: Um...

Mr. Bair: "Did you continue to visit Moore Field after the war" I think was the next question?

Mike: Yes sir, into the jet age, did you continue to, to go by there?

Mr. Bair: Well, yeah, into the Vietnam War they had some little Cessna jets that they trained in and I used to go out and watch them.

Mike: Umm hmm.

Mr. Bair: And there wasn't as many people training at the time as there was during World War Two. And then later on, I was on a group, the Texas Valley Citrus Committee that; we, we maintained the Mexican fruit fly program and did the sterilization of flies out there.

Mike: Umm hmm.

Mr. Bair: That became uh, uh, previous to that it was the, uh... fruit, uh...

Janette: Screwworm?

Mr. Bair: Screwworm!

Janette: "Screwworms?"

Mr. Bair: "Screwworm fly, yeah, it's the screwworm. Uh, where they took the worm and radiated them so they couldn't reproduce.

Mike: "Oh okay."

Mr. Bair: "That's the way they did it. They spread out flies and males couldn't reproduce so therefore, gradually, you know, they eliminated the uh, the screwworm, which was a very dangerous uh, insect for cattle. Then we used it to sterilize the Mexican fruit fly."

Mike: "Uh huh"

Mr. Bair: "Same process, you know, you sterilize the male and pretty soon your population goes down and it's done a pretty good job of that. Then they would fly them out of there in planes and they had these little deals in the back where you would put the boxes out and usually they have a box with a, with a bull's eye on it so the kids could shoot BB guns at it or something later on when they found the boxes. But anyway, they'd explain what the boxes were about. That they would drop the fruit flies, they would chill them down, chill them down and drop them down the chute, out of the airplane over the, over the citrus areas. Of course, there used to be a lot of citrus areas in the valley. They would drop the fruit flies down there and then, again they couldn't, once they warmed up they'd fly around, but they weren't producing anything. They were sterile. So anyway, that, I went back for that, is the last time I was there."

Mike: "Was this the military that was assisting with this or the Department of Agriculture?"

Mr. Bair: "No, it was the government. It was the state department, state department of agriculture, right, right."

Mike: "oh okay."

Mr. Bair: "So we got to go out there, but now though they say they won't let anybody go out there."

Mike: "So, yeah, when did they transition from, from being a military base to a, a civilian base?"

Mr. Bair: "Um, well I guess after World War II, it kinda closed down and they moved all of the barracks off. In fact, uh, we were involved with a bunch of different groups to put in money to the Rio Grande Valley Development Association and they used that money to buy a hanger, I mean barracks from Moore Airbase and took them down to Weslaco. You know where A and M Research Farm, you guys know where Weslaco Research Farm is, and then there's a citrus development center, which I was on that board."

Mike: "mhm."

Mr. Bair: "And some of those buildings were from Moore Air Base that they hauled all the way to Weslaco. They utilized those buildings. They used to be a lot of barracks and everything. Just, you know, an airbase. But then they took it all down and they used some of those buildings for our research farm, down there in Weslaco. But, uh, now I haven't been out there in a long time."

Mike: "Do you know if anyone still flies out of there or is it, is it the, uh..."

Mr. Bair: "Uh, the base is locked up Uh, the secret is, we hear there is an F-16, bombs on it and back in the hanger and there's a fighter helicopter. That's been the talk for years. But I've talked to a guy the other day that's running the program out there and uh, he said nah there's nothing out there but a friend of mine lives off the end of that runway there and he said there is, there is a jet back in that hanger and of course we're all curious about it but, you can't land there. A friend of mine bought a new airplane and he wanted me to go fly with him, play around with it and one day we come in and did a touch-and-go. When we got back to McAllen, tower said you need to call this phone number. When he did, he got chewed out. You can't go into that airbase, we got all that traffic. Of course this guy, he kinda had a temper. He lived on, in the north (unintelligible) Montecristo Road, he's a farmer. He said, don't tell me, he said, I live down the road from that place, there's no traffic out there. (laughter) Anyway, they threatened us."

Mike: "So that's a restrictive, restrictive..."

Mr. Bair: "Yeah very restricted, yeah. It's restricted now, you can't go in there, fly in there or anything, so I don't know what's going on in there."

Mike: "Okay, well um, Edinburg Airport, um, what is Edinburg Airport primarily used for, nowadays?"

Mr. Bair: "Well, it's uh, mainly for business flying and for recreation and cargo."

Mike: "Cargo?"

Mr. Bair: "We're not an airline, we're not interested. Although, we had uh, some guys from Mexico out there that were keeping their planes out there. Little twelve passenger Cessnas back a couple years ago, when they were shooting a lot of people on the highways in Mexico. He would fly people uh, out of Mcallen or Harlingen or Brownsville, fly them down to Tampico, Monterrey and different parts of Mexico because they were businessmen who were afraid to drive, you know, there were some bad things happening as you all know."

Mike: "Sure."

Mr. Bair: "So, he had this little, you might call it an airline, he had two Cessnas and space in there could hold twelve people. So, in the meantime, because of that uh, he said

you all need to build a customs building here, so uh, the city said yeah let's spend the money. It cost a lot of money but we have a brand new customs building out there at the airport. It hasn't been given the blessing yet but, um, it's, it's complete and ready to go. So we have a customs building, whenever they open it up. Now you have to call two hours ahead of time so they can get custom people from McAllen or Hidalgo come up there to the airport."

Mike: "Mhm."

Mr. Bair: "But they'll be someone stationed there 24/7 I guess. Yeah, well anyway uh, it'll be utilized some because there's a lot of businessmen out of Mexico coming up to learn to fly and we have a guy there that's teaching people how to fly and we have a lot of students out of Mexico who want to learn to fly. We have businessmen, I mean, their own airplanes, that want to get their license and be able to fly in and out of our airport. They prefer Edinburg versus McAllen, they like Edinburg Airport so, met some of those men over there, businessmen, and they want to utilize Edinburg as an entry and departure airport into Mexico. So once they get that done, they can take off from Edinburg and fly into Mexico or fly from Mexico to here, as long as they give a two hour notice ahead of time so they can get the proper customs agents out there to the airport."

Mike: "So, basically, the city owns the airport?"

Mr. Bair: "Yes, the city owns it."

Mike: "Okay. Alright, as far as uh, construction, that's just contracted out to different uh..."

Mr. Bair: "Yeah, it's uh, it's bid out to different people, yeah. We've had an engineer, oh gosh, twenty-five years ago we had one engineer we had for about ten years now we have a different set of engineers that specialize in airport business and help in the development of anything we want to do. We utilize that type of engineer. So it all has to be approved, it takes time, you know, and you got to uh, generally speaking uh, Edinburg would put ten percent of the money into uh, some development out there and the state would put ninety percent. But actually that money came from a gas tax. You know, like on highways we all pay a gas tax. They're supposed to use that money, the gas tax, to rebuild highways and stuff. Well with aviation you also have a tax on fuel. Of course fuel is much higher in aviation that it is in, in uh, automobiles. But anyway, that tax was utilized through the Texas Department of uh, uh, Texas Highway Department Aviation Division."

Mike: "Mhm."

Mr. Bair: "Helps you write a request and if they approve it, you know, they help give money to develop airports. Like we uh, fixing to spend two million dollars out there. We've got, like I said, we got forty people waiting on the hangers."

Mike: "Mhm."

Mr. Bair: "We're going to build maybe twelve more. We already have about eighteen. We could utilize more hangers. DPS uses one of our hangers. We need more space to park helicopters and airplanes. In fact, when I was talking to uh, McRaven, I said you know, you're a guy I need to talk to, I'd love to see an aviation program in Pan-American. With thirty thousand kids out here, I call them kids everybody's young (laughter), anyway surely some of y'all would be interested in aviation. I know in South Dakota or North Dakota has a fantastic aviation program. I mean they can take you right into aviation. There's a market today, like I said, my son is an airline pilot, he called me the other day and if he hadn't lost his medical because of his eye two years ago, he said dad, I'd be making three hundred thousand today (laughter). But anyway, there's a need and demand for more pilots and uh, so uh, I

just thought off the top of my head, hey, you know, you're the guy I need to talk to. Figured he is a big wheel (laughter). Of course I'm sure they, I know they don't have the budget to, for an aviation program, but I still think it would be nice."

Mike: "Sure."

Mr. Bair: "Thirty thousand kids at UTPA-RGV you know, and have some kind of program. Start learning, you know, a trade."

Mike: "Okay, I think the last question I have on here um, that we haven't answered already is um, when was um, Edinburg Airport uh, when did it go from being an auxiliary field from Moore Airfield to, did it go directly from military to city or, how did..."

Mr. Bair: "Well, the government owned it and the city maintained it and then they basically said use it or lose it. So I've been on, I was on the first board in 1984, which is like 31 years ago, so uh, we started you know, doing something to the airport. Put in a new airstrip, landing strip, first thing you got to do."

Mike: "So after that..."

Mr. Bair: "Well, I guess it wasn't really utilized until around the early '80s, I'll say the early '80s because it could've been before '84, that's when I was on the board."

Mike: "Okay, and do you know when the military stopped using it?"

Mr. Bair: "Well uh, the Vietnam War was what year? Was that, was after..."

Mike: "Was about '65 to '75 roughly I think."

Mr. Bair: "Yeah, whenever the end of the, the uh, Vietnamese War. They used, they uh, trained in some jets out there, little Cessna jets. They utilized it then but, uh, so it sat there for, say twenty some years probably before being utilized."

Mike: "Okay"

Mr. Bair: "But uh, so now Edinburg own the property itself. There's a whole lot of acres there."

Mike: "Okay, so the whole thing's a city uh, a city operation."

Mr. Bair: "We bought some more property and it extended on so we got to, we can put a seven thousand foot runway when we uh, get the money to build it."

Mike: "Sure." (laughs)

Mr. Bair: "It takes sixteen million to do what we'd like to do. That's a lot of money. We have to build a wider strip, a longer strip to handle more airplanes. Right now, we can handle 30,000 pounds per axle weight, and uh, of course it depends on summertime or winter time. In summer time you have a density altitude that requires more length to take off and land because the air's lighter and thinner. Anyway uh, we have Fed-Ex right up the highway, Fedex Ground. Of course you know what my dream would be. I'd love to see a Fedex Air up here (laughter). They'd come down here and get the trucks and haul stuff around. Anyway, it's mainly a recreation and business and uh, cargo airport right now."

Mike: "Alright, I think that's all the questions that I have. Is there anything else anyone else would like to ask?"

Karla: "Uh, you were named Citrus King. Tell us a little bit more about that."

Mr. Bair: I was king in '92 uh, I apologize, I got out that picture, I don't think I put in there (sound of shuffling), sorry. I was involved in citrus business, I was on the different citrus boards and at that time I was managing Edinburg Citrus Association out here on Chapin Road. It's a citrus co-op. And people who are involved in citrus business are the ones who can be chosen to be king. It was voted on by the ex-kings, you know. Uh, they would nominate somebody and bring them in and vote on them, and

that's how I did it We had to go on some parade. Put our tuxedos on (laughter). I have some pictures, I didn't bring them, I'm sorry."

Karla: "It's okay, we'll see them."

Miguel: "I think that's it."

Karla: "Anything else you would like to share Mr. Bair, for the project?"

Mr. Bair: "Anything I'd like to share I this project? I don't know, I have so many different stories, but I know we're going to have to cut a lot of the stuff out, I guess you're going to have to read most of this and then I read through it, I can, they say that I can delete anything I want."

Karla: "Yes."

Mike: "Yes sir, that's correct."

Mr. Bair: "I know there's going to be a lot of reading done. Uh, well I was asked to do this, the Norquest, live right down on the corner there, friends of mine. He's the one who told Russell, he said hey you ought to get old Bair, he's been here a long time too. My family's been living on Chapin Road for over a hundred years I guess. Part of my family (coughing). So I told him, well I got some uh, abstracts. I was either going to give them to the county museum or uh, but he said no, we're interested in those abstracts because it's got the history. That's another group, maybe you won't get to see those, but I had stacks of abstracts which gave the whole history back in the, I don't know, back in the 1800's or 1900's, along the way up to almost the current. Now, they quit giving them out now so uh, I can't bring it to date on the property that we own. There's one of them in there maybe that my brother and I bought, it's in the abstract showing how much we paid for it, for the land but, it's very interesting if you want to study history and see who owned the land and how it passed on from one group to another group and how much they paid for it. Anyway that's what these abstracts are about."

Mike: "I think we have one of our other teams, they're, they're working on that."

Mr. Bair: "Yeah, there's another team working on that, another team working on irrigation and one on political and social or something like that, I don't know. Anyway, (coughing) I thank you all for putting up with listening to me."

Mike: "Well thank you."

Mr. Bair: "They asked me to do this and I put it off for a while. Uh, I get to talking and I won't know when to stop but uh..."

Mike: "Well we certainly do appreciate you taking the time out of your day to come by and speak with us."

Mr. Bair: "Well I'm unemployed right now so, (laughter) I've done my chores with the house (laughter). My wife said you don't have a job, I worked until I was 79, I'm 81 now, she said you don't have a job, you have to help more around the house (laughter).

(End Recording)

Appendix D

Interviewers: Colin Newton, Samuel Ayala, Ethan Portillo, Stephanie Chapa

Interviewee: Dwayne Bair

Location: CHAPS Office, Troxel Hall, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Date: Monday 10/12/2015

Colin Newton: "My name is Colin Newton and I am with the CHAPS program. Today is October the 12, 2015. It is 3 O'clock in the afternoon and we are in the room 205 of the CHAPS office in Troxel Hall. Um, interviewing with me will be."

Ethan Portillo: "Ethan Portillo"

Stephanie Chapa: "Stephanie Chapa"

Sam Ayala: "Samuel Ayala"

Colin Newton: "And we are interviewing Mr. Dwayne Bair today. Uh, the topic of conversation today for the most part is going to center around health care. And um, and topics relevant to it and Mr. Bair's upbringing and uh life in the valley so if you guys want to go ahead and get started let's go ahead and get started with a question. And you are? Just for the record."

Dwayne Bair: "I am Dwayne Bair"

Colin Newton: "Ooo, excellent! Ok"

Ethan Portillo: "Ok. Well Mr. Bair we want to start from the beginning. Uh, where were you born and who uh who delivered you?"

Dwayne Bair: "Ok. I was born on the farm out on Chapin Road. There was a different looking house in those days by the way. That wasn't what it looked like when I was born. They added a boy's room and another wing on it but that's where I was born in that home. Dr. CJ Hamme delivered me. And in those days it's either a midwife or doctor that went out to the country, you know, and delivered people."

Ethan Portillo: "Were your, uh, brothers and sisters also born by a doctor or was it..."

Dwayne Bair: "My older brother was and my sister was born in a hospital. And then I think little brother was born in a hospital also. My older brother and I were born in the farm house."

Ethan Portillo: "Were there many hospitals at the time?"

Dwayne Bair: "There was Grand View Hospital in Edinburg. It's been knocked down since, they built another hospital right on Freddy but, the old one, the main one"

was big old red brick hospital there. And of course McAllen had a hospital. But there were other hospitals. The ones over there on Ridge road, there were none of those at that time. I saw the other hospitals finally being built in McAllen. Of course the large one over there is Renaissance which is now in Edinburg on McColl Road. Originally there were two on Ridge road. McAllen Hospital, and Regional Hospital.

Stephanie Chapa: “Regional”

Ethan Portillo: “Uh, what was the cost differences that you’ve seen over the, back then...”

Dwayne Bair: Maybe dad gave them a sack of fruit, I don’t know. (everyone laughs). But uh, and he did give fruit to people in those days.”

Ethan Portillo: “For services?”

(inaudible)

Dwayne Bair: “Now I don’t mean necessarily barter system but just a thanks for comin’ out you know.

Ethan Portillo: “How about pharmacies? Where there any pharmacies at the time when you were young or...”

Dwayne Bair: “Yeah, I remember Garza Pharmacy about a block east of the courthouse is the one I remember the most. And then there was the Corner Drug Store and that was on the southeast corner of the Edinburg town square. I remember those two, Corner Drug Store and the Garza Pharmacy. And then later on there were some others but, those are the ones I remember as a kid.”

Ethan Portillo: “Did they serve soda pop and that sort of thing or just...”

Dwayne Bair: “No but there was one on Main street in McAllen. If you want a good hamburger, I forgot the name of that uh...”

Colin Newton: “Faulkner’s?”

Dwayne Bair: “Faulkner’s drug store, yeah. Sometimes people say, hey let’s go to Faulkner’s and get a hamburger, at a drug store. (everyone laughs). They made good hamburgers too.”

Ethan Portillo: “Uh, did you all use any other forms of healthcare besides let say a doctor. Was the local Vet, did he help y’all out with certain...”

Dwayne Bair: “Growing up there wasn’t any health programs that I remember. Of course this came later in life with me. Yes we have AARP and Medicare because we are over 65. “

Ethan Portillo: “When did you start seeing insurances being used, in, by your family or.”

Dwayne Bair: (sighs) “When I grew up my family did not have health insurance. Later on when I got married and had children we got into health program and once we got sixty-five, we got Medicare. Medicare pays for part of the costs and

AARP makes up the difference. When my wife had breast cancer was operated at M.D. Anderson we both had insurance programs. I've been going to M.D. Anderson for 16 years for my leukemia and so fortunately I was over sixty-five when it hit me so I've saved a lot of very large bills there. Fortunately we had that insurance. It's a good program. I don't know what I'd of done without it, had I been less than sixty-five years of age."

Samuel Ayala: "You mentioned that you were in the military and that some of your children were born in El Paso correct?"

Dwayne Bair: "That's right El Paso. (Inaudible). Just a month before we got out of the service, Steven, my oldest son was born December 19, 1955 in William Beaumont Army hospital. Yeah I did and I wasn't kidding about that, I shouldn't told that I guess. (laughing) He was six dollars and the girls would be five. I explained the difference I think. Anyway we had to go to classes. The fathers all had to go to a class. And this lady nurse captain made us put diapers on the babies, the plastic babies, and burp them and all that. Boy she was serious, you cut up she'd get on you and say "you guys gotta learn how to do this cause you all gotta help raise that kid. You help make it, you help raise it." (everyone laughs) So anyway one night we're sitting there in class and a taxi cab driver ran into the class "hey where do I take this lady she's in my taxi cab havin a baby." The nurse said you should have come to the class so you would know. (everyone laughs) I think there were forty-three babies in the nursery there. The new mothers had to go down to get their baby and bring them back to their room and they put a curtain around for a little privacy to nurse the baby. I don't know how many days she stayed in the hospital but that's where he was born. That one was pretty cheap. (everyone laughs).

Samuel Ayala: "Six dollars so. Um, as far as. You said she stayed a couple of days. Were there any complications that needed to be taken care of by the doctors or just that was normal at the time?"

Dwayne Bair: "You mean my wife staying with the baby??"

Samuel Ayala: "Mmmhmm"

Dwayne Bair: "No, no there were no complications that I remember. There was something. I think that the standard length of time was three days as long as the baby was alright. But when I first went to the nursery and they said "that's your baby" I said oh my god! He had a big red J on the side of his cheeks. I didn't know what that was about and I thought oh my god I can't tell my wife! Although she goes and gets him to nurse him every day and I thought oh my god they're gonna call him Captain Hook you know there's a big red J. Well, then later the nurse explained it to me. I called her aside and asked "Will that ever heal because the kid has got a big red J on his face." And she said that was from the forceps they hooked on the cheek bone to pull the baby out."

Samuel Ayala: “Um, as far as, um. Going back to the hospitals, was it owned by like a group, do you know. Or was it like a doctor. Because I know that you said that, um...”

Dwayne Bair: “It was a county hospital. It’s not like the Renaissance. Renaissance of course is owned by two hundred or more doctors I guess. But uh, no it was owned by the county. In fact I believe it was called Hidalgo County Hospital. Yes, I believe it was owned by the county.”

Samuel Ayala: “That’s fine. We’re just trying to get like an idea.”

Dwayne Bair: “an idea yeah”

Samuel Ayala: “Mmmhmm. Um, going a little bit into, um, your childhood as far as healthcare with like dentistry, how, um, do you remember the first time you went to the dentist?”

Dwayne Bair: “I don’t remember. I guess we might have gone sometime but I don’t ever really remember going to the dentist. When we had a tooth loose, we just tied it onto the door handle and let somebody jerk it out. (everyone laughs) We’d negotiate with our parents to give us two bits if we pulled it out, you know, and put it under our pillow or something (laughs). No, any teeth that came loose we pulled them ourselves. And of course we’d challenge a brother “hey you chicken” you know (everyone laughs). That’s why we didn’t we didn’t go, I really don’t remember going to the dentist when I was a kid, frankly.”

Samuel Ayala: “Do you remember the first time you went to the dentist just in general? Even if it was in your older years?”

Dwayne Bair: “I don’t know if it was when I was in the service. We had to go get a medical prior to going in the service. But, uh, probably should have. My teeth are all worn down right now.

Samuel Ayala: “What about your children? Did you take your children to the dentist?”

Dwayne Bair: “Yes. You know. Yes.”

Samuel Ayala: “Of course.”

Dwayne Bair: “You try to do more for your kids as you go.”

Colin Newton: “When, when you went to the service, were your teeth in pretty good shape?”

Dwayne Bair: “As far as I know.”

Colin Newton: “Now when you took your kids to the dentist were their teeth in pretty good shape?”

Dwayne Bair: “As far as I know.”

Colin Newton: “Very nice.”

Dwayne Bair: “Yea ha, I'm sure they were alright.”

Colin Newton: “I didn’t know whether diet plays a difference....”

Dwayne Bair: “I’m sure my wife was probably the one that took them when my kids were young. Of course I busy farming all the time and of course she was busy raising four kids, which is a job. But uh, as far as going to the doctor much I don’t remember. We had aloe vera, picking up the wrong end of a piece of steel after cutting with a torch, aloe vera is a great plant to have nearby. Keep one at your house. That was one of the home cures on the farm and some of the guys would say “nah put some kerosene on a rag to wrap up a sore or something. We just didn’t run to the doctor, we kinda took care of it ourselves. I guess we were fortunate and didn’t have anything real serious. But in case the men on the farm got hurt, we did have workers comp before it was required. Later on it was required but you know it's only fair to take care of the people working for ya. But we did have workers comp incase the men got hurt on the job.”

Colin Newton: “In what year did you start using workers comp?”

Dwayne Bair: (sighs) “I don’t know, I just know we had it way before it was required. I think we had it through Farm Bureau Insurance.”

Colin Newton: “ok”

Dwayne Bair: “Uh, you know we talked about it, it was the right thing to do. To take care of the people working for you.”

Samuel Ayala: “That’s fine. Um, talking about the health care of the people that worked for you. Did they use the doctor and the hospitals a lot? Or was it just in extreme cases?”

Dwayne Bair: “No, I don’t think they went a lot and uh they probably went to a different doctor and farmacia than we went to. I have medicine from Mexico right now at my house. I’ve got a box of Z packs in my house right now. I’m sure they got a lot of medicine out of Mexico too.”

Colin Newton: “A lot cheaper.”

Dwayne Bair: “A lot cheaper for the same product. I use to go over there and look at their books and say ok show me in the books to see if it’s the same product you know. Just like that guy that bought that medicine company out the other day. Did you all see that? How terrible. It was seven dollars a pill and it went to several thousand dollars or something a pill. I mean, that’s wrong. I think he finally brought it down some because of all the pressure. But this medicine can be pretty high.

Stephanie Chapa: “Ok”

Samuel Ayala: “That’s understandable. Talking about expenses and stuff. I, I know there is a huge difference in expenses back then.”

Dwayne Bair: “Well, like I said I went out of farming in 88’ and there’s a lot that’s happened since that time. I, you know, I had to quit farming fifteen-hundred acres. I lost all my corn, over five-hundred acres of corn, it got aflatoxin. Plus the freeze the year before knocked the rest of my citrus out. No way could I come out. After that period a lot more happened in insurance programs. So I really can’t answer that as far as on the farm.

Colin Newton: “In regards to cost, when did you notice the cost starting to increase a little more dramatically?”

Dwayne Bair: “Well, it was a constant thing. There seems to be a constant increase all the time, of course, once I had my Medicare after I hit sixty-five the cost wasn’t as important you know. Although we still have to buy a lot of drugs that are not paid for by the program. In other words, between my wife and I, our program is over five-hundred dollars a month and plus other medicines which is probably around the seven-hundred dollars a month now. Of course it’s escalated so. In fact yours is going to be escalated more”

Stephanie Chapa: “You were saying that you go to Mexico every so often to get medicine right? When did you start going?”

Dwayne Bair: “About 5 years ago and then I have a friend that goes over there every couple of weeks.”

Stephanie Chapa: Oh okay

Dwayne Bair: you know you don’t wanna go anywhere except Progreso anymore. I used to travel a lot to Mexico when I was with the bank but you know why no more of that Progreso’s a safe place. We all figure, I mean the winter Texans love it over there. They can’t wait till they all come back but ah you know there is a tremendous amount of difference which you pay for medicine.

Stephanie Chapa: Umm

Mr. Bair: these companies are making a lot of money evidently

Stephanie Chapa: Mhmm

Colin Newton: So it was a recent thing you, when you were younger did you ever get any medicines from Mexico as well?

Dwayne Bair: oh yeah

Colin Newton: Okay

Stephanie Chapa: What were like the common sicknesses growing up here in the Valley?

Dwayne Bair: the what?

Stephanie Chapa: the common sicknesses like illnesses

Dwayne Bair: Well there was the common flu

Stephanie Chapa: A cold?

Dwayne Bair: A simple cold and of course we had to worry about polio. We had to take polio medicine which pretty much got rid of polio. Of course we all had to have our small pox shots, I think they had eliminated smallpox but we would see people come over from Mexico that had small pox. You know evidently they didn't have the program over there. When you go to school, that's the time to catch the new kids and make everybody get their shots but I've seen smallpox what it can do and it's pretty mean I think all over the world now it's pretty much controlled. So I guess the common things were a regular cold. Of course in winter time you had more bronchial type of cold and I remembered measles. We had measles in those days and of course most of us had chickenpox that's why we're so subject to....

Samuel Ayala: shingles

Stephanie Chapa: shingles

Dwayne Bair: What?

Stephanie Chapa: Shingles

Dwayne Bair: Shingles, for example ah they put me on Acyclovir because I can't get that shot because it's live virus today take a shot for shingles but its live virus and I have a weak immune system because of my chronic leukemia so I can't take that shot. I wish I could but I was gonna quit my medicine till my wife got it last year and she was in pain. Nowadays you can take some medicine and you can knock it pretty quick. I don't remember shingles back in those days. I remember measles and mumps. I remember my kids having mumps and swelling up you know the throat swelling up real bad. My brother-in-law had polio. He was a dean of business at Pan American. He walked with a limp. Most of the people that had polio usually walk with a big limp. We were treated for polio and our kids were treated for polio.

Colin Newton: Did you notice a difference between the sicknesses that you are your family got versus the illnesses your workers got? Did they get ill more often?

Dwayne Bair: I don't think so, I mean we all our working conditions were pretty much the same for all of us, I mean we worked out in the fields around the fields later on when I drove the tractor we didn't have cabs or air conditioning. Now we have cabins with air for the men so there's better working conditions, dirt was my problem breathing a lot of dirt you had to put a bandana. I went to the doctor one time to check me out told me your nose is full of dirt I'm a farmer man you know.

Colin Newton: so the sinus solution back then was a bandana? [Mr. Bair coughs]

Dwayne Bair: Yeah a bandana [giggles] we just hoped the wind didn't blow the dirt your direction.

Colin Newton: Very nice.

Samuel: What about tetanus? Was that a concern? I mean

Dwayne Bair: Yeah anybody that stepped on anything we immediately got tetanus shots that was that was a fear of locked jaw you know. We all had a big fear of that, yes anybody that got hurt they immediately we took to the doctor. Yes that was a serious concern, tetanus.

Stephanie Chapa: You were saying aloe vera was one of the home remedies what other kind of home remedies would you use instead of going to the doctor? Something that you

Dwayne Bair: Ah let's see. My mom, when we got a cold, she would put Vicks on our feet and she'd also rub it on our chest and put a hot towel on our chest and then made us breathe a pot of steam. That was one what I remember. Then in those days we also got boils. See I never hear of anybody having boils anymore but we got them. Maybe it's the water 'cause we had a system that used canal water if fact I used to drink it. My wife wouldn't when we got married she would send me to town to bring her fresh water. Occasionally, we had have boils and what our folks would do they would take us down to Boca Chica, I remember there was no South Padre Island bridge. In fact we went on a boat over there on my junior class trip to Padre Island because there was no bridge in 1951, so we would go down to Boca Chica and we'd all go swimming, we would soak them up in the salt water and then you get the matchstick or toothpick and you get the head and you peel it out looked like a volcano, you never experienced that I guess.

Stephanie Chapa: Oh my God.

Dwayne Bair: Then you put ichthammol I-C-H-T-H-A-M-M-O-L sticky black stuff but it worked, yeah but you never hear about boils anymore. I don't know what it was. I guess going and playing on the dirt all the time [giggles] and the water we had honestly I never tried to research it to see why.

Stephanie Chapa: Yeah. [giggles]

Dwayne Bair: I'll do that when I get home find out all about boils. You know we played in the farm yard we had horses and cattle and chickens and you know maybe we walked through stuff we shouldn't have. That's one of the childhood problems we had you don't have today.

Ethan Portillo: That's was actually the animals Mr. Bair did you do anything for your animals when they got sick was there anyone else you remember a vet or.

Dwayne Bair: I'm sure my dad probably took them to the vet or brought the vet to the house but you know I don't remember them getting sick either. We had a barn, we had 4 horses, 3 riding horses and a work horse because we had a citrus nursery. We used that big old work horse to pull a cultivator in the citrus nursery. I just don't remember them getting sick. I remember dad when cattle had a calf you know we would walk down watch the cattle having calf and it's just part of education on the farm. It's just natural to a

farm kid you watch those things and of course you might have to pull the calf make sure it's alright, and don't get stepped on.

Ethan Portillo: Did you all castrate your animals the bulls or to fatten them up or were there also dairy cows?

Dwayne Bair: I don't remember my dad doing that but I remember some cousins watched them do that. We had a big BBQ my cousins down the road they had 9 kids down there past the Norquest family there and uh they had a bunch a cattle. They had a lot more cattle. We didn't have very many cattle but dad loved to take care of them. My brother and I didn't.

Stephanie Chapa: When did you see um like clinics like *Nuestra Clinica Del Valle* kind of pop up?

Dwayne Bair: Well that was later on. Not when I was a kid but later on yeah there was a number of clinics to serve more people, those were good.

Ethan Portillo: Was there any cases when you would see a doctor own the local pharmacy or that kind of thing?

Dwayne Bair: You know those days I don't remember. I know there was a doctor above the corner drug store on the town's square in Edinburg, I don't think in those days that the doctors owned them like they do today.

Samuel Ayala: What about emergency services um I kind of more specifically towards like broken bones and things like that cause I remember reading one of the letters that I think was talking about an anniversary I think it was your parents anniversary but um a girl I think it was a girl had fallen off the porch and broken her arm but

Dwayne Bair: That was probably the Norquest sir.

Samuel Ayala: Okay

Dwayne Bair: Did you also interview the Norquest?

Samuel Ayala: No I didn't. I'm not sure but what about emergency cases like that where somebody breaks

Dwayne Bair: There were ambulances those days but we would probably load them up ourselves but later on of course ambulances would come to the country and of course we weren't that far out of town there on Chapin. I know my grandson skateboarded and broke his arm and we sat down in Edinburg Hospital the one there on Sugar for 2 hours couldn't get in so we had to take him to another one you could see where the bone would penetrate his skin poor kid we had found another one in McAllen.

Colin Newton: So have you noticed a difference over the years in the bedside manners of doctors and the ability to go in and have a pleasant I mean as pleasant as you can of an experience with a doctor versus from when you were younger to nowadays? [Mr. Bair clears throat]

Dwayne Bair: I can say the only time I remember going to a hospital was when I was 10, I had my tonsils out and all I remember. Every time I smell ether, we had ether on our diesel tractors and every time I smelled that ether my mind would go back to when I was in the hospital getting my tonsils out. They took a rag with ether on it and put it over your face and tell you to start counting to 100 backwards. You'd get to about 95. But anyway the bedside manner was fine as far as I remember then and of course later on I had numerous different operations and I've always felt that if you'd be nice to the people that are cutting on you, you know [giggles] be nice to the people taking care of you. I've had numerous operations over at Renaissance and you know I got good service I've never complained about service anywhere, but because you know if you are nice to people they'll be nice to you. That's why I take them jars of honey, I used to take to MD Anderson and hand them to the nurses and doctors you know it's a thank you.

Colin Newton: Yeah when my children were born my aunt made sure that I always brought cookies and treats to the office staff and the doctors

Dwayne Bair: They're people too, people are people and people react.

Samuel Ayala: With all the changes that you've seen with healthcare from when you were younger not really going a whole to now people going for kind of almost any little thing do you think that there's a difference in the health overall of people versus you know when you were growing up you said you didn't really get sick and I know that I've been sick quite a bit sounding like you were healthier than I was maybe have you seen a difference?

Dwayne Bair: I got my tonsil out but I don't really remember being sick often. We used home remedies you know, I don't know how to compare the amount of sickness we had those days versus today, I really I've never read any statistics on that.

Samuel Ayala: Do you think your children maybe went to the hospital or to the doctor more often that you did growing up?

Dwayne Bair: Yes probably so because they were more available and you know you try to do more when you have kids. You said you have kids but anyway you always want to do more for your kids. It's a natural thing. I'd say yes for that reason alone that you want to make sure your kids are healthy.

Colin Newton: Well that leads to an interesting question um up until recent years you've been fairly healthy correct?

Dwayne Bair: Yeah.

Colin Newton: Um okay so what was your diet like growing up compare to the diet of your grandchildren?

Dwayne Bair: Okay that's a good question because my mother never cooked fried foods. My father couldn't eat fried foods. He had some heart problems and so everything was broiled or baked. When I went over to my wife's folks

house, before we were married they were German and they fried potatoes with grease that's the good stuff, good fried stuff you know, so I never got any fried foods growing up as long as my father was living because my mother just baked and broiled everything which is alright. I guess it's real healthy for you plus we had vegetables from the farm. We always had carrots and tomatoes and sometimes other crops like green beans. We had a lot of citrus to eat, so we ate pretty healthy but there was a big difference how good fried food tastes. Of course when I as a younger kid growing up, I ate at the neighbors houses and my first my first sentence in Spanish was "*dame tortilla*".

Dwayne Bair: I ate with the men sometimes working out in the fields when we were planting orchards. So they shared with me, I gave them what I had, and I wanted what they had.

Colin Newton: Very nice there was an article that I recently read that was kind of discussing how the younger generation tends to have a lot more illnesses and has to go to the doctor more because of diet because older individuals or people who were raised several decades ago had fresher food available to them versus now where they put so many chemicals in it once they send it off to store it.

Dwayne Bair: Right that's true. You know, it's you don't have a lot of options I mean you got to eat canned goods and some stuff and I know as a farmer I get (cough). Well I'm going to tell you a story but we're going to cut it out that ok?

Colin Newton: Ok

Dwayne Bair: I previously mentioned someone I took to the airport the other day and I was telling him the hurricane named Beulah that we got 25 inches one day and I had just finished planting 150 acres of carrots on a Friday, and Saturday we got 2 inches of rain. I told my brother that we had to get water on that land because most of ours is sandy loam soil and the carrot seed would germinate under the crust and try to push up. So anyway, here I was worried about getting enough moisture to get them up and then Tuesday we got 25 inches. I couldn't get in some of my fields for months because it was so wet. My dad's land had been tile drained so we got in quicker. Anyway, I told my neighbor I had to farm with a helicopter to go in there and spray naphtha. You all know what naphtha is? It's kind of like kerosene it's a petroleum product but I sprayed naphtha on the carrots because the careless weeds would come solid in my carrots and naphtha, because of the structure, wouldn't hurt the carrots but it killed weeds. I had fields that, the helicopter was the only equipment that was ever used until we harvested the carrots. Of course our beautiful square beds with the rows here on top were washed down and there were carrots on the side of the bed and the bottom of the bed. We probably ran over as many carrots in the bottom of the furrow as we harvested. I grew millions pounds of fruits and vegetables every year I farmed I'm proud of it because I know I fed a lot of people, and also grew a lot of cotton and clothed a lot of people.

Stephanie Chapa: mmhmm

Dwayne Bair: But people have to realize in order to grow a crop you got to fight weeds and insects. Now they've done some breeding work to where the insects will never bother cotton as much now. I know people get excited with GMO but anyway there's nothing a matter with that. I mean there's been cross pollination since there's been a world folks, since there been plants the pollen goes across the air and pollination. Its real simple, look at the rest of the world where people are starving, now they don't have the tools, the efficiency, the economy, or the chemicalists to take care of those products. In fact they send corn seed over to some of those countries that have been treated for disease so they got it before they planted it and the people were eating it and got sick but this corn was treated to plant, and not to eat and agriculture gets a bad name.

Group: No you're fine.

Dwayne Bair: But you know like my grandkids say "grandpa you got so many stories", it's that I've been here so long.

Stephanie Chapa: flips page mmm (inaudible)

Ethan Portillo: How about pharmacies? Do you use any local pharmacies? Do you get most of your stuff from Mexico?

Dwayne Bair: No, most of it is from local pharmacies. HEB pharmacy over on Freddy Gonzalez. I mean when I go to the doctor, he calls the order right to the pharmacy. I usually get some Z-packs (Azithromycin) from Mexico but lately I haven't been going over to Progreso. I have friends that go occasionally and so I'll have them get me something.

Stephanie Chapa: Do you remember how much health care was for your children? When they started health care?

Colin Newton: How much was a doctor's visit?

Dwayne Bair: We didn't of course have a health care program for my kids when they were growing up .That was before they was any health care program that I know of. How much was a doctor's visit? Gosh, I don't know I'd say it was ...my younger days anywhere from 20 to 100 probably could have been 50 later in life. Again I'm sorry I can't give you a good answer there.

Colin Newton: But it's definitely changed from a bag of fruit and a thankyou (group laughs)

Dwayne Bair: no that was just a little extra my dad liked to give fruit, you know as a thank you. Not necessarily as a barter but a little thank you

Ethan Portillo: that's nice

Stephanie Chapa: Did you experience a lot Doctor home calls? With your children?

Dwayne Bair: No. No.

Stephanie Chapa: You would take them to the doctor and stuff?

Stephanie Chapa: well yourself, and your children

Dwayne Bair: I'm sorry I got two periods, me growing up as a kid, and my family. Now you know I don't ever remember seeing a doctor coming to the house. I guess obviously he came when I was born, but I don't remember that of course.

Colin Newton: So they were present just no specific recollection

Dwayne Bair: no, no I don't I just guess we were healthy enough or something

Colin Newton: Very nice, does anyone have any questions.

Stephanie Chapa: No, I feel like we've covered everything.

Colin Newton: Ok

Samuel Ayala: I have one question though, just kind of curious umm it's that I used to work out at the La Coma Red Gate Ranch when I was younger

Dwayne Bair: which one?

Samuel Ayala: La Coma Red Gate

Dwayne Bair: La Coma?

Samuel Ayala: mmhmm

Dwayne Bair: My brother cleared that, he and Bud Harrison

Samuel Ayala: Herman?

Dwayne Bair: Bud Harrison, and my brother cleared the La coma ranch with a caterpillars and an anchor chain.

Samuel Ayala: hmm

Dwayne Bair: I'm sorry excuse me go ahead

Samuel Ayala: no well no I used to work out there and there used to be a lot of rattlesnakes

Dwayne Bair: yeah, like the black rhinoceros

Samuel Ayala: Yeah, yeah that was pretty cool but

Dwayne Bair: ok

Samuel Ayala: with the land that you worked, was there was a lot of rattlesnakes and stuff around? Any accidents regarding that?

Dwayne Bair: There were when my dad came and they first started farming 80 acres just north of town, across from Dr. Baker

Samuel Ayala: yeah

Dwayne Bair: I'm sure they had a lot of rattle snakes then. I remember one time dad killed one when I was growing up. But we had a black snake that would kill rattlesnakes. We had a fenced in area where we kept our chickens and had these apple boxes, that the chickens would go up there under the rafters and lay their eggs and I would gather them. Anyways, I stuck head up there one day to gather the eggs and a big ol black snake stuck his face right in my face and scared the dickens out of me but, fortunately he had an egg in his mouth. He was stealing eggs, I told my dad I was going to kill that black snake. My father said "don't you ever kill a black snake, a black snake will kill a rattlesnake" Now I've actually seen a movie where they'll punch them just like a boxer, they'll knock them out and just swallow them.

Samuel Ayala: well I live really close to some area where you farmed I live off of Hoehn and Schunior

Dwayne Bair: ok on Schunior yeah we farmed there at one time

Samuel Ayala: Yeah I saw one of the maps that you had

Dwayne Bair: yeah

Samuel Ayala: that's why I was asking too, because last year in the summer we saw a rattlesnake, and it's been

Dwayne Bair: you live in red bud

Samuel Ayala: no we live.....

Dwayne Bair: no excuse me, not Red Bud. What's the one across from the street from that one now...

Samuel Ayala: umm

Dwayne Bair: it's a brand new subdivision,

Samuel Ayala: I forget what it's called

Dwayne Bair: I should know I used to work with the bank. We financed it.

Samuel Ayala: Wisteria

Dwayne Bair: Wisteria Heights yeah

Samuel Ayala: I live right next to it

Dwayne Bair: you live to the west?

Samuel Ayala: yes we live on the west

Dwayne Bair: that's Lunaville we call it, some of the Luna brothers live out there, three-four Luna brothers used to farm that area.

Samuel Ayala: ok, ok I was just wondering about cause when I was at the ranch, working on the ranch. We had an accident out there where a guy got bit. He was fine 'cause we got him to the hospital fast enough but they say it happens like once a year. Sometimes the hunters come, and the saw the snake over there and the map so I thought I would ask.

Colin Newton: ok well Mr. Bair just want thank you so very much for your time today, and it was an absolute pleasure

Dwayne Bair: well thank you, you know it's fun to talk about the history and things are of course a lot different.

Colin Newton: Okie dokie well that includes our interview for today thank you so much.

Appendix E

Interviewee: Mr. Dwayne Bair

Interviewers: Cesar Cepeda, Christopher Munoz, Ana Hernandez, Javier Ramirez, Harry Rakasky, Ms. Roseann Bacha-Garza (CHAPS Program Scholar)

Date: October 14, 2015, at 10:00 AM

Location: The University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley, Troxell Hall Edinburg, TX

Roseann Bacha- Garza: Ok we are recording, we are recording so please begin Harry

Harry: Ok my name is Harry Rakosky, were here today to today is Wednesday October 14, 2015 its 10:00am in the morning were conducting an interview with Mr. Dwayne Bair of Edinburg Texas, thank you for coming Mr. Bair. The Interview is being conducted at Troxel hall at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley we also have 5 interviewers present and I'm going to have each of those introduced themselves and uh then we will get on with the questions with and then begin at that point

Cesar: Um good evening Mr. Bair my name is Cesar

Mr. Dwayne Bair: My name is Dwayne Bair

Ana: Good evening I'm Anna Hernandez

Javi: I'm Javi Ramirez

Christopher: I'm Christopher Joaquin Munoz

Roseann Bacha- Garza: and I'm Roseann Bacha-Garza

Harry: ok we have questions that Anna will begin asking, Mr. Bair feel free to spend as much time or little time as you want on the questions

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Thank you

Ana: ok in General what overall effects did the vary natural disasters have on your family and/or business

Mr. Dwayne Bair: ok A. it's just droughts, the droughts would limit the crops and naturally reduce yield if we were able to get a plant in and get it if it rained, sorghum would be a cheap crop to grow. The serious thing with the drought is the citrus. We have to have water all the time so because of those droughts, I remembered one summer when the water well companies were drilling wells all over the Valley to put water on the citrus even though it was salty, it was wet, and so droughts become quite a problem but thank goodness that we have two dams on the Rio Grande River. B. Freezes cause many losses of trees and crops, obviously when you have a freeze they are going to kill your trees and we lost a lot of citrus trees the years forty nine, fifty one, sixty two, eighty three, ninety nine and also eighty five was also a bad freeze, you lose your crops plus citrus trees and it can take five years to replant and get back into commercial production again. Hurricanes and Floods of course it drowned numerous crops and acres of crops that we had when hurricane Beulah hit for example.

That was the only one that really affected. Hurricane Beulah with all its 25 inches of rain in one day certainly drowned some crops and because the land didn't dry for a long time we couldn't plant any other crops which limited the amount of crops a person can grow. In a farm, you gotta keep planting something all the time. Hurricanes and floods also damaged people in the town, damaged homes, flooded homes, and other types of damage.

Ana: and second question in general what kind of things did you and your family do to prepare for the different kind of disasters?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: ok on the farm, of course, we make sure that we secure all of the equipment is secure so it wouldn't blow around. Now in regard to other disasters which was freezes we had young citrus trees and we would wrap them with the tree wrap to protect the main trunk of the tree and uh then '62 came and my dad told us "boys we gotta cover the whole tree up with dirt" so we actually went out and my dad, brother, and I and our farm workers on the farm covered thirty acres of baby citrus trees all the way with dirt, we worked on that cold weather for days. Because my father was right when we got up to seventeen degrees and we did save the young trees but we lost the rest of our crops and other larger citrus trees, but we did save those thirty acres, thank goodness. Save the trees but lost my dad. He worked himself to death in that freeze.

Ana: third question, after the disaster what kind of opportunities did you take if any to adjust your future farming operation practice or any projections?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: ok one of the things after there's different kinds of disasters of course, floods and freezes as far as the freeze goes we pushed our trees then we had to relevel the land. Once you dig up the citrus trees and you messed up the level of the land so we had to rework it but a big ox tool to rip all the roots out and rework the land so it gets back into shape to replant other crops or more citrus. That was one of the things that you had to do for that type of disaster, after a flood of course you just let it dry out.

Ana: ok, fourth question, did you did any of the natural disasters actually restart any beneficial outcomes to you or to your business?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Well it killed some bad insects when we had the freeze. It would kill some that weren't dying in the soil.

Ana: Fifth question, what were some of the worst and best things that came out of the disasters?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Well I guess a lot of trees and citrus trees in our crop which were our loss of income of course percentage of our income came from citrus and all of a sudden it was wiped out you know that's it and that's my answer for that.

Ana: Ok I'm going to pass it to Cesar who is going to be talking about Natural Disasters

Cesar: Ok uh hello Mr. Bair I have the first question directed to you my question is what were the consequences of hurricane Beulah and excessive flooding on your plants, land and orchards?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Ok our citrus were able to withstand the wet conditions. We had some of our old citrus land that our dad had installed drains. You can only stand so long that trees suffocate and have to have air, fortunately our citrus trees made it through alright as far as that, I planted a hundred and fifty acres of carrots on a Friday and when we got a lot rain on Saturday morning. The rain crusted it and worrying about how we were going to get ditches up and irrigated to soak up the moisture so the little germinating seeds will come up through that crust, well Tuesday we got twenty five inches and we didn't have to worry about getting wet (laughing)

Everybody: Laughing

Mr. Dwayne Bair: It certainly came to, of course it washed all the beds down and some of the seeds were down at the bottom of the furrow probably had as many carrots growing at the bottom as it did on top. Another factor was that it was too wet to plant for months, I had some fields that I couldn't get into for over three to four months because it stayed wet. I couldn't get in the fields with the equipment so I hired a helicopter to spray naphtha on the careless weeds. You can kill them with naptha and naptha wouldn't hurt the carrots.

Everybody: laughing

Cesar: My second question is what preparations if any did you and your family make for your plants, crops and orchards prior to the freeze of nineteen sixty-two?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: See question number natural disasters number two

Everybody: laughing

Chris: same answer

Mr. Dwayne Bair: yeah

Mr. Dwayne Bair: ok you told me to do that right

Harry: yeah that will work

Mr. Dwayne Bair: ok ready

Cesar: yes uh what effect did the various droughts have on the wild native plant species that existed on your properties?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Well the wild species that we worried mostly as a farmer Johnson grass and careless weeds and they seemed to survive very well. The seeds stayed in the soil after the drought and next time it rained they we got careless weeds and Johnson grass again so uh I mean the only plants I think about is I think about weeds and the effect of us farmers.

Cesar: ok uh question number four, what effect if any did specific invasive plants have on farm life and on production of your crops?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Well it required herbicide and cultivation for all the crops, there were always weeds and different types of weeds in different crops and it required herbicide or cultivation to knock down those weeds that affect our crops.

Cesar: ok uh question number five and the last question to your knowledge did the freezes increase or decrease the number of invasive plant species that affected your agriculture business?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: I do not recall, I don't think it change any of them that I remember that affected me as a farmer I don't recall

Cesar: ok well um therefore the next section um the interview will be pass to natural disasters and animal life which will be Ana I believe

Ana: back to me, so first question do you recall seeing any particular animals more or less often before a natural disaster than it had pass if so please describe so?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: uh well there animals seem to react before any type of weather change I think it's the barometric pressure that affects them. You can see some changes in them but one of the things that I really noticed, after, after, the freeze I mean this is talking about the freeze disaster versus hurricane disaster, uh, is that the redwing blackbirds, we didn't see any for many, many years. I, I, think they were nesting, heavy at the time, and then it seems like after that, for many years we did not see a redwing blackbird.

Roseann Bacha-Garza: And this was [Mr. Dwayne Bair suddenly says "uh"] after a particular event?

Dr. Dwayne Bair: Yeah, after the '62 freeze.

Ana: Second question, as we know insects have either beneficial [Cesar Cepeda suddenly hits a key twice on his iPad] or detrimental [Ana meant to say "detrimental"] effects on crops, what was your increase in – was there increase in number of any pests after a natural disaster that affected your crops or livestock?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Well, uh, over uh winter a weevil, some of them died, and which was good for us, but if not, some were buried in the soil, so, I, I would say it was, it was beneficial probably because some of the insects had been eliminated.

Roseann Bacha-Garza: What was the name of that weevil the –

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Boll weevil.

Roseann Bacha-Garza: Boll weevil.

Mr. Dwayne Bair: B-o-l-l, and then w-e-e-v-i-l. Boll weevil and Boll worm, eh, are the cotton varmints, and the nemesis.

Ana: Ok. Third question, did these pests [papers shuffling, turning] affect plant, livestock, or both?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Boll weevil affected cotton crops.

Ana: The RGV is for known for its wildlife visitors. Do you remember seeing any m – migratory animals from birds in the past that you, are no longer seeing today?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Yes, and, and I'm sorry, I got ahead of myself. After the '62 freeze, we didn't see any redwing blackbirds for a long time.

Ana: Ok. My fifth question would be what kind of plans, or per – proper – procedures, if any, were you able to put in place to safeguard your livestock prior to the arrival of a [someone during the interview coughs, possibly Mr. Dwayne Bair] natural disasters?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Um, we had a barn and, we had four horses, we had three riding horses and then a work horse, so we put them in the barn, and make sure they stayed in the barn, and, and a milk cow, we had a milk cow shed where the cow stayed. We didn't have a lot of cattle in those days, just horses and a cow, we always had some calves we were feeding.

Ana: Thank you, I'm gonna pass it down to Chris, which is gonna be invasives [Anna meant to say invasive] plant distribution [Ana meant to say "distribution"].

Harry: And, ca – if I could just m – mention like, if, ya'll have any questions, you know, in response to something he says, feel free to, uh, you know, expand on your [Mr. Dwayne Bair then responds to Harry with "Yeah, yeah sure"]. Mr. Bair, if there's more you wanna add to it [Mr. Dwayne Bair then says "sure"], feel free. Ok.

Chris: So I'm gonna be asking you questions about invasive plant distribution [Mr. Dwayne Bair says "ok"], in your area at the time. Do you recall any of the following plants on your property in the list below?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Yeah, of course Morning glory vine, salt cedar, and then, Bermudagrass. Those are the ones that I remember.

Roseann Bacha-Garza: What did the Morning glory vine do?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Well, they would get in citrus trees, and crawl up in citrus trees.

Roseann Bacha-Garza: Well, whether they choke them, strangle [Mr. Dwayne Bair says "no"] them?

Chris: There are some – there are several species of Morning glories that you may have seen during that time, do you happen to recall the color of the flowers?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: I sure don't.

Chris: Ok. And in terms of the Ethel salt cedar that you mentioned, do you remember ever [Mr. Dwayne Bair coughs] using some of the wood from down salt cedars in order to create fence posts?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: No, we never did that, but we had a big salt cedar tree, in fact, um, I made tree houses in it. There are to – farms, but, um, we had some other areas that had some salt cedar trees along the edge of the field. And they drew all of the moisture from the crops in those fields. You couldn't plant anything next to the large, salt cedar tree because it pulled all the moisture, er, some people said it left salty areas in the soil, but anyway. I know it pulled the moisture away from those crops. That was the only problem. If you have an area that's not been cultivated, you're always goanna have trees grow. If you have a fence line, birds sitting on the

fence they will drop the seeds. They grow up and that's why you have trees and bushes and, things growing along the fence lines and property lines.

Chris: So you had already seen [Christopher pauses] property lines divided by stands of salt cedars

Mr. Dwayne Bair: – Yeah

Chris: – At that time? Would you give me a date, on some of the, that you saw that, that like description? – Just a year.

Mr. Dwayne Bair: I can, back in, uh, 40's and 50's.

Chris: 40's and 50's?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: 40's and 50's yeah.

Chris: Ok. Cool [several interviewers suddenly chuckle and Mr. Dwayne Bair coughs]. Alright, I'm gonna go on the next question if you don't mind. Do [key tap sound made by Cesar Cepeda on his iPad] you recall any of these species being commonly regarded by the general public as invasive species at the time of or soon after their arrival?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Depending on where it was growing.

Chris: Ok. That's a good answer.

Chris: And which sedates the s – correctional –

Chris: Alright, so three, do you recall any of these species being sold or propagated as cultivars in the area?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: No, I don't. Now, Johnson grass, I went to, a research farm up in Luling, Texas one time, and we, uh, as we drove around, this was a college class by the way that Pan Am had, and we went to Luling, Texas to, maybe Luling foundation. And as we drove through the farm, we started laughing because they were growing Johnsongrass as a cultivar to raise for some cattle ranchers up there to plant on their land, we all started laughing, making fun of "Man, we get rid of that stuff in the Valley" you know and "You guys are growing it." Their research leader got quite upset with us laughing at him and I – we told him "We got rid of that stuff, you're trying to grow it" as I went down to the Valley, we get all you want. But they were growing it for people in their pastures and have the ranchers up in that part of the country plant for, for grass um, so that was the cultivar they were using that we were trying to get rid of.

Chris: Did your house then have a lawn, of any kind?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Uhh, yes, yeah –

Chris: – Was it carpet grass?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: It was carpet grass.

Chris: Ok. So you – do you happen to have remember if it was Bermudagrass, or, or, or the St. Augustine?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: It was Carpet grass

Chris: Ok [interviewers laugh].

Chris: – “Who threw the revolving plates?”

Mr. Dwayne Bair: “Grandpa, well how much did you get to mow the grass?” Well, I got three meals a day and I got a bed to sleep in.

Chris: Couple palaces? [Interviewers laugh]

Mr. Dwayne Bair: No, no money, there was no money [Roseann Bacha-Garza laughs]. You were told to do it.

Roseann Bacha-Garza: [one of the interviewers chuckle] That was your chore –

Mr. Dwayne Bair: – Yeah, you did it.

Roseann Bacha-Garza: Or, one of your chores.

Chris: Alright.

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Anyway.

Chris: Around what [Mr. Dwayne Bair coughs] year would you say that the notion of invasive plant species became a common knowledge to the farming community and to the general public?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: As far as I know, all crops had invasive plants, as long as there’s, long as there been farming.

Chris: – Ok –

Mr. Dwayne Bair: – You have to control it.

Chris: So, uh, at the time, an invasive plant may have been thought of as a plant, that was unwanted

Mr. Dwayne Bair: – Yeah. That, that’s the way I think about invasive plants. So –

Chris: – Ok, great –

Chris: Ok. [Mr. Dwayne Bair coughs softly] Five [Mr. Dwayne Bair coughs], did you or anyone in your family take any measures to address the distribution of the various invasive plant species? If so, what measures, and which plants?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: No.

Chris: Alright. [One of the interviewers chuckle softly]

Mr. Dwayne Bair: That’s it.

Chris: [Christopher pauses briefly] Well thank you, I'm gonna go ahead and pass it forward to –

Javi: – Javi. [Javier shuffles his papers] Hello sir, ok. [Javier clears his throat] I'll be talking about the International Boundary and Water Commission. Overall, what did you think at the time about the United States entering into a water treaty act of 1944 that led into the building of Falcon Dam and reservoir?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Great decision!

Javi: Great deci [Javier chuckles] –

Mr. Dwayne Bair: – Great decision for the whole Valley, not on agriculture, but all the cities. Eh – it allowed for growth of the cities, and allowed for irrigation on crops.

Javi: And your opinion stayed the same over time?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Oh yes –

Javi: – Yes?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: That was a great, idea. Thank goodness they did it, 'cause I know before that, we went to a drought period in the late 40's and, I think I explained the other day that when Eisenhower came down, you know, and we went to the dam, we looked down, and there was nothing in the river hardly, it was dried up, and we thought we would never fill that dam and then, that was the summer of 53' and then, uh, I know in 54' when I went to the service, I was gone when we had the hurricane come in, and, hurricane Alice came in and sat there and filled up Falcon dam. One little hurricane, sat there and rained, and rained, and rained, and, and, filled it up. And they've had some, disagreements, but yes, it was a great thing. A great thing for the whole Valley.

Javi: Awesome. Did the sudden filling of the Falcon reservoir have any effects on the delivery of, your water or your pre – parations [Javier implies "preparations"] for receiving water?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: It allowed for crop planning, you could, go ahead and plan on your crops knowing that you had a, a resource in there for your water which is part of growing a crop immediately allowed for crop planning and you could figure on what you were going to plant.

Javi: Uhhh number three, did you ever have any personal dealings with the International Boundary Waters Commission in the decision making such as lobbying, formal complaints or meetings?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: No

Javi: No...Uhhh okay tell us about your adventure following President Eisenhower motorcade to the opening ceremony of Falcon Dam?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Yay well I told that story before but I gonna tell it again to this committee but a friend of mine had a pretty souped-up '46 Ford too so he said "let's

get behind the convertible Eisenhower is in” and we went through all the Valley, through McAllen all the way up to Falcon in a convertible so we decided we were going to get behind the president car. Well there was about three secret service black Fords behind the president car. We try to pass (laughs) and the Secret Service pointed the Thompson machine gun at us and we got behind the Secret Service and went all the way to Falcon Dam. Our troops are from Fort Hood were on half of the dam and the troops from Mexico were on the other half of the dam and their president was there and Eisenhower was there and they gave the dedication service right there in the middle of the dam. It was quite exciting thing for obvious reasons it was a pretty exciting day. The president got sunburned for riding on that convertible.

Javi: Do you remember the date by any chance?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Ahh.. man I’m sorry I don’t I can probably google it

Roseann Bacha-Garza: I I think

Mr. Dwayne Bair: It was the summer of ’53 I know it was ‘53 because I went to the service on the January of ‘54. That gets you close to the date I would say

Javi: May, June, July?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: July, August somewhere around there in the summer time

Roseann Bacha- Garza: I think that’s important that we should note on that Eisenhower motorcade (figure 45) was that I believe he came along the us HWY 83 which at the time is what we know as Business 83 and at that time that particular road is known as the longest main street in America so if he started his motorcade it would be interesting to look into if he started in Brownsville I know he went through San Juan there is a picture in the Hidalgo County Historical Commission archives of Eisenhower going through San Juan in that motorcade on what we know today Business 83 so that is the route he took and once that particular Business 83 finishes after Mission I think technically continues on the road along the river to the Falcon Dam

Mr. Dwayne Bair: I don’t know where he started. I don’t know if he started down there or not

Roseann Bacha-Garza: yay it would interesting to see exactly know how many miles that motorcade travel

Javi: When did you and your friends saw the car and decided to follow?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: It was just a matter of being in the parade.

Harry: How many people where in your car?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: I think there was 3. I wasn’t driving this was a friend of mine. Just three of us in one seat coop I don’t know if there was a back seat in that ‘47 or not but anyway there was three of us that I remember.

Javi: okay number 5 - Hurricane Beulah reported resulted in great amount of flood water being released than during previous floods because of the man made changes with

the Rio Grande including the falcon dam. Do you know if the changes made to the floodway by the international boundary and water commissions prior to hurricane Beulah prove to be more beneficial to your property or did it prove to be more of a detriment to your property?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Well there is always an improvement, all the time they improve drainage there is an improvement in drainage of the Rio Grande Valley. I wasn't close enough to it to get flooded but I know that somebody stole the brass gates out of the out of the flood gate system by the McAllen airport and the airport got flooded with 6 foot of water on the airport. They had water in airplanes and shops and everything.

Chris: Why would someone steal the flood gates?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: To sell just like they steal the cemetery brass vases for flowers

Roseann Bacha-Garza: or copper wiring out of houses or infrastructure

Chris: Wow

Mr. Dwayne Bair: they didn't know it until it is too late and water flooded the airport

Javi: so they was a lot of airplanes delays apparently

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Yay... but anyway as far as damage on the farm no. Everything they did they help the drainage system, they still trying to improve it. I flown that whole drainage system many many times I believe I told you before like Peñitas is 144 feet above sea level. I think Hidalgo 126 or 129 above sea level. Out there north of Edinburg where I farm is 85 [feet above sea level] so your land generally falls towards the north east from here from the river. I guess for millions of years the floods coming down from the Rio Grande put a lot of good soil into the Valley too. They say that that's way next to the river there is some good soil millions of years or however long it been to create this country down here, but anyway the general flow if you look it up the geodetic survey map, you see the elevations from here to the coast and they gradually flow north east that's why the county main drain if you ever see it in a map it goes to the north east, that gives you natural flow. Just like your irrigation system from the river your natural gravity flow. You think about the creation that engineering help make a natural gravity flow for miles, miles and miles and miles that took a lot of calculating, a lot of engineering, when we open the water in our canals, they go a certain way. It flows that way because of gravity.

Harry: It's destiny

Mr. Dwayne Bair: No it's a simple word its gravity

Everybody: Laughs

Mr. Dwayne Bair: anyway okay that's enough of that

Javi: Okay. Thank you for your time. I am going to pass it down to Harry

Harry: Okay uhmm my first question is just from a farmer perspective. Your overall view of the irrigation system, what irrigation district or if there is more than one how many serve you and kind of how everything function as far as your concern

Mr. Dwayne Bair: ok I had other maps of other district but this happens to be of district 1. So it comes with a lot of acres. I don't know how many acres you know look at this map. All of this is Hidalgo county irrigation system district number 1 so you think about the enormity of the acreage involved here

Harry: Now was district one the only one that served you?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: No I also used District 2 which is south of Edinburg, District 2 and District 15 which is north of Edinburg. I work with three different water district but the bulk of it was in as you can see most of are farming area was in here. I had some up here and some down here but most was in this area. So yay most of it was district 1.

Harry: Uhmm just overall what you know about the irrigation system

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Ok I have an aerial shot but I didn't bring it sorry. Of the Peñitas pumps a friend of mine who was Manager of the water District 1, Bills Goldsberry at that time so he wanted to go and look from the air. So I put him in my plane and we went up there we took picture of Peñitas and the river and the pumps and everything. But you know where Peñitas is so as I mentioned before the elevation is 144 feet in the town of Penitas and out here it decreases as you go north and east. Well you actually go north east. As you go towards McCook, now it might be a little higher but flowing this way which is mostly this part of this district it decreases in elevation which allows for gravity flow. There used to be a big old gas engine but I believe now they are all electric engine. I mention the *canaleros* or ditch-riders. You guy here about that?

Harry: Oh yes the guys that run the canals

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Yay I don't know if that's around this point if you want to talk about that

Harry: Uhmm I guess that question about the so Penitas pump is basically a big pump that just pulls out of the river and into the land so it can start its gravity thing going

Mr. Dwayne Bair: right starts the gravity, and then I believe there are two lifts they call it lifts after that because not all is consent downflow. You might have a down flow and then you might have a Lomita a little hill or something. So you got to have a lift pump to get it back up over that. You start off with the main vein you know here and out of that main vein then off of that goes all of this other arteries. I call them arteries, like those are canals. It all started here in Peñitas. You have a main canal which is very larger and then as you get on down occurs the canals get smaller and smaller because of volume by then you can only put so much volume in here so that's the way we operate. Now District 2 right next to the river south of far end near of Hidalgo they have reservoir. They'd pump from the reservoir into their system. Which is all similar-everyone has a similar system. Although one of the greatest changes they've made over the years.

Chris: It says earth roads, paved roads, canals lined, canals dirt, pipelines, railroads and etc.

Mr. Dwayne Bair: So see some of them are originally dirt canals, and then cement canals, and then a lot of these have been put underground to pipelines-concrete pipelines. Because of being in the way and in McAllen on that 2nd street where everybody goes jogging there used to be a big canal there at one time and then they put it underground into a pipeline. Many of the open ditches or open canals now have been put into a pipeline to get it down under the ground. You can't build over it, but you can pave over a pipeline. But if they have a right of way easement over that area.

Harry: What are these big concrete things?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Alright anytime you're passing water like that you have to have breather pipes- vent pipes. So yes you have to have the vent pipes or nothing will flow. Hydraulics fluids will not flow. You need some kind of either pressurized pump, or natural flow-gravity flow- so therefore, you have to have that vent- without those vents, the water will not flow. Of course, it's a bane to all of the crop dusters so what we did on ours. We went out and painted all of our concrete pipes. We got some kind of powder mixed it with water and painted them white. We painted all our stand pipes white, which they really appreciated because when you're flying along there, you're busy watching the spraying; you don't want to run into one of those pipes. You must have a vent once every so often for water to flow.

Harry: Ok and I've seen water come out of it- is that a bad thing?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Somebody didn't open the other gate before they closed this gate, so therefore whenever the water got there it didn't have anywhere else to go. So the pressure just made it overflow.

Harry: How did you get the arrangements to have the water delivered to you?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Okay, of course we go to the water office first and we pay so much an acre to irrigate. And then we had to pay so much for bond tax. The bond tax was used to repair the canals all the time, which they had constant repairing going on. So you pay so much per acre and then you get in touch with your ditch rider, "a *canalera*", we called them, the guys who knew that system out there. In other words, I had one ditch rider for this area maybe and then another one over somewhere else. Before I'd leave the water office I'd call and say I've got water coming in a certain day and a certain time, can you help me? Because there's a lot of gates that need to be closed in order to manipulate the water where you needed it but then during the middle of the night you might need to change from one area to another area, so in order to not waste any water, he's gotta go and plan ahead on the water because it's already flowing. So we couldn't work without them because they have to know where all of these gates are and they handle most of the larger gates and we would handle some of the smaller gates right on the farm.

Harry: Were the gates on the farm your own property or were they owned by the irrigation district?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: The ones on the canal were irrigation districts and once you got into our property we had our own gates and valves of course.

Harry: And did you have to coordinate with your neighboring properties the water being ordered in?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Well not usually, unless he wanted to get it as soon as we got through, since the waters in that area, if he had paid for it he can say, 'When you get through, let me know so I can take the water and go on down without having to stop it all here and go back through the whole system. We'd work with our neighbors on that.

Harry: What kinds of challenges or issues did you have to deal with regarding irrigation water for instance where there salinity problems, drainage problems, water rights issues, cluster building issues, anything that stuck out to you as a challenge?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Water rights sticks out here. Water rights was in our courts for twenty-some years. Establishing water rights from the river was a big deal and they spent many years with a lot of lawyers. There's certain districts [that] have certain rights-they're rated like 1 or 2- I can't get into that because I do not know, but I do know they spent twenty or so years in court establishing rights. Now water allotment is a different story. Like in district 1 we can build up to three irrigations. We can build our allotments, it's like having money in the bank. We can put three irrigations in there. Unless you got a rain or they release more water up above, or unless I bought some from another person.

Harry: So is that like, over a year you can only release water into your fields three times a year?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Well, no. You maintain three irrigations but in the meantime if it rained you could build that back up. It was a moving target. Not just three for a year. In fact, during the drought there was a lot of citrus groves in the Valley that were froze out and that people from up north had, and that was the only property that they had, maybe a 5, a 10 or a 20 or a 40-acre citrus grove. And so some of these guys just let them freeze and they didn't even push them out so what I did one year was I went out to the water office and I said, 'Look, I'd like to purchase their allotment.' Because every property has a certain amount of allotment. So I started purchasing water from all these guys, so I'd have enough water for our citrus that has to be watered all year. And so I did that. I made a lot of phone calls and was able to transfer in that office with their permission through paying them, to my account so that I'd have water. And after buying \$10,000 worth of water one year during a drought, we got a large train that filled up all of our allotment and so we couldn't use it.

Harry: And you couldn't share it over?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: No I tried that and they said, 'No you can't do that. You can't keep it and stack it on top of your other water. Once you build up to 3 that's it.' That's the way this district is, some might be different.

Harry: How about the salinity issues? Did you have any issues where you had to drain out the land to get rid of the salt?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: That's what happened on my dad's property. He was real conscious of salt conservation on his property. He'd tile-drain it all which helps take care of that

salt problem. With tile drainage you go down about 8-foot and you have these pipes about every 100-feet across the field and then tied into a manifold pipe and tied into a drainage ditch to get rid of it. To get rid of it that helped to flush out a lot of that salt. The irrigation wells like I said I worked for a water well company one summer and most of our wells that we drilled we set the pipe at around 330-foot and we were running around 1300 parts of chlorides total salts, which is not good, but it's wet and when you got a citrus grove you have to irrigate it. You want some water on it to keep it alive. So it was a problem during the drought with the salinity. And then some growers started putting their water into their irrigation canals with salty water, and taking out that good water. That's when there was a little reaction and my father told me, 'That's not fair, we've got good water coming in from the river and you're waiting and putting your salt water in and taking out our good water and saying that you're replacing water. You're replacing it with the same amount of water, but not the quality of water. Which, too much salt has an effect on the soil.

Harry: And then as far as paying for it, you would go and pay at the office when you wanted it? It's not like you got a monthly bill?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Yes, you went in and paid for it when you wanted to irrigate. You'd tell them how many acres you wanted, when you wanted it, and they told you when they could get it to you because they can't always get it the day you want it, depending on who else is irrigating. If someone is ahead of you, you wait your turn.

Harry: What kinds of interactions did you have with the irrigations districts?

Harry: Were you on any boards did you deal with the managers out there and the canal riders just kind of how all that worked

Harry: did you ever have to deal with the irrigation boards?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: No I didn't but my brother was on an irrigation board so I didn't have to deal with him

Harry: Okay any managers?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: No generally speaking we got along good with everybody except if there's a problem in the canals they usually repaired it or fixed it so I didn't recall any big problems with our water district.

Harry: Okay, alright fourth question describe any changes you witnessed over the years with regard to the technologies, the processes, the materials used by the irrigation districts or even at the farm level.

Mr. Dwayne Bair: As I mentioned earlier, many of the canals have been put underground into pipelines. The biggest change I would say is in saving a lot of water is the drip system in citrus groves. A lot of your larger growers now have their own little lake or reservoir and let the water sit out and let the dirt and everything to settle down so the water can be as clean as possible then they run it through filters and then they have a drip system in the groves where they lay a line with little emitters. This way, instead of flood irrigating where you put a lot of water on but through a drip system and putting it on more constant but not as much volume, you're able to save water and

now a days they meter their water so they paid based on their meter system versus just you got two hours to get a head of water on every acre. This has been a big savings and it's also helped the production of citrus by controlling the water flow through the drip system. Not only citrus but crop plants now they put tape in the bed off the ground. They call it elastic tape and lay it in and put the dirt over that tape and then they plant all these different vegetables on top of the bed and then they have a large pump in a filter system. If you see these trailers out with some big brown things on them those are filters and they use a pump and they'll hook up a bonnet to a valve to get their water. They will pump that water through this drip system, I mean through their filter system and going into all of these roads out in the fields you might see the beds wet without seeing any canals or anything because it's going through the drip tape. Now that's very expensive. Now a days farming vegetables you can spend a thousand or two thousand dollars an acre depending on the kind of vegetables you're growing, you can spend an awful lot of money growing vegetables so I guess it's worth it because they grow good crops with that tape and after they get through that crop they rip out all the tape out and stack them up I guess they burn it or something, I never used the tape, I used gated pipe I guess I could of answered that on the other question my brother and I had a quarter mile of gated pipe twelve inch PVC pipe with sliding gates that way you could hook a bonnet we would call it a *tortuga* (turtle)

Harry: a turtle?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: a turtle yeah on this valve you hooked it into this valve and then you hook your pipe in and shove in there and there's this seal a rubber seal on every joint. You just slid it in there you know and turn the water on and you just slide your gates out which is a pretty nice way you don't have to make ditches or anything and if you have land that's not level you know you got land that run like this you can run it down the road without blowing a ditch out so it's not required to have a level land when you got gated pipe because it will bend the plastic twelve inch pipe will actually bend with the flow of the land so you slide the gate open of course it's a job when you finish. You have to pick them up and carry all those pipes across a quarter mile. Each piece is about twenty something feet or something pipes anyway one man can carry them.

Harry: Would you use these blue tubes?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Yeah that came later. That is also something they've used that blue plastic they come out of real good materials nowadays but it's similar to the gated pipe and it's a lot cheaper and a lot easier to handle. They hook that up to a hood and then what they do they go along where they have this device where they stab a hole in it and it's a little gate you can control it shut it on and off and that's the same thing as gated pipe but you can jab it in if you want it say every twenty inches or every forty inches or whatever you need. Anyway, they've made some advances in the type of equipment we use nowadays especially through the gated pipe and filtered system.

Harry: And last question on the irrigation section what other sources of water did you use or have available to you whether it's city water well rain water how are they used how are they conveyed that kind of thing

Mr. Dwayne Bair: for home use or irrigation?

Harry: For any kind of sources of water.

Mr. Dwayne Bair: oh okay as far as our home we had a pipeline that came into our cistern then we had a filter kind of a filter than ran through some bricks and rocks and stuff and go into a big cistern down underground. It stored around four t or five thousand gallons of water and then we would have pipes hooked up in that to go into the house for use in the kitchen and the toilets. Then we had caught rain water on the roof of the garage. We had a big tin roof my dad would get up there with a broom and hose it down when it started raining and sometimes by the time he'd get through cleaning it the rain would quit. Then he would divert the rainwater into a five thousand gallon tank we had a pipe running to the back door of the house. We'd go out there and get our rain water to drink

Harry: washing clothes?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: well yeah two sources, rain water and then cistern water for the cattle feeding troughs and well I drank some of it to but it was clean after it settled down.

Harry: did you have any windmills on your property?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: No

Harry: Did you have any artesian wells?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: No artesian wells

Harry: Now the city water

Mr. Dwayne Bair: That came in later much later

Harry: Like in the '50s or '60s?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Later than that I think. When I got out of the service and started working, I bought a place in 1957. We didn't have it then so it must been in '60s. It was Alamo Rural Water Supply, they might have started earlier than that but that's when I got it, probably in the '70s in our homes

Harry: Did you have a swimming pool?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: No well actually it was a canal that I used when I was growing up I'd swim in a canal

Harry: and there wasn't an issue with the irrigation districts about you being in there?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: No

Harry: Okay

Mr. Dwayne Bair: We swam in a canal and eventually my folks bought a membership at Ebony Hills Country Club. They weren't card players, smokers, drinkers, none of that they probably never went there but they bought it so we would have access to a

swimming pool instead of just the canals so we finally in high school got to go in a swimming pool.

Harry: okay could you go fishing in the canals?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: A lot of people did, I didn't.

Harry: bottled water did you all have to buy bottled water?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Oh yeah bottle water for years until we got potable water

Harry: and I asked you about artesian wells no artesian wells.

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Right we didn't have any artesian wells. No and as far as irrigation water one time I believe we used some of the neighbors well water during the drought. He was pumping in the canals but dad didn't like it because it was too salty and he didn't want to hurt our soil.

Harry: And okay I just threw in some other questions one was looking back what was your greatest personal satisfaction as a farmer

Mr. Dwayne Bair: well what I wrote here was producing a good crop and knowing you were helping feed and clothe many people of the world. I think about it and every year I farmed I raised, not only me and men on the farm my brother, we raised millions of pounds of fruits and vegetables millions of pounds every year we farmed as get to thinking about it and you go 20 ton an acre of citrus 20 ton an acre of carrots thinking about the hundreds of acres we had every year. You know what we raised a lot of fruits and vegetables and we fed a lot of people in this world and I am proud of that good food, too. Now some people question it like my neighbor did about spraying the carrots with naphtha you know but we're not going to spray something on that is going to hurt ourselves on anybody else. It kills the weeds and dissipates. Farmers don't want to hurt anybody.

Javi: Criticism?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Yeah because we have to use some chemicals but think about how many people we feed in the world today that wouldn't be fed if we didn't have some chemicals. And besides that somebody says, well GMOs, people get excited about ...

Harry: What are GMOs?

Chris & Javi: Genetically Modified Organisms.

Harry: I knew that. (Laughter)

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Anyway, but, uh, you know, as long as there's been plants in life there's pollen ... plants cross-pollinate all the time. Nature has cross-pollinated for as long as there's been plants and life, and there's nothing the matter with cross-pollinating, you're not, you're not creating a cancer because you cross-pollinate one ... parts of one plant with another, but you know that's another thing people get all "Well I don't want any GMO," you know but, hey, we fed a lot of people in the poorer countries of the world with some new crops and new types of crops that would have starved to death and, and uh, so, you know, I always speak up for that.

Now, farmers don't want to hurt anybody. They raise a lot of food and feed a lot of people. Okay, enough of that question.

Harry: Uh, and then, if you had to do it all over again, what is the one thing that you would have done differently?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Oh, gosh ... I probably would have utilized some of the newer methods of, of planting and, and irrigation, uh started earlier, uh, like the, the drip systems and closer plantings and ... of citrus trees and maybe tried to buy some more land or borrow some more money and invest a little more at the time and, instead of renting most of the land, but I don't know, I never, I never put much to it because I did what I did, and you take your best shot and go down the road, you know ...

Harry: There ya go.

Mr. Dwayne Bair: ... and, uh, I mean we all have our opportunities in life to do, to do something and we, we regret some of them and some of them we don't but, uh, you got to just keep your head down and keep going and like I told that other group, "You don't ever give up." You know, there's going to be some things that come along in your life, there's going to be roadblocks, but you just, you can't give up, you just got to pick up and go again. I mean, watching these freezes and going through it and it's pretty disheartening when you spend a lot of time and money and effort to grow a crop and you see it wiped out and go out and pick an orange or grapefruit and it's so hard you can't even cut it with a knife and then you know, you know you've lost it all but ... anyway that's life, nobody guarantees it. That's one thing about farming that I've told people, nobody guaranteed you anything when you decided to farm, that's part of the, that's part of the gamble you take. And, uh, I never blamed God, "God, how come you did this to me?" No, you know, He created this earth and things happen and that's the way it is. You can't, you can't look at yourself as a uh, uh, a victim, you just, you just go on, you pick yourself up and go down the road.

Harry: Mmhmm. Good.

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Nah, it didn't cost you anything for that extra philosophy (laughter). You can scratch all of that, in fact, when you get to that part.

Chris: No, we'll keep it.

Roseann Bacha-Garza: No, no we'll keep that, that's inspirational.

Mr. Dwayne Bair: ... just, that's just, that's just from an old man, that's just from an old man telling you you're going to face a lot of things in life, just don't give up.

Chris: Well, thank you for your insight. Appreciate it.

Harry: Um, are there any questions that, that we didn't ask having to do with natural disasters, irrigation, any of that, that that would have been good for us to ask that, that you'd like to kind of give us some insight on?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: No, it's just that we're going to keep having them. And that's one thing we don't control.

Harry: Mmhmm.

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Because of the warm seas, they're looking for a lot wetter season in California. Oh, what's the word? It's a Spanish word, uh ...

Harry: El Nino?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: El Nino. El Nino. Yeah. El Nino. They're looking for, because nowadays they can seem to determine ahead of time, uh, what kind of weather we're going to have. I mean the, the science of weather has really come a long way. So, they're saying because of the temperature in the water right now, over in the Pacific, El Nino's going to have a big impact on California. Well, with all of the rains they've had, when it starts raining they're going to have a lot of floods and mudslides, too.

Harry: Mmhmm.

Mr. Dwayne Bair: And that's the downside of it, but they need to fill all those lakes up over there because they've had a lot of drought in that California area. I know that, that the agriculture area has been hurting because of a shortage of water. (Coughs)

Javi: I know that up there in California they grow grapes. Nobody over here grew grapes?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: They're growing some ... yeah, they're some vineyards here in the Valley right now. I haven't been out to them, but it's, it's, they say it's a good area because of the, you know, the weather, it's a good place to grow grapes. Now, I haven't been but out there, but out there north of Mission somewhere some guy's got the, uh, there's several grape vineyards right now.

Chris: Grapes ... grapes grow well here. I have two different species of grapes ...

Ana: Is that recently ...

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Pardon?

Ana: Is that recently introduced, the grapes?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Yeah, recently, but many years ago, in fact, back in the '30s, uh, my Dad told me that there was a bunch of athel trees out on about thirty miles north of Edinburg, or maybe twenty miles north, on the west side of the highway, there were some rows of athels ... salt cedars ... big tall salt cedars. And I said, "Now, what in the world did somebody plant all those for?" And he said, "Well, back in the late 30's or early 40's ...

Chris: Fence posts.

Mr. Dwayne Bair: ... some guys tried to plant some grapes and they needed a wind break. They wanted a wind break, and so those athel trees served as a windbreak. But, uh, as I was saying, anything growing next to an athel, it's going to suck all the moisture out. But I think the biggest problem was, they could grow the grapes, but I think the

birds ate ‘em all (chuckles, laughter, cough). They had a bird problem, but it’s a ... you could almost grow anything here in the Valley, you really can because of our climate and the soils and everything, but (sniff) some of it’s not profitable to grow.

Javi: It’s probably still a problem with the birds right, nowadays?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Probably so. I don’t know, I know A&I, or A&M had some grapes down there north of Delta Lake. I, I’ve been in that vineyard one time, but I don’t know what they did, whether they covered it with nets ... sometimes they’ll cover them with nets to keep the birds off. But there are some vineyards, I know, up north somewhere. You can probably get it on Google, you can probably find them.

Harry: Mmhmm. I thought I’d go just around and see if there’s any questions that, that you wanted to add or if something came up that ...

Chris: I didn’t have any additional questions. I just wanted to thank you for meeting with us, taking the time ...

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Well, thank you all for putting up and listening to me.

Javi & Chris: Nah, it was a pleasure ...

Mr. Dwayne Bair: But I know (cough) that some of these stuff you can probably cut out and ...

Harry: Nah, it’s good.

Roseann Bacha-Garza:I, I have a couple of questions, just to elaborate on the questions that the students came up with you, up with for you to answer. Um, I was curious about, um, specific crops that benefit from dry conditions and ones that benefit from wet conditions ...

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Okay, that’s a good question.

Roseann Bacha-Garza:... because you had droughts and freezes and, and floods. And I know, for example, sorghum typically grows in dry conditions, um, are there particular crops that benefit from those?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Yeah, uh, I’m thinking first of all, I’m thinking of cotton. Most cotton, if you’ve got enough water to irrigate it, it’s better that if you never have any rain on it. I mean, cotton grows good in dry climate, as long as you can get the water on it. And, of course, certainly you don’t want any rain after you get the cotton open because, what happens, uh, the rain comes down and it changes the quality of the cotton. I know I used to, I used to, when I was fourteen I had to weigh cotton for my Dad. Cotton picking, we picked by hand in those days, and I weighed the sacks, you know, and uh, then I’d have to take the women’s sacks and empty them up in the trailer. Anyway, then we had some rains and I’d give them the weight and we’d put it in a book. The rain made the cotton lighter and the pickers thought I was cheating them on the, the scales. The cotton just didn’t weigh anything ... you know, because after the rains it washed a lot of the oils out. And it was, you could pick a sack of

cotton that weighed maybe seventy pounds, and after the rain it might weigh fifty pounds. And you could see the pickers thought I was getting to them on the scale.

(Unidentified Participant): Yes.

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Oh, anyway, but uh, that's an example of showing the difference, the effects of rain on cotton. And the grain sorghum, you don't want rain on it once it's mature ... once it's headed out and bloomed, you don't want rain on it because it also washes and affects the quality of the grains, so, during harvest you don't want rain during the harvest on about anything, I guess. If you can just get the moisture through the ground through irrigation. It's best if you never got a rain on most ... I guess any crop. Of course, we've harvested cabbage in the rain before, during the freeze, and you know, and, and it gets pretty nasty having to go out and harvest in wet conditions like that. Ya'll probably seen onion patches with pretty little flowers growing out. Those pretty little flowers are not a good thing because the onion will never ship. It's got a hollow point in the center and it'll rot. So you get a seeder, they call them seeders, a seed stem and then forget it, you've lost it. So rain can come at the wrong time in onions, you know and, and cause a jump in, in the growth.

Harry: How about citrus?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Citrus ... well it's, it's better if you get it on the ground and not all over the ... uh, maybe, sometimes, if you get a lot of dirt building or something, then you can wash the trees off, but, uh, no most crops I know of you're better off if it never rained on the particular crop. If you get the moisture to the root system of the plant, whatever that plant might be or tree, you're better not, you're better off not to get it on the crop.

Roseann Bacha-Garza: How about, um, salt, the, because we do have a lot of salt in our water down here in the Rio Grande Valley? Have you, do you have specific characteristics, um, perhaps like with citrus, do you recognize when, uh, crops are being harvested in citrus, for example, that there's a problem with salt? Like, well, how would a salt adversely affect a crop?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Well, at first it affects the growth of the tree. You won't get the normal growth in the tree. If it's very heavy with salt, the tree will be stunted and uh, you know, the leaves won't be as big and pretty and green and shiny and, and uh, it just generally doesn't grow as good.

Roseann Bacha-Garza: Well, too much salt for a human being is also not good.

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Pardon?

Roseann Bacha-Garza: Too much salt for a human being is also not good. It raises your blood pressure ...

Mr. Dwayne Bair: I know. My wife tells me that every time we eat (Laughter). I happen to eat a lot of it, but uh, it hasn't killed me yet.

Roseann Bacha-Garza: Um, uh, Chris was asking about invasive plants and a couple of weeks ago in *The Monitor* they were talking about Carrizo Cane. It ... was that something that happened in your properties along the canals?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: No ...

Chris: Another name for it at the time would have been “Giant Reed.” And the scientific name is *Arundo donax*.

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Yeah, right. Of course, it’s all along the river. It’s all along the river, uh, and in some of the canals, of the open canals, yeah, it, it became a problem years ago. But most of the canals, like I said, earlier were put in underground now in pipelines, so you don’t have that, but it’s never particularly affected me on my farm, no, but it has affected certain areas.

Roseann Bacha-Garza: And I think I had, oh, um, one of the things you’ve mentioned, um, a handful of times that might be interesting to this group is, um, you’ve mentioned tile drainage. You went into some specifics during this interview, um, does, uh, you said on the properties you had dirt-lined canals, cement-lined canals, which I know the cement lining in the canals came during the, uh, Great Depression Era, um, and then you have tile drainage.

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Yeah.

Roseann Bacha-Garza: So what is the difference between, between those ...

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Okay, the drainage you put on your, your, yourself. The whole irrigation part is part of the irrigation district. But on your own soils, my Dad, I know, was active in the Hidalgo County Soil Conservation Service. And if you look in those folders there, that blue one that’s real faded, uh, that is an example of a conservation plan, telling the type of soil, and a lot of our fields. My Dad tile drained, I forget the exact distance, but it seemed like they were six to eight feet deep. And they put, they put these tile lines and butted them up next to each other and then they put hay over them to keep dirt from falling in on the connection, so that water could seep into these pipes, and then they would go along and tie into a header. In other words, they would all go into another pipe, and then that header would go into a drain ditch and that way you got the water flowing and flushing your soil all the time. And I know my Dad, on most of his land that he had, he tile drained it and it made a terrific amount of difference because it helped get rid of the salts in the soil. That’s one of the, one of the main benefits of it. So, uh, he tile drained most of his land. And the soil conservation people helped do that, and you could get some assistance from the government if you would drain your soil. They would help pay for that work you did. So it was costly, but yet the government also helped.

Harry: Would a lot of the other landowners do that also, or was that more your ...

Mr. Dwayne Bair: No, a lot of them didn’t. The people who had been here quite a while like my Dad were more conscientious of maintaining their soil. People who may buy five or ten acres out here, they’re not going to mess with worrying about draining it.

Harry: It sounds almost like a French drain, kind of how you’re describing it, we had one by our house that would pull it away.

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Okay. This is under the soil say six to eight foot deep and then it ties in. Let me see one of those books, I might show you an aerial map where you can

actually see the difference in soils. After Hurricane Beulah, I flew over several blocks and I could see that, uh, they were starting to, to drain. There was a different color in the soil because as, because as it drained it was drying the soil in rows, and you could tell exactly where those drains were.

Chris: Wow.

Javi: Like lighter, like a lighter brown?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Right. Anyway, Dad worked with the soil conservation people. They checked on your soils. You probably haven't read any of this, but they were saying what crops could be grown on this land and what chemicals could be used to control it and so it was a conservation plan to try to get the farmers to go by some kind of plan, preserve the soil and what was the best for certain crops, so my Dad was real conscientious about conservation type of work.

Harry: Mm, good, good. Hey, I have one more question ... did, did ... when we were talking about the IBWC and it was a good thing overall. You know, when I was reading back on history of how it would flood in the Valley, and how the floods helped create more fertile delta, or whatever. Did the, the dam's creation cause that to be a problem down the road to where now the, the land is not as fertile as it used to be?

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Well, no, that of course that happened over thousands, a million years, however long it took for that soil to keep coming down the Rio Grande and flooding. That's what we are, a delta instead of a valley. We call it the Rio Grande Valley, but we're a delta really. Like I said, Hidalgo is 126 feet above sea level. Out here it's, probably around here, it's probably around 85 ... 90 feet above sea level, this land here. So we're a delta. Actually, we're lower than the river. That's what becomes a delta; when your property is lower than the river. But as far as changing that, that happened many years ago. And of course, naturally, there is some dirt that comes in the water down the canals still, but nothing like it used to be and for many years without any farming or anything going on, but it hasn't stopped the value of the soil any just 'cause it quit coming down and flooding. I mean, thank goodness we have the dams so we can control that water now, but we don't have the same flow because we have the dams.

Harry: Does anybody else have any questions they want to throw out?

(Unidentified Participant): He already answered mine.

Harry: Okay, thank you so much for taking the time to ...

Mr. Dwayne Bair: Well, you're quite welcome.

Appendix F

Interviewee: Mr. Dwayne Bair

Interviewers: Ismael Aleman, Ray Ruiz, Santiago “Jimmy” Lopez, Selina K. Ramos,
and Dr. Roseanne Bacha-Garza

Date: October 15, 2015

Location: CHAPS OFFICE, Troxel Hall, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Transcribed by: Ismael Alemán, Ray Ruiz, and Selina K. Ramos

Dr. Roseanne Bacha-Garza: Alright, so we are starting ... and we are starting.

Ismael Alemán: Okay.

Roseanne: We are recording, so let us begin “Jimmy” you can start by saying today's date, and where we are, and we're with, and who is in the room.

Santiago “Jimmy” Lopez: Okay today is Thursday October 15, 2015. Time is 09 with Mr. Dwayne Bair, members of the class, which is uh ...

Ray Ruiz: Ray

Santiago: Ray

Selina Ramos: Selina

Ismael: Ismael

Santiago: Ismael and “Jimmy” Lopez. Mr. Bair, first I want to thank and have something to tell you. On behalf of the CHAPS 2015 class, we would like to thank you for you allowing us to research and write a complete concise history of the Bair family. We thusly and sincerely appreciate your willingness and effort to help keep the legacy of the rich history of Edinburg, the Rio Grande Valley, and your family's contribution to agriculture. Again we thank you for your cooperation.

Ray: [Undecipherable comment]

Santiago: Okay, so first I want your first name, your complete name. I want your name, date of birth, place of birth, and uh anything else you want to tell us about yourself.

Dwayne Bair: My name is Dwayne Whigham Bair, and I was born February the eighth 1934 out here on Chapin Road North of Edinburg in a farmhouse.

Santiago: Your parents' names Sir?

Dwayne: Parents names were Lee Martin Bair and Dorothy Heacock-Bair.

Santiago: Was your father a farmer Sir?

Dwayne: My father was a farmer up in Iowa and the whole family sold the farm. My father and his father and two brothers were also farming in Southwest Iowa. They put all the equipment and mules on the train and came to Edinburg to start farming.

Santiago: And when you were, when you were a child you lived on I'm sure was out in the country back then, because Edinburg was about two three miles away from it. Uh, your childhood would you explain it as being adventurous?

Dwayne: Uh ...

Santiago: Were you a are hard worker? Were you considered a farmhand by your dad?

Dwayne: Oh yeah. When you lived on a farm there was always something to do. I know my grandkids would say there is nothing to do grandpa. Well we never said that.

Santiago: [laughs]

Dwayne: Yeah we had chickens to take care of, we had calves to feed, we had horses to feed, I had a cow to milk. We had work to do. You did your job without asking. As far as fun, we had a lot of fun. We did, like I say, we had three riding horses and a work horse. So uh I roamed free as a little kid. I got my slingshot. Some of the kids across the road that worked for the neighbor, we'd all go out and go down the railroad track and get a pocket full of rocks you know we would shoot a lot of stuff we shouldn't have probably.

Santiago: [Laughs]

Dwayne: But I roamed free as a kid. We'd go swimming in the canals. We'd ... I mean I didn't know about a swimming pool until I was in high school. My neighbor, that neighbor was a *wino* and [group laughter] he'd throw gallon wine bottles in our citrus grove and we'd put 'em in a toe sack of potatoes bag and make it float. My folks never knew that. Anyway we'd roam free yeah and my dad would ring a bell. When he rang that bell that meant come home. It was very adventurous. So one day I decided I wanted a to parachute, so I got a tractor umbrella and I got up on the roof and then the wind caught it and pulled me off, so I thought I wasn't high enough, so I go in the house and get a sheet... [group muttering] We had a two story barn with a big wide door. We kept hay up there and boxes for tomato harvest. For a parachute, I took a sheet, so I could float down you know, so I got up in that two story building there in the barn, and I kicked the little hay but not enough and jumped.

Santiago: [laughing]

Dwayne: When I came to, I had knocked myself out when I hit myself in the chin, with my knee, and I said maybe I'm not high enough. Thank God there was nothing higher on the farm [laughs], but anyway so everything was exciting. We rode horses, we played Cowboys and Indians, and the city friends would come out you know and we'd ride bare back, and so we made these rubber guns. Back there before World War II you could get good red rubber tubes that would make good elastic. We'd make machine guns, rubber machine guns and pistols you know ... So I'd give them city guys, my friends that came out there a pistol. They would get on a horse and go while I counted to a hundred and I'll come find you. I gave them a pistol, a rubber gun you know, [laughing] it can't hurt you bad. It might sting a little bit. I'd track 'em down. I'd track 'em down and then when I find them. They never figured it out. They thought I was a bad shot, 'cause I never shot them. I shoot their horse and they would fall off and the horse would run to the barn. So we had a lot of fun. Yes we ... were very very adventurous.

Santiago: You had how ...

Dwayne: We had a lot of work to do to.

Santiago: ... many brothers and sisters?

Dwayne: Okay, I had two other brothers and one sister.

Santiago: And you the youngest, the youngest boy?

Dwayne: No uh, my oldest brother was uh uh born in 1930. My sister was born in '32. I was born in '34, and my little brother was born in '38. My brothers and I were four years apart.

Santiago: Okay. Uh, would you, would you describe the uh, could you describe for us when ... there was freeze in '62 right? Is it that was ...

Dwayne: '49, '51, '62, '83, and '89 plus 85.

Santiago: Well in '49 I'm sure you were still in school.

Dwayne: Yeah, I was still in school.

Santiago: At that time ...

Dwayne: That I remember yeah.

Santiago: And uh, did you all ... when uh, I know as family you said you had uncles and brothers and everybody else. During the freeze was ... there was no crop of choice back then, so you ...

Dwayne: Well no, no ...

Santiago: The the everything was

Santiago: Oh yeah you know it.

Santiago: And how much, how, what were uh excuse me. What was your main crop back then? Was it oranges, was it grapefruit?

Dwayne: Grapefruit and oranges.

Santiago: And uh produce?

Dwayne: Yeah we grew produce to. We grew, later on we grew a lot of carrots, and tomatoes, and I grew pickles, I grew green beans, and uh tried some onions and lettuce, but I didn't grow too much of that.

Santiago: And, when uh, after the freezes you all came back and did it again.

Dwayne: Unfortunately, I mean we had our own citrus nursery and we tried to protect that nursery and keep water running all night, and in the '62 freeze I remember driving a pick up all night. We had anything like a big fogging machine. My dad bought it at an Army surplus store and put a barrel of diesel in there and drip in into this, it's like a big hot muffler. It had a little engine. He kept it real hot. You dripped the diesel and made a fog, so I drove all night around our nursery. We had two blocks 10-15 acres another one 10-15 acres of citrus trees.

Santiago: It's okay.

Dwayne: If you have a cloud layer the heat goes up and comes back down. If you have a clear sky, you're gonna freeze the heck out of stuff. If you got a cloud layer, the heat don't dissipate. It stays in there, so I was makin' a cloud layer. Next day in town somebody said did you see that cloud last night? 'Cuz we lived over in North East Edinburg (laughing) so anyway the Northern was blowing it all over town.

Roseanne, Dwayne, Ray, Selina, Ismael, Santiago: [laugh]

Dwayne: They were.

Santiago: And ...

Roseanne: So that was a special trick then that the farmers did to?

Dwayne: Yeah, yeah. We also burned tires. We stacked up used tires on the upwind side, so the heat would blow over the trees. We had tires all around the nursery, but you couldn't put 'em around your whole citrus grove. We had about ninety-five acres citrus in '62. So uh we tried to save it. If we couldn't save them then we had to push the trees out.

Santiago: Uh, I just thought about something. During the World War II, the second World War, I know there was a lot of rationing. There was a lot of uh you know they had a lot of rationing they had *migras* Mondays stuff like that. Were you was you as agriculture people, were you directly affected by that? Or ...

Dwayne: Yeah.

Santiago: Or ...

Dwayne: We had a little book. We were fortunate people. [jokingly] “You damn farmers get all the gas.” You know, but we had a little book and you’d tear out a coupon. But it was hard to get tractor tires, so we had a lot of citrus, and so my dad bought a Oliver Cletrac. It was like a little D-2 Caterpillar a D-3 with iron wheels you know, so it had fenders on it so it wouldn’t knock the fruit off. So we used that in the groves you know. It’s hard to turn around and everything when you had a ditcher plate on it, but anyway that’s what we used during the war there. I remember all the coupons for sugar and gasoline, and of course we were fortunate. Later on we’d go to Mexico and get sugar. We could only bring much you know.

Santiago: So you would say that because uh and after the second World War that’s when everything took off, but before the Edinburg canal was built where would you go get your water from? Do you remember?

Dwayne: Well before that uh there wasn’t any water unless until they got the irrigation system and all of these blue lines [proceeds to point them out on his property maps] here you know.

Santiago: And what year was that do you know?

Santiago: The year you were born?

Dwayne: I would say in the ‘30’s.

Santiago: The 30’s.

Dwayne: In the early ‘30’s or late ‘20’s when they, first they did the survey.

Santiago: Uh huh.

Dwayne: First, they did the survey and then they started laying the lines. That was a great engineering one of the greatest engineering feats in the Valley. Peñitas is 144 feet above sea level where the Dist. #1 pumping plant is.

Santiago: Yes.

Dwayne: My farm, where I grew up is 85 feet above sea level. So everything falls to the North East outta here. Your ... if you look at a map ...

Santiago: Yeah topical.

Dwayne: The elevation it all flows towards the North East from here. That’s why your county main drain, the big drain. It flows to the gulf.

Santiago: Yeah, yeah.

Dwayne: Anyway to answer your question late ‘20’s or early ‘30’s I guess when all this maybe it was before that I’m sorry. I ... I didn’t ...

Santiago: Not it’s alright no problem.

Santiago: Uh, that’s my questions.

Roseanne: Certain system irrigations systems were set up earlier than that, but during uh the Great Depression and the federal relief programs ...

Dwayne: Okay.

Roseanne: There was a lot of cement lining.

Dwayne: Okay.

Roseanne: ... of the irrigation canals. So, uh, you would see more work and and definitely uh more specific uh maps set out to lay out the plans for these irrigation.

Roseanne: You know ‘cause you know the Hidalgo (County) Pump house was pumpin’ water to irrigate fields back in the turn of the century, so yeah.

Roseanne: Yes.

Dwayne: ... irrigation districts up and down the river all up and down the Valley. I use 3 of ‘em in district one, and district two, and district 15...

Roseanne: Yeah.

Dwayne: ... but uh uh they're all up and down the Valley, but that was probably [Inaudible] irrigating sugar cane...

Roseanne: Yes, at the San Juan Plantation.

Santiago: Oh, oh another question. Oh, I'm sorry another question. Uh, get back to the farming, I'm very interested in farming, uh the Shary [Inaudible] was there. That's the irrigation. Was there any uh dairies anything around here? I remember there was a dairy. There was a creamery down here downtown uh ...

Dwayne: It was "Golden Jersey Creamery".

Santiago: Was that local milk?

Dwayne: Yeah local milk.

Santiago: Local milk?

Dwayne: There was several little dairies around here, and there's one on Alamo Road.

Santiago: But there was also one on 23rd St right?

Dwayne: Oh yeah.

Santiago: And Freddie Gonzales?

Dwayne: Yeah, that was uh a friend of mine. Anyway yeah there was a dairy there.

Santiago: Yeah now you pass by there ...

Dwayne: I remember ...

Santiago: ... and there was also one in Mission right by the cemetery.

Dwayne: Yeah.

Santiago: Uh, the uh when you when you went uh where was the packing shed that you took your stuff to was here in Edinburg was one in McAllen?

Dwayne: Well, it's uh right down over here uh there's several Hugh Rouw had a big shed he was a big shipper. Uh, Edinburg Citrus Association was where Pueblo Tires is ...

Santiago: Um huh.

Dwayne: ... next to the train station, but just South of that there was two or three ...

Santiago: *Bodegas*.

Dwayne: ... Bodegas you know. I think I mentioned this before, but railroad companies owned all of the property along railroad track. They built the packing houses at least to the people to run to run produce in, and of course coming back North of [Highway] 107 up here. Uh, that's where my grandmother and grandfather lived where the college bookstore [University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley] is. They had a half of block, and they had little rent houses, and of course there were packing houses right along there. People working in the packing houses there, so they're all up and down anywhere there's a railroad track, 'cause in those days most of the produce went through by rail, and so therefore like U.S. [Business]83 Highway they said the longest uh highway. How was it that you describe that? The longest highway.

Roseanne: The longest main street

Dwayne: The longest main street.

Roseanne: In the United States.

Dwayne: From Mission.

Santiago: To Brownsville, to Harlingen.

Roseanne: To Brownsville or Harlingen yeah. It was uh ...

Santiago: They used to call it uh what was it the they used to call it something? It had a ... Magic Valley Highway. What was it called back in those days. It had a name for

it, and uh we're talking about the crops and the farming and stuff like that. Was it hard to get farm labor?

Dwayne: No, we had farm labor. Uh, some people were here. Some came across. Some we helped get papers for, and then we had the Bracero Program, which I thought was a very good program. I don't know why they discontinued it, because I talked to a lot of the guys you know that came over here. They might have a little *ranchito* (ranch) over there, and they want to work for a few months. A lot of guys I talked to wanted to make a bit of money over there, but they could be here legally, and you know they had a permit to be here, so uh you know I thought it was a good program. You know up at the *llelera* Wallace Bracero camp, very large building up there where they housed the people in. A lot of them did harvesting. Well they weren't making as much money harvesting as they did when I took 'em to our farm to irrigate you know, and uh so they knew my pickup. They knew they'd make more money with me, so I drive up there and they see my pickup come up. I thought it was a very good program they would give 'em sack lunch you know, and we'd take 'em out and take 'em back to the when we're through. If if we needed extra men we had three houses on the farm. Some of the guys would stay with us all the time, but then we need extra people sometimes. There's a lot of crews in town you know, and they ran their crews.

Santiago: Okay that's all my questions.

Dwayne: You can cut all that off of the tape if you want to,

Roseanne: No.

Dwayne: ... but anyway I just ...

Santiago: No.

Roseanne: Those are good stories. We appreciate it.

Santiago: Next is from [Ismael] got some questions?

Ismael: Um, can you tell us uh your grandparents' names?

Dwayne: Uh, um yeah Joseph Wilson Heacock and Fannie Knowles.

Santiago: Knowles.

Dwayne: Fannie Knowles-Heacock. Thank you.

Santiago: He was born in 1877. He died 1958. She's born 1878 died in 1972.

Dwayne: Okay.

Ismael: Can you tell us a little bit of what influenced your parents to move to this region?

Dwayne.: I assume uh, like I say uh I wasn't around in 1913 when my mother came or 1920 when my dad came, but what there were a lot of these developers like names you see in here sometimes in the history in the Valley the developers ...

Dwayne: Sprague, Chapin.

Dwayne: Developers like San Juan Plantation a 100,000 acres you know, so they would send I don't know if they were the ones that did it. I assume they did. They would send people up into the cold country you know, probably in the winter time, and said come to the Valley, you know, hey man you can grow three crops a year, and it's warm down there. There up there in the cold with snow, and they think you know pretty good sell the farm and we'll go South. You know a lot of them had adventurous minds of course. You had to to sell everything you had, and move not knowing you know, but I assume to really answer your question is probably developers got 'em to come or maybe some friends or relatives uh moved and they said, "Come on down. It's okay." You know. I assume that's the way it was. Like I say I wasn't here '13 or '20 though.

Ismael: Can you give us a little bit more of um family traditions and in the sense of farming? Uh, the way you taught your children. The way your father taught you. Some of those family ...

Dwayne: Right.

Ismael: Um, family farming traditions.

Dwayne: His father I guess in Iowa and came down here. I started farming with my dad when I got out of the service. My father had a heart problem, and he wanted me to stay on the farm, which I did. So my dad taught me a lot of things, but my dad was very interested in protecting the soil. Uh, he was involved in a soil conservation group, and he made us, every three years we had to plant oats. We had to plant oats, so the roots would penetrate the hard pan, and then we would plant red top cane, and we put fertilizer and ammonia nitrate.

Ismael: [laughs]

Dwayne: We chopped the cane down and put ammonia nitrate mixed it in plowed it in the soil. Well and our land was very strong. Then my father put drain tile around six feet deep. Then it helps leak the salt from your soil. The quality of our soil is very good we could raise a lot of production on it. My brother and I came in the farm, we needed more acres because we couldn't support three families on the land. We had to rent more land, which we paid either crop rent or cash rent ... so we learned from our father, and our sons worked for us, they drove cotton pickers and drove tractors ... They wanted to farm I uh ... it hurt me to tell them there wasn't enough room to farm. I had to tell them sorry being better off going to college and getting a degree and go find a job... so... I hated that because in a way I wanted to stay on the land. Some of it my father sold it off years ago.

Ismael: Yes sir, uh ... one more question ... uh I know that y'all harvest different crops, but which would you say you have more passion for? The ...

Dwayne: Well! ... Of course I loved the citrus. We had crews that harvested it ... but I enjoyed, I enjoyed picking cotton crop, we had two John Deere cotton pickers, and it was fun have that old seed hit that fan up there, and you know and uh fill that basket with cotton... that was enjoyable... The vegetable crops were fun too, we grew a lot of chico tomatoes... We grew fresh tomatoes, and then when we got through the fresh tomatoes the cannery came in and harvested what was left. And then, they came out with the chico tomato which was stronger and solid, you could harvest them all almost at the same time... And they made good tonnage, we never got much pay for ton, we got from 12 to 15 a ton. So we didn't make much for ton, but we had to make a lot of tons per acre, so if you make 20 ton an acre, then you do alright... so uh we try to keep our production high, 'cause the price they paid us was not that high. But to answer your question I enjoyed harvesting any crop. The worry and sweat you put in a crop and then finally you get it harvest it. It's great to harvest any crop. I really enjoyed hearing that cotton go up in the picker.

Ismael: That concludes my questions...

Dwayne: Selina?

Selina: Okay, my research is basically on the land and that other entire thing [Land Title History and Spanish Land Grants], I don't have that many questions to present you, but I do notice that your house was standing by 1930, so approximately what year was the house built?

Dwayne: '26.... You know I uh... I... I can show you a picture there. I don't know which one you have let me show you the old house that was actually. That one, that is a way it looked in '26, when the folks built it on Chapin Rd. It was a pretty small house, later on when they had four in the family they put on another wing.

Santiago, Ismael, Selina, Ray: No... No Sir...

Roseanne: I have photos of the farm as it stands today...

Dwayne: Anyway, it's pretty sad looking today the barn is falling down and uh, the shop shed that I built after I got out of the Army, my dad put me to work building a tractor shed with a carpenter. They gave that 40 acres to my older brother, he was the oldest in the family so they gave the home base to them. But my brother died of cancer in '88.

Roseanne: Wasn't your sister living there too? Or?...

Dwayne: Yeah, yeah they had a house in an acre and a half that's cut out of that 40 acre block. My sister lived there. In fact my mother and dad lived there and then dad died right after they built it... '62 freeze. Dad must of built it in '61 then he died in '62, and my mother took care of Ms. Heacock, Grandma was there until she was 95 then died in that house, and then my sister took care of my mother she died at 95, then my sister died last year at 83 all in the same house. Then the old house they let it go, they are going to tear it down I don't even want to go by there...

Roseanne: So there's two houses on the property.

Dwayne: Yeah there's two houses. The main farm house then dad and mom moved out the house so they gave it to my brother and his wife and family.

Roseanne: So the one right on Chapin Road is the one that was built in 1926?

Dwayne: Yes, in '26 the original part got a little, a porch here a room there, and you know they added on...

Roseanne: Is it behind there?

Dwayne: It's got a bunch of bushes and trees

Roseanne: So it's on the property but it's behind the original home?

Dwayne: No it's right next to it.

Roseanne: Right next...

Dwayne: You can't see it because my sister did maintain it, her husband died, my sister was a teacher, she taught at Stephen F. Austin for many years.

Santiago: Perales?

Santiago: He used to teach at San Isidro...

Selina: So I have another question, I do notice that the original deeds to the property they were given by Chapin, and another patriarch here in the community. I do [know] that your dad unfortunately passed away with that freeze, so when he passed away whose name was on the property?

Dwayne: My mother's. Then they deeded that over to my brother. I guess they did that over a period of time. It was a 10,000 dollar values without having to pay taxes on it. So a little bit every year, you know giving it away without having to pay taxes on it. So there was some land we inherited. There was some down by my house before the expressway came through it, uh.. I bought that property 58 years ago. But uh, and there is property my father had, the expressway came though and took a chunk outta my dad's land so he gave me a little triangle piece up against my land. And then my brother and I bought a 40 acre block from a guy from up north, when my brother was farming we bought three or four 40 acre blocks. But you know when you have a disaster like you lose all your crops in a hurricane or

flood, you know you gotta pay your debt, so you sell a piece of land. Over the years we were growing then bad things happened we'd sell a piece of land and pay our debts, you know then come back down. Which was kinda the way it worked.

Selina: Okay, my final question, just to specify... Can you give me the full physical address of the location of the main house?

Dwayne: Yeah right here [looks through maps] That would be lot 8 section 241, Texas-Mexican railway survey, that was the home base

Roseanne: And the number on Chapin Road is?

Dwayne: The number where I lived, where my house was, lot 6 section 246 Texas-Mexican railway and my brother and I had other pieces we bought... I lived in the home place 20 years till I went in the army, I was drafted outta college here, and then I got out. I got married and worked out in the farm, eventually I bought some property and stayed there 45 years. 20 years in the home place and 45 years there. When all the kids were gone, my wife wanted a smaller yard because she liked working in the yard, gardening and all that, and so she wanted to sell the farm house and move to town.

Roseanne, Selina, Ismael, Ray: [all laugh]

Dwayne: So we sold one acre, just one acre where the house was, then later on we sold that other property [coughs] So that's kinda it .. that's the ... that's the legal part and I don't know I didn't get an abstract on my land 'cause they quit doing that... and these abstracts here my father owned... Do you know out here where international paper plant is on the corner of Chapin and 281

Santiago: 281

Dwayne: That piece of land there all of it, all the way back to the railroad my dad owned that then in 1950 he sold it to...to uh... to.. Southern Pacific railroad to their real estate division, and then they sold it to that paper plant, and then dad saved the 10 acres for the Edinburg Citrus Assn. Then 10 more for Edinburg Coop Grain Elevator so they both would have access to the railroad track. In fact, when I worked at Edinburg Citrus, I shipped the last car load of citrus outta the Valley in rail car. After then no one shipped by rail anymore...

Ray: Okay so I'll start with my questions, my question might predate you but um, when your family arrived to the Valley, did the Valley meet their expectations or did it somehow fail?

Dwayne: I'm sure it did. They never talked about it they tried to make the best outta everything, you know... so I'm sure it met their expectations. Um, my dad stayed on the farm, it's the 80 acre block out here north of town. Block 241 was the first piece of land that my grandfather bought and they had a farm house and a barn out there. My dad had two brothers and two sisters and the rest of them they left the farm.

Roseanne, Selina, Ismael, Ray: [all laugh]

Roseanne: [laughs]

Ray: Why did your father pick land here in Edinburg, supposed to land somewhere else closer to the river?

Dwayne: Well, I guess it was the person, the salesman probably uh, uh, like I say uh, I think the promoters were probably from this area so they found this piece of land and talked them into uh, to buying it. I really don't know I can't give you a better answer on that. I wasn't here uh. You know my mother said there was no highway

between Falfurrias and Edinburg it was all dirt road so they came in a Buick touring car, it had big holders on the side where they'd put their suitcases. They had a tent, they'd put their tent up every night, cook their meals on the side of the road all the way from Iowa down here you know.

Santiago: The *Grapes of Wrath* the movie.

Dwayne: Yeah, but then they'd live in a tent out here at the college, my grandpa used to own some land over here some out near the college bookstore is, they stayed in a tent until they could build their house. Got their house built then they got into it.

Roseanne: So these were the Bairs?

Dwayne: Heacocks.

Roseanne: Oh the Heacocks, so that, that was the family with the 80 acres and put the house up?

Dwayne: no that was the Bairs, the Bairs did that.

Roseanne: Okay, So that Bair family that has the 80 acres are different from the family that built the house in 1926?

Dwayne: No, Dad built the house on Chapin after he got married and moved off of the original farmhouse.

Roseanne: Is the house on the original 80 acres still standing?

Dwayne: No, it's owned by some trucking company up here.

Roseanne: Where did the Heacocks built their house?

Dwayne: Well like I say where the college bookstore is.

Roseanne: Mmhmm...

Dwayne: They had half a block there, the house first then they built 5 little rent houses because there was a lot of people working in the packing sheds up and down the railroad track. So it's easy to rent them. My grandpa also had the hardware store...

Roseanne: So those houses aren't standing anymore?

Dwayne: No, no, no there's a college bookstore there.

Roseanne: Yes I'm aware [laughs]

Ray: So what differences in the City of Edinburg have you noticed over time?

Dwayne: Oh gosh, [phones rings]

Roseanne: Ask your question again?

Ray: So what differences have you noticed over time in Edinburg, and have they been for the better or the worst?

Dwayne: Yeah, of course for the better you know if you look at it as a farmer you see good soil, good land covered with asphalt and cement you know, but you gotta understand towns gotta grow and cities have to expand and when they do they have to take up a lot of land. The farm right up this road the Norquest, just on the other side of that baseball field, I rented their land and cultivated 40 acres... you know but yeah... I guess you have to say it's for the good, in most cases because people have to have a place to live. But it kinda hurts to see good land and there goes a subdivision you know and you can't farm it anymore.

[All laugh]

Dwayne: Did that answer your question?

Ray: Yes, um, what has growing up in the Valley instilled in you as a person?

Dwayne: Well, [long pause] I like smaller towns, you know I get along with everybody and uh...you know it's more diverse now, let's face it, it's changed and now the Anglo population is now five percent. That changed dramatically. It's a, it's a unique place to live, agriculture you can grow all years around. And in Mexico I

have some friends down there. I used to love to travel down there and drive down there over near Tampico and that part of Mexico. It's a beautiful country down there, beautiful rivers. A friend of mine farmed down there. But to answer your question I like it down here and liked my life. Oh it's fun to get outta here and see some hills. First time my folks took us out to see the Frio River we got to Rio Grande City and we said boy look at those mountains!

[All laugh]

Dwayne: The little Lomita I thought was a mountain, and it's nice to get out of the Valley. My brother-in-law lives out up north of Campwood. So it's fun to get out of the Valley and see some hills, we are flatlanders over here but it's fun to live here it's home.

Santiago: You said you knew the Edinburg Citrus Association and the Texas mutual, was it?

Dwayne: Yeah

Santiago: when that came together did you combat prices from Florida or California prices?

Dwayne: Yeah let me break them down. First of all Citrus Mutual was a growers organization and we worked with grower problems and then there was TexaSweet, which we put money into advertising our citrus from the Valley. Then there was Texas Citrus and Vegetable Association and that included the packing sheds and the growers. Then there was the Texas Growers Association which included cardboard box manufacturers and then we had Texas Valley Citrus Committee which we set the regulations of size and quality of our grapefruit and oranges. But we controlled our sizes and all of that through federal marketing order. So there was that group. Then of course the Edinburg Citrus Association was a co- operative. I went on the board in 1962 when my dad died. Anyways there was several co-operatives and then we deiced in the late 60s that we need to build our own juice plant, so we put all these together and we borrowed the money so we could build the juice plant in mission Texas Citrus Exchange. Other Coops formed such as Rio Tex Citrus Association, Lake Delta Citrus Association and the South Texas Citrus Association.

Santiago: I've smelled it.

Dwayne: You've smelled it? Yeah! You can smell the pulp when you running citrus any way so we all put that together in the early 70s we borrowed the money and uh built that plant and took all of the fruit juice to that plant and we were the only juice plant in the Valley so we had our own fresh fruit sales department that sold for all of the Coops. Kika helped us get tree insurance in '83. A lot of people think the government takes care of us in some disaster, but it doesn't. We did get tree insurance in 1983 in fact I went to with the manager of Texas Produce Association to Washington in 1982 to testify and Kika helped us get that insurance program. Sure enough we got a freeze the next year. What it would do, the insurance program allow you enough money to replant baby trees to help you get back in business, so that was a good program, that's the only government program that really helped us growers.

Santiago: What year did you get married?

Dwayne: Uh I'd ...

Santiago: Uh, you better remember.

Dwayne: Yup.

Santiago: What date and what year?

Dwayne: Yup better remember. November 13 1954.

Santiago: And your wife's name?

Dwayne: Shirley Ann

Santiago: Shirley Ann and last name?

Dwayne: Martin.

Dwayne: Her dad was a field man for a packing shed.

Santiago: Okay and how did you meet in school?

Dwayne: No, I met her on a hay ride. I was with another girl actually we were on a hay ride we use to have hay rides you know and uh we all know what a hayride is?

Anyway we got the eye'n and you know any way we kind of eye balled each other and uh then uh she started coming to our church she was catholic before that then she came to the Methodist church [laughs] anyway started coming to church and we got married in 54.

Santiago: Was she a local? Was she from here?

Dwayne: Yeah, she was from Edinburg.

Dwayne: Yeah she was local.

Santiago: So her family, what did, he was field man you said?

Dwayne: Yeah.

Santiago: [explanation to group members] I don't know if you know what a field man is he's the one works for the packing house.

Dwayne: Packing houses they go out and check the fields get the farmers to grow crops.

Santiago: ... to make sure the crops are ready.

Dwayne: When they get the harvesting goods to come in over see them make sure they harvest all of that.

Santiago: And uh then you had three children?

Dwayne: Four.

Santiago: Four, three boys and a girl.

Dwayne: No, two boys and two girls.

Santiago: And their names?

Dwayne: Steven Lee Bair is the oldest. He was born in a 55, December 1955 in William Beaumont Army Hospital.

Santiago, Ray, Ismael, Selina: It's okay it happens.

Jimmy: And then?

Dwayne: And then okay then it's Jeffery Scott J-E-F-F-E-R-Y. Jeffery Scott Bair and Joan, actually she calls herself Joni 'cause "they call me Joan I don't like the name Joan." She calls herself "Joni", Joan Margaret Bair, and then Julie we actually we never got a name of the birth certificate for middle name, so she calls herself Julie Bair McDonald. Now she married a McDonald.

Santiago: How many grandchildren do you have?

Dwayne: I have seven grandchildren and six great grandsons.

Santiago: [whistles] Expensive Christmas?

Santiago: And they were all educated here in Edinburg?

Dwayne: Yup, every one of them graduated from high school. I said okay I want you to go to college kids and get a degree 'cause I didn't finish and always is better for you, you can open doors they don't guarantee a dang thing, but it will open doors you then gotta do your job, but anyway he said I don't want to spend my time and my money. I said "Then get out and dig ditches, so he went and worked for North Alamo Water Supply. Any way but he was good with equipment he drove pickers for me and tractors. Then he went with some guys they went up did roofing big

stores bounced around then he wind up over at McAllen Aviation then uh and he liked aviation, so he learn to fly, so he became an instructor and charter pilot it came naturally to him, and so he flew all over Mexico and all over United States, and then taught a lot of people to fly and uh told me "I'm going to be an Airline pilot" and I said no you're not cause you don't have any college, and I've always heard you need two years of college, so he took all of the test and aced all the test. He flew for Emerald airlines first of all he was captain when he was 26, I guess, and then he flew for American West a long time he's flown over thirty five years then American West bought out U.S Air and then they merge with American Airlines, but a couple of years ago he was flying from Phoenix, Hawaiian Islands, Cancun Mexico, and Washington D.C. He goes to those different places, but then he was landing one night and he told them turn on the runway lights up, and uh he said "I can land the alright but when I got back UH UH," so two or three years ago he's through. He's got my genes. I have macrodegenertion in one of my eyes and you gotta have 20/20 eye vision to be a an airline pilot. In fact I had to sell my plane, because I got a license, but I don't have the medical and you suppose to have both.

Santiago: What kind of plane did you have?

Dwayne: I had a tail dragger. I got a picture of them both I had a Maule, a piper. They took the nose gear off they move the front main gear forward now there but that was a fun one that had a big motor in.

Santiago: This is the last one you have?

Dwayne: I could take off in two hundred foot by myself, low fuel, with a little head wind.

Jimmy: What did you this for traveling for surveying?

Mr. Bair: I've been all over Colorado, and I've been to Arizona all over in Texas

Jimmy: In this? [points to a picture of a plane that Mr. Bair brought with him]

Mr. Bair: Oh yeah. I've made it to Phoenix in six hours. It wasn't a real fast plane, but I can make it to Phoenix in about six hours. I'd go to Fort Stockton and fuel up. I had a aux tanks on it.

Santiago: Did you take your wife with you?

Mr. Bair: No, um she wouldn't. She went two times. My brother-in-law had cancer, and I had to take her to Pleasanton.

Santiago: Pleasanton?

Dwayne: Pleasanton, Pleasanton thank you thank you. I had to fly her to Pleasanton once, and I flew her up. Our granddaughter got baptized in College Station. She went, but two times and that's it. I had planes for twenty some years. She only went two times. I understand some people are you know afraid of flying.

Santiago: When you were in the service were you in the Air Force?

Dwayne: No, I was in the Army.

Santiago: Army?

Dwayne: Army yeah anyway, so Steve he's through flying. The next one, Scott is senior system engineer in College Station for A&M. He handles the program for A&M. You know there's A&M campus all over the state of Texas. Anyway he could have retired last year or two years ago, but he wants to work some more to get a better retirement, and he said "Dad as long they have main frames they gotta have me because I know some stuff they none of them know." But he said "There gonna go to the cloud." You know the cloud? Y'all understand that? Young

people understand all about the cloud. Anyway he said "As long they have main frames they need me," so he's gonna work maybe one more year.

Roseanne: Yeah sure.

Dwayne: He's only 57, but it's his hobby judo fighting. He fought MMA stuff. He's terrific. I mean he's not a smart alec, but he could be dangerous. He actually fought in the ring with bigger guys and everything. He said, "The big ones don't bother me any way." Finally, he quit his knees and elbows started hurting. Okay that's Scott he lives in College Station. He married a girl from uh from Brownsville. They have a little beautiful little girl, Tony Maria, and she went to the University of Texas and got an Art degree. Linda runs Evans library in A&M, and Scott works in the computers. Okay then Joni uh is a teacher in Los Fresnos, and she use to be here in Zavala. She was a coach for many years out here in Zavala. She like to surf, so she living on the Island. Any way she still teaching, and then Julie got a Master's Degree in Speech and Hearing. My youngest daughter here at Pan AM. She is in the McAllen school system. She works with pre-talk. They call them 3, 4, and 5 year old kids and all these different kids with problems, and she has to go to the home some times to help with kids. She's very conscientious helps kids.

Santiago: Um, okay uh your brother you had said two brothers?

Dwayne: Well um okay my oldest brother Howard of course he died of lymphoma 1988. He was like I said. He was born in a 1930, so he was 58 when he died of lymphoma. They did not have much how to take care of in here in the Valley at the time. He died a horrible death. Then my little brother went to A&M first year. Then he came back went to Pan Am. He joined the rodeo club and weightlifting club, and he went one year then a approved to go back to A&M and August 28 1960 he'd been riding bulls one night out here at the Sheriff's Posse Arena. Then he got in car with some guys and it was kind of raining, and they were going down you know where 2nd street and huh Lutheran/Methodist church. Any way they didn't make that curve, and they slid sideways in the church sign, and my brother was sitting in the back seat, and he was killed and the other boy killed.

Santiago: And what was his name?

Dwayne: James Edward.

Santiago: James Edward.

Dwayne: Yeah, James Edward.

Santiago: So he had to been huh 19 or 20?

Dwayne: He was 20 years um my dad never got over that. That's why he worked himself to death. He went out in the fields. He would take a hoe and go hoe weeds and not talk to anybody and uh pretty sad, so when that freeze came he said "boys we gotta cover the whole trees with dirt." Have I told you the that part cover the trees any we covered about 30 acres with the shovels you know, and uh men in the farm helped us. We had to get the tractor to loosen the dirt up so we can. Any way we saved the trees lost my dad.

Santiago: And then you had there was only 3 boys a daughter?

Dwayne: Yeah, then my brother died and then another brother died, and then my sister died last.

Santiago: So you the only one left?

Santiago: And your sister's name was?

Dwayne: Pardon me?

Santiago: And your sister's name was?

Dwayne: Marjarie M-A-R-J-O-R-I-E Maureen Flanagan. Yeah she uh she had weak heart. She had seven kids.

Roseanne: She was born in 1932 is she the one who recently passed away? So she lived a quite long life?

Roseanne: I actually have a one question. Um, uh it's related to the so called "Founding Fathers of Edinburg." Um, men like such John Closner or Dennis Banks Chapin or Sprague. While you were growing up, you were born in 1934, I think John Closner passed away around about that time. Um, while you were growing up did you know any of the family members of those founding fathers of Edinburg? Did you hear any stories of you know of how they moved the court house from the now City of Hidalgo into Edinburg? Was there any folklore any stories anything that you called recall from the Founding Fathers and their families?

Dwayne: Yes, I didn't know any of the Closners, but my mother had friends who were the Closners. I heard them talking about it. I didn't personally know them, but yeah I heard the story about how.... of course I've read it and heard talking about how they moved the courthouse at night and there went in there and moved it up to a little piece of land here that somebody had donated. I think to build the courthouse, and so they moved all the books up here. I think at night so any way.

Roseanne: Um hmm ...

Dwayne: So there was a lot of controversy, and I understand that Mercedes wanted the courthouse down there

Roseanne: Yes.

Dwayne: But uh ...

Roseanne: They wanted it there. It was the highest um elevation from the river and Hidalgo kept flooding from the Rio Grande, and uh that was a difficult thing for the courthouse to be there, and they wanted to move it. The suggested for Mercedes, but uh because of its elevation, but because of the landowners John Closner and his friends would prefer that it be up in Edinburg.

Santiago: What can you tell us about Sheriff Victors and uh Judge Richardson and those people. You know who I'm talking about right?

Mr. Bair: Oh yeah. I know Judge Richardson. I didn't know Victor.

Santiago: He worked for the sheriffs for about forty years.

Dwayne: He was here for a long time uh?

Santiago: They were part of the *Patron* system.

Dwayne: Well before him of course was uh ...

Santiago: Baker.

Dwayne: A.Y. Baker.

Santiago: A.Y. Baker.

Dwayne: Pretty much controlled politics.

Santiago: So I've heard stories about you know of the people who in charge of the courthouse at that time.

Dwayne: I've [interrupted]

Santiago: I guess you remember 1970 when Ed Gomez finally beat Richardson for county judge was the first Mexican American to get elected anywhere in the Valley.

Dwayne: Is that right? I didn't know?

Santiago: Ed Gomez use to be an anchor for Channel 4.

Dwayne: Yeah.

Santiago: Remember that?

Dwayne: Yeah, I remember Ed.

Santiago: Remember Ed and uh that was a blow to the establishment of the A.Y. Baker's and Costnos, and that's when everybody else, and that's when they started losing all the clout, but that, I was wondering if you knew anything about. I heard stories about Milton Richardson and Oscar McInnis, and Oscar McInnis went to prison trying to kill that guy, his girlfriend's guy.

Dwayne: I was in the grand jury for him and for some murders and Oscar McInnis was ...
[interrupted]

Santiago: DA?

Dwayne: ... was the DA sat next to me in Hidalgo Courthouse and several murders happen when I was in the grand jury. I uh I can say.

Roseanne: You can be general.

Santiago: And how about Senator? What was the guy's name? Remember the guy Bates, Jim Bates Mr.?

Dwayne: Jim Bates? Oh yeah, "Diamond Jim."

Santiago: You knew him?

Santiago: He was a friend of mine. In fact I was in grand jury in federal grand jury when we use to go to Brownsville at the time. The Bates family grew up in *Hielera*. The dad worked for Southern Pacific. They lived in a box car. Jim Bates and Billy Bob Bates, I knew them all. In fact Billy Bob was on my board directors in the Citrus Assn., but I knew the Bates family and uh, so I was in federal court grand jury and the judge said, "Anybody know of these lawyers?" Okay after all you come up to the bench, so I went to the bench. "How well do you know them?" "Well I know their family and his father worked for SP," and you know and I knew their brothers. "But how well did you know them?" "I mean did you really know them real close?" I said, "Well yeah, I use to sit on his lap and drive the school bus on bus number 2 in North Edinburg." Boy he got mad at me. He called me a bad name when we got out of court. I did. I was little kid you know, "you wanna drive this?" "Sure come on." We had a dirt road on Chapin Road. It was a dirt road, so I got up on his lap. I was in grade school and was steering the school bus. When I got out of there (court) he said, "you didn't have to tell them everything he called me a bad name. Well he kept asking how well I know them him. "Well I know him well enough," I said. Of course nowadays, if you say you sat in a lap you know people you know it's sad. [mimicking] Yeah he was a little upset. Yeah, I knew him pretty good. In fact when one of my daughters got married, Jim bates cooked the beans. Johnny Economedes cooked the barbecue.

Santiago: Economedes?

Dwayne: Economedes? Yeah, he cooked the meat. Jim Bates cooked the beans. We had a big yard wedding for my daughter, so yeah we're good friends.

Santiago: Anything else? Anybody [looks around the room]? I think that's all Mr. Bair. We thank you for being here and thank you for your time. I hope your wife feels better, and if you know want to add anything later on feel free to contact us.

Dwayne: Yeah, feel free to. Like I say you know I'm unemployed now as long as I get my house work done. I was a stockholder and director for First National Bank, so they hired me to chase real-estate and do inspections. We lost 179 million dollars of Freddy Mac stock. That's what hurt First National Bank. We had banks, 60 banks all over the state of Texas from El Paso Del Rio, Eagle Pass and all over the state, it was a good bank, but anyway we lost that much money out of our capital, and so they uh gonna shut us down, so I told my wife I don't have a job anymore,

and she said, “then you gotta either do the vacuum or the washing. “No let me see, the washing machine has too many buttons you couldn’t probable figure it out.” I said, “Yeah I probably couldn’t figure it out of course. I’ve only flown airplanes,” but anyways I can’t figure it out it’s too complicated you know. I’ll do the vacuuming. I do the vacuuming. She does the washing and the mopping.

Roseanne: The lesser of two evils.

Dwayne: And I told her. I said want a cordless vacuum cleaner, because I’m old now. I’m clumsy. I got two artificial hips. I fall sometimes you know I want a battery power vacuum cleaner you know see you don’t have a job, and it’s not in our budget. When it comes on the TV they advertise the Cobra I say [clears my throat]. She just she grins she won’t look at me. No it’s not in our budget, so I keep telling her I want a better vacuum cleaner. These are old.

[Interview ends]

Appendix G

Interviewee: Dwayne Bair

Interviewers: Colin Newton, Victor Limon, Eduardo Pichardo, Rafael Soto, Roseann Bacha-Garza

Date: Friday 10/16/2015

Location: CHAPS Office, Troxel Hall, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Victor Limon: A couple of the questions that I want to go through Mr. Bair are going to be concerning like the farm workers. You know just kind of recap what was going on with the strike and stuff like that. My first question to you is during the time of the labor strikes in 1968 how the melon strikes, how much of an impact that that have on your farm and you farm workers?

Dwayne Bair: It didn't have any impact, of course I wasn't growing melons either.

Victor Limon: Oh ok, we know that there was a Bracero program here in the valley in the 1940 through the 1960 I think, and did you, were you using the bracero program for you laborers.

Dwayne Bair: Yes, I was and I thought it was a great program. For example, Wallace had a bracero camp at the *Hielera*, because it was huge ice plant at Loll. Wallace had a big camp up there and I would go pick up men there. They would see my pick up and run to me because, they knew that could make more money irrigating than they could picking different vegetables. But yes I thought it was a great program I talked to a lot of the guys in the program, may be they had a little *ranchito* somewhere in Mexico. They didn't want to stay here they wanted to come over earn a little money and go back home. They had identification you know and they didn't have to worry about anybody picking them up. I thought it was a wonderful program and I wonder why they ever quit the darn thing, I don't know maybe you know why, but I thought I was a very good program.

Victor Limon: as far as for as far as for the migrant workers that we had in this area . Do you recall hiring your employees? Were they more Mexicans as far as Mexican Nationals or were they more of the Mexican-American community like the local people here?

Dwayne Bair: Well, probably the local people. Although some of them helped them get papers.

Victor Limon: Ok

Dwayne Bair: We had two families come in here hungry and afraid. I tell you we felt sorry them. Then we built three homes. We had three houses on the farm where we let them stay. And of course we took care of the electricity and water and we didn't charge them, because you know it was handy for us to have someone there all the time and they stayed with us for a long time. And I remember these two families each had two sons so that was six people. And that you know was a lot of people there for the farm. Of course when you get into harvest that was a different story, you get a crew. But I would say yes we used probably more Mexican Americans (Victor also answers at the same time "Mexican- Americans). I always worry about how to refer

to that. You know like I told the other group yesterday, you know none of us picked our mother and father we are who we are and you just make the best of it.

Victor Limon: The tension

Dwayne Bair: All this stuff that's happened these riots and stuff it just sickens me.

Victor Limon: As far as for your worker, the people that you would hire, what was the impact they had on your farm. As far as for bring them in and for you know picking your harvest. What was the impact? How much of an impact did they have on your farm?

Dwayne Bair: Well first of all of course you had to have labor in the farm. Nowadays more things are mechanized than they were. I used to weigh cotton when I was thirteen or fourteen you know and it was all by hands. My dad made me empty all the women's sacks (Bair smiles and laughs) but anyway it's necessary, you have to have labor especially if you are going to harvest vegetables and citrus. Now they tried some mechanical harvest of citrus in Florida, but it never worked. I've been to Florida and studied in some places over there to see new methods of everything but you have to have people picking the fruit.

Victor Limon: But do you recall what was the maximum amount of workers that you had at one time, maybe during a good harvest about how many people did you bring in?

Dwayne Bair: During harvest, well, if you are going by maximum, but this is an extreme, I used to grow green beans for Renown Foods over in McAllen, and one time we had three hundred and fifty (350) people out in a field harvesting. It was interesting they were singing songs from their state, from the area they were from Mexico. Three hundred and fifty people out and of course one of the things the sheds and everybody we were guilty of was not having good toilets in those days. Later on, of course, we required toilets. We had citrus growing next to where we were growing beans at times and they had to go somewhere you know and that was one thing that really bothered me. We finally got toilets on wheels with water and so forth. Normally for a crew, say a citrus crew, might be fifteen (15) people. Then we had tomato harvesters, there might be....tomato crew there might be twenty (20). Edinburg Citrus had four hundred (400) over four hundred (400) total people. We had one hundred and fifty (150) inside the shed there, and then the rest he had you know harvesters out in the field.

Victor Limon: Do you, can you recall like a family, you know how you had different families that were living there (Bair agrees with a "Yeah") one family that you really, I mean that they just stick in your mind. That just stands out above all the rest.

Dwayne Bair: Two Castro families came here and they were hungry and good workers. We had these houses built and each of them had two sons and they were good workers. Over the years they had earned enough money, and these guys from California, these labor recruiters would come in and drive through your farm. Of course they promised them the world I guess and so they left one night. And that kind of hurt because they were good people. I think they were embarrassed. They knew we had been right with them did everything right with them. But that opportunity came for them. So you know that's the way life is. You see something bigger down the road and so they loaded up their cars and everything and left to California and that kind of hurt. I wish they would have come by and told us you know we would have wished them well, but that's life. But another family that I remember Florencio Hernandez, after the sixty-two (referred to the year 1962) freeze we got wiped out. We had lost nine-

ty-five (95) acres of citrus. We lost all our crop all our trees everything else we had growing we lost. I will never forget Florencio. This is in the National geographic, a guy came by and wanted to interview me and we got to talking and he asked me "how do you get along with the people who work on the farm?" Florencio worked in our Potter and Bair Nursery. He came (Florencio) by and offered me (5 seconds pause Mr. Bair was emotional and took time to recollect) four thousand dollars (\$4,000) savings and that was in 1962 and that was his life savings I guess. That was a hell of a lot of money in 1962. That was like twenty (20) to twenty-five (25) thousand dollars today. he said i'll help you get started again. Well I appreciated it you know but it takes a lot more than that for farming. But the fact that he was willing to you know loan me his money and savings I think it tells you how we got along in those days. We got along good. We had respect for each other, of course I grew up with his kids. We wore shorts, no shoes, we were pretty tough in those days. They taught me that name (Bair is referring to the word *Huevos*) (interviewees laugh) I can't even say that. Anyways, we filled our pockets full of rocks and we'd go down to the railroads and shoot birds and go swim in the canals. We would go skinny dipping in the canals around there in fact I swam in canals until I was in high school. Then the folks bought a membership in the Ebony Hills country club. They didn't play cards, they didn't smoke, they didn't do any of that they didn't run with that crowd but they wanted us to have a swimming pool instead of the canals to go swimming in.

Victor Limon: To take it back and recap a little bit more when did you take over the farm? Your dad's farm.

Dwayne Bair: Well, Ok I'll give you the sequence. I was going to college here. First year it became a college here 1952 Pan American sixty-three (63) years ago. I had a year and a half and then Uncle Sam says hey we need you so there were about fifteen or twenty of us that were going to college that they were going to draft. So we went down to the draft office and said just let us finish the semester so we can get credit so we finished the semester and then we went to service I got out in fifty-six (56). Then my brother was over in Korea during that time but I didn't have to go, but the war ended in fifty-three (1953), summer of fifty-three anyway I got out in fifty-six (1956). Came back home and my dad had heart problems and I never finished college. So I just started farming with my dad and my brother who had just got back from Korea. So there was my father my older brother and myself the three of farming together but we had to start getting more acreage because three families trying to you know live on that acreage was not enough to go around. Then in sixty-two, when the freeze came, my dad said, "Boys we go to cover the whole tree with dirt" we had just planted 30 acres of new trees. Like I said, we grew them in our own nursery. He said " it's going to be a killer freeze and we are going to have to cover the whole tree and not just bank them." If not, we are going to lose Them. We lost about 95 acres of mature citrus. Dad had some, my brother had some and we had some together. Anyway so we worked down in the field for about three days. we kept shoveling, my dad, my brother and the men on the farm. We had a guy going ahead of us with a tractor and we shoveled the loose dirt over the whole tree. We saved those trees, but then I watched my father die three days later in the hospital. Yeah, he worked himself to death really. Yeah he wouldn't go home and because my little brother Jimmy was killed a year and a half before that in a wreck and he never got over it. And so he just worked, worked, worked.

Victor Limon: And your family you know your dad when he was running the farm and everything he was doing with the farm the Bair Farm. Was he as well hiring laborer as far as Mexican-American and Mexicans, laborers to come and help him out as well. And

can you recall as of when did he start hiring. A year? Just trying to get a. when, how long your family has been supporting laborers as far as giving them work for the Mexican –American community

Dwayne Bair: Well we already had some people working when we came in. And I didn't finish the story sorry I get side tracked. But your main question was "when did you take over. Anyway my dad died in sixty-two (1962). And then my brother, my partner, got lymphoma in eighty-eight (1988) and he died. I had it all after that and then in eighty-nine (1989) I had a lots of corn. I had five hundred and seventy nine (579) acres of tortilla corn for the *Maseca*, a special variety of corn. It was a beautiful corn crop, but upon maturity it became infected with aflatoxin (fungus). You can't sell it if it's over 8 parts/billion. So, having lost the rest of our citrus a couple of years before and now this loss, I had to quit farming. Sold all my five John Deere tractors, two cotton pickers and ninety pieces of equipment. I paid the bank and paid everybody off and went to work at the citrus shed. You have to excuse me yet again I got off the story but. My dad had people hired there before I started working. and then when my brother and I came in, we started hiring more people.

Victor Limon: Well let me ask you how many years was the Bair farm active.

Dwayne Bair: It was active from nineteen-twenty (1920) until eighty-nine (1989) until it got wiped out. I'm sorry yeah my daddy came here, their family sold a farm in Iowa. Sorry I should have gone back to the very beginning, in southwest Iowa. Near College Station Iowa. They had a farm they sold and they moved down here in 1920. They put the mules and the farm equipment on a train and came here to Edinburg, Texas and farmed an eighty (80) acer plot out here on the north end of town. That's where they lived. It's the first block they bought. Then they bought some more and cleared some land. From 1920 until 1989 I guess you could say. But that was my father, then my brother and I came into the farming area in the mid-fifties (1950's) and then until eighty eight (1988). So Bair Farms lasted from the twenty's (1920's) until eighty-eight (1988).

Victor Limon: And my last question for you today as far as for my part how do you like the culture here.

Dwayne Bair: Well you know I have grown up here. Like I say my first sentence in Spanish was *dame tortilla*, because you know I was running around with these kids on the farm and you know and we'd shoot birds and stuff we shouldn't shoot and we would go swimming in the canals and so I grew up... and I would go into the houses with the guys you and I'd put the hand out and say *dame tortilla* you know so .. *dame tortilla*. And I would eat with the families and I just roamed. So I have grown up with the culture. We took bathes in the canals and swam in the canals.

Victor Limon: What's your favorite Mexican dish?

Dwayne Bair: Oh. (lets out a laugh) Oh I got a bunch of them. But my favorite, if you get that right pepper you know that *poblano* pepper what they call those (Eduardo Pichardo calls out *chiles relleños*) *chiles relleños* yeah if you get the right pepper year I like *chiles relleños* . but you know I like all Mexican food.

Victor Limon: Thank you for answering my question at this point some else can take over.

Dwayne Bair: You know I ate a lot of tortillas when I was growing up I probably ate as many as you did.

Eduardo Pichardo: One of the questions that I wanted to ask you was during your time as a child and or as you started getting older, during elementary, middle school and high school and your years of college did you witness or experience any discrimination towards yourself or towards anyone else and how did that make you feel then and now?

Dwayne Bair: well you know, in those days I didn't know about discrimination, my folks never talked bad about anybody in their lives, my folks didn't talk down to anybody and they respected people, you know, we respected everybody, so I never really knew the word discrimination growing up, and of course the percentage is different. Now we are five percent Anglo and in those days I don't know what it was, you all probably know but it didn't matter, I mean we were all friends, it's like a guy I told in the group yesterday, guys I played football with and grew up with, and if, excuse me, but if a pachuco, they called them pachucos then, came by with the duck tails and big chain and a bigger knife you know, and we would get in a fight with us, we fight against them we'd fight together against them somebody that tried to attack our group, I mean that's the way it was, I really didn't know about discrimination until it seems like lately with all this crap going on it's just sickening but I never felt that, I never felt that when I was going to school.

Eduardo Pichardo: And what about as a, segregation in the school or in the university, did you ever see any kind of segregation, as far as Mexicans from Anglos or from African Americans?

Dwayne Bair: There were two grade schools in Edinburg, Stephen f. Austin over in the east side of town, most of the east side of town was Spanish speaking, and then there was Sam Houston, was the other grade school. There were of course Mexican Americans going to Sam Houston too but those guys we grew up with mostly spoke English. I don't know how they segregated that by where they lived or whether they can speak and write English and Spanish or not, I didn't think much about it, of course, I wasn't affected in any way, I can't remember anybody complaining about it. We didn't have many blacks here although I knew several of the families. One of them worked for ford tractor dealer and others worked for lee walker in oil field construction. When I was on the school bus and the girls were walking to school, and so some of the kids on the bus yelled some naughty things out and I got into a fight on the bus and they stopped the bus cause I knew the girls and you couldn't talk that way to those girls you know, I'd ride with dad and we'd stop by their farm and they'd come out, we'd visit, so that's kind of ironic you know but anyway, they, I remember they had to walk to school, so yea there was some discrimination.

Colin Newton: Mrs. Attwood mentioned when we interviewed her last year that they had their own school house

Dwayne Bair: Yeah, Mrs. Betts I think was their teacher

Colin Newton: oh ok

Dwayne Bair: Yeah, and they had their own cemetery, up there north where just south of where I lived out here just east side of Edinburg. You know there were certain things that were kind of accepted. There wasn't anybody saying much about it and there were certain things that everybody accepted, right or wrong, but they were accepted,

Eduardo Pichardo: That actually leads me to the next question, in 71, February of 71 we had the incident that occurred in Pharr, the police riots

Eduardo Pichardo: I know Edinburg played a pretty big role in there because they step in, and sent fire department and police officers

Dwayne Bair: Sheriff's, yeah

Eduardo Pichardo: What can you tell me about that, and what was your take on that?

Dwayne Bair: I remember there was, I forget what the cause was, the reason for the riot but I know one of the sheriff deputy's shot up in the air and hit something and bounced down and hit a guy, I think he killed him but I forget what the cause of that was, what was the cause, you all probably know

Eduardo Pichardo: it was police brutality, the group named Mayo, Mexican American youth organization,

Dwayne Bair: Oh yeah Mayo

Eduardo Pichardo: They created; they wanted to do a protest and it lead to a two hundred plus person protest outside the police station

Dwayne Bair: I remember I heard it got pretty nasty, yeah that mayo group, I remember them cause we had a dance one time at the Echo Hotel and we all dressed in *guayaberas*, in Mexican style of dress and everything, we were having a dance and bunch of them came in and well anyway we got into some fist fights. They said, you can't dress like that because you are not Mexican.

Eduardo Pichardo: One of my last questions was, do you recall Mexican day at the pool?

Dwayne Bair: No, but I did hear that a pool in mission excluded Mexican Americans.

Roseanne Bacha-Garza: In San Juan they did too

Dwayne Bair: well anyway yeah that, I remember talking about it, I never would go there, I swam in the canal you know, but unfortunately there is always discrimination, that's the way life is I guess, but let me tell you this sword cuts both ways, I'm not going to tell you where I've been discriminated against towards to but it does cut both ways, it's not right either way, well I got four kids, two of them are daughters, one of my daughters and one of my sons are married to a Mexican American, I say to them don't worry, My daughter married a handsome guy from port Isabel, it didn't bother me. I was in love with a girl, Sylvia vela, I was just little skinny country boy, I would never ask her for a date, she went to college the same time I did, she was in the same class, and If you look up in the bronco school book in nineteen , you see we went over in fifty two, in fifty three or fifty four, look up the bronco queen, she was a beautiful gal, and I was too bashful little country boy, and everybody wanted to date her

Eduardo Pichardo: that concludes my questions, ill hand it over to Rafa

Rafael Soto: Mr. Bair, we were talking before the interview, we were talking a little about the relationship with the UFW and LUPE and with Cesar Chavez, what Pichardo was mentioning during 1971 there was a riot and during that time Cesar Chavez had come down to the valley, was that time period, was it acceptable or were you ever taking place with a relationship with Cesar Chavez when he came down to the valley

Dwayne Bair: I didn't personally, now I'm a Methodist, the two lawyers that worked for, united farm workers, I can't remember their names now but I got a tape of a meeting when

they came to our church, our pastor invited them to come to our church, I was on board of directors of the Methodist church out here, they were out there, explaining things, those two lawyers what ticked me off, I had been working all day in the farm, and I'd come home all dirty and clean up, put some nice clean clothes on, khakis or something to go to my meeting, and I knew those two lawyers, hall is one of them, his last name, you'll read his name, and there wasn't lupe then, I don't remember them forming, but anyway, these guys were trying to look like farmworkers, well, anyway what are these guys trying to do look like they're farmworkers and I had tough hands, strong hands in those days with coalesce, and I grabbed each one of them and I squeezed them until you know, I guess just letting them know, hey don't try to come up here and try to make me think you're one of them cause you represent the farmworkers, but you're not a farmworker, you're a lawyer, you know, and we met with them, they said their side

Rafael Soto: did any of the strikes during that time even with, let's just take a chronological time, with Cesar Chavez in 71 and some of the late labor strikes with Antonio Orendain, did that ever affect your labor force

Dwayne Bair: never, never affected me personally in the farm, and I met tony Orendain one time, and I understand, they're trying to do something to help the people they represent, we all do something like I mentioned earlier, you know, you're trying to help the people and they did a lot of good things for them, some of the people that come along with it wanted some side money so they were turning melon truck over there, and the mayor of McAllen once farmed one time, he drove out there, he was an ex WWII and he pulled out a 45 and he said the next sob that turns over my melon truck he would shoot. He'd been to war and he wasn't going to put up with that, you know damage to property is one thing, I mean, making your point across and all of that is one thing but when you start tearing apart stuff and start damaging people's property that's wrong, that's totally wrong, that's not the way to do it, that's not the way you do it Chavez helped a lot of farmworkers, and you know he was trying to help the people he represented and he did

Rafael Soto: mentioning the two leaders, of the civil, of the labor force, now that you're mentioning a time period with Orthal Brand, about what was going on with the damaging property, did you see the group of Cesar Chavez different the way they protested, differently to the Orendain, were the Orendain people more aggressive or was it Cesar Chavez more passive, peaceful demonstration?

Dwayne Bair: I can't answer that honestly, I really don't know, I don't remember honestly, I remember tony Orendain came, seemed like after Chavez was here, it started with Chavez, but I really don't remember, I was never affected in our farm up there, usually it was down there in San Juan, Alamo down there around the rio, up and down the river, most of those guys grew lots of vegetables and that's where most of the protest seemed to go on I ran a packaging shed for 17 years and only had one protest one day. There were pickers all in front of the shed, I said who's the leader here, and one of the guys held his hand up, "what's the problem" "well the field man promised us so much money when we start harvesting early" were ring picking you know and it's hard to fill the bins, and you get paid by the bin, so the field man promised them some more money and so I said "you didn't get it?" and they said "no" "well then it's wrong and we'll fix it" the field man never told the bookkeeper, to raise the wages per bin because early in the season it's harder to fill the sack or fill your bin, I mean we were wrong, and you were right and we'll take care of it, that's the only time I ever had a protest

Rafael Soto: thank you I have, going back to, this is more about civil rights, this is going more into labor, how was the waging, I know that, los mayordomos, you were saying the mayordomos did the pyramid of your mayordomo hired the labor, how was the paying, did you pay by costal, like by the bucket?

Dwayne Bair: a tray you mean?

Rafael Soto: yes

Dwayne Bair: well of course like a chopping crew or something, I think we paid by the hour, or they might pay by the contract and say, hey we'll do so much an acre, but the harvesting in fruit is all done by the bin later on, it used to be by the box, and then by the bin and the labor contractor, the mayordomo, the foreman, he'd keep track of how many boxes they did and then we'd pay them, and they paid the people, later on they go their checks, then the labor laws changed and everybody got a separate check

Rafael Soto: how was they pay compared to in sequence like 1930 to 1960 to the time you closed, like was that being paid 26 cents then \$1.50, do you remember?

Dwayne Bair: man that goes way back, when I worked in the cotton gin when I was 15 I left the farm because I was getting about a dollar a day so I told my dad I wanted to Wallace Gin, they had three cotton gins, when I was 15 I was making 40 cents the hour that was about 1948 I guess 49 somewhere along in there I assume that was minimum wage maybe 40 cents the hour 12 hours a day 7 days a week, you know I thought I was rich, and I played in a dance band on Saturday night, and here's one, you're interested in this type of thing so I'll tell the story of the dance band, so we had this little dance band, we had a piano player, we had a trombone, we had trumpet, we had a drummer, he was later the head of McAllen high school's band director, Robert Bolls and, anyway, we had a seven piece band so I didn't have time to practice during the week working 12 hours a day so one of the guys in the band that was going to be our manager he got a job of all places the first gig was at Avalas Ballroom in east Donna, now I don't know if you guys know where Avalas, east Donna, where east Donna is, well not many gringos went during the day time and none at night, you know that's just the way it was, well anyway, we played a Saturday night at this beautiful restaurant, Avalas Ballroom had this beautiful restaurant and a dance floor outside where the dancing was, we got ready to leave and they didn't want to pay us, they didn't like our music, I know we had this big band music, I can't remember the name of that song, it was Glenn Miller or something, but anyway, but we had "*Linda Mujer*" which was the only Spanish song we had, so the guy didn't want to pay us. I guess people didn't like our music. I got to get to work in the morning and we're not that good anyway this was our first gig, let's go, I went out on the dance floor and some beautiful local gals there wanted to dance so we danced until some guys came in with a big chain and I said c'mon we gotta get out of here so anyway that's kinda funny, but not that funny.

Dwayne Bair: twelve hours a day seven days a week, you know I thought I was rich [laughter in the room] I play in a dance band Saturday night there was one year,[pause] can I tell the story of the dance band?

Dr. Bacha-Garza: Yeah sure.

Rafael Soto: So you were mentioning to us that back in forty-eight you were getting forty cents, saying that type of work in the sixties what will be the pay around that time for the same labor?

Dwayne Bair: This is was in forty-eight or forty-nine, in the sixties, I cannot recall

Rafael Soto: Oh.

Dwayne Bair: I was looking in one of my farm that I put together to borrow money.

Dr. Bacha-Garza: This one.

Dwayne Bair: To borrow money, I had to project all expenses and income. I notice here that the family expense where seven hundred dollars, now that was for two families so we were drawing three hundred and fifty a month. You know this was nineteen eighty-eight or eighty-nine. And I see [looking in files] the labor was fourteen or fifty-five hundred and change in different months. We did fifty-five hundred again in different months.

Rafael Soto: Ok.

Dwayne Bair: I am sorry I just cannot remember.

Rafael Soto: Do not worry.

Dwayne Bair: but I mind if you look at it was kind of terrible compare to know but everything is relative you know, pretty much relative.

Rafael Soto: Well thank you doctor Bair, I mean Mr. Bair [laugh].

Dwayne Bair: I never graduated but thank you [laughter in the room].

Rafael Soto: know you did!

Dr. Bacha-Garza: With an honorary degree.

Dwayne Bair: Things have changed a lot throughout the years, but the racisms that goes on now is sickening.

Colin Newton: Ok Mr. Bair, let's have some fun with politics here now. You have couple of letters that you have presented to us, so I want to talk about for those for a minutes one of the first letter was date January twentieth, nineteen-sixty seven by Fidencio Guerra. What was his him at the time was he a judge or a.

Dwayne Bair: He as a judge it should say he was a federal judge.

Colin Newton: Ok, because I notice his son was a judge many years later.

Dwayne Bair: I forget what the letter was about.

Colin Newton: The letter was actually to congratulate you on being named the J.C. outstanding farmer of the year. Did you have a personal relationship with Mr. Guerra?

Dwayne Bair: Not really I met so many people and my involvement in different meetings but he probably knew my father.

Colin Newton: Ok.

Dwayne Bair: I probably did not have any connection with him before.

Colin Newton: And of besides being named farm of the year from the J.C. what are your recollections of that.

Dwayne Bair: I was involved in a lot of organization trying to help you know. I was chairman of each one of this I am going to mention except Texas Sweet, Texas Citrus Mutual was a growers organization we talk about stuff in growing, Texas Sweet was an advertising group and we put our own money to do our advertising, Texas Citrus and Vegetable Association was an association for packers and the farmers together and Texas Valley Citrus Committee set our regulations on the size and grade of our citrus fruit. I was on the Vegetable Market Association, this was when I was going around at night and helping everyone signed the contracts so we could try to get more for our tomatoes. I spent so many nights and days out there that one of my kids one time said. Daddy why are you home tonight? You know it is bad when you know to go to meetings and go do stuff like that. Anyway, I was in the thirteen years or fourteen years at the Texas A&I Kingsville citrus center in Weslaco then it became Texas A&M citrus center in Weslaco. I was on that board for long time and it was very interesting, the development we did trying to make a new or better product. I was on another one, I was on the Edinburg airport Advisory Board for thirty one years. That is my love [smiling] flying and my hobby.

Colin Newton: But it seems you were really there to help the local farmers and the local farming community what they disserveed.

Dwayne Bair: I was involved.

Colin Newton: Very nice. Well that continues with some of the letters you have presented us with one of the next one I have is dated July twenty fifth ninety sixty seven and this one was from Senator Edward Kennedy and.

Dwayne Bair: O I did bring that one in.

Colin Newton: Yes, this was thanking you for appearing in front subcommittee migratory labor in Texas. Do you have any recollection on that?

Dwayne Bair: Yeah I do, Harrison Williams was an A.H. he was from New Jersey he came down here and made some smart well it was pretty nasty but anyway senator Paul Fannin from Arizona chaired the committee for some reason we do not want it to fall under, it properly says somewhere that we do not want him to do or labor laws or something so that was, we were testifying that in courthouse down here in Edinburg.

Colin Newton : Very nice, how does that correlate to the next one with letter that I have that is from Congressman Kika de la Garza, regarding something you had advised him of in relationship of the National Labor Relationship Board was the same thing?

Dwayne Bair: Yea it revolved the same thing and I forget about the detail about it and what it was about but yea it was involved in that.

Colin Newton: Did you have any type of relationship with Kika de la Garza?

Dwayne Bair: Oh yeah we flew to Washington one time to testify he helped us get a citrus trees Tree insurance program in nineteen eighty two. I think in 1983, we had a killer freeze and help us get back in the citrus business. We received enough money to plant other trees and it was very helpful when Kika came to bat for us with the tree insurance we had.

Colin Newton: Do you believe that Kika de la Garza was a champion of the farmers in the Valley?

Dwayne Bair: Well he was a champion of everybody.

Colin Newton: Ok, very nice. One of our next letters that I have is from the office of Lieutenant Governor and it is from Preston Smith and this one was to thank you for your efforts with the Hidalgo County Farm Bureau what do you recall about this particular letter?

Colin Newton: Very nice, I got one from John Tower dated April tenth nineteen sixty eight, this one also wanted to thank you for your correspondent regarding improvement for farm workers, I guess improving work conditions for farm workers. Mr. Towers states in the letter that he do not felt that their needs to be any additional federal legislations necessary.

Colin Newton: Something so all of things are related to the something. Very nice ok.

Dwayne Bair: The reason I brought this guys Is because this guy ask me if I had any letters any people, my wife had put all them away in fact [laughter].

Colin Newton: It seems like nineteen sixty seven and sixty eight were very active.

Dwayne Bair: Well, well I had been involved.

Colin Newton: [laughing] very nice. One of the next letters I have is [Bair phone rings] [meeting pausing for Bair to answer the call].

Dwayne Bair: excuse me you all but wife is in the hospital.

Colin Newton : We do understand, ok in the next two letters that I basically have are one was dated October thirtieth ninety seventy five by Don Bentsen thanking you for you letting him use your good name in the efforts and what efforts was he speaking?

Bair: for office I guess [laughter in background] I never voted for a straight ticket in my life I never pull *uno palanca* [Laughter] you need to look who the people are. I voted across you know it do not matter republican or democrat I voted for the man or woman.

Dr. Bacha Garza: it ok [smiling].

Dwayne Bair: now with this entire PC [political correction] I get sick of hearing all that PC [laughter in room].

Colin Newton: very nice, in the next letter is date January fourth nineteen seventy eight it is from Lloyd Bentsen thank you for your involvement in National Labor Relationship Act that I guess passed back in nineteen seventy eight before he said before I reach a decision on the bill I want to review the record of the hearings and carefully set the final bill as report to the committee. What was going on back then?

Dwayne Bair: Well that same that was going on.

Colin Newton: Same thing?

Dwayne Bair: Most of the letters got in the greenhouse and I had to testify in front of Kennedy and on Harrison Williams from New Jersey, Paul Fannon was the chairman of Senate committee.

Colin Newton: It all said around the same thing.

Dwayne Bair: Yeah.

Colin Newton: Over a period of years, so you trying to tell me that Washington moved slow well.

Colin Newton: Very nice, in the last I actually have photos here you provided of you and George W. Bush it looks like they were when he was a governor of Texas.

Dwayne Bair: Yeah I almost cut his finger off before that picture there [laughter in the background] he was reaching for a slice of grapefruit I was cutting, I said watch it governor and I can't afford to buy a governor's finger.

Colin Newton: So what was he here down for exactly just you know?

Dwayne Bair: I do not remember the total reason, I really do not, for some reason he wanted to come by our packing house.

Colin Newton: Just a governor visit.

Colin Newton: Ok, other than that particular committee you were called upon to testify in front of Washington in front of Mr. Kennedy. Where there any other committees that you were remember being call for them?

Colin Newton: Ok, we can discuss that later. Ok so let's talk now about some local figures and maybe your relationship with them. The Bentsen pretty prominent family in the Valley did you type of personal relationship with the Bentsen family?

Dwayne Bair: Citrus contract with them association that was in Moorefield that was forty years we first start at next the train station here in Edinburg where Pueblo tires ends we had a shed there. I probably do not mention to you all but I mention to others years ago in the thirties and forties the railroad companies owned the property facing to the river Southern Pacific when right down here and of Missouri Pacific when east and west down here created the longest man tree and anyway M.P.O own that property so they build a packing housing we called them a shed here but anyways so they build them and then they leased them to guys to run a packing company and then not tell later people end up buying them and they stop shipping by rail not very efficient you cannot count on the railroads for that good but that was only on shipping we have for freight business those days until we got trucks refrigeration in of course that the way you go today. So now [laughing] what was the question?

Colin Newton: We were discussion your relationship Bentsen family.

Dwayne Bair: Don Bentsen had his citrus in Edinburg Citrus Association.

Colin Newton: Ok nice, and did you ever across Lloyd when he was Senator?

Dwayne Bair: Yes, when I was thirteen, he was a bomber pilot in World War II and when he came back, he was county judge. I needed to get a driver's license because I drove farm trucks. If you work on a farm and you lived on a farm you could get licensed about when you are thirteen or fourteen so I had to go in front of the county judge and I remember him telling me. Son! And he was twenty six when he came back from World War II. "Son I rather see you get a airplane license than drive a motorcycle. Later on I read the story of his life. His father had a wreck and he forbid the boys, Lloyd senior had a wreck on one and he forbid the boys to ride motorcycles.

Colin Newton: And, um, I guess one of the more controversial, um, valley figures—how about Othal Brand

Dwayne Bair: Oh he's something else. You know, he-- Well you gotta give him [inaudible] you either loved him or hated him. You know, he-- did a lot good for McAllen, I'll say

that. He was very progressive building the city of McAllen. He was very outspoken which some people didn't like, you know, and yeah, he made a lot people mad but, he did a lot good, too. So you gotta weigh everything. There's was good and bad, I guess in most everybody. Hopefully a little bad and a lot of good and um,--so he..I would say he did a lot of good for city of McAllen and for the industry.

Colin Newton: Ok. Very nice. You mentioned gov--former governor Rick Perry. What was your interaction with him?

Dwayne Bair: We helped him become Agriculture Commissioner. So, met him personally--knew him personally because of that.

Colin Newton: Was it a group of local farmworkers?

Dwayne Bair: Just a bunch of us guys that were--liked him, wanted to help him become... We had some parades for him, and put signs out for him, and gave him a little money I guess, and helped him become Ag Commissioner. Yeah, we got along fine. I've ridden down the Pedernales River with him in his car before. I have a friend who had a place in Dripping Springs (a farmer from Donna), he had a little ranchito out there. We'd go riding around, take fruit up there all the time and he'd come over from Austin to pick up fruit and we'd go riding around [inaudible]

Colin Newton: Very nice. Out of all the governors that you've seen in your lifetime, which ones do you feel seemed to do the most for the valley region and the agriculture?

Dwayne Bair: Gosh, I don't know. Of course, Alan Shivers was the governor and they had a connection with that, oh, over there in Mission---Shary Estates. I don't know, we seem to get along with most of the governors we've had as far as I know.

Colin Newton: Ok. As far as presidents are concerned, what presidents do you think seem to care more about the agricultural industry and the region?

Dwayne Bair: I'm not a historian, we've had several presidents down here in the Valley.

Colin Newton: Ok, do you think NAFTA had a big impact on--

Dwayne Bair: I think it's been good, getting the commerce going. I mean, they always say it's better to have trucks going across the border than tanks. You know, better to have commerce going across. The more commerce, the more you are involved in daily life, in commercial and business life and people, the less chance you are to have war, you know? When they built that new bridge over there this side of Mazatlán over the mountains over there, it was supposed to put a lot of produce trucks in here because there was one over in Arizona previously, going to the East coast, you can see how much out of the way that is, cross over to Arizona, come all the way from the East coast when they could cross here in Pharr, McAllen, Mission and the bridges there. It's a straight shot right up the coast. Yeah, I think NAFTA's been good. There's controversy about that, they put jobs down there, but the maquiladora business has been good for the valley, you know, a lot of stuff being done on this side, then the other side and with NAFTA, you know, whether they wanted to pay tax on everything going back and forth across the river. I used to, when I worked for the bank the last, a few years ago, I used to go to the maquiladora there and different places, to inspect different properties, check on some of the companies we did business with.

Colin Newton: It has changed. Well, do you mind telling us that story you told us in class about chasing down Dwight Eisenhower when he came down here as president?

Dwayne Bair: Oh yeah, ok. In, um...let me think of what year that was..

Roseann Bacha-Garza: 1953?

Dwayne Bair: ‘53, yeah, ok, yeah. Anyway, a friend of mine had a fast 1947 Ford. Eisenhower was gonna have a parade all the way to Falcon Dam. Yeah, ‘53, summer of ‘53. Anyway, he was gonna have a parade all the way to Falcon Dam to dedicate the new dam that finally got built. So, a friend of mine, he said, “Let’s get in behind the President.” He was in a Packard convertible. When we started to pass the Secret Service cars, we got up beside one of them and the window came down and they put up a sub-machine gun out the window there, and they said “Back” so we got in behind the Secret Service, we were the first car behind the Secret Service to get to Falcon Dam. You know, it’s a long ways up there, about 70 miles or so, but anyway, we got up there and our troops from Ft. Hood lined the dam on this half in the chrome helmets, and bloused boots, and the silk scarves. And the troops from Mexico lined the other half, and their president was there and our president, Eisenhower was there and they dedicated the Dam. And, of course, we looked down in that dam and said “Man, they’ll never fill this dam.” I imagined this little trickle of water going down there, you know, we was in a drought in the late ‘50s, there was a time it was really bad. A lot of wells drilled in that time. Anyways, that’s another story. Anyways, that was the summer of ‘53. In ‘54 I joined the service and when I came home the dam was full because in the summer of ‘54 Hurricane Alice drifted across, I think around Falfurrias somewhere, it didn’t seem to damage much, but it drifted over there and sat there and rained and rained and rained and rained, and it filled Falcon Dam--one hurricane filled the dam, so I always have hope, you know “hey, don’t worry about it. One good hurricane will fill that dam. Since then, we’ve had some come out of Mexico that have added water to it, and since then we’ve opened the Amistad Dam in Del Rio. So anyway, it’s interesting, that was great for the whole valley, it provided water for cities, for irrigation purposes, because the irrigation water at that time, in fact I worked my senior year as a roughneck water-well drilling. The water was a little salty, but for citrus growers, you had to keep them alive. So it was a great thing and then all of a sudden we had plenty of water.

Colin Newton: Very nice. Well, it seems your political involvement centered around your trying to help farmers in the region and trying to help the farm industry. My next question is, do you recall--was your father involved politically in any way?

Dwayne Bair: I don’t know. He might’ve been.

Colin Newton: Ok

Roseann Bacha-Garza : You didn’t want to talk about [voices overlapping/inaudible]

Dwayne Bair: Probably not go there, it was controlled by a sheriff and a politician in those days. I...yeah, lets not go there.

Colin Newton: Ok, so other than that, any--no? Just out on the farm working hard. Ok.

Dwayne Bair: Yeah, making a living. Trying to make a living. We literally grew--I got to thinking about it, I told the group the other day, I said “sometimes you sit back at my age and, you know, what did you do in life?” Well, you know what? I can be proud to say that--somebody asked me what was the greatest joy in one of these questions was and I think what it was was being able to grow a good crop and knowing that I have fed, not only me, but the men on the farm. I have fed and clothed probably hundreds of thousands of people because every year we grew over--millions of pounds of fruits and vegetables. Millions of pounds. It don’t take much to get to a million pounds if you make 20 tons an acre. To me, that was satisfaction. You know, the fact that we gave a lot of people jobs, we created a lot of jobs. You know, it all...everything has to start somewhere--to create something before you can

take from it. It's why I say, you know, Sorry, but good government...big government has to get their money somewhere. And I'm sorry, but one of the guys we've got running for president now, you know, Socialism is great until you run out of other people's money. If you run out of other people's money, Socialism doesn't work anymore. You know, so you know where I stand there.

Colin Newton: Yeah.

Dwayne Bair: But anyway, it's a fact. Look at Europe and some of those countries. I'm sorry Bernie [Sanders], but I don't really agree with you.
[Laughter]
[More laughter]

Colin Newton: Ok, well I guess we'll go ahead and end this up with a fun question. We've all heard about your need for speed, and your love for flight and motorcycles: Tell me about your favorite motorcycle that you've had.

Dwayne Bair: Oh, well we had a Triumph motorcycle--my brother and I bought a little used Triumph, a pretty hot little bike. And then, we had some dirt bikes, and on the farm I'd build tracks, I'd build some jumps, you know. So one day we got out there, I'm like "Let's race, boys." I know, my two sons, they didn't have the experience, so I'd hit those jumps and I'd go airborne. I'd go over like that and go around a turn and downshift and lay it over, you know, and I could take 'em on the jumps and curve, and we had the same size bike but they were smaller, so they'd take me on the straightaway, but I could take them on the jumps every time. And it really got to them. I finally went to the house, and my boys came in and said "Dad. We're ready for you, now." I know, boys. I knew they finally got them to go airborne. I said, "No, boys. It's getting dark out there, you might get hurt. You don't want to be out there in the dark." "No, come on dad, come on. You said you could kick our rear, you know. Come on, let's go." And I was just "No, no, boys, it's too dark."

Colin Newton: Ok, well, does anybody have any other questions for Mr. Bair?

Roseann Bacha-Garza: I have one or two quick questions for you, I guess. I don't know if anybody's asked you, yet, in all the groups that you've been working with: When did you learn how to speak Spanish?

Dwayne Bair: Well, I guess on the farm I learned Spanish. But, well, the farm, when we had the *braceros* down there at night sometimes I'd go down play a little guitar, and sing, you know. I used to be able to know all the words to some Mexican songs. Anyway, we'd sing songs, and I guess, mainly, on the farm and then in the packing house, you know, most everybody'd speak Spanish and English in the packing house.

Roseann Bacha-Garza: Like a teenager? Teenage years? Or younger?

Dwayne Bair: I told you my first sentence; (inaudible)

Roseann Bacha-Garza: Were you five or six?

Rafael Soto: Oh no no..

Roseann Bacha-Garza: I know that, um...

[Laughter]

Roseann Bacha-Garza: During this interview you've switched to Spanish a couple of time to make a point, to affect.... Do you find yourself talking with the other farmers, or are you thinking in Spanish, or are you constantly switching back?

Dwayne Bair: I think in Spanish sometimes. Anyway, sometimes it's easier to state things in Spanish that it is in English. I don't know it's probably not that correct or P.C. probably, but sometimes you just think in Spanish.

Roseann Bacha-Garza: It's all part of living in this area. I think it was Eduardo had asked you about living here: what you've gotten out of it and it's part of the culture to switch back and forth between the languages. And everybody understands it and accepts it and it's just part of who we are

Dwayne Bair: Yeah, it's who we are, and, I mean, most people are [mockingly] "What state are you from?" Well, I'm from here, damn it. I grew up on a farm. I was born in a farmhouse over in Edinburg. Everybody thinks, I guess there's so few of us, that...we're the tourists or something.[Laughter and inaudible comments from Bair] But, you know, just, it's a natural thing when you grow up here. I know not all opinions are the same but everybody I talk to.... But I used to love to go down to Mexico and travel. I had a friend who farmed down there, in fact I still have a friend who farms down there. We used to fly down there and go to the big party after the onion harvest, but you know, right now I'm a little nervous about going down there. We'd land there and about 500 people from the little village that worked on the farm down there came to the party. These guys are from the *ejido* farms down there.

Colin Newton: Well very nice. Well, Mr. Bair, I want to thank you so very much for joining us today, and that concludes our interview.

Roseann Bacha-Garza: Well that's the purpose
[Audio ends]

Appendix H

Interviewee: Mr. Dwayne W. Bair

Interviewers: Octavio Ortiz, Gabriel Rodriguez, Marianna Watson, April Wilson

Date: Saturday, October 17, 2015 at 10:00 A.M.

Location: Mr. Dwayne W. Bair's Home

Octavio: Umm okay, uh just uh start recording, today is uh Saturday, October seventeen, uh two thousand fifteen, one of Mr. Dwayne Bair's home, interviewing Mr. Dwayne Bair of course and for the CHAPS Class, umm we're at 215 Ann Street in Edinburg.

Mr. Bair: Two zero, two zero fifteen (2015 Ann Street).

Octavio: 2015 Ann Street in Edinburg, uh my name is Octavio Ortiz.

Gabriel: My name is Gabriel Rodriguez.

Evan: I'm Even Burg.

Marianna: Marianna Watson

April: April Wilson.

Mr. Bair: And Dwayne Bair.

Octavio: Thank you sir, anyone want to start with questions first, or have their own questions for Mr. Bair, or....

Evan: Uh I uh will uh, Evan Berg here, um I uh I was unfortunately not able to see you for the uh first ones so I'm glad to go for this one, uh my questions revolve around uh the farm technology that uh you and your family used, uh....I heard from I believe uh Octavio that you had said that John Deer was one of your favorite brands [Mr. Bair answers; yep] and he also said that you had uh other, like other brands as will [Mr. Bair answers; right] I was wondering if you could maybe [coughing, inaudible]....

Mr. Bair: Okay going way back, the first brand on the Bair Farms in nineteen twenty was the mule, I forgot his name, my father told me, but our first uh farm power was actually mules they brought down on the train from Iowa, they brought all their farm equipment from Iowa, and then uh some of the early tractors my Dad had, he had an Oliver-Hartpar, you probably never heard of it but it was a huge big old tractor, you couldn't move the wheels and he used that for plowing and for disking and then he bought several Ford tractors. Ford tractors were very prevalent. There were plenty of Ford tractors around then, Ford-Ferguson first and then Ford tractor and then we had some Allis-Chalmers tractors. Then we had, during the war, World War II, it was hard to get rubber tires so Dad bought an Oliver Cletrac. It was a track tractor like a Caterpillar, like a D-2 Caterpillar and it had fenders on it. We used it in the groves. We were heavy in citrus at that time so we used that tractor in the groves and then eventually we, after the Allis-Chalmers we had several different models of Allis-Chalmers then we went to John Deere. [Clears throat] When I had to sell the farm equipment after a disaster, I sold five John Deere tractors, two John Deere cotton pickers, and a John Deere high-cycle. We had a high-cycle to spray the crops in the fields but anyway we finished up, we liked John Deer, so we stayed with it, there were very dependable as long as you changed the oil and filter they lasted very good. Some of the equipment wasn't necessarily John Deere, we had several different planters made and built by a machine shop that we used. That's the way a lot of your

farm equipment got started, farmers actually made 'em up, made the equipment in their own shop or had somebody build them. They figured out a better way and so a lot of the equipment on farms was built from ideas that came from farmers, does that answer?

Evan: Yeah uh that's uh [Mr. Bair overlaps answers, Okay] what I was interested in.

Mr. Bair: Sorry I didn't get your name just before we go on [Evan speaks overlapping, It's fine sir.], thought you were in one of the other classes.

April: Gabriel do you have any questions?

Marianna: Um, I have a question also, from....from our last interview you told us to ask you why, why did you choose farming or why farming out of every...other?

Mr. Bair: [Clears throat] Well, of course I came by it naturally growing up on a farm, I told the class yesterday, I said you know when I sit down and think what have I done in my lifetime, and between my brothers and I, and the men on the farm, we raised millions of pounds of fruits and vegetables every year our farm, millions of pounds, and the satisfaction knowing that. We fed and clothed hundreds of thousands of people over the years, I farmed thirty-seven years before I had to quit and that satisfaction there, part of the satisfaction knowing that we fed a heck of a lot of people 'cause we grew citrus and vegetables and then we grew cotton, that's why I said clothed people. That's to me satisfaction, the satisfaction knowing you grew a good crop, being proud of a good crop you grow and then knowing that we fed a lot of people.

Octavio: Just a follow up question to that sir, you showed us some pictures oh uh uh citrus you donated uh all the way [Mr. Bair interjects; Yeah], [April interjects; Nine eleven, yeah] can you elaborate on that cause I, I found that real interesting [Mr. Bair interjects; You all seen that picture, probably Evan did, did I show you all the picture?] yes sir you showed all the pictures [April interjects, you showed us all pictures of nine eleven of where they were donation they uh...citrus] [Octavio overlapping, the citrus] [inaudible voices] [laughter].

Octavio: I was I was wondering if you could elaborate a little more because that looked really interesting and I never had heard of, I never heard of that sir [April interjects, yeah and it never made big news or anything] that it, exactly.

Mr. Bair: Okay uh, well of course everybody felt very, very patriotic. Everybody naturally felt the tragedy of losing three thousand people in one time. You know that was a terrible, terrible tragic thing to happen and a vicious thing that they did, so everyone felt they wanted to help. We had fire department people from Edinburg Fire Department that went up there. There was fire guys from different fire departments, all over the country that wanted to go. You know when disaster happens, there's something about it that you want to go. You want to help. All of the shippers in the Valley put some fruit in gift boxes. We all did that, it wasn't just our company [Evan interjects, how many was donated?] Each citrus shipper donated several thousand gift boxes of citrus. We all pitched in to help, help out the situation. We gave the firefighters and police some fruit. Everybody appreciated fruit from the Valley. That's thing I've learned.

April Wilson: Well we have time of talk...[Mr. Bair interject, No I mean I was talking about everybody appreciates fruit.]

Mr. Bair: I've been going to M.D. Anderson for sixteen years, I have leukemia, chronic leukemia, and I started takin' grapefruit up there for doctors and nurses. They love it, always remember if you give them fruit, especially grapefruit and oranges. It got

too bulky to take so now I take honey up there, I take, I have little jars have a little bear on it, you know my name is Bair (*Oso*) had little bear on it, I used to pass out honey, in fact before you all leave, I just got a new case a couple of days ago. One of the guys I drink coffee with is a distributor for honey. So I buy a case from him, keep in the trunk all the time, so before you all leave let me give you all a little bottle of honey.

Octavio Ortiz: Well I was just wondering if your little brief a little more description of the of what happened in the picture.

Mr. Bair: Well yeah, that's just something we wanted to do so we sent these little gift boxes, I think they were kind of the pink ones, weren't they there?

Evan: Yeah they looked about uh pink or kind of uh like a red.

Mr. Bair: Yeah that was what that was about, just you know our feeling all over the country about that terrible thing that happened everybody wanted to do something and share, share in the pain I guess.

Octavio: Do you have another Marianna for Mr. Bair?

Marianna: Umm I guess for your...[turns to April and asks] Do you want to ask him about your pesticide?

April: We know that you like to fly, we heard about that already and then we know you used pesticides, not the question is when you sprayed pesticides did you actually have someone do the flyover, or did you do it?

Mr. Bair: No I didn't, I didn't do any of my spraying. My flying was purely recreational. I've been to a lot of places all over Texas, and Arizona, and Colorado, but my mine was just pure recreational. No, we hired people to do our spraying now I used to flag the field for them. We'd go out and count so many steps and hold up a flag but nowadays they have a GPS they can set the swath width on the GPS and drop over and hit a button and spray and pull up and come round and hit another button and it they would just center the needle nowadays you can do anything, so it sets the next swath width for the next pass. No, I didn't do any spraying, I watched them so and like a dummy I wanted to see how good a job they did so I laid out down in the field when they were spraying the cotton and it got. They they did a good job and I didn't have any bugs on me for a while.

Octavio: Okay, well this this goes more to I mean uh follow up question to uh the takes on, on the how the family took the farm work, how, how was that distributed in your family you basically gave the rolls to different persons in the family to be in charge of [undetermined words spoken] or was there a particular field, was there one of your family that was really good at something and they took that they were in charge of

Mr. Bair: When we started, my Dad he had the most input. Like I say when I got out of the service in fifty-six I started farming. My brother got back from Korea and so he farmed by himself for a while and then we brought him into the partnership so it was two brothers and my father. My father had the input. He was the most demanding about doing the proper soil conservation techniques. He wanted oats planted every three years so the roots would penetrate the hard pan. So we planted oats on the smaller acreage of the property that mostly my Dad owned first and then, and then of course we didn't have enough property to farm for three families so we had to keep expanding and lease more property. You saw all those maps with the color codes different crops (Appendix I). We talked about what to plant. To plan ahead we talked about how many acres of cotton, how many acres of vegetables and we'd sit down and talk about it together, we agreed on what kind of crops we wanted to plant based on what the future process might be. For example, cotton, grain, or corn and then on

vegetables it's pretty much a set price on canning vegetables on fresh vegetables it's a gamble all the time, but what we tried to do was generally have over fifty percent to vegetables. Canning crops didn't pay much per ton, but if you go enough tons, we'd come out. We knew what we could get with canning crops. This was a stable price. We had the contracts, then all we had to do was make the tonnage. Now with fresh vegetables, I had forty acres of beautiful lettuce one time and I kept checking with the packer, that was gonna harvest, for about two weeks ahead of time every day, I would go and ask what's the price. Well we cut one day and we cut over eight hundred cartons and acre and these were the big cartons of lettuce beautiful Great Lakes lettuce. The next morning I went in, and he said, "well, we can only pay you ten cents a carton." Then shed manager said, "We're gonna pay you ten cents," then I said get the crews out of the field. "What do you mean," I said get the crews out of the field, "why" I said I don't want to run over 'em with the tractor and the shredder, I will not accept ten cents a carton for that beautiful lettuce. I'll turn it back in the soil and it will do me more good to I put it in the soil. So I told all my friends to help themselves and I went and told the crews to get out of that field. The shed manager said, "but you can make something out of it, you're making eight hundred cartons here an acre and times ten cents," I said forget it man it's worth more than that for fertilizer, so I got all the crews out and told all my friends help themselves and I couldn't go by the field, we put a shredder in the field...I, I couldn't watch it. I couldn't watch it man, shredded up forty acres of beautiful lettuce and, and we plowed it and disked it in back in the soil, because you know why, why accept ten cents? I mean that's a slap in the face you know. Ten cents for a carton and you know ultimately they're paying a lot of money for all those heads of lettuce out there in the marketplace, I never grew melons 'cause I watched too many guys make it one year and lose if for three. So I grew onions one time and the same thing the market dropped, and this particular shipper kept on shipping on consignment without my permission, it's illegal, you cannot consign or roll any produce without the grower's permission. What he was doing, yeah they were harvesting and I said how much money have we got in my account, so much, okay, I said pay me now, no, no let's wait till we get through. What he was doing, was he kept harvesting and charging me so much a bag for onions and then, then when the money got through my little pot of money that accumulated, went down, down, down, I received seven cents a sack, seven cents a sack for fifty pound bag of onions, of course we had a few words, I immediately quit doing business with that man, cause it's first of all I quoted him I said I could sue you right now, "oh you blanket, blank farmers you're always whining, I said whining, seven cents a sack when you had a pile of money there you made on the first shipments, the markets drop and he didn't tell me he just kept shipping 'em you see on consignment, no but he would ship them up somewhere and you know these guys in New Jersey bring 'em on up, we'll take care of you, yeah we'll take care of them alright, and you know how they took care of them right. Mostly with canning vegetables, we grew a lot of carrots, canning carrots, we didn't get much per ton but you make a lot of tons with canning carrots and Chico tomatoes, we used to grow a lot of fresh tomatoes. But they came out with the Chico tomato, it was bred up just for canning. They made a lot of tons and they were very efficient in the canning plant so it was a great thing. So then after we grew, we grew a lot of them. We grew green beans, Blue Lake beans for Renown Cannery in McAllen. We used to harvest by hand and then we went to a machine harvest, we didn't get as

much yield but they wanted to go that way because it took an awful lot of labor to harvest green beans.

Gabriel: Okay I think we're going to switch gears here, I'm doing the customer section business practices stuff like that, I have a couple questions, They might be a little repetitious, some of the other question have blended in with it, I do apologize for that.

Mr. Bair: You don't have to apologize for anything.

Gabriel: So first question here that parcels of land that you first managed. Where they already setup for farming? Or did you have to clear them?

Mr. Bair: Most everything, everything we farmed was ready for farming, but some we would have to go in and level. In the case of some citrus trees, we bought some land from people up north. They lost their trees so my brother and I would buy them. We would clear the trees relevel the land and get it prepared. One thing about preparation, we always deep plowed every crop. We always deep plowed our ground to kill the "root rot" fungus and also to be able to save any rain that may fall.

Gabriel: Oh okay this is just like a follow up on some of the questions you answered earlier from the previous meeting that we had I know you mention landlord that you managed some of one were out of town that they did not live here can you explain a little more on that?

Mr. Bair: I had 50 landlords because we needed to farm more acres that the land were owned. This required a lot of bookkeeping because we had to keep each piece of land's production separate.

Gabriel: Mr. Bair in reference to the book, where exactly where these parcels of land you managed also where was your acres that you farmed? You have precious location of where you?

Mr. Bair: Because we farmed so many parcels of land, we used coded maps to keep track of each crop. My father was very active in the Soil Conservation Board, so we tried to take care of the soil.

Gabriel: Also in reference on what you were saying landowners, did you try to get land that was next to each other, how did you do that?

Mr. Bair: Because we farmed so many parcels that were as far as six miles apart, we had a special trailer to haul the equipment down the county roads.

Octavio Ortiz: Oh yea.

Mr. Bair: I use to farm all of that.

Octavio Ortiz: Oh the golf course?
(Everyone laughs.)

Gabriel: So that was basically the only incident. You didn't have any other people who I guess tried to outbid you in any other...

Mr. Bair: No. No, not really and uh, there wasn't a lot of people looking for land to farm. It takes a lot of money to farm and equipment cost a lot of money.

Gabriel: Okay, okay next question here I wanted to know where did you get your information on prices for crops? When you went to sell them or you know.

Mr. Bair: Prices for cotton and grain crops were rather steady and generally know before planting times. Fresh vegetables were a different story. These prices could change fast, depending on weather factors in other states. However, with canning vegetables, we always contracted a certain price before we planted.

Gabriel: Uhmum. Okay in reference to also what you said about the market. Where was that information you know I mean like you said you had to go to...

Mr. Bair: Okay it was available online you can get it on the market news service published market prices.

Gabriel: Okay.

Mr. Bair: Yea there was there was a publication you could get for market prices on whatever the commodity might be. It's the fresh stuff that you never knew.

Gabriel: So they never fluctuate or anything?

Mr. Bair: India might have a weather disaster and effect the price of rice. Whatever happened around the world might affect price over here. Say Georgia had lost all of their onion crop the price might be high. So when one place lost, usually somebody else gained. That was the way it is in the fresh product business. Somebody had a disaster over there then everybody wanted to plant more of that crop over here.

Gabriel: Did that also affect the citrus industry? The market?

Mr. Bair: Citrus was more stable.

Gabriel: Okay.

Mr. Bair: Citrus is a more stable crop. Some are more perishable than the next. Of course you can harvest a grapefruit, in November or you can wait till March. So, you see it doesn't have to be harvested right then, so even though eventually anything that's growing is perishable. It's not like the next day you gotta move it. So why pick it if the market is not that good you might want to wait awhile. You want to wait to see if Florida has a freeze then if it does the citrus price will go up. Generally that's what happens with the fluctuation in citrus prices. Natural disasters such as freezes and hurricanes in one area will affect the amount of volume produced. Supply and demand still affects prices.

April Wilson: I guess that would lead to another question you mentioned like the produce having to stay fresh and everything to ship it out faster, so how would you keep vegetables cool for transport especially back when you first started farming, before you had all the technology they have now?

Octavio Ortiz: The "*Hieleras*" (Coolers in Spanish.)

Mr. Bair: Yeah. Back when my father started farming we just didn't have a refrigerator truck lines like you do now, so the icing dock I talked about here north of town, we call it the "hielera" but it's Lull. Lull is a little town west of Hwy 281 on Monte Cristo Rd. There was a huge ice plant and the trains from the Valley going North on the Southern Pacific Railroad would stop to ice down the rail cars so they could keep the produce refrigerated for the long trip north. If the rail car had citrus, they would load a large piece of ice in the bunker and some large fans would blow air over the ice and cool the fruit. In those days, all produce was packed in wooden boxes or bags. For vegetables, like cabbage, they would blow crushed ice on top of the boxes and as the ice melted on the trip north, it would keep the vegetables cool. Later on when trucks had refrigeration, you could set the temperature properly. We used to export a lot of citrus, before the freeze wiped out a lot of the volume. We'd ship to Germany and France. We'd haul it down to Brownsville. We would get a bunch of shippers together to fill that ship, because it took a lot of loads of fruit, the rooms were refrigerated. When we'd go to Japan, the containers would come to our packing house. You've probably seen them as they sit on a trailer. And so the containers would come to our packing house, we'd load them up and they had a compressor refrigeration unit underneath it and they'd deep the fruit cool till they go to Long Beach, California. And when we'd ship to Japan, these trucks would take these containers out to Long Beach, California and there they'd load these

containers, I'm sure you've seen pictures of them loading these things onto ships. Anyways, they'd load them onto these ships, and it'd be like extension cord, the way they explained it to me, each unit had a compressor unit within itself, and they'd just take all these cords and plug 'em in. If you can imagine a bunch of extension cords. And so that's the way they refrigerated each one of the container units going to Japan. Forgot how many days it took. I used to know it, how many days it took to go across the Pacific there to get to Japan, but I don't remember now. That was a good business in those days, shipping to Japan, and Germany.

April Wilson: Definitely. Any other questions y'all? (Looks at other classmates.)

Evan Berg: Has anyone asked about Texas Produce Hall of Fame?

April Wilson: No, but you can! (All laugh.)

Evan Berg: Well I, I did some online research for you and I found an article from a uh, I believe it was a newspaper called the *Packer*?

Mr. Bair: Yea, that was a produce newspaper.

Evan Berg: Ok, and well it in the article it talks about you, and it says that in the fall of 2000, you were inducted into the Texas Produce Hall of Fame, and I was wondering if maybe you could elaborate on what they is.

Mr. Bair: Well, I guess the reason, you know, it's hard to elaborate. But anyways, I was involved with a lot of organizations. I wanted to be involved and help. I was chairman of County Farm Bureau, chairman of Edinburg Farm Bureau, chairman of Texas Citrus Mutual, and Produce and Citrus Association and several other organizations but I was involved because you wanna better it. If you want to be involved in something you had to make it better. Through the Hidalgo Farm Bureau, we were able to get the price of canning tomatoes, up. Fact, I was threatened by TexSun Cannery in Weslaco. My brother said, "you better quit it cuz they're gonna blackball us and they won't let us contract anything." And I said, "no, we are not getting a fair price for our tomatoes." So I'd actually go out at night and get people to sign up a marketing contract agreement that we'd take so much for our tomatoes. And I felt like I did some good, you know? We raised the prices from \$12.50 to \$15, then \$20, then \$22.50, and then what happened after that, uh, I kept track of what the supply was in the United States. Ohio and California grew most of the tomatoes for canning, tomato juice and all that. Anyways, so I did my homework, and found a copy of contracts from all over the United States, so I knew what was going on, I did my homework, so I could go to the canners and say, "Look, guys, I know what's going on, so you need to raise the prices a little bit, ya know. That \$12.50 a ton is not cutting it with us. And here's what the market price is, and we know what the margin is, we know what the pack house price is for tomatoes." So I did the homework to justify asking for some money. And I had meetings, I called some meetings around and I noticed some of them sent their field men and spotted them out and I said, "Hey guys, it's fine. I see y'all. If you got any questions, go ahead and ask 'em." I invited some of the canners. They wouldn't go, they'd send their field men out to these meeting sites. So we gradually raised the price over several years until California and Ohio had a bumper crop and they had too much, supply and demand works folks, if you have over supply, the price is going down. So I called a meeting, said "Hey guys, we're gonna have to drop back a couple dollars." Well, this is what really hurt, some of the farmers there said that I sold out to the canners. I didn't sell out to the canners, I was trying to use knowledge and common sense and the actual market conditions to justify a price. But when some of 'em accused me of selling out, of course in those days I was a little bit fiery. I said, "ya

know, if that's all you care about, you guys that are bitching about it, didn't even grow tomatoes yet, and you're telling me I sold out? You can..." Well I won't tell you what choice words were said. Anyways, they really hurt, and that was by some of my own farmers. But if you're gonna ask for something then justify it by doing your homework and finding out what the market is.

(All laugh)

Evan Berg: So it's because of your contributions to

Mr. Bair: I guess that's the reason, come on upstairs and I'll show you some of the plaques.

I wanted to show you the picture of our home. I have some others, thank goodness my sweet wife put paper clippings together and put everything all together. I told her this morning, "I might have plaques on the wall, but you put it together and created a home. And the beauty and four children, and every plant in that yard except that blue Plumbago. She planned everything else in that yard. She loves plants and I'm real proud of her. I want to show you picture of our original home place because we never go a picture of where I was actually born, you got a picture of it later on.

Evan Berg: Well that was, uh, kinda what I wanted to get more elaboration on.

Mr. Bair: Yea, I don't know. Somebody decided they needed to give me an award I guess (chuckles). I guess it's just involvement. I never solicited for an award. If you serve time trying to help whatever organization you represent, you may get some awards. And that's the way it works.

Octavio Ortiz: Anybody else has questions for him?

Marianna Watson: Um, I wanted to ask when you would to Tampico or why would you go was it just um for fun or for..

Mr. Bair: I enjoyed visiting some friends who were farming in Mexico, I did fly a friend down to Ciudad Monte to buy tomatoes.

Marianna Watson: Yeah, Or you know just like um I remember last time you said you would go to Tampico with your farming buddies right? Oh and you would fly with Michael right? Or who would you fly with?

Mr. Bair: No, I had a lot of other friends I've flown with but not Michael Williamson.

Marianna Watson: MmmHmm.

Mr. Bair: No I didn't fly with him, I've never taken him up, but Michael McCarthy I have.

Marianna Watson: Oh Okay.

Mr. Bair: But you know I take anyone up, I tell you, "you wanna go fly?" And I'd give you so many minutes to get out the airport, and if get there, I'll take you flying, if not I'm gone. Ninety percent of the time I went by myself, I think my wife only went with me two times. In twenty-six years I've owned two airplanes; she didn't like flying; some people just have a fear you know? So I didn't push it.

Marianna Watson: Mhm.

Mr. Bair: I just flew for fun most of the time. Someday I'm gonna get a map and up spots on it of all the places I've landed in the country. I've landed on the beaches of South Padre.

Marianna Watson: (laughs)

Mr. Bair: I can say I'm checking my engine out or something. Just to see if I could do it you course know?

April Wilson: Anyone else got questions or?

Octavio Ortiz: I was wondering as a closer, um actually I worked over at that Coffee Zone down here in Edinburg, Dan Cochran. I asked her, "Do you know Mr. Dwayne

Bair?" And she said the words, "deeply religious," and I was, "Well...that sounds like him." Cause he always tell me you, you know want to give everyone that fair chance, the fair trial before (inaudible) with everyone else. In other words more important overall, than the petty things in life. I mean any closing thought you might want to express?

Mr. Bair: Well you know the old golden rule, one of the most basic simple rules, do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Marianna Watson: I think it is. (Various laughs)

Mr. Bair: Anyways just treat people right, I was...my wife has been in the hospital for three days, and everyone have been wonderful. You know if you, talk to people nice, show respect, you get respect. I had some friends "I wouldn't go to that damn Renaissance hospital for nothing." You know I've had good results, got along good you know it's just a real simple basic human thing. Be nice to people, treat people right, be decent and you get respect back. It's just simple. But you just know, the world would be a better if we were all that way. I guess it just kinda sums it up. But in the '62 freeze, we lost my dad and all our citrus trees and crop. One of the men who worked for us offered to loan me four thousand dollars of his own savings and in 1962 that's probably worth twenty thousand today. This guy that worked with us, had that savings and he came to me and said, "I'll help ya get stared back, I know you've lost everything" and I appreciated it, but that's the kind of respect that you get when you respect the other person. But you know, try to treat people with respect and that meant a lot to me. 'Cause here he was, his life savings or I'm guessing it was his life saving, but he had saved that much money up back then he worked for us, so uh you know that gives you a good feeling.

Marianna Watson: Mhm

Octavio Ortiz: Okay.

April Wilson: (Points a picture) is this a picture of you and your wife?

Mr. Bair: Yeah, this is my wife and I. This is my daughter, and my son. Joni teaching in Los Fresnos, Julie gotten her master's at Pan Am. She is a speech hearing therapist. And then Steve's an Airline pilot, he wouldn't go to college, he wound up becoming an airline pilot making more money than my other kids, and this is Scott he's a senior engineer for computer services at A&M, he could have retired a year or two ago, but he trying to get a little more, get a better retirement, he'll probably retire in next year, he also fought, taught judo, karate, MMA fighter. Very respectful kid, I could hold a shower shoe over my head, one time he walked up and kicked it out of my hand.

Marianna Watson: Wow.

Octavio Ortiz: Is this Bill Burns?

Mr. Bair: Bill Burns, yeah.

Octavio Ortiz: I knew both of them, I told you about Don. Don and my little brother, he used to take my brother up to A&M some cause my brother didn't have a car and Don always had a car, they were the same age.

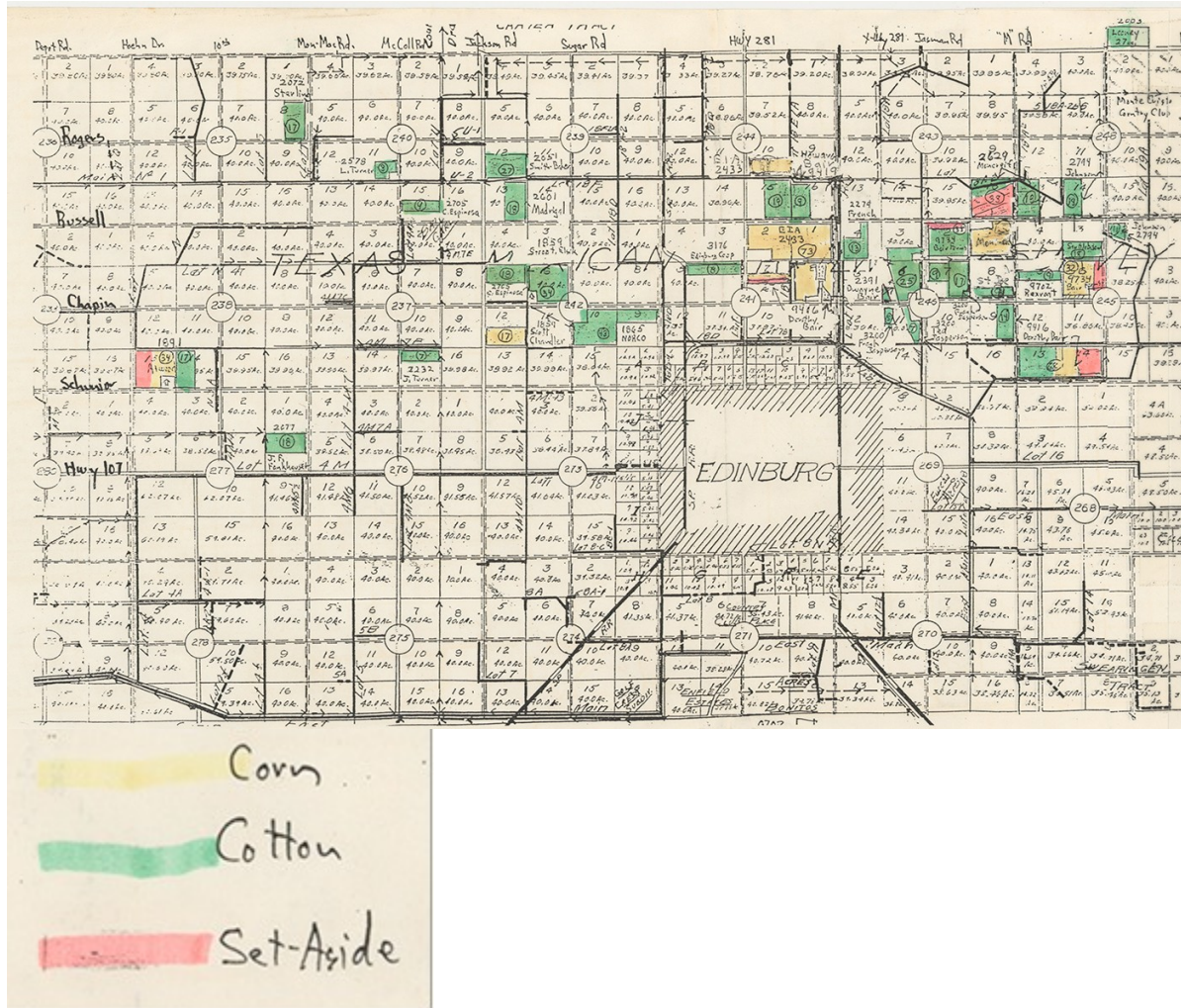
Mr. Bair: These one over here are Scott, and Joni and Julie. More of Shirley's oil paintings, some of my grandma's water colors, (cough) anyway here is the original home. (Inside of Mr. Bair's private office, showing a picture of the original Bair home.) Now the picture you all got was a little different, this was Chapin Road but that's where I was born. That's what it looked like when I was born, then later on they built a boy's wing 'cause there were three boys, and then we built a porch on

that side. And we closed in the front porch right there. But that is a house that was built in '26.



Lee Martin and Dorothy Bair's original homestead built in 1926 on Chapin Road.
Photo taken on May 15, 1930. Courtesy of Dwayne Bair

Below is a map layout showing how Dwayne Bair and his brother farmed the crops in the landlord method. All the plots are scattered throughout the county, causing problems with it came to moving equipment back and forth.



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Shirley Martin Bair

Shirley Martin Bair, 80, passed away on April 14, 2016. She was born July 7, 1935 to James Boyd and Margaret Martin, and the oldest of six siblings. Shirley lived in Edinburg all of her life where she graduated from high school, married her high school sweet heart, and raised her family of four children.

Shirley was a homemaker, owned a balloon business, and also the first entertainment director for Alamo Country Club. She was known as a caring, giving, sweet, loving wife, mother, sister, grandmother, great grandmother and friend to all who knew her. Her creative spirit inspired those around her through her painting, sewing, arts & crafts and gardening. Shirley was someone you could count on to listen. She had a wonderful sense of humor with an infectious laugh that brought smiles to everyone around her.

Shirley was a devoted member of the First United Methodist Church in Edinburg where she tirelessly worked on numerous committees, church projects and many other charitable causes. Her selflessness and strong faith carried her through many trials and tribulations, all the while remaining positive and appreciative for all the blessings she had throughout life.

Shirley is survived by her loving husband, Dwayne; and her four children, Steve Bair, Scott (Linda) Bair, Joni



Bair and Julie (John) McDonald. She is also survived by her siblings, Darrell Martin, Sandra Green, Kenny Martin, and Debbie Kuehn; seven grandchildren; and six great grandsons. She is preceded in death by her parents, James Boyd and Margaret Martin; and a sister, Linda.

Memorial service will take place at 10 a.m. Saturday, April 23, 2016, at First United Methodist Church in Edinburg, 3707 W. University Dr. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to First United Methodist Church's Shoe Bank or Prayer Garden or to any other charitable organization of your choice.

Funeral services are under the direction of Memorial Funeral Home in Edinburg.

Sign the guestbook at www.themonitor.com/obituaries.

Appendix K

Letter of Appreciation to Dwayne Bair and Edinburg Citrus for September 11th Donation



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