TRANSCRIPT
INTERVIEWEE: **Bob Burleson** (BB)
INTERVIEWER: David Todd (DT)
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DT: Let's start with some of the early players and reasons for you being interested in conservation and any friends, family, etc. who might have gotten you encouraged about conservation.
02:51 – 2009
BB: Okay. I guess, I guess at the outset, let me say just one thing and that is that throughout the history of our state, there have been always been people interested in conserving the, you know, the natural wonders of the state. And there's always been some people that were aware of what was going on. So, I'm operating from memory and I would always want you to keep in mind that—that I may leave somebody out unintentionally that was active at a time when I should have remembered them and certainly that's—that would be, you know, the vagaries of human memory allow for that. Also, no one group and certainly no one person can take credit for-—or anything. It's all been sort of a—a communal and joint effort down through the years and—and I hope that I'll remember most of the major players. But if I don't, it sure isn't cause I've intentionally left anybody out. I was—I was born and raised in—on a ranch so I—I have grown up with
04:05 – 2009
BB: the natural world and frankly, I've been a hunter since childhood. And—but I always had a—had an intense curiosity about the natural world. That was fostered partly by my mother who was an educated lady, Ruth Bohmer(?) Burleson, and she got me—she taught me to read long before I—I could—was old enough to go to school—to the little country schools. And, she bought me, as a very young child, a—a Britannica Junior, a small encyclopedia and I had read that thing—every single volume in it, from cover-to-cover before I went to the first grade. So, I learned a whole lot about the natural world just from reading that. She was just a—she was a very encouraging person. And, then my grandfather on my father's side, R.C. Burleson, was a farmer who lived very close to the land and was very observant about the land and—and just trotting around behind him and working with him as a child also gave me appreciation for life, basically.
DT: What would he show you?
05:23 – 2009
BB: Everything from the tracks made by insect or the—or the eggs they lay. That was before the days of—of really widespread pesticides so you had to deal with, in your crops, you know, whatever—it went from the boll weevil to the bud worm, whatever else, you know. And, with—and just sort of the—the way mice lived, the way the cotton rats lived, the—the plain old Norway rats in the barn, everything. It was interesting to him and so he would—we—we hunted squirrels on the creeks and fished in the ponds and the little

creeks near—near his place and…
DT: Where was that?
06:08 – 2009
BB: Near Mark, Texas on the Blackland Prairie, north of here, probably 45 miles. And, he was a cotton farmer all his life and—and worked basically till he died. And—but he gave me a real reverence for life, so to speak, along with—with my mother. And that—that's something that has stayed with me and I've been—I'm glad I was raised by them. Far as conservation itself, I have to trace my real interest in it to the publication of Rachel Carson's, Silence Praying. That was the first—as far as I'm concerned, that was the first really awareness or awakening element in my life, in terms of really getting me and my wife, Micky, interested in—in being active in the conservation movement. That was a—I read every book she wrote, you know, all of her books about the—The Edge of the Sea and Under the Sea Wind and things of that nature. And they just sort of awakened in—in us a—an awareness that—that there was globally things going on we needed to be concerned about. That's basically kind of the start of it. In fact, I think nearly all the conservation movement in Texas probably ultimately traces its roots to Rachel Carson's book.
DT: What sort of things that she wrote resonated with you?
07:51 – 2009
BB: Well, sort of—of you had to pick out just one thing from her book, you would pick out the—what I call the unintended consequences of human activity. That—I mean, that's
08:09 – 2009
BB: basically the root of it as far as I'm concerned and it's the root of most conservation activities because it's the things that we don't foresee about our human activities that ultimately end up causing most of the damage. And, the—the widespread—at that time, basically starting at the end of World War II, if you think back, you're not old enough but I can remember the news reels during World War II when, as we would capture towns in Italy, for example, every citizen of the—the town would be passed through a delousing station, a big tent set up and white DDT dust was poured over every man, woman and child in those Italian towns. And it was—that DDT was looked on as really a tremendous advance in civilization at that time. And—and it did do some things very well. I mean, it—I can remember the first bomb I ever saw—the first DDT bomb I ever saw. It was weird looking thing. It looked like a small—small oxygen bottle and you—you would buy these things and you could spray DDT all over your house and you'd have no more flies around your barn, no more mosquitoes. And so—but it—unknown to all of us, and really I think unknown to the manufacturers probably, it was a persistent deleterious, you know, agent introduced into the environment. And even today it's detectable after all these years and many years after its general usage has ceased, it's detectable chemically in our water, in our soil, in the ice at the—at the every ends of the earth. You know, it's everywhere. And so, that—Rachel Carson raised that awareness in me and millions of others. And it was her last living act really. I mean, she died near the time that book was published. But it was—it was—it was a tremendous impact on a lot of people. Had a—had a tremendous impact.
DT: Can you tell us about some of your published books?
10:35 – 2009
BB: Well, I have—as an author, I'm pretty limited. I have written one book called, Back Country Mexico, and David Riskin(?) and I put that together out of the years we spent in Northern Mexico collecting plants, basically as a part of volunteer work to—to preserve

knowledge of what—what there is in these island mountain masses in Northern Mexico, where you have mountain islands separated by miles of desert. And there are lots of endemic species inside those mountains that are—that are found nowhere else. And so David and I and many other people that had a scientific bent and had botanical knowledge, volunteered for years to work with the Mexican government and the University of Texas Botany Department at Austin, Marshall Johnston, Dr. Johnston. Then the University of California, I think it—I can't remember if it was at Berkeley or Davis but they had a—they had an active role to play in that as well. Jim Himerickson(?) there, who's now, I believe in Austin again. But those people were going back into the very rural areas and looking to see what was there. And David and I spent about eight years as volunteers traveling in Northern Mexico collecting plants and—and animals and insects and mollusca and we got flowers and—and snails and things like that named after us because we were the first ones to report them, you know. Anyway out of that, because of the knowledge of the Mexican culture that we developed at that time, he and I wrote the book and it was published in 1986. The only other thing I've ever published of any real consequence was the—I did write the first guidebook to the Rio Grande River that helped people understand and get into and safely, you know, travel the wild river or what
12:41 – 2009
BB: ultimately became the wild river. But that was at a time long before the wild river was even thought of. And, I think that the first publication of it was in about 1964 and in 1965, it was published in American Whitewater serially and then shortly thereafter the National Park Service started publishing it through the Big Bend Natural History Association. And it's been updated and revised. A geologist, Dwight Deal(?), worked with me on that (phone ringing).
BB: A geologist, Dwight Deal, worked with me on that and the two of us put together a mile-by-mile guide of the Rio Grande River. The—the—what is now the wild and scenic river sections of it. And…
DT: Is it a description of mostly the hazards of the river or is it also a description of what you might see?
13:36 – 2009
BB: Really, it's more than that. It involves the history of the area, the—the zoology and botany of the area, the geography and geology of the area and it lets people see, you know, become—relate to the environment that they're traveling through. I mean, if you just get in a river and just go from point A to point B as fast as you can, you really miss the—the true experience of river running, the true enjoyment of river running is to take your time, enjoy the rapids and have a good time, you know, sporting but learn to get outside your boat. Get on the banks, go up the canyons, find the springs, find the caves,
14:16 – 2009
BB: climb the bluffs and really get a feel for the country that you're going through. So that's what we did that for. And we want to—we wanted it to be safe as well and then we wanted to basically preach stewardship. You know, low impact. Don't take anything away. Don't destroy anything. You know, get permission if there's anybody to get permission from and if you run into anybody remember you're on their—in their country, on the Mexican side and—and you're on their ranch on the Texas side. And—and even in Mexico, people can be jealous of their property rights. So we tried to help people use the rivers and also keep down the level of conflict with—with the owners on both sides of the river. And that's—

that's been a pretty successful little publication. Again, that's—it's not copyrighted or anything like that and I made no—I've never copyrighted any of the guidebooks that I wrote. I wanted them to be used and reproduced freely.
DT: Can you tell about your help with Justice Douglas and the history…
15:35 – 2009
BB: Justice William O. Douglas ultimately, I believe, was the longest—the longest tenured… (noise)
15:47 – 2009
BB: Justice William O. Douglas was ultimately, I believe, the—the—the Supreme Court Justice who served the longest. He was appointed during the New Deal days to the United States Supreme Court by Franklin Roosevelt, President of the United States, and he served until he died. And he was a very active advocate of conservation efforts. He started writing a series of books, a wilderness series for a major publisher. And I apologize for not knowing the name of that publisher or not remembering it. But he started writing a series of wilderness books for a major publisher that—that—and he had written about four books. They involved, I believe, the Pacific Northwest, the Maine and Vermont area, like the Appalachian area and some of those. Well when I first encountered those in early—in the early '60's, about 1960—I'd say about 1963, my partner and uncle, Jim Bohmer(?) who also has always been very conservation oriented and very—he's a historian and so he—he's very reverent about the past. We got the idea, along with my wife, Micky, that perhaps what if we just invited Douglas to come to Texas and tell him that we'll—we'll pay his way, in terms of we'll provide the—the—we'll take him everywhere he wants to go in the State of Texas if he'll write a conservation book only about Texas. In other words, concentrate on Texas. We wanted to use that as a vehicle to get interest stirred up in Texas about preserving the natural environment. And ultimately, he did that. We took him everywhere he went in Texas over a period of several years and we just funded it out of our pockets. And he—he would provide his own plane ticket to Texas, he and his wife would come down but we'd take them from there. We'd meet them at the plane and we took them through the river canyons in the Rio Grande and—in Big Bend National Park. We took them into the
18:12 – 2009
BB: Guadalupe Mountains which, at that time, were privately owned and you couldn't get in there except through permission from the owner, J. C. Hunter, Jr., and—and the ranch manager, Noel Kincade. Those were two people that were very helpful in all the effort toward the Guadalupe Mountain National Park. And we would take him to Big—took him to the Big Thicket. And the Big Thicket Association there would take him on trips, Lance Rosier(?) and some of those people would take him back into the Thicket. And the end result was he wrote, Farewell to Texas, a Vanishing Wilderness. And it covered the hill country, the Trans Pecos(?), all that—the Big Thicket, the Guadeloupe Mountains and all—all the mountainous areas. And that was a big—a big help. It got a good bit of publicity for conservation and turned out to be a great idea and I think the original idea came from my uncle, Jim Bohmer, who suggested it to me one day and then Mickey and I picked up on it. And I contacted Justice Douglas and one funny thing I'll never forget: the first thing that I—when I first wrote him and asked him to come to Texas, his—he apparently dictated a letter and he intended to say and I'm sure said, I have some free time in September and I'm ready to come and shoot the rapids with you all on the Rio Grande River. But his secretary must have misunderstood and the first letter I got from Douglas said, I'm ready to come in

September and shoot the rabbits with you on the Rio Grande River. So we—we joked—jokingly talked to him many—many times about our trips of shooting the rabbits. The reality was he was really a fine man, a very intelligent person and he was the first person that ever brought to my attention the existence of the Nature Conservancy which was, at that time, mostly active in the northeast. But he was a big supporter of the Nature Conservancy, had been to many fund raisers for them and
20:29 – 2009
BB: tried to help their efforts and—and he gave me the concept of, you know, of the foundation buying land and holding it efficiently for conservation purposes. So anyway, Justice Douglas turned out to be a lifetime friend. We were friends, he and I and my uncle Jim and Micky were friends for the rest of his life. And—and he—we never lost contact with each other and he was always interested in Texas and—and in conservation work in Texas. (misc.)
DT: Justice Douglas talks about the beauty of the Guadalupe Mountains. Can you tell about your efforts to protect them?
21:32 – 2009
BB: William O. Douglas lived in the—during the areas—I mean, during the time when the court was not in session. He had a—a small cabin in the Olympia—Olympic Mountains, okay, in—in Washington State. He loved mountains and that was where—that was basically where he loved to be. He had never been to the Guadalupe Mountains in Texas. And they also go into New Mexico. But, we're speaking primarily here of the—the Texas Guadalupe Mountains. A part of that includes Carlsbad Caverns. Carlsbad Caverns National Park or National Monument. But he—we—we—we knew that the Guadalupes were a major ecological treasure and that the owner of that, J.C. Hunter, Jr., really wanted that ranch to become a National Park. He was a very fine, civic-minded
22:36 – 2009
BB: person. His father had acquired the ranch. He had maintained it. He had a foreman, Noel Kincade, who had lived there in that area and had run the ranch for most of his life. And Noel Kincade was a—an unusually fine person. Just a—a—very self reliant but didn't have any of the—of the hostility or bitterness or anger that many West Texas ranchers have toward any kind of conservation effort. Unfortunately, there were a lot of them at that time who were very opposed to the—to any constraint on killing Golden Eagles or Bald Eagles. Okay. And—and, for example, because they felt like that they—that they were dangerous and—to the—to lambs and kids. And there's—there's no doubt that an eagle from time-to-time will take a—a lamb or a kid. That's—their—their argument was founded in reality but Noel Kincade, for example, although he was a—he raised goats and sheep and his son was a major wool and mohair producer. He had a very good attitude toward—toward the raptors and toward preserving them and he didn't himself shoot them, you know, like so many of his neighbors did. He was a—so we, through our knowledge of J.C. Hunter, Jr., we had permission to go into the Guadeloupe Mountains anytime we wanted to. And we took many hiking trips into those mountains long before it was a National Park. We took Justice Douglas in there and Noel Kincade and J.C. Hunter were his personal guides and friends throughout the trip. And—and that really—he really concentrated on the Guadalupes in his—in his book, Farewell to Texas. We then started working with Senator Ralph Yarborough and others to get the Guadeloupe Mountains into the National Park system and—and there were several problems that were presented by that. Number One,

at that time they didn't have a whole lot of money for buying it and the land would have had to have been purchased. Mr. Hunter was able to
25:00 – 2009
BB: give them a good deal and a lower rate or, you know, lower price than he would have sold it to somebody commercially but, still he had to—that was what he had to leave his children and he—he couldn't just give it away. So it had to be a sell. Secondly, the Texas Company and some other oil companies had some mineral rights and some leases on parts of it and if you have a National Park, you must deal with those mineral resources and get either a no-drill clause or relinquishment of the rights to drill and enter and explore. Otherwise, you—you really could not have a National Park. I mean, it's—it's—that—National Parks and mining and oil production and all that don't go together very well. So we started working through contacts and friends and things like that and—and politicians to get the Guadeloupe Mountains made a National Park. There were—there were many, many groups that worked on that. But I will say that my uncle, Jim Bohmer, probably was the one person who was most successful in getting the Texas Company to relinquish its mineral rights which cleared the way for the legislation that created the National Park. Jim dealt with Texaco for over a year and with their attorneys just negotiating and trying to find a way that everybody could—could feel like it was—that they were not getting mistreated. You know, and obviously a corporation that large, you can't threaten them. You've got to work with them. I mean, those are—it requires compromise and persuasion. But he was able to do that. He then went to—I was not able to go but Jim testified before Congress on the advisability and suitability of making the Guadalupes a National Park. Again, other conservation groups were active in the same thing. Not–not at all saying that—that—that we were the only ones working because that's just not true. On the other hand, nobody else got Texaco to release their mineral
27:19 – 2009
BB: except my uncle. And so I'll give Jim Bohmer total credit for that in that we could not have had a National Park without it. And also that, you know, the Senator from Texas, Ralph Yarborough was extremely helpful in—in all those endeavors, along with the—the wild and scenic river proposal. He was—he was the one who got the first money and the first study authorized in that. So that—he was a good—good man to have up there.
DT: Tell us about the Wide and Scenic River designation for the Big Bend…
27:56 – 2009
BB: Once we started—once we published our mile-by-mile river guide to the—to the Rio Grande River, it was pretty obvious that people—if people don't use a resource than there's not much of a motivation to maintain and preserve it. And, at that time, the Federal Interstate Land Sales Act had not been enacted. And all over the State of Texas, wild areas were being broken up into sort of ranchette subdivisions, even if they were miles from electricity and water. Until the Federal Interstate Land Sales Act was enacted, developers could buy large ranches, subdivide them and just don't worry about whether there was any—any electricity or any potable water available to the people. Okay. So they were chopping up areas all around the Big Bend area. One of the areas that they chopped up like that was—was called the Terlangula Ranch Development which was out to the west of Big Bend park and that was being developed in the '60's. And so our fear was that all of the Rio Grande along those canyons would be bought by developers and chopped up and we'd lose forever the wildness and the remoteness of that area. So

29:17 – 2009
BB: we started publicizing it through the help of Frank Talbert, Frank X. Talbert who was a widely respected and widely read columnist for the Dallas Morning News. He—he wrote a column called, Talbert's Texas and I can't even begin to tell you how many columns Frank wrote supportive of Guadeloupe Mountains National Park and it's efforts, the Big Bend, you know, the Wild and Scenic River designation effort and all that. He was—he was really a tremendous help to getting publicity out there. So with Ralph Yarborough, Senator Yarborough's help we got—we couldn't get an actual designation of it because the politics of it. We didn't have enough strength, at that point, to do it. But we were able to get Ralph Yarborough—Senator Yarborough was able to get an allocation of funds to do a study and to—and to appoint the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation as the agency to do the study. Because the—in getting it into the hands of the right agency was very important because the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation was really more conservation oriented than some other government agencies. And, so Ralph Yarborough got us the money for the first study of the—of the qualifications and the feasibility of making the wild and scenic rivers—I mean, making the Rio Grande a Wild and Scenic River. There had already been a few rivers like that ded—dedicated in the nation. I think some in Wisconsin, some in Maine, perhaps one in Virginia but it was sort of an idea in its infancy to—to designate wild and scenic river sections. The idea being that the people on the banks could use them for their normal purposes but they couldn't develop within the line of sight from the river. That's basically what it boiled down to. Ranchers could keep on ranching. Farmers could keep on farming but you couldn't build structures or new roads or—or denude the countryside, so to speak, within the sight from
31:36 – 2009
BB: the river. And that was very, very important out there on the Rio Grande because it runs through canyons for most of its journey and—and to have development right up on the canyon rim, I mean, just would wipe out the—the solitude and the—the beauty of that particular river section. So, what we did was, once we got the money allocated through Congress for the study, several of us, on the first trip—let me think—who all was involved—on the—on the first trip to take the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation study team down the river. We got Texas Outward Bound to furnish the rafts and some—and some raftsmen to carry the government team. Then John Baker, Dr. John Baker, a dentist from Dallas, my cousin, Harry Burleson, let's see, I think Bob Sims, friend of his, Davis Bragg, number of other friends, that we boated with a lot. David Riskind, we all kind of put together a team and we took the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation study team down the river, Rowland Rower, former—at that time, I think he was Chief Naturalist at Big Bend National Park. He was there and there was some other National Park people. Anyway, we took them down there and they did a study—a feasibility report. In the meantime, there was a lot of political opposition to it. So Micky and I, at our—financed a separate trip for the ranchers. We took all the ranchers who was—who wanted to come, who were landowners along the river and we also took the head of the sheep—Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers Association, the head of the—the Mohair and—Counsel, Mr. Sid Harkins, I believe he was and then Bill Sims was Head of the Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers Association. Dudley Harrison, who later was a State Representative from Sanderson. We
33:49 – 2009
BB: took him and—and then a lot of the ranchers that owned—David—David Adams and—

and others that owned land along the river. We took them down there on a trip, just like a tourist would—would go, camping out and—and looking at the river from an angle they had never seen it from. And—and basically just building relationships. Just letting them get to know us and letting us get to know them. The end result was probably, in the long run, favorable. It certainly wasn't immediately favorable though because like everybody else in West Texas, they were all very suspicious of the conservation movement. They were suspicious of the idea that if you've got something that people like, they'll soon swarm you over and—and we'll have long haired hippies and marijuana parties on the river and everything like that. It took a while to get—get them to accept it but ultimately they did. But we had another problem. It was very—very serious. In the treaty that created the dams like Falcon Reservoir and Amistad Reservoir, there were three dams provided for in the treaty. And one of those dam sites was in the very middle of the wild river section. It would have been basically below Dryden, Texas in one of the—in the heart of the canyon country. And that—that dam could—was—was only—you know, it was provided for by treaty between the United States and Mexico. International level treaty. And the Texas politicians couldn't abrogate the treaty. Even the United States acting alone couldn't abrogate the treaty. So with the next step was to take the Mexican and the Texas commissioners, the International Boundary and Water Commissioners—we took them down through there. Took them to the Dryden Dam site, showed them—and it—it is a beautiful site. It's a deep canyon, probably a thousand feet of—of very sheer walls on each side and scattered up the walls are the old wooden remnants of the
36:16 – 2009
BB: ladders, hundreds of old ladders that they—they used when they were core drilling to test for that dam. It was a dam site. There are remnants of the old cables, remnants of the anchors if they—where they had a ferry—ferry operation going across the river to carry equipment from one side to the other. All that is there if you know what you're looking for. It's very difficult to see now but it's still there. When they got out of the river after five days with us on the river, both the Mexican Commissioner and the American Commissioner said that, as far as they were concerned, in view of the probability that there was not going to be enough extra water to fill that lake and keep it full anyway, they felt like the highest and best use of the canyon section was as a wild and scenic river and the—the Mexican Commissioner withdrew any objections he had to it. Then it was a matter of going through the State Department and they ultimately got consent from the Mexican government to designate it as a wild and scenic river. But if we hadn't taken those people down there and let them see it from the perspective of the river runner and go up the canyons and—and bathe in the hot springs and just sort of see what they'd be covering up with a lake, I don't think it ever would have been accomplished. It was—so I—I'm real proud of that and—of course, Micky—Micky and I footed the bill for that—for those trips. We just paid for that out of our—our pocket. But, I mean, it's not as though it was a big deal but it—it certainly to a young couple at that time it wasn't—we weren't flush. And—but it was—that was money well spent as far as we were concerned. After that, there was a lot of political fighting, a lot of resistance but ultimately it was passed into the—the National Wild and Scenic River system and it's had that designation ever since and it's protected by or patrolled by the National Park
38:28 – 2009
BB: Service out of Big Bend. Part of the river is designated—part of the river as designated

goes through Big Bend National Park and that—that gave the National Park Service a good argument that it ought to be the one who—who supervised it and did—did the patrol and all that. And it's been an extremely, extremely well used section of river for people nationally and internationally. Again, as part of the—of the effort to—to publicize that area, Dr. John Baker and I ran national Sierra Club outings through the rivers, through that—that canyon section every year for I guess eight or nine years.
DT: Can you talk about some of the adventures of going through the canyon?
39:12 – 2009
BB: Oh yeah. Yeah, sure. Obviously the adventure is directly proportional to the water level. You know, if you—being a desert stream basically and basically having its origins in the Sierra Madre in Mexico, although you think of the Rio Grande starts up really in Colorado, near northern New Mexico's boundary, all right. But so little—so much of that water is used in irrigation through New Mexico that—that very little of that water really annually gets to the—to the Rio Grande in Texas. Nearly all the water comes down the Rio Conchos from Mexico and that—and it—so it strictly depends on rainfall in Mexico as to how much of a—of a river running season you have. You can always get down it. I've only seen it so low you—you had to drag maybe a few times in my lifetime but for the real rapids, you know, for real whitewater, you need several feet of—of good flow. You can always make it, you know, especially in a canoe, but for—for the—for the
40:26 – 2009
BB: really adventuresome runs, you need more flow. And that's a matter of seasonality and usually the—the early fall of the year is the best time for—for the higher waters. And there are several sections that are very, very remote that do have major obstacles in the forms of either outwash boulder gardens that have come from side canyons that have flooded in the past. That's the typical rapid that you're running or from the collapse of the cliff walls themselves which, in two places, have almost dammed the river and the water runs kind of through those more or less temporary dams, temporary in the sense of—of geologic time. Those are tricky and on high water can be hazardous so you need to know what you're doing if you're going down there. A few people have come to grief and lost their boats and, you know, we've had to help people out. Others have had to help people out but, in general, it's—it's not nearly as hazardous as some of the very high gradient rivers of the west that have higher flow like, you know, the—the Salmon River and—and the Yellowstone and some of those and—and the Grand Canyon, I mean, the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon, parts of the Green River. There's numerous higher gradient rivers that have a greater drop in feet per mile than the Rio Grande but there's hardly any of them that are any more remote from civilization than the—than the Rio Grande canyon. So it's really a neat place. It's well worth preserving.
DT: Tell about some of the higher drama times going through the canyon.
42:21 – 2009
BB: Well let's see. We never—we never sustained a serious injury. I cannot think of—of us ever losing a boat. I did put a boat back together—we had two National Park Service Rangers one time that decided they were going to run a rapid that was really above their skill level and their boat was bent in two around a rock. We got them out okay. We always would set up a—a rescue boat, usually a kayak with a—with a T handle on the back deck where they could take a swimmer in the water and with the double bladed paddle, they could stroke that swimmer to the bank. So even in high water, you can rescue someone

with a kayak that you could not rescue with a canoe. And that—what you do is you place a—a nylon rope through a hole in the deck of your kayak behind the seat of the paddler and put a T handle on it so that a swimmer can grab it and then lay—kind of lay on the back deck or in the water beside the back deck. And then the paddler can stroke to the shore and get them into—into shallow water. We had—we had rescue boats set up below. They got the—they got the two paddlers to the—to the bank but the boat was out there jammed and bent around a big boulder. So John Baker and I swam out there and got the boat off the rock and it was in a big U shape and we still had three days and about a hundred miles to go.
DT: Aluminum boat?
43:57 – 2009
BB: Yeah, aluminum—18 foot Grumman canoe as I remember. So we—we got it in shallow water and just jumped up and down in it, stomped it until it began to take a canoe shape again and the thwarts were all broken out of it, the ribs were broken and with three rolls of duct tape and some driftwood, we put that canoe back together. And it—it wouldn't carry anything but the paddlers. We had to separate all their gear out but we paddled that boat out three days, held together by duct tape and driftwood. And…
DT: Another testimonial to duct tape…
44:33 – 2009
BB: Duct tape does great work. You can't go on the river without duct tape. Other occasions we've had—we had one occasion where the river flooded and rose 18 feet in twenty minutes. That—that's one thing you learn to do on the Rio Grande is to have a long line high up the bank where you tie your boats at night or else pick them up, lift them out of the water and take them up. You don't want to go to bed with your boats in the water, tied with a short rope because overnight, it can fluctuate several feet and you could end up with no boats. We have picked up a few boats of others. We have found—we've pulled three dead people out of that river over the years but, in each instance—I'm sorry, four—but in each instance, we believed that they were not boaters. We believed that they were Mexican wetbacks who were attempting to cross the river on a flood and drowned. We—as I say, we've picked up four bodies and notified the authorities of the finds. But that's a—such a remote area that these fellows will sometimes make themselves a little
45:43 – 2009
BB: raft out of the chorizo(?) cane that grows on the river and then they'll try to float themselves across. And on high water, a lot of them from the interior of Mexico, from the desert area, lot of them don't swim so if they tumble off their raft and lose their raft, they just drown and usually they have their leochose(?) on their back—their—their little—their bedroll and so we picked up several who, unfortunately, lost their lives. Other than that, we've never had a serious accident. We've had a few dunkings. We've had a few people that hadn't come out of their boat, we'd have to rescue them. But if you set up safety at these major rapids, you—that you always set up a rescue, a throw line at the bottom as well as a kayak or a—or a canoe manned by two people with no gear in it, preferably a deck boat, you can always make the rescues that are necessary. And it's just fundamental safety. You know, fundamental river running safety that you engage in. So it's—it's exciting but it's—the hazard of it is easy to exaggerate.
DT: Treat us to some of the fun of singing and guitar playing on these trips.
47:07 – 2009
BB: Sure. I can—I always carried a guitar on the river with me. I've always—in fact, I've

carried a guitar with me everywhere I've been in my life, just about it. And we'd sit around the campfires in the evening and sing Mexican folk songs and sing early country songs and things like that. And it's—that's one of the enjoyable things about river running is it brings everybody close together. You're—you're camping together, you're working together, you're portaging together, you're helping carry gear around the—the bad spots so you can run an empty boat through. It's much easier to maneuver an empty boat than it is a fully loaded boat. And the music in the evenings is part of the mystique of the whole affair, I think.
DT: Share some of that mystique with us. Do you have two or three songs…
(misc.)
(playing guitar and talking about old music – Ridin' Down the Canyon)
51:20 – 2009
BB: And of course, usually somebody else knows the, you know, the words and everybody sings along if they want to. It's no—it's very informal. But, in fact, I've had lots of times we'd be on the river singing at night and—and out of the darkness would come some of the Mexican people who may—may have a little house or a cabin not far away and they'll hear you singing and come down because it's, you know, beats whatever entertainment they've got and we'll usually join in and sing some Mexican songs and some of them are pretty good musicians. I've had some pretty fair guitarists just show up, traveling in Mexico, especially when we camp out, you know, in our plant collecting expeditions, things like that where we're camping in private range land always. And we sit down and sing the Mexican songs and play them and usually draw a good crowd. And it's a good way of breaking the ice with people, you know. I'll go into a little Mexican village and sit down on the square and get out my guitar and before long, people will show me where the best canyons are, where the best springs are, how to get into a place that's under lock and so we use music a lot of times as a—as an icebreaker. Good—it's a good deal.
(misc.)
(playing a guitar and singing—Ole Shep)
(misc.)
DT: Is that an original composition?
55:53 – 2009
No, that was written by Red Foley, Red Foley.
DT: Have you got any original compositions of your own?
56:05 – 2009
BB: Got one my brother and I put together. It's—it's really—if you're—if you're—if you're very much a feminist, you may get offended. But we—it's really sung with—it was written in a good spirit, not at all intended to insult anybody but it's called, Like My Doggy Do.
(singing)
(misc.)
(singing and playing)
END of reel 2009
START of reel 2010
DT: Can you tell us about your other work in the State, outside of West Texas, and particularly about your work to try and stop the shell dredging?
01:02 – 2010
BB: When governor Preston Smith appointed me to the Parks & Wildlife Commission, my

appointment was opposed by—seriously opposed—in the—because the senate, in Texas, must by a certain margin confirm a govern—a gubernatorial appointee to the Parks and Wildlife Commission. When I was appointed, I was opposed by—because of my conservation leanings, I was opposed by the shell dredging industry out of—out of the Houston area. Most people today don't really know what shell dredging was but—but for nearly 100 years, dredges, large floating dredges had been digging oyster reefs out of the bays and estuaries of Texas and using them for two things. One is a raw ingredient for Portland Cement. There were large cement factories down on the coast near Houston, for example. And secondly, they were using them for basically road gravel and fill material on county roads and city roads and subdivisions and things like that. All of that was a dredge, not only destroyed by simply a huge, rolling wheel that dug up the buried or fossilized oyster reefs but the—the—the tremendous damage of it, although it destroys whatever it dug, the tremendous damage was done by siltation because all of the sediment that was stirred up off the—off the bottom of the bay or the estuary by these dredges then floated in a dredge plume from the air you could see a plume sometimes three and four miles long of suspended sediments that would go behind these, they would go wherever the current took them. And as they settled out, they settled on the—the very environment that produced the life of the bay and estuary, the
03:14 – 2010
small oysters, the small shrimp, the small crabs, the juvenile fishes and it smothered them. So these dredges, for every oyster reef that they dug up, they probably destroyed dozens of others by siltation. And additionally, they—the channel dredging created what's called spoil. Spoil is essentially mud that's been dug up from the bottom of a—of a canal. Gradually they kind of filter—it filters in and begins to shallow or make the canal more shallow. So they redredge it and the spoil is dumped in a pile. Those—that spoil gradually is carried out by currents and again, it covers up the—the grass, the—the grass flats and the livelihood of the—of the bays and estuaries. And, of course, without the bays and estuaries, you got no life in the Gulf at all. I mean, nearly all of these larval forms of—of sea life develop in the brackish or sailing waters of our bays and estuaries. So, there was one particular very powerful group called Parker Brothers in Houston. Park Brothers was a major shell dredging industry and had, I think at that time, perhaps three dredges running. They had a—Parker Brothers had a very strong lobbyist, a former representative, I believe, named Jill Devaney(?). Jill Devaney was a very strong lobbyist. And the Parker—Parker Brothers spent a good bit of money opposing my nomination and my confirmation as a commissioner on the Parks & Wildlife Commission. They just recently, senator—ex Senator Bill Moore died, the bull of the Brazos. They had him sort of in—in their hip pocket. And another senator named Jim Bates from down at Batesville, I think he's deceased as well. They had him in their hip pocket. And so the people that were working for me were Barbara Jordan and Senator Don Kennard and then my own senator, Murray Watson from Waco. None of these people are, of course, in the—in the senate anymore. Long—long—this was long ago and—and, of course,
05:41 – 2010
Barbara is deceased and—and Don is working in Washington. But it came down to a very close vote but, thank goodness, Barbara Jordan and Don Kennard and some others got me confirmed. Well, I mean, before long, the shell dredging issue came before the commission. And obviously I was one—I was just one of six commissioners at that time. At that time, the

commissioner had six people on it. But we did studies that showed the tremendous amount of damage that was being done. And even more important, although the dredgers always claimed that they were digging only fossil, that is dead oyster reefs, that no longer would serve as a substrate for the growth of new oysters, the truth is they would dig through anything that was in their path, including living reefs. And they oftentimes lied about their position. When a—when a vessel is on the water dredging, you can't tell just by eye whether they are in a permitted section of bay floor that's been surveyed and found to have no living oyster reefs or whether they're over in a non-permitted area, okay. We started triangulating on them with our Parks & Wildlife personnel down there and found out that they were, at night, oftentimes moving their position, getting into non-permitted areas, dredging live reefs and things like that. Well eventually the sum and substance of it was we made it so hard on them to operate that they shifted to an alternative supply which is they bought a lot of land up in the Texas hill country around New Braunfels and places like that and started excavating limestone, shipping it by rail to the coast and using that which was environmentally far better for the bays and estuaries. Again though, like all trade-offs, there's some awful big holes dug around New Braunfels that—that, you know, for quarrying. But the trade-off, we felt like, was a fair one in that the bays and estuaries were in serious trouble. I mean, there
07:56 – 2010
was—there was a definite threat to the—to the sport fishing industry and even the commercial fishing industry along the coast from shell dredging. And so it's—the ending of the shell dredging and then later on constraints on commercial netting and even non-commercial netting. We started putting in some real good regulations that pretty well put an end to indiscriminate netting on the coast. It still goes on illegally and you have to fight it all the time but—but those regulations were—were put in place and basically our department, in the late '60's and early '70's, the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department became much more conservation and enforcement oriented in terms of preventing damage to the natural resources. So that was—I was proud that—of the commissioners that I worked with and the—the members of the staff of the—of the department that did such a yeoman job on pointing out what the dredging industry was doing to our natural resources on the coast.
DT: Can you tell about your experience with the number of dams being built?
09:16 – 2010
BB: I didn't personally have a lot to do, as an individual, with—in the dam fights. What I—what I worked on while I was on the commission was more what—what I would call is remedial action, so-to-speak. In other words, if most of these dams had already been authorized and were a part of the Texas water plan and had tremendous political power behind them. Now that—that doesn't mean you can't beat a dam by lawsuits or by politics. But—and I—but, as a practical matter, if you can get the people who want to
09:57 – 2010
build the dam to set aside other tracts to replace, so-to-speak, what they're flooding, you've at least done something. And so, we—we started a process whereby we were working with and sometimes fighting with the river authorities and—and power plant—power companies and all that to force them to acquire additional, offsetting Texas river bottoms, hardwood—bottom land hardwoods and swampy areas and wildlife habitat that would replace, at least, or preserve an amount equal in value to that which they're flooding. And

that concept has continued to this day. It was new at that time and—and I believe that the—the commission I served on was probably the first one to really press that as an alternative. If you can't stop the dam, at least make them pay their way, so-to-speak conservation wise by—by setting aside and buying with those same state or governmental funds an offsetting piece that could be protected in perpetuity. And so we did that good bit in East Texas on some of the lakes that already were authorized and were going to built over our dead bodies probably, rather than get into an outright, head butting battle which we would probably lose politically. Now other conservation groups were more active and more aggressive and some of them filed suit. I think Ned Fritz' group filed suit on more than one occasion related to a—a dam on the Sulfur River and there may have been others. You talk—when you talk to Ned, I'm sure he'll tell you the details about that but—but we worked more in the area of realistic compromise and I had some good—there were some good men on the commission that I served with and who were really interested in—in preserving the—and adding to the amount of park land and natural area land and wildlife management land that Texas had. And we—we did a whole lot of that remedial type work while I was there. As far as dams, the truth is,
12:15 – 2010
nearly all the dams that really are economically justifiable have been built already. Every time you build one now, you're building a marginal dam that—where the water flow is probably not that reliable and the location is usually pretty damaging. There's no question though but what's it's still a threat because as Texas population grows and the—and the water crisis which always will be with us, deepens there will be more and more pressure to build marginal dams. And—and so people involved in conservation cannot casually look at things like the Texas water plan. It—basically that's a—that's where the voters have to fight, you know, and—and is to try to defeat those. Those and some of the plans like the one right now going on to channelize the Trinity even further and build new—new levies and other basically boondoggles is what it boils down to so that people can build in areas where people shouldn't build. And—and that's something that has been a constant fight all along and it's going to continue to be a fight and as the population pressure increases and the—the demands for total utilization of water increases, that's going to be a major battleground forever, I think. Mickey can probably tell you when you visit with her about some of the efforts of—of the current Parks & Wildlife Department to try to gain guarantees of releases of fresh water to make sure the bays and estuaries have adequate inflow. If you just cut them off, it's—it's a—it's fatal because if they get too saline, if the bays and estuaries become too salty, the life in them just basically dies out. And—and so you've got to have those freshwater inflows and if you're stopping it all behind dams and using it only for economic or domestic or citified—city purposes, and you don't give any—any value to the freshwater flows to the bays and estuaries, everything's gone, you know. And so she was helping fight that
14:38 – 2010
battle along with other people on the present commission. And she knows more about the current status of it than I do. That's about all I had to do really in—in all honesty with—related to dams and reservoirs.
DT: Can you touch a little on some of the wildlife, can you tell about the falcon?
15:07
BB: The peregrine falcon—there basically were two or three populations. One was kind of

an East Coast population that traditionally had been the—the falcon had—had nested—sometimes even nesting on building ledges on New York City but had nested along the East Coast, Northeast Coast for years. The—there was another big population called the tundra population and these birds nested in the arctic and Alaska and Northern Canada, places like that. And then they were highly migratory. They would come fly every year, in the spring, they'd fly south and go to Central America and—and South America and then come back for the nesting season or vice versa. Anyway, they'd leave there in the hottest—coldest part of the year and then come back in the—in the spring and summer. It turned out that populations were dropping very precipitously of the peregrine. And it's a—it's a dramatic bird. If you've ever seen a peregrine up close and seen one take another bird in mid air, right over your head, which I've had that happen several times in my lifetime, you cannot imagine their—their beauty and their grace and their unbelievable speed when they stoop. Anyway, it turned out that they—they're hatching—lack of hatching success was based on DDT which was causing a thinning of the
16:44 – 2010
eggshells. Fortunately there was a relict population that was non-migratory in Northern Mexico and out in the Big Bend of Texas. And nobody knew how many of them there were. You know, whether it was really—or really what their habits were. We started taking people into Northern Mexico because of our experience in—in—in Northern Mexico in plant botanizing work and in the Chihuahuan Desert survey. We started taking, you know, folks that really were cognizant of and really knew and understood the peregrine in there and we'd take them into the—these high mountain ranges and they would survey. So Mickey and I were on several surveying trips and—and some trapping trips where we'd trap and band these peregrines using the—the techniques of—of the falconry people.
DT: How would you get to their nests?
17:37 – 2010
BB: You—you don't have to get to their nest. You—most of the—most of the studies are done through like a rifle stock with a telescope mounted on it and you can get—you can—you can bring them right into the—into focus at several hundred yards range. So you—you just find the aeries or the places where they nest and then you watch them through binoculars or telescopes without having to interfere with their nesting and hab—and feeding. But, on at least two occasions, I was really below, several hundred feet below, a nesting peregrine and the male, the tiercel, would come out of the sky with a bird in his claws and scream at the female. The female would come off the nest and they would make an interchange right in the—right in mid air above you and—and she would bring the—the bird back to feed the nestlings. And…
DT: Trapeze artist…
18:38
BB: Yeah, you can't—you can't believe. She just rolls over on her back, he passes over her in the opposite direction and it's just instant transfer just like that. And she takes it. Or occasionally he'll just drop it and she'll just swoop and pick it up in mid air. And they are amazing birds. They're the kings of the air. Well, being we studied the locations and helped people—helped people get into Mexico to study the locations and map the birds and there was a—a viable population there that apparently was reproducing. And that was a major contribution. The peregrine then was placed on the Texas Endangered Species list also and was given protection in Texas although frankly, the great majority of them lived in National

Parks in Texas. There were some in the Davis Mountains and there were some other places that were not in National Parks and so they were protected by Texas regulations. We also did a—we limited the ability of falconers to take peregrines from the wild. We—we instituted pretty strict regulations on falconry. Not that the average falconer is—is a bad person. It takes a lot of dedication, a tremendous number of hours of training and—and devotion to the—to the craft to be a falconer but there's that—that almost irrepressible urge to own a peregrine. That's—that's like having the—the I don't know, Bugatti or something like that if you're a sports car fan. I mean, they've got to have the peregrine and some of them will cheat to get them. And some of
20:23 – 2010
them will—will take mountain climbing gear and go to iries and—and rob them of their nestlings. And our department has caught them, in the years past, caught them being smuggled in from Mexico, caught them being smuggled in from other areas. So there was an educational aspect of it with the department of training people to watch for those smuggled birds. And to watch the Texas coast which is a very easy place to trap peregrines in the spring. They will come in and—and also in the fall—in the—in the spring, they're coming—coming north to their nesting grounds in the arctic. And you can—you can trap them using a lure. You use a pigeon that's wings are tied and you tie a rope on him and you put a little light weight where he can't really go anywhere and you drive along and toss that weight and pigeon out on the sand and if there's a peregrine anywhere around, there's something about a pigeon that a peregrine just focuses on. He'll come down and you have a little vest on the pigeon with tiny loops of monofilament(?) and the peregrine will land on the pigeon and his toenails or his claws will become entangled, talons will become entangled and you jump out and run and grab him. And you band him and weigh him and take the temperature and sex it and all that. And we did that—we spent several days doing that, Mickey and I, on the Texas coast but you have to learn to watch those areas during the migration season or people will trap them illegally and—and possess them illegally. And since they were an endangered species, that would—became a very important part of our department's enforcement.
DT: Could you talk a little about start up of the Texas Organization for Endangered Species?
22:10 – 2010
BB: Right. Okay. Again, that was a—that was a—I wrote a little history, within the last two years, for the TOES or the Texas Organization on Endangered Species, because I was a charter member of TOES, I wrote a little history from the files I had. I still had my original files of the organizational effort. I wrote that for their annual meeting and I can't remember if it was last year or the year before. I'll try to find that and send you a copy of that. I'm sure it's still on the computer disk in my—in my office and my secretary can find it. But I wrote a history of TOES, of the early days, and it gives the names of all the people who were involved. And I—I cannot, without looking at the file, give you all the names but essentially TOES was created by what was then the Soil Conservation Service in cooperation with a number of conservation groups and, at first, it was composed mainly of people who were botanist or zoologists or biologists that were related to governmental agencies or educational institutions like University of Texas and other—other major universities around the state. But many, many individuals joined in on it and it was—they had a number of meetings. They had active committees. It was an important player, you know, in the late '60's and—in Texas in terms of pushing toward a Texas Endangered Species Act, pushing

toward regulations that faced up to the—the needs of endangered and threatened species. And that encouraged landowners to protect them on their private lands. So TOES was a good organization. It still exists. It's not nearly so active anymore as it was for various reasons. Among which are that there are other competing organizations now and you can only belong to so many. But we had a real good attendance a good meeting at sort of the anniversary issue, anniversary meeting within the last year or so.
DT: Was there a triggering event that convinced people to start a group like that?
24:34
BB: I think it was—I think there were several events that again…
(misc.)
24:48
BB: TOES as an organization was, no question about it, owed its, you know, it—it had its justice in Rachel Carson's Silent Spring. That means, that woman's work and her book started nearly every effort that I'm aware of toward really being aware of the unintended consequences of human endeavor. And, I mean, she certainly was not the only person who ever had those thoughts but everybody, at that time, governmental—government and industry was be—in a belief in the inevitability that technology could solve any problem. And during World War II when we did so well with our industrial might and developed so many new technologies, including pesticides and antibiotics and everything else, many of which have their place. Again, nobody really was looking at the long term consequences. The—the unintended consequences of the use of so much—of so much of a chemical load being put on the environment. And she aw—awakened everybody to that. It was difficult in Texas to deal with endangered species because, as
26:08 – 2010
you know, Texas when it became a state, it kept all of its private lands for itself. So we don't have large federal enclaves in Texas. Only a few small national forests. They bought those. They were not—they were not originally federal land and nearly all the—the land in Texas that has—that really has endangered species on it is—is private land. So you have to deal with the private landowners. You have to respect their rights. You can't go in there with a sledgehammer and just batter people into doing what they need to do to protect the environment. So it's a big educational effort and TOES, I think, was important in that. TOES always had people that had enough sense to not publicize the locations of pockets of endangered species and—and TOES was always a cooperative organization dealing with landowners and as a result, usually the members of TOES could get access. Later that became a problem. It—it's still a problem for any biologist or any scientist to get on private land in Texas there's been no much misinformation passed out by some advocacy groups that landowners are afraid that if they admit to the existence of a—of an endangered species on their land that, in some manner, they'll be restrained in their use of their land for their economic purposes. Most of that is, you know, scare tactics and most of it is not based on truth but—but I must admit, there are—there are instances where landowners' rights haven't been fairly considered by governmental agencies under the Endangered Species Act of both Texas and the federal government. And those—every time something like that happens which is regrettable, it usually gets inflated greatly and gets bandied about in the landowner organizations and you have to, you know, you're set back again in your—your efforts to try to conserve some really rare and endangered species on private land. That's a battle that's still being fought.

(misc.)
DT: Can you say a few words on some of the more frustrating episodes you've had or maybe some of the successes?
28:50 – 2010
BB: You know, if you're—if you're—if you have a reverence in your—in your heart for the natural world which my wife and I do and I—I know many, many others who do, you know. If you have that kind of reverence and if—if you feel like that your time on earth is—is really very short and that—that you don't necessarily have the right to just use up all the resources of the earth for your own personal benefit. If you have those feelings and, thank God a lot of people do, then you're frustrated all the time at the way humans treat the world around them. I mean, so frustration is a daily, even depression is a daily feeling of anybody in Texas who's interested in conservation. On the other hand, you can accomplish things by persuasion and compromise. I have always been in the—on—on the side of those who believe you can accomplish more in the long run by working with the opposition in trying to change them and get a compromise position than you gain by filing lawsuits. And so I've never participated in or advocated the filing or the confrontational approach—approach to conservation. In that respect, I differ markedly in philosophy from Stuart Henry, the Sierra Club as it now is constituted, and—and even
30:28 – 2010
my friend Ned Fritz. Ned is a very controversial person among private landowners and most of them don't like him because he is confrontational and he's aggressive. On the other hand, I must say to give them their full due, the Sierra Club's lawsuit on the Edwards' aquifer was—was beneficial. They did a—they accomplished a lot and they forced the other side into some compromise positions by litigation. I'm sure some of Ned's suits against the Forest Service on clear-cutting and some of his suits related to the Sulfur River Dam and other things like that that I wouldn't even know the details on, I think those have been probably beneficial in the long run even though I didn't agree with them at the time they were doing them. It's just a difference in philosophy. You know, I—my wife and I spent years trying to cultivate private landowners and trying to cultivate the West Texas politicians and the West Texas ranchers so that we could work with them. And we had to—because of that we had to forego the use of litigation or threats of litigation as a tool. And so we never did use that and—and never will. That's just not our style. On the other hand, litigation has its place and it's effectively used and even though I don't favor it in the long run because I think it hardens people's positions and ruins relationships, I recognize that a lot has been accomplished that way and I would not take away the credit to, you know, particularly in the Edwards' aquifer suit. I think that was, you know, something that did accomplish a lot. It got—it got some conservation measures put in place that, weak as they may be are better than no—than what they had which was the law of capture before that, you know. So that's sort of the philosophical difference. You will always be, though, occasionally depressed and occasionally really hurt by what's happening around you because two weeks ago, my wife and I took a tour
32:46 – 2010
of prairies that we had plotted and, you know, and studied basically thirty years ago. And out of all the ones that we went back to, something over twenty, they were all gone except parts of a couple of them. And even the one—one that was remaining had been sprayed and so all the broad leafed—the forbs and the lagoons were gone from it. Others were just—

had just disappeared. They had been plowed up. And so when you're faced with that, we became very depressed that day and just finally quit, even though we still had a few more we could go look at because it was getting so depressing that—that what little remnants we knew of of the Blackland Prairie were gone. But again, it's—that's just the price you pay, I guess, for living in a—in a free country where—where each individual has the right to control their own destiny and use their own resources in the way they see fit. I mean, overall, it's a good system. Occasionally it has, you know, terrible deficiencies.
DT: What are the challenges in the future?
34:04 – 2010
BB: I guess the greatest challenge for the whole world, in the future, is population. If there's no constraint on population growth, this—the entire world will ultimately become a very degraded environment. The—the idea of the oceans as a dumping zone or as a zone that belongs to nobody and is—is—can take an infinite amount of trash, so-to-speak, is—has been dispelled by every study that's been done in recent years. There's hardly a piece of ice, there's hardly a drop of water that doesn't show some evidence of
34:47 – 2010
man's intervention, even that which is pulled from few thousand feet below our—this house in the Trinity Aquifer shows traces of—of modern introduced chemicals now. So humans have impacted the world in just about every way you can and we work, my wife and I work a lot and travel a lot in the third world. We'll be going to Honduras in August to work down there and help rebuild housing for the—for the victims of Hurricane Mitch. We'll be going in July to Mexico to do work in villages there. Because we work in the third world, we see how degraded some of that country is already and when you think of the rates of population growth that are prevalent in nearly all third world countries, you just simply realize that—that we're out—we're out breeding our natural world and we're perhaps the only species that can simply reproduce to the point and use the resources to the point where—where nobody has a very good life. And I'm certainly not saying that there's not going to be a way found to survive. I mean, there's a large number of resources out there that are marginal now that we can always go to and by new techniques and expenditure of greater funds, we can keep on. I think we can keep on probably for several generations using hydrocarbons from the—from the earth, oil and gas and—and coal and things like that. But the problem is that—that the price we're going to be paying for that in terms of pollution, in terms of—of the quality of human life may just make it a very bad deal. And—but I look at population control and preservation of the oceans and to a somewhat lesser extent, the rain forest, the tropics as being problems that everybody ought to be concerned with.
DT: Is there a favorite place that you can describe that has a certain magic for you?
37:08 – 2010
BB: Mickey and I often have said that—that it would have been nice if we had been born to wealth where we could have just acquired all the places that we loved. But then we got to looking around and we—we couldn't get to them if—there would be so many of them, scattered so far apart that we really would never even be able to visit our own property. So, I would just say this, I'll—Mickey and I have always loved rivers, especially remote, clean rivers. And we always have loved canyons and small water forces and I guess that—I guess that places in remote mountain ranges and places on long, remote rivers are probably my favorite thing, you know, that's—those are places that I always feel a different person when

I—when I get there. And I feel like you can shuck off all the cares of the world and—and just relax and—and I think Mickey feels a whole lot that way too.
End of reel 2010.
End of solo interview with Bob Burleson.
Reel 2011 contains a joint interview with both Bob and Mickey Burleson.