Leroy Klinger
Family History
November 19, 2007

Interviewer: Barney Cline
Videographer: Tom Koch

Barney Cline (BC): It's good to have you here. We really appreciate your effort in joining us today.

Leroy Klinger (LK): I'll do what I can.

BC: I heard something from your relative, or your relative's husband, that sort of intrigued me. He said that you still own the first car that you owned. You still have it.

LK: I've still got the first vehicle I ever owned.

BC: That suggested to me that you are a guy who holds on to things, and remembers things, and keeps old things. Is that accurate?

LK: I bought that '46 Chevrolet pickup in June 6, I think, of '46—still got it.

BC: A '46 Chevrolet pickup, and you still have it out there. I mean you have it at—

LK: —at my place down here. Yeah.

BC: It runs?

LK: Well, I haven't been—I gave it to the daughters; I gave it to the stepdaughters. I haven't run it in quite some time. It had over 275,000 miles on it.

BC: I don't want to spend a lot of time on this, but it's intriguing. Tell us about when you bought that car and a little bit about it. That's good history.

LK: See after the war—World War II—you couldn't buy a vehicle. You couldn't find a vehicle nowhere. Then I was going with somebody, and we decided to get married. And I didn't have a vehicle. So man, I hunted and I hunted. I couldn't find none. So Mr. Roland Bindseil down here told me his father-in-law was waiting for a—people could put in for vehicles then, and then when the time come, they got them. He said, "Well, he's going to get a pickup and would have an old '37 Plymouth for sale." I said, "Don't matter what it is just so I have a car." So Dad and I come to town one Sunday down at the Bindseil store, and he said, "Well, the father-in-law got the pickup now. Do you still want that car?" And I said, "Oh yeah, I want that car. We're going to get married the 4th of July."

So we drove down to Smithson's Valley down there, and he was out in the field. So he came home. He'd been working out there. He came home. We got to talking. I said, "Well, Mr. Beierle, I come down to get that. I hear you got a pickup." "Yeah," he said. "The wife don't want to ride in the pickup. I can't sell the car." I said, "What? You can't sell the car?" "Nope," he said. "She won't ride—she don't want to ride in the pickup. She don't like that pickup." So we talked a little while, and I finally told him—I said, "Mr. Beierle, my dad and I might as well go home." And he said, "Would you like to see that pickup?" "Well, I'll look at it." So he opens the garage doors and backs it out—red, black-fendered pickup.

BC: A '37 Plymouth?

LK: The old car was a '37 Plymouth. But his wife wouldn't do away with that. So he said—finally he said, "Would you like to have that pickup?" And I said, "What? Mr. Beierle, what do you mean?" He said, "Well, I really wanted a three-quarter ton, so I got a half ton. But," he said, "if you want that one, you can have that one." He said, "You want to drive it?" So I drove it out a mile to the road and back. I said, "What do you want for it?" He said, "Well, let me go in the house. I bought a spare tire on it and put a license plate on it. Let me go see." He come back and said, "Give me eleven and a quarter, and you can have it." So Dad had bought my brother an old model T car when he was twenty-one, and, of course, I was already twenty-six then. So Dad said, "I'll pay six hundred; you pay the rest." I was so nervous I couldn't hardly write out that check. Drove up there to Blanco and, man, they say, Give you fifteen hundred dollars for that pickup. I said, "You give me two thousand, you can't have it." I was so proud of that thing.

My wife-to-be was working at a nur—I mean a laundry in San Antonio. So, man, I was proud. I drove down there to show her that new pickup. So I drove right up in front of the business. She was busy inside. So I walked in there. "You got a car?" "Yeah." "What'd you get?" "That pickup right there." "I don't want to ride in no damn pickup." If there had been a crack that wide in the floor, I'd have fell into it. [indicates very small width with fingers] She didn't know that she would ride in that pickup nine and a half years before we got a car—bought a '55 Pontiac. I've still got that pickup.

BC: That's a great story. Thank you for sharing that. One of the pieces of history that I understand you perhaps know and remember and have recorded more than anyone is the fire that occurred here in Blanco. Wasn't it 1929?

LK: 1929.

BC: And we'd love to hear about that. I've only heard bits and pieces.

LK: Years ago, they had the telephone—you know the old crank telephone. [demonstrates cranking] That was sometime after midnight the telephone kept ringing, ringing, ringing. So Mother and Dad went to the telephone. "Blanco's on fire." So we went out on the—seven miles out—

BC: You were living out—seven miles out?

LK: Seven miles, yeah, between here and Albert.

BC: Yeah, west of here.

LK: Yeah, west of here. So we could see a glow—red glow. So we got in that old '25 model T touring car, and here we go to Blanco. 'Course we got down there that—in the courthouse square, there was a well—dug well there—so they—I was just nine years old, so they told me to stand there. And, of course, that west side—the burning started down on the lower side and come up this way. So I stood beside that well and watched it burn. Mr. Moore's store was already burning. And there was a space between Mr. Moore's store and Bindseil's—Walter Bindseil's store. But then the others—the little business next to that—and then there was a barbershop—then, of course, the Masonic building, a two story building. But it was already in the second building when we got there. So then they carried water—they didn't have no fire department or nothing—they got to carry water from every well in town—bucket brigade. So it finally got into that two-story building, and, of course, then there was about a six-foot opening there between that and what they call the old Comparet Store.

BC: Did they have a volunteer fire department at that time?

LK: They didn't have nothing—just a bucket brigade. Some wells went dry. So then they got into that two-story building, and then they got into what they call the Comparet Store, which was the Mercantile awhile back—put ladders up on that. And they kept pouring water on that and that two story building. I stood there and watched the top—the roof come down, hit the second floor, and fall down. The fire went hundreds of feet there. [demonstrates with hands] So they called the New Braun—well, before they got in there, they called the New Braunfels fire department. 'Course that was the old road—that 311—that old winding road down here. 'Course it took quite awhile for the fire truck to get here. So then they was going to try to pump water out of that well, but it was too deep, so they had to take the fire truck all the way down to the bridge down there—lay hoses all the way to the pump—all the way up here into town. But they helped save the Comparet Store then; they still got water on that one. That whole side burned, except for Walter Bindseil's store—this two-story that didn't burn down. It just did some damage on the side. So then, of course, they got it restored where he went on with his business after that. But they never did know just exactly how this fire started. 'Course this story—just what they heard—Mr. Moore—Mr. Frank Moore I think was his name—had a store. They sold a little bit of everything. He bought cream and bought eggs and everything. So Walter Bindseil went down on the corner, and he built him a store down there. And he started selling vegetables cheaper than Mr. Moore did. He paid more for cream and eggs than Mr. Moore did. Well, at that time, to iron the clothes—had the old gasoline irons—had to use white gasoline—old leaded gasoline—in it. So Mr. Moore, they said, would always buy him a pint of white gas for his iron. Just before that he went and bought a gallon—went to the station and bought a gallon of white gas. And

they wondered why he bought a gallon of white gas. When that fire started, they went and started pouring water on it, and they said it just spread the fire. So they knew it was gasoline. So the presumption was that Mr. Moore was trying to burn Walter Bindseil down. And then he burnt nearly everybody down. We don't know it's true. They never did do anything about it. But that was the presumption of what it was.

BC: Interesting. Well, what else was—could you talk about the square. You remember the whole square, and who was there. What stores were there back in that era; now we're talking in the 1920s? The fire was in 1929. So you have memories of that square and what was there—what went on.

LK: Over in that corner on the west side in the lower corner was Walter Bindseil's store, and then Mr. Moore's store. And I think there was another store there, and then the barber shop. They were just rebuilding the barber shop—remodeling the whole thing. I can't think of his name now had the barber shop. And they just brought the plate glass—set up in front of the building in front—ready to put it in. After that fire, just a wad of glass melted down on the walk—melted that plate glass. Then there was a two-story building, which we know as the Masonic Building 'cause the Masonics—the Masons met upstairs. I don't know if they owned the building or not. But then next to that was the Comparet Store. Then next to that was open space, which used to be just a gravel—just dirt floor in there. But then finally they poured concrete in there. And then they was going to start having dances there, but the Baptists and the Methodists and those just—that wouldn't work. So they made a skating rink out of it. Man, I mean they had, man, people there.

BC: This was the west side?

LK: West side of the square next to where the theater is now. But then its—the funny part of it was people would gather there. They'd take little pigs, put axle grease all over them, and then try to catch them on roller skates. Oh I'm telling you, if there was anything comical to watch, that was comical.

BC: What age folks did that—young kids or all ages?

LK: Oh that was all ages—kids—all ages. They tried to teach my dad to skate. And he skates going up [demonstrates with hands]. So they tied pillows on his rear so when he fell on it, it wouldn't hurt so bad. Oh, people gathered to watch. Everywhere people gathered.

BC: How many years did that last—the roller-skating?

LK: Until '38—I guess when they built the theater.

BC: When they built the theater. Now the Lindeman store, was that later?

LK: That was J.J. Cage Mercantile Store.

BC: At that time.

LK: Yeah. That was the old Cage store, and then became Crider's IGA, then Kneupper's IGA, and then Lindeman, the Kneupper's son-in-law, took over.

BC: You have an amazing memory that you can trace all those connections back. Well, what else was on the square? Can you talk about the other places on the square?

LK: At the other, [inaudible] go around that side on the—see the road used to come from the Bowling Alley is up there and made a ninety-degree turn. Now on that corner, there was—just when I was a little boy—there was an old blacksmith shop there. But then they put a lumber yard there—big lumber sheds along the edge there—next to where the highway is now. Then next to that was Mrs. Wall's furniture store and undertaker deal. Then was the bank. That marble front is just about as big as the bank was—what they got on the front of the bank now. See now the bank goes all the way up the road. But at that time, the bank was just a small little narrow deal there. Then was Charlie Yancey's Confectionery. Then there was a hardware store. Then on the end of that, when I was a little boy, was a Chevrolet dealership. Mr. uh, uh—

BC: The hardware store is the one that, well, existed until relatively not too many years ago.

LK: Not too long ago. That was the hardware. Then there was a Chevrolet dealership, but the hardware store took that over. Then on the corner where the post office is—that was Charlie Crist's home—Charlie Crist's home right there. Then across the street—I don't think there used to be a street there, just an open area—had medicine shows there all the time. There where that bar-b-que place is now (NE corner of 4th and Pecan)—that was my uncle's Ford garage. Before that, it was Byrom and somebody else had a Ford garage, but in my time, it was my uncle's—my mother's brother had a Ford garage there.

Then across the street over there, there was an old building falling down—posts and stuff. I don't know what it used to be, and then was the drug store. The drug store is still there.

BC: It's still there, right. It's Stricklands. (316 Pecan St.)

LK: Then there was the post office. Then there was the telephone office, which is still there.

BC: Is that what was the old Byars building? (308 Pecan St.)

LK: Yeah, Byars, right. Mrs. Byars—Ruby—and the girls had run the telephone there—the old crank telephone. Then there was just a sign on the next corner. Then go over on the other side—let's see, the first building on that side was where the blacksmith

shop is now. And in this blacksmith shop if you go in the front door, where Knoll's blacksmith is, right behind the door there's a rock wall sticking out—part of an old rock wall. As far as I know, that was the first courthouse in Blanco County history—in that building. That burned in 1878, I think. All the records are lost. But that's the first courthouse that Blanco had, and all the records were destroyed. Then, of course Wayne Smith and Glen Greebon built the rock garage, which is there now. They had an upstairs on there. Wayne Smith, I think it was, lived upstairs, but they've taken that off now. Then there was an open space there, which it still is. And then there was my uncle's blacksmith shop—Mother's brother's blacksmith shop—built wagon wheels. They did all that stuff. They did sharp plows—all that stuff.

BC: That's where the restaurant is now? (419 3RD ST.)

LK: Where restaurant is now. Then there was a little space in between. Then there was a filling station with a doctor's—Dr. Edward's office was in the back of the building and the filling station in front. 'Course then for a while, it was a novelty store, you know, with ribbons and all this other stuff, and Dr. Edwards had his office in the back. And I can tell stories about Dr. Edwards—about what kind of a doctor he was. But that pretty well—then, of course, across the street from that was old Edward's house—Dr. Edward's home (518 3rd St.)—which is still there. What is it—the Chamber of Commerce—what it is now?

BC: Uh-huh.

LK: That pretty well takes in the court—further down then past Edward's house, there was a big cotton gin there. In '29, they built the first power plant on the corner where that nursing home used to be—built the first power plant there—old diesel power plant. I think it was '29 when they built that power plant there. Mr. Olfers was—run that thing all the time.

BC: That provided power for the city?

LK: Power, yeah. Mr. Glen Greebon and—

BC: —long before PEC (Pedernales Electric Cooperative) came—

LK: —Mr. Wayne Smith and Glen Greebon wired all the homes. That old—just twisted cords, you know—had that light hanging down—switched the light on.

BC: So just a few homes, probably relatively few homes, had power.

LK: Had power, yeah.

BC: That was a private power company. I mean they—

LK: It was. I don't know who put it in there or what. I don't know if the city did it or what. I don't know. But that was there for quite some time until the—in the late thirties when the R—what is it—REA come in. Then the rural electrification come in.

BC: Tell us about Dr. Edwards. You mentioned interesting stories.

LK: We always heard that he was a real good doctor. So Dad always called him a horse doctor.

BC: A horse doctor.

LK: A horse doctor. He made his own medicines; he didn't buy them but made his own medicines. He used to have—out there on the farm and ranch—get together and have these ice cream socials. Man, the women would bring pies and cakes, and they made ice cream and everything. So after we'd had these parties at night, Dad would wake up, and, man, he would itch—have the whelps on him. Man, he just itched all over. He couldn't sleep or anything. So Dr. Fulcher here—he couldn't do nothing for him. Went to New Braunfels. They gave him medicine, but that didn't do any good. Every time they had a party, he'd get that again. So, finally, they said, "Well, why don't you go see Dr. Edwards? Maybe he can cure that." "No," he said, "I don't want to go to that horse doctor." They said, "Go see him—see what he says." So he went in there to see Dr. Edwards. I went with him—don't know how old I was. And Dad told him what was happening. "Well," he said, "Let me get that old book out." That was falling apart. He started leafing through it. "Ooh," he said, "I got it here. I think I know what it is. It's nettle rage," he says, "caused by white sugar." Dad said, "What do you mean white sugar?" "It's caused by white sugar. You shouldn't eat no more white sugar 'cause it's something in the refining that is causing you to have this—hives and that."

BC: Some kind of an allergic reaction.

LK: Allergic reaction to refined sugar. He said, "You should eat just normal—no brown—no not brown sugar—but before that, the raw sugar." But he said, "You can't get that, so just eat brown sugar. Don't eat no white sugar." And he said, "I'm going to give you some medicine." Looked up on wall, and his shelves were about five or six shelves across the wall there with all those different bottles on there with little tags on it. So he went over, and he got to looking, and he looked. "I know. Here it is." And he took that—got a six ounce bottle—medicine bottle—poured about that much medicines in there. We walked across the street where that well is over there, put the well bucket down, and pulled it up, and he filled that bottle with water—shook it up. He told Dad to take a teaspoon ever night and ever morning. Not eat no white sugar. He said, "If you still have it when you're through with this bottle, I'll fix you up another bottle." Dad took that, and he never had it again—ate all the white sugar he wanted.

BC: How long did Dr. Edwards stay in town? Was he here for a long time?

LK: I don't know when he finally passed away—must have been sometime in the 30s I guess. Then another deal—my cousins had eczema. You know breaking out on the arms—rash and everything—lived in New Braunfels. They tried doctors in New Braunfels. They went to San Antonio and tried doctors. They couldn't cure them. They told Aunt Emma, my mother's sister, Why don't you take them to Dr. Edwards? "Oh," she said, "I don't know Dr. Edwards." Go see what he does. So she went there, and he did the same thing to them—took some of that medicine. He made all of his medicine out of roots and herbs and everything. He mixed some medicine for the boys and cured it. He would not tell his wife, and he would not tell his daughter what—how he made his medicine. He took that to the grave with him. His daughter was in the nursing home with my aunt down there. She said, "We tried everything we could to get him to tell us what he did." Wouldn't tell them—took that to the grave with him. But he cured people. I've seen it with my eyes. I couldn't believe it if I didn't see it.

BC: The theater opened—was built in what, '38?

LK: 1938.

BC: You would have been eighteen at that time. What do you remember about that? We hear a lot about that—W. D. Glasscock.

LK: We had a movie before that. If you stand on the west side of the square looking at the courthouse, over on the right, there was a space there. Riggs, from Oklahoma, come out here—I think it was a couple of years—put a tent there. And on weekends, they had movies in there.

BC: In a tent.

LK: In a tent. They had little shooting stands out there—made a little money. But on weekends—I think four nights—they had movies in a tent.

BC: What was the first movie you saw?

LK: Well, the first movie I saw—I'm still trying to—they told me of the name of it—that was upstairs in the old courthouse. Years ago, they'd go show a World War I movie.

BC: So I bet I know what that was.

LK: What was it?

BC: *All Quiet on the Western Front?*

LK: I think that's what it was, yeah, because I went up there, and they put just straight benches out there, and they put a bed sheet out there—stretched a bed sheet up there—

BC: Up on the top of the—

LK: —on the second floor of the courthouse. 'Cause, see, the courthouse—

BC: Was that something they did on a regular basis, or was it just—

LK: Well, that was the first movie I know that they had. They said they had one on the west side where the theater is now, but I don't remember that. That was before my time.

BC: People paid? I mean there was a small charge to—

LK: Yeah, a small charge to see it. So they had to—

BC: Remember how much it was?

LK: No. I don't remember—probably a quarter—maybe ten cents. But they had these big reels about that big around [indicates size with hands] with the movie on there—about five or six of those reels. So they set straight benches up there and put the sheet up there to show it. Fellow setting everything up said, "Well," he said, "we're going to turn the lights off now that we're showing the movie." Turned it on—"The End." Whoever had showed that movie before forgot to rewind. So he had to stand there and rewind those reels with his hand. We sat there and waited.

BC: We do that with our tapes sometimes.

LK: One thing I remember about that—the old biplane—that bi-wings plane, you know, double wings—they had a machine gun right in front of the pilot, and they're shooting through the propeller. And I thought, "How in the heck can they do that without shooting that propeller?" But they was synchronized. I think that's what they said it was. Yeah. But he finally showed the movie. And I found out not too many years, Mr. Glen Greebon was the one that showed the movie. He got paid. His wife could come watch it, and he got in for free. But he had to run it. And he did the movie with his hand. He could speed it up or slow it down. He's the one that had to rewind all them reels.

BC: How old were you at that time?

LK: I don't know. I just have no idea how old I was. I have no idea.

BC: A young youngster.

LK: See that courthouse—that building was only used for a courthouse four years. You know that.

BC: Right…right.

LK: But it was used for everything else after that. But that's the first movie. Then of course—

BC: What were some of the uses that you witnessed in the courthouse that you remember?

LK: I had three surgeries in there.

BC: Is that right? It was a hospital for many years.

LK: For thirty-something years. There was over nine hundred babies born there. And when they had that re-deal—that opening of it again here not too many years back—seven hundred and something of them come and got their certificate out of the nine hundred that was born there.

BC: I think now they have pictures in the courthouse or a list of all the names.

LK: Oh, they've got pictures on the walls there. First it was a bank. It still—I don't know if they took the sign off it. But that, man, I'm telling you, just about everything you can think of. But for years it stood there vacant. When people went from the west side of the square to go on the other side, went right through the courthouse. Go across that-a-way [indicates north/south direction with hands], you're going through the courthouse.

BC: You mean the doors were open?

LK: Oh, the doors were open. Anybody could go. We played in there when we was kids. We went up and down them steps—had a big time. There was nothing in there for years.

BC: Did kids go upstairs and play?

LK: Oh, yeah. We could play upstairs. We went up and down them steps and everything. It was wide open quite a few years. And then, I guess, the first thing they opened there was a hospital then. Dr. Flannery and Dr. Kealey I think opened up. I think. But there was a hospital for thirty-some years. And then a story I've told before—see, the drug store on the east, yeah, east side—drug store was in front and on the right and in the back was Dr. Fulcher's office. On the left was Dr. Edward's dentist office—Hemple Edwards. 'Course I don't think Mr. Hemple Edwards—I never did see him sterilize any tools. He just washed them and put them back on the tray. So I guess I was twelve, thirteen years old—got a toothache. Man, I was hurting so bad. So I went to see Dr. Edwards. "Yeah," he said, "You got a abscess on that tooth." He says, "But I can't—afraid I can't pull it because it's got a abscess on there, and I can't deaden it." He said, "We'll wait a few days." They took me back home, and, man, I was hurting so bad I couldn't sleep none, so Dad took me back down there. He said, "Well, I guess we're going to have to get that tooth out." He tried putting Novocain in there, and it just

squirted back out. It was so infected. He said, "We got to get that tooth out." So I know it was my dad and Albert Riba and I don't know who else—one got between my legs—held my legs down. The other two got my arms and held me, and Dr. Edwards started pulling that tooth. I screamed that people from the west side of the square come through the courthouse. They come from ev—"Who's getting killed? Who's getting killed?" But when he pulled that tooth—the roots were all full of puss and everything—but I had relief after he got that thing out. But I mean made a noise. I was screaming. [both laughing] But you know, it went straight through the courthouse—come over there. And that's—his daughter—not too long ago at a family reunion, his daughter—I was telling her about that.

BC: Was the theater—when it opened, was that really a big event? Was that a major happening?

LK: Oh my, that was something. Yeah. Friday and Saturday, they had westerns and serials—continued deals. Then, of course, they had the newsreels and all of that stuff—matinees—a lot of things. Then on Sundays and Mondays, they had, you know, different movies—family movies. But Friday and Saturday were always western, and then Sundays Mondays was. And one of the movies came in was—I wanted to get a copy of it and never did. Yeah, I did get that—Joe E. Brown and *Earthworm Tractors*. Old Joe E. Brown—he was a comedian. He was a crazy somebody. 'Course, they showed it Sunday afternoon. There wasn't too many people there. Sunday evening, that place was full. They had to turn people away.

BC: The word got out how good it was?

LK: The word got out how good it was. Yeah. My dad could go see a movie, and he'd always go to sleep, but he went to see that movie, and he didn't sleep one wink through that. Monday evening, they tried to turn people. So they had to keep it, I think, another day or two to show that movie.

BC: Movies were shown every day?

LK: No, just Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. That's all the days it was.

BC: Somehow I that the idea that they were only on Saturday. I guess I'm thinking of Saturday matinees.

LK: No, it was Friday and Saturday, Sunday, Monday. But when the Riggs had the old movie out there, the one movie that I can remember was *Steamboat Round the Bend*. Will Rogers was in it. I've tried to find a copy of that and never did, but they were having a boat race on the Mississippi River. And Will Rogers—he was something anyhow. So these two boats were racing, and this one guy was always drunk. He was drunk all the time. So they were racing and they were ahead, and all of a sudden, they run out of wood—firing the old steam deal. And the other boats started passing them.

All of a sudden, this boat started gaining on the other, and he was throwing his whisky in it, and he won the race. [both laugh]

BC: The theater—now on Saturday, was that something that mainly the young folks went to on Saturday or was that—

LK: Mostly young folks. It was all western; it was always western. And I could never—as a kid, I could never figure out how these cowboys had the white hat on, the fancy clothes on. They'd fall off the horse and roll down the hill there about two, three hundred yards. Come up there, and there wasn't no dirt on them. And I thought, How? Now I know how they did it, but I didn't know then how they did that.

BC: Did people come in from all around? From ranches?

LK: Yes.

BC: That was sort of a focal point of activity at that time?

LK: Really, the only entertainment they had here. The only entertainment they had.

BC: What about food afterwards? People go to—

LK: Then they go home.

BC: Go home or was there a restaurant or café?

LK: 'Course, see, right next to where they built the theater where that open spot was where they had the skating rink, see, Mr. Glascock made two businesses in between there. The one next to the theater was Wagner's Drug Stores—Horace Wagner and Joe Siah Wagner—that drug store in it. The next one was a café—Hill's, I think the name of it—that cafe there, between there and where the old Comparet Store was. 'Course the people there would be open when the movie was over with. And then, Charlie Yancy, I think, was still open—the confectionery was still open. But that's about all that was open then.

BC: What were some of the other ways that you entertained yourselves or that kids your age had fun in Blanco, say back at a younger age, before the movie?

LK: Wasn't much to do except just play; that's all.

BC: Were there things in town, or you basically would be at home and have neighbors or friends that came over?

LK: We generally didn't come to town except on Saturdays and Sundays to go to the show or something. But, otherwise, I was out there on the farm seven miles out. The only way you came to town was on Saturday. Everybody came to town on Saturdays.

And you couldn't find a parking place anywhere. And at one time, they had what they called Trades Day. If you bought so many dollars worth of stuff, they gave you a ticket and they put that in a basket. Then on Saturday afternoons, they'd draw off a cash prize—five dollars, ten dollars, something like that.

BC: Did they have Market Day? Sort of like we do now?

LK: No, I don't remember that. No, I don't remember that. There was—I think they called it Trades Day at that time. I know like when Daddy would buy a lot of cattle—a whole truck load of cattle, see—he'd get a lot of tickets. I think Mother won fifteen, twenty dollars one time. But otherwise, it's of course Saturday nights—dances. Twin Sisters or Kendalia—different like that.

BC: The whole family would go?

LK: Oh yeah. The teenagers didn't make dates—didn't go on a date. You went with your parents. You got to the dance hall. The parents sat around the dance hall or up on the buzzard roost up there and watched everybody. The girls stood on one side, and the boys on the other. When the music started playing, you'd go over and ask a girl to dance. At the end, you'd take her back. There was no date. You didn't have a table to sit at. 'Course, that's a little bit different than it is now. Of course, I could take fifty cents to the dance, pay a quarter to get in, and I'd still go home with a nickel or a dime sometimes. Hamburgers was fifteen cents. Hamburgers weren't that big.

BC: You mentioned Twin Sisters. Were there other dance halls that you could go to?

LK: Twin Sisters was always the first Saturday. Second Saturday was Kendalia. The third Saturday was Flugraths, up the river. And the fourth Saturday was Fischer Store. If there was five Saturdays, then say the first month that had five Saturdays, Twin Sisters would have the extra dance. And so on down the line. Every Saturday night—Smithson Valley had a dance on Sundays, but most people, farmers, didn't go there because you had to get up early Monday morning and go to work. But there was a dance every Saturday night.

BC: Fischer was the fourth—

LK: Fischer was the fourth Saturday.

BC: That's quite a series. You know it just happens that—you might want to look at it on your way out—a photograph here of an architect, a woman, who had done a study of Texas dance halls, and she's taken very good pictures of all the ones you've mentioned in this area.

LK: They think the Twin Sisters Dance Hall is the oldest dance hall. But they've no record of it. Now it's Gruene's. It's the oldest dance hall. But I know years later I got the copy of the deed when they bought a half acre for the Twin Sisters Dance Hall. And

a couple of years ago, I think they added on to it because the building has got more than a half acre now. But in this deed, it says this will be used for entertainment. If it's ever stopped being used for entertainment, the land goes back to the original owners. It's copied in the deed like that. So it's from the Bruemmers that they bought that property.

BC: Do you remember what year?

LK: No. I got it at home. I got a copy of that deed at home. But then they had a bowling alley right there close too, so that was entertainment too. It burnt down in, oooh, '60 something I think.

BC: You mentioned the Glasscocks. Are there more stories about the Glasscock family?

LK: They set quite a few shady deals, I think. 'Course there was one of them—now I don't know—I can't remember what his name was—the older one—

BC: W. D., I think, was the one that built the theater.

LK: Yeah, and those buildings—the two buildings beside it. But the one of them now, what, I can't remember his first name. Sometimes you'd see him. He had a big scar like [indicates side of face]—big scar, and the next time you'd see him, he didn't have a scar. They had some kind of a court case one time in Johnson City. Went over there, and they had smart lawyers. But come to find out, these lawyers from Dallas out-did them—lost their case. But I can't—I was just a kid—'cause they had court cases, the parents would take them to see what was going on in court. That's how I found out how crooked court is. [both laugh]

BC: Seems to me I heard something about the school house—the old school house being built with stones from the Glasscock ranch.

LK: Well, that was the third high school. The first high school—where Mother went—I think it was a two-story building. And it burnt down, and they had school down in the courthouse building. And how long Mother went, I don't know. I never did find out for I weren't in genealogy at that time. But then they rebuilt the one that's the original one. You drive up going up that way to the front. But that was the second high school. And then the one to the left is the one I helped build there. I forget if it's junior high or what it is now. But that was in '35, '40, something like that.

BC: You helped build it. Tell us about that.

LK: Well, it's what they called the NYA, National Youth Administration. Give the children, young boys—that's what Roosevelt started, NYA. So we got out there, and there was just trees and stuff out there and nothing out there. Mr. Claude Kidder was going to be the foreman. So he called me over and said—

BC: This would have been in the early 30s?

LK: ’39 or ’40, I expect, ’39 or ‘40. So he called me over. He said, “We’re going to stake this thing off, now (inaudible) off. You help me read this blueprint.” I said, “Mr. Kidder, I’ve never seen a blueprint in my life. I just went through the eighth grade at McKinney school up there.” He said, “Well,” he said, “I’ll show you how.” He said, “You read this, and you read that, and we’ll stake the whole thing off.” We staked it off, and all of the foundation was built by hand. The concrete was poured, mixed in a box—not no ready-mix concrete—poured all the foundation. Then one crew would go out there on the Glasscock ranch and quarry the rocks—break the rocks off. Then they’d bring them over here. And each fellow had a table there, and you had to take a chisel and hammer and square that rock off—make it look right. If it wasn’t square, you couldn’t put it in the wall. And we built all those—built the walls then like that.

BC: You must get a lot of satisfaction going by that old building. Maybe you find a rock that you remember chiseling.

LK: Yeah, well, that’s—got twenty-one cents an hour. It was NYA, National Youth Administration. I couldn’t finish 'cause Dad needed me back on the farm before we got the auditorium finished. But the other one that I wanted to tell you—where I told you my uncle had a blacksmith shop on the south side of the square there—my dad didn’t need me, I could work for him. He put up windmills, built these rock tanks, and poured concrete—anything—laid water line by hand. So I worked for him, and I stayed with my grandparents here in town. I didn’t have to go all the way home. We’d work five and a half days and sometime eight-hour days—sometime ten-hour days. Saturday at noon, my pay was seven dollars.

BC: That seemed like a lot of money back then.

LK: He raised me to ten dollars. I thought I was a millionaire. I really felt like something.

BC: You must know all of the ranches around Blanco. You’ve probably been on these or worked on them or had friends?

LK: No, not on the ranches. I didn’t work on them, but I know a lot of the people, of course. Not too many years ago, I’d come up here to the Bowling Alley Café, and I’d know over half the people. I don’t know anybody now anymore. They’re all strangers. The older ones are all gone, so I don’t know hardly anybody anymore.

BC: Did you ever join in on those famous domino games—five o’clock in the morning, Bowling Alley Cafe?

LK: No, no, no, that was after—see, that bowling alley wasn’t built till ’47.

BC: Okay. That's right.

LK: '47. Yeah. That's when it was built. (inaudible) right beside it. But there's another story I could tell. You know when Lyndon Johnson was running for, I think, state representative, when he first started politics—where the Bowling Alley is now, there was just an open field. That big house on the corner was there and the little house behind it. But that other was Mr. Galbraith's garden. There was nothing there at that time. So all of a sudden, Saturday afternoon, I heard that Lyndon Johnson was going to come electioneering in Blanco. He was coming in a helicopter. He was flying from town to town in a helicopter. So, good gosh, everybody in town—they went over there, and they gathered over there in front of that, and finally here it come a helicopter—landed on the patch. Had a speaker and said, "Stand back…stand back till the rotor quits turning." So then he had a little platform beside the helicopter, and he started making his speech. 'Course as a kid—I must have been thirteen, I guess—I don't remember what he told about his running for office and everything. And he said, "I guess you see my mode of travel—how I get from town to town—but I cannot call it what it is. I'm going to call it a heeliocoptor because there's too many Baptists live in this town." That's the only part of his speech I can remember. [laughter]

BC: That you remember.

LK: That I remember—right where the Bowling Alley is now.

BC: Well, now living out seven miles west of town, you weren't all that far from Lindendale. Did you have much contact with the folks out there in Lindendale?

LK: Not too much. No, we knew—I knew where it was up there, yeah. See ever community had a school—just a lot of communities had a cotton gin. Lindendale—that was up the river—over what we called the River Road, 1888 now. Then, of course, Live Oak—that was right there beside the Flugrath Store. That's where Live Oak School was. I went to McKinney School, which is on McKinney Loop now.

BC: Then for high school you came into Blanco, or they had a high school out there?

LK: I didn't go to high school. See out there at McKinney, they had only seven grades. And eighth grade had to go to Blanco. So when my brother went to school—he was five years older than me—he got to go a year to Blanco. Then he had to quit school because Dad needed him on the farm. So he said, "You go to eighth grade just like your brother did." So when it come time for me to go to the eighth grade, there was three grades there was no pupils in. There wasn't but fifteen or sixteen pupils in all. So the teacher could teach the eighth grade. So I took the eighth grade out there at McKinney School. So I never did get to come to high school.

BC: Did they have reunions?

LK: No. See, the old school is still there.

BC: Probably not that many folks left then.

LK: You know where the old McKinney school is? Where, ah, dang it—

BC: You know I don't think I've seen that. I know Live Oak and the—

LK: Dang it. It's always been there. (inaudible) lives there now. In the history book, it says that building was built in 1878 for a Church of Christ. Mr. McKinney gave the land. And they built that for the Church of Christ, and later they made a school out of it. Billy Joe Berger—you know where he lives? Billy Joe Berger lived—he still lives—in the schoolhouse. It's still—made, you know, made rooms out of it, but the school is still there where I went to school. The building is still there.

BC: You lived in Blanco or near Blanco until—when did you actually leave?

LK: Oh, I went to service in—well, there's—Pearl Harbor was in '41, wasn't it?

BC: Yeah.

LK: Then in February, I went in the service. I was in the service three years, eight months, and fifteen days.

BC: You joined the navy?

LK: No, army. Oh I was drafted. And then I went overseas—stayed there twenty-five months and one day. I didn't mind that one day, but that twenty-five months sure was a long time—went to Europe. Then I came back.

BC: Where were you?

LK: Europe—third army division—served with Hodges, General Hodges. Supposed to go in on D Day but thank God, we didn't go in because I probably wouldn't be here now. We went eighteen days after D Day. I stayed until the war was over. Then I come back to Blanco here—helped build the buildings, the court, the tourist courts down here—helped build them and quite a few buildings around here.

BC: Did Blanco feel different to you after being in the war for a couple of years?

LK: It wasn't too much. It's about the same thing, about the same thing. Then I got married—first time 4th of July, '46.

BC: And your wife put up with that pickup truck for seven years.

LK: You know where the Bowling Alley is and that big building right beside it on the corner. And there's a little twelve-by-sixteen room behind it. I don't know if it's real

estate or some kind of office. It's a historical building anyhow. First wife and I lived in that building for fifty-one weeks after I got married.

BC: Right off the square?

KL: You know where the Bowling Alley is, and then that big house on the corner to a building right behind it, twelve by sixteen—one room, no water, no nothing in there—water faucet outside, toilet outside. You took a bath up the river—went up the river and took a bath. Lived there fifty-one weeks. How many couples would live fifty-one weeks like that now? Paid four dollars a week rent.

BC: A bath in the river? Did you just go jump in the river?

LK: Well, go up the river—there's dams up there now—but there was places that—deep places—you could take a bath up there. And I built a garage apartment just a little ways down here on the right where the Bucks live—where all that junk is on it—built my garage apartment there. Lived there almost two years. Then in '49, I moved to Cibolo.

BC: And you've been in Cibolo since '49?

LK: Ever since '49. You know where Randolph is now—the back road going off toward Randolph (Randolph Air Force Base)?

BC: I haven't been out that way in a long time.

LK: See when I got to Cibolo in '49, it was a little over a hundred people, and now it's over twelve thousand.

BC: New Braunfels is one of the fastest growing cities in the country probably.

LK: Yeah. I used to do carpentry work—built my own home—took me five months. But I lived in Cibolo 'cause I worked at the Pearl Brewing Company then for thirty—for a little over thirty years. Yeah, I worked there over thirty years.

BC: In San Antonio?

LK: Yeah.

BC: You drove in? You commuted?

LK: Yeah. I built in Cibolo because I could find work in San Antonio, Seguin, and New Braunfels—all about the same distance. But then I worked thirty years and one month at the Pearl Brewing Company. The building I worked in is just a hole in the ground now. The bottle shop burned down.

BC: Do you still have family or relatives living here in Blanco?

LK: Dick Knoll—the one who owns the blacksmith shop—that's my cousin, first cousin. Then that's just about all around here I think now—can't think of anything else right now—anybody else.

BC: These are wonderful memories. Are there other high points or low points of life in Blanco that occur to you?

LK: Well, I seen when they built the park—Blanco State Park—in 1933. I watched them build that. At that time—

BC: Was that controversial? Was there any opposition, or everybody support it?

LK: Everybody supported it because that was what Roosevelt started, and we knew it as a Tree Army Camp. That's all we knew it as. But then we found it was the CCC, Civilian Conservation Corp. And I often wondered why did they call it the Tree Army Camp but found out that when they first started the Civilian Conservation Corp, they planted the forest, and I guess that's the reason they called it the Tree Army Camp. 'Cause that was—course then later, they built parks and did everything. But that's—but see, where the camp was, if you go across the new bridge down here just on the left, that's where the CCC Camp was. I don't know how long we had to furnish—fift—twenty gallons of milk there every morning at five o'clock. We had to milk twelve to fifteen cows. [demonstrates milking with hands]

BC: To feed the workers?

LK: Yeah. Every morning at five o'clock, we'd have twenty gallons of milk there. Took the old model T touring car, and took the seat out of the back, set the two ten-gallon cans in the back.

BC: Fresh, raw milk?

LK: What we'd milked the evening before and the next morning—no refrigeration. There was no refrigeration—didn't have no electricity out there or nothing. Then they built the—

BC: Were they living in tents?

LK: First in tents, yeah. The officers had their—I think they all had tents to begin with, and I think officers had buildings later, but that's all houses in there now. I got pictures of the army camp there. But then another thing they built the club house—built the dams. And then the last thing they were building is down here where the entrance used to be sitting—see, used to be right down here where that bridge is—the entrance to the park—the concession building and everything. And just a little ways below Town Creek, there's a little arched bridge there—course you go over—don't go across it anymore—just the workers. We come to town one Saturday, and they almost had that thing

finished. One side they had to do some work—that rock work—but they were just about through with it. That was the last thing they was going to do. We come to town the next Saturday, there was no more bridge there—rocks laying all over. What the heck! They must have built it crooked or something. Another week or so the bridge was finished and everything. I often wondered, Why did they rebuild that bridge? But what was the matter? But I guess it's been about ten years or twelve years ago, I was in a doctor's office in San Antonio—one of these Parks and Wildlife Magazines—in there, I found out why they did that. They had so much time allotted—so much money allotted to build that park. Then they realized they was almost through with that bridge. They had to do some more work and take up some more time. They had to tear that bridge down and rebuild it. That was in 1933, mind you. I wanted to take that magazine home. I forgot about it. But I read it. That's why they rebuilt that bridge. Even then, you know, everything was government.

BC: Well, we're probably less efficient today than we were back then, I would think, with our—

LK: And at upper lake there by the club house—after they built that, in the summer time, they used to have boat races on that. That was so wide! Sunday afternoons, they'd have boat races on that. Now there's just a small channel in it. But when they first built it, that was wide.

BC: Is that right?

LK: Yeah, it was wide area there.

BC: Boat races? Like row boats or canoes or powerboats?

LK: No, no. Powerboats—we had powerboats then. They'd run from the dam up to the Kendalia Road up there—down there.

BC: You've mentioned several times that you collect things and keep things at home. You must have volumes and volumes of records and documents, photographs.

LK: I got some. But mostly the second wife and I started the genealogy—studying the family. My mother lived to be ninety-eight. But when we got into genealogy—studying the families—it was too late. She didn't—couldn't—remember too much stuff. But when we—the second wife and I got married, we're driving around the country, "Old so and so lived here." But it'd go in one ear and out the other. But then later, we wished we'd listened. Had to go to the courthouse and find all that. See I've been married twice. Both wives died of cancer. But it was so interesting to find through the families, you know, all the families. I've got deeds. The wife would do the families, and I would do the deeds—get copies of deeds. 'Cause years ago, they put in there how many silver dollars they gave, or how many gold coins they gave for the piece of property.

BC: It's all written in there.

LK: All written in there. Now you buy a piece of property for a million dollars, and you know what they put on there? Ten dollars and other consideration. That's all they put now. But I tell some were comical. I found one where my great-grandfather married my great-great-aunt in New Braunfels. Come out to Rebecca Creek over there at Spring Branch, bought 320 acres. Couple of years later, there was 640 acres to the west of there—almost to 281 (US Highway 281) there where the Spring Branch bowling alley is. And some—a couple of guys had bought it. And they owed a dollar and eighty something tax. They couldn't find them—the guys that were paying the taxes. So he goes to the courthouse in New Braunfels, makes a new deed, pays the back taxes. He bought 640 acres for six dollars and ninety-one cents. Now it's bringing anywhere from eight to ten thousand dollars an acre. But that's what made these old deeds so popular. I've got all that stuff. And then the families—family genealogy—it was so interesting. Now a lot of people are not interested—like Dick Knoll, my cousin—he's not interested. My brother—tell you a story—I'd go to see him about our great-grandparents. "I don't give a damn." That's all there was. So he just wasn't interested. But it's so interesting, and now that I've—since that wife passed away, and I'm trying—I've got two step-daughters, which are my second cousins. My dad's father's father and my mother were first cousins. But see a lot of these families—they don't know, so I'm trying to get all of this stuff back to the original families. I don't want anything throwed away. 'Cause my great-grandfather was Johann Heinrich Fischer. Then the girls' great-great-grandfather was John Fischer here at Twin Sisters. And then we found there was a Fritz Fischer. So we thought, How are they kin? We couldn't figure out no way they was kin. So when the girls' grandparents passed away, they had a lot of records from Germany—I mean letters from Germany. I told them just go throw them records in the fire. Burn all of them records up. So the oldest daughter—she said, "My mother saves stamps. Maybe she'd like some German stamps." So she saved them—a pack of them. In one of those letters, we found out those three were brothers. If that letter had been burned up, we'd have never known. So they was all right in this same area—those three brothers.

BC: Do you have old photographs at home as well?

LK: Oh yeah. Some I don't know who they are. Mother had a lot of them. She did write on some of them. But a lot of them—she didn't know who the heck they are. It's a shame—so old many photos that nobody knows who they are.

BC: Did you take photos yourself?

LK: The wife took photos. I got boxes and boxes of parades and air shows and everything. She took pictures everywhere. There was rock fences. You know rock fences? A lot of them called them stone fences, but I call them rock fences. When I was a small child, a neighbor—he was way older than I was—he said, "When I was a boy, my father used to contract to build those rock fences." And he said, "We'd have to go and dig a foundation. You know, dig down in the ground, go quarry the rocks, lay them up three and four foot high." For every yard, they got twenty-five cents. He told

me that. I thought, That don't—that sounds odd. But then later in the history books, I found out that that was what they got—twenty-five. He said, "A lot of days, we didn't make a yard." But a yard was that much money. If the rancher would furnish the rocks, then they got seventeen cents a yard. But that's where—now those fences are still standing today if they wasn't tore down.

BC: Yeah. We have the remains of some of those old fences. I always assumed that the people living on the ranch just went out and did it. But you mention that contractors did the work—that people made a living doing that.

LK: Yeah, they hired people to do it. I couldn't believe when he told me. I thought, That don't sound right. But then I found out that was the going rate back then. 'Course a quarter would go somewhere. After Bindseils had their store there, and Mother would come to town and—about three, three and a half dollars—took her and me and my brother to carry the stuff to the car. Now one piece of meat that big costs that much. [indicates small size with fingers] And if Mother didn't come to town, she'd give Dad a slip with what she wanted. He'd walk into Bindseils' Store and say, "I'm going to be back at four o'clock to pick it up." Four o'clock, we'd go in there and all them boxes—the clerks put it together for him. How many would do that nowadays?

I watched them build that south side. I watched them build that store. That's all in my story there. (*Memories and Recollections of Blanco*, Leroy Klinger, Blanco Library) Walter Bindseil—how he started out—started with the corner where some of his stuff was burned. And then moved—sold that and built down there and (inaudible). Then, of course, Roland Bindseil built the Bowling Alley. The first two alleys—they called it the Blanco Valley Bowling Club. When I was a small child, my uncle, aunt lived up past Flugraths up there. I could see back in the pasture there was an old long building in there. I found out that was the old Blanco Valley Bowling Alley. 'Course they didn't use it anymore. So when they built this bowling alley, went and got those two lanes up there and put them in this building down here.

BC: A great piece of history. We're very much indebted to you for sharing this with us.

LK: I hope I helped you out.

BC: Oh, it's been wonderful.

Notes:

This interview was conducted and produced by the Oral History Committee of the Blanco County South Library District.

In spite of the best efforts of the Oral History Committee, some errors may be present in this transcription. Please refer to accompanying video for original source.

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