

STOKES: This is Ray Stokes from Fort Worth, Texas with the Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine. I'm in the Special Collection Section of the Library there in Fort Worth. Today I have the pleasure of being some 350 miles from Fort Worth, in Borger, Texas, and I'm in the home of the great granddaughter of the founder of osteopathy, Dr. A.T. Still, Andrew Taylor Still, and she is living in Borger, Texas, and has lived in Borger, Texas for about 56 years. Her name is Mrs. Aldeen Surface. She was a Cowgill which is her maiden name. We are happy to be in her home this morning, on the 3rd of April, 1990. I say we because I have with me a very distinguished professor of the Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine, Professor Emeritus, Dr. Charles ^{Ogilvie} ~~Ogelvey~~ who is living now down in Ben Wheeler, in east Texas. He came with me this morning to Borger. We are delighted to have the opportunity to visit with you, Mrs. Surface, Aldeen if we can call you Aldeen. I would like for Dr. Ogelvey to introduce himself by discussing a matter or two that he has with you.

OGELVEY: Thank you very much, Ray. I'm deeply appreciative of the opportunity that you have afforded me to be here with Mrs. Surface. We had had some little preliminary conversations here and we have been discussing some of her relatives that may afford us some future contacts and I believe you said that you had living cousins. Are they from her husband's brothers?

SURFACE: They're from my side of the family. They're my grandmother's, Maurucia Still Cowgill, her children. She had nine living children and the majority of them lived in east Kansas, around Baldwin, where my grandfather dedicated the land for the college at Baldwin. Then I have a cousin in Reno, Nevada, and one close to Palm

Springs, California.

STOKES: What is the name of the cousin in Reno?

SURFACE: His name is Alfred Dennison Cowgill.

STOKES: How do you spell the last name?

SURFACE: Cowgill.

STOKES: Oh, you pronounce it...

SURFACE: Yes, our side of the family pronounced it "Cogill" instead of Cowgill.

STOKES: And what is the name of the one in Palm Springs?

SURFACE: George William Cowgill. Then as I said, the majority of the cousins lived in eastern Kansas, south of Ottawa. One died recently but he lived at Princeton. The rest of the cousins I don't know. There are quite a few of them in eastern Kansas.

STOKES: What information do you recall at all...did you ever see your grandmother Maurucia?

SURFACE: Oh yes.

STOKES: What do you recall about her? What were some of her traits and characteristics?

SURFACE: She was a little short, dumpy person. That's about all I remember about her. Of course we visited them regularly.

STOKES: About how old were you when you first remember visiting?

SURFACE: Oh, I imagine I was 6 or 7 years old.

STOKES: Well, you ought to be able to remember that pretty well. Was she a good cook?

SURFACE: Yes, as far as I could remember, she was. And they visited us when my father was alive and had a practice at Kiowa. They visited us there.

STOKES: Now was he a physician?

SURFACE: He was an osteopath. He graduated in 1905 in Kirksville.

STOKES: Now that's your father?

SURFACE: Yes.

STOKES: What was his given name?

SURFACE: Henry Rutherford Cowgill, and he graduated an osteopath in 1905.

STOKES: From Kirksville?

SURFACE: Yes.

STOKES: Now was it at that time...were there two schools of osteopathy in Kirksville?

OGELVEY: I believe there was just one in 1905, that was the American School of Osteopathy.

SURFACE: We stayed with an uncle, lived with an uncle, while he was in school, which would have been a brother to Dr. A. T. Still, and it was George Still, I believe, that he lived with.

OGELVEY: He was a surgeon.

SURFACE: Yes.

STOKES: Well, do you recall, you were saying your father graduated in 1905. Where did he go practice and when did he practice, in what city?

SURFACE: _____, in 1905, and that was where I was born.

STOKES: What year were you born in, now?

SURFACE: 1905.

STOKES: Who is this, what is her name, let's put her on?

SURFACE: Tinkie.

STOKES: What kind of a cat is she?

SURFACE: She's a Himalayan.

STOKES: About how old is she?

SURFACE: She's about five years old. She likes microphones. She wants to be on tape.

STOKES: Okay, and your father practiced how long? When did he pass away?

SURFACE: I can't remember.

STOKES: How long were he and your mother married, do you remember that?

SURFACE: I can't remember.

STOKES: How did they meet? Do you recall how he met your mother?

SURFACE: In school; she was studying too. She lacked six weeks of graduating when she married, so that stopped her education right there.

STOKES: And how many children...how many brothers and sisters do you have?

SURFACE: None.

STOKES: You were the only child.

SURFACE: I'm the only child.

STOKES: Then you are the end of that particular segment of the family?

SURFACE: I certainly am.

STOKES: Let's go back to some of the visits that you may have made.
How far away were you living from Maurucia, your grandmother?

SURFACE: When I was growing up?

STOKES: When you were growing up? You were growing up in Garden City,
Kansas?

SURFACE: No, I grew up in Kiowa.

STOKES: And how far is that from Garden City? Or how far is that from
where your grandmother lived?

SURFACE: Well, that was about a mile from the Oklahoma line and they
lived south of Ottawa, Kansas close to the eastern line of Kansas. I
don't know how far that would be. I would be at least 400 miles or
more.

STOKES: More than a day's journey in those days.

SURFACE: Yes.

STOKES: What type of mode of transportation did you use?

SURFACE: Train.

STOKES: There was a train direct line?

SURFACE: Well, to Kansas City, I know that much, and I think we took a spur from there to Ottawa, or maybe it went through Ottawa.

STOKES; Was that the Missouri-Kansas-Texas?

SURFACE: No it was the Sante Fe.

STOKES: And you don't recall any of the stories that you heard your grandmother tell about her father, A.T.?

SURFACE: She never spoke of him that I can remember. Of course, I was young and I wasn't interested.

STOKES: Sure, I understand that. When did you find interest in doing a little tracing of the Still side of the family. Were you married at the time or did you do that before you were married?

SURFACE: I had these original photos. What I should have done when I had that photo made, there was a doctor in Amarillo that wanted that picture and in the meantime it had been broken into several pieces and I took it to a photographer in Amarillo. That picture that I gave you

is an oil painting. It's a hand painted picture.

STOKES; Let's talk about that. I'm looking at the picture that you kindly gave us about 10 years ago that you sent down by a friend who was a patient of a doctor at Hawkins, Texas, which is close to Dallas, a Dr. Roider, and this patient who was a friend of yours, by the name of Babe and I can't think of what her name was then.

SURFACE: Parker.

STOKES: Parker, Babe Parker, that's right. She was kind enough to bring...now I'm looking at the picture of Dr. Roider and Babe Parker holding this picture of Dr. A. T. Still and then here, of course, is a copy of the picture that I had the pleasure to present to you this morning of Dr. Still and this was taken...They call him the whittling, it's known, he had so many pictures. He must have been photographed a hundred times at least in different poses and this particular one is the only one that I have of 1904, I believe is what is stated on it, where he is sitting there with his knees crossed, whittling on a piece of wood, and in those days I believe the art of photography, it was taken in black and white and then hand colored into color and it looks real good. Where did you get the picture? Do you recall how you got a hold of the picture that we are now so happy to have?

SURFACE: Well I don't know. I was trying to think. It must have been in some literature that my father received from the college.

STOKES: Now which college would that be, Kirksville?

SURFACE: Kirksville. And he also had a bust of my grandfather.

STOKES: What happened to the bust?

SURFACE: Well, little ole kid that I was, I went up storming upstairs to his office as mad as I could be and I slammed that door open and knocked that bust to the floor and broke it in a million pieces. So that was the end of the bust. But now that picture, I don't know if any more of that type has shown up. I should have had that copyrighted because this doctor in Amarillo that I had the picture made for, he had a bunch of copies made and sold them at some of the gatherings, I believe there was one in Albuquerque that he took a bunch of pictures out there and sold to the different doctors.

STOKES: But as far as you know the picture that you gave me was an original.

SURFACE: A copy of the original.

STOKES: Oh, a copy. It wasn't the original?

SURFACE: No.

STOKES: Do you know where the original would be today? Would it be, you know there is a Still Museum, a national museum in Kirksville. I wonder if they would have the original copy, or do you know?

SURFACE: They might have an original picture.

OGELVEY: I believe they do. I recall seeing that and I'm sure it was in the museum.

SURFACE: Blanche Laughlin, is she dead?

OGELVEY: Yes, but her daughter is living and her name is Mary Jane. Did you ever meet her?

SURFACE: No I didn't.

OGELVEY: It was Mary Jane Denslow, but she was Mary Jane Laughlin. She is a granddaughter of A.T. Still and she is in a nursing home. She is in fair health. She is still very alert.

STOKES: She lives there in Kirksville?

OGELVEY: Yes. I have a snapshot that was taken probably around 1920 that is with her and Maurucia, taken in the Laughlin's yard in Kirksville, and Maurucia was visiting there, was there for a short visit, and she showed me this snapshot. She was a little girl, a little toddler then, and I made a copy of that photograph. You were describing Maurucia earlier. She was short. I would say she was maybe in her late 60s then, and she was quite heavy then. So Mary Jane is still living in a nursing home.

STOKES: That what relation are they, half-cousins or what?

OGELVEY: Well, she would be an aunt once or twice...

STOKES: That's right, because she's a granddaughter and you're a greatgranddaughter.

OGELVEY: She always spoke of A.T. Still as granddaddy. She always called him granddaddy and she was born in 1914.

SURFACE: It's my understanding that it is from my greatgrandfather's second family.

STOKES: She is from the second family.

SURFACE: They didn't care much for my grandmother because she was an original daughter.

OGELVEY: Yeah, I wondered about that.

SURFACE: They weren't very compatible the way I understand it. I think the Laughlins would just as soon not had her in the family. They wanted to be the original family and she was first.

STOKES: That's right. Speaking of firsts, or your grandmother Maurucia, I am holding this picture here of her that was taken on her 19th birthday, I understand, or maybe not on the birthday, but she was 19 at the time I believe was the original age mentioned. How did you acquire it? Do you recall how you got hold of the origin^{al}? Now you gave me the origin^{al} a few years ago and I'm holding just a copy of the picture now. We have the original in our archives there at TCOM, but do you remember how you acquired it?

SURFACE: It evidently came, I would say, with that bust that they sent the original of that whittler picture and a picture of my grandmother. I don't know how I got it. They wouldn't have it at Kirksville so it was evidently giveⁿ to my father from his sisters or brother. That's the only way I know how that they must have received it.

STOKES: And you had it for a good number of years. In other words, Dr. Still died in 1917 and of course you were how old?

SURFACE: Twelve.

STOKES: Twelve at that time, well you could remember that. You didn't go to his funeral?

SURFACE: No.

STOKES: Any of your family go to his funeral?

SURFACE: No. The publication that they put out, I believe used to be monthly, a little magazine that they used to publish and send out.

STOKES: You mean Kirksville?

SURFACE: Uh-huh.

STOKES: Well I'm not quite sure.

OGELVEY: That's the Journal of Osteopathy.

SURFACE: That probably was it, and I sent them a notice of my father's death and ...(phone rang and Mrs. Surface answered the phone)

OGELVEY: We were talking about your sending to the Journal of Osteopathy a notice of your father's death in 1924.

SURFACE: Well my father didn't die until...

OGELVEY: Didn't he die in 1924.

SURFACE: Oh no.

OGELVEY: Oh, really.

SURFACE: I moved here in 1934 and ...

STOKES: Was he living at that time?

SURFACE: Yes.

STOKES: Was he still in practice?

SURFACE: No, he was injured and he came to live with me and he was with me...

STOKES: Do you mean he lived her in Borger?

SURFACE: Yes, and he was in no physical condition to practice.

STOKES: How old was he at his death?

SURFACE: He was 74, so, let's see, I think he was born in 1880.

OGELVEY: My records show 1876.

SURFACE: Was when he was born?

OGELVEY: When he was born.

SURFACE: Well, that's right probably.

OGELVEY: The record I have says he died in 1924, but that's not correct.

SURFACE: No.

OGELVEY: I'm going to get that corrected, because this information came from Kirksville.

STOKES: Where was he practicing before he became unable to practice?

SURFACE: Kiowa.

STOKES: Excuse me, how do you spell that?

SURFACE: K-I-O-W-A, it's an Indian name. We came here in 1934. I believe he died in 1947.

STOKES: How old did you say he was when he passed away?

SURFACE: I don't remember.

OGELVEY: According to that it would make him about 72. That's about right.

STOKES: Well we're getting some things corrected here, at least.

SURFACE: I was talking about sending that notice in. I was rather perturbed over it because they just put the notice that he had expired and they didn't say a thing about him being the grandson of Dr. Still or anything, and I blame that onto the Laughlin side.

STOKES: I understand. Well, where is he buried?

SURFACE: He's buried here.

OGELVEY: His middle name was Rutherford. Is that a family name?

SURFACE: I was told he was named for Rutherford B. Hayes. Whether that was so or not I don't know.

STOKES: At least that was what you were told.

SURFACE: Now what were you told about how he started osteopathy?

STOKES: Dr. A.T?

SURFACE: Uh-huh.

STOKES: I think she's addressing that question to you, Dr. Ogelvey.

OGELVEY: Alright. My understanding was that he became disenchanted with conventional medicine after the death of his first wife and two of their sons, that would be Maurucia's brothers, and so he searched around for different alternatives to the practice of that day and finally came to the conclusion that manipulation offered a better way of treatment, and that was in 1874 when he was still in Kansas in that area of Baldwin. Is that the way you understand it?

SURFACE: No, that's not the story that was handed down through the family.

STOKES: We'd like to have your version.

OGELVEY: That's right.

SURFACE: Of course, he was a physician in the Civil War at Andersonville.

STOKES: Anderville, what state?

SURFACE: I don't know.

OGELVEY: It was in Georgia. Andersonville prison?

SURFACE: Prison.

OGELVEY: That was the ...

SURFACE: It was notoriously terrible.

STOKES: I've heard of that.

OGELVEY: That was your grandfather, John W. Cowgill, who was at Andersonville.

SURFACE: No, it was Dr. Still that was a physician at Andersonville.

OGELVEY: Oh really.

STOKES: We knew he was a physician in the Civil War, but your grandfather also was a physician in the Civil War?

SURFACE: My greatgrandfather.

STOKES: No, but your grandfather?

SURFACE: No, he was a lawyer.

OGELVEY: Yes, but he was not a physician, but he was a participant.

SURFACE: My greatgrandfather, Dr. A. T. Still, was a physician in the Civil War at Andersonville Prison.

STOKES: Alright.

SURFACE: And when he came home his family took spinal meningitis and he lost his whole family except my grandmother, Maurucia, and he swore he would never practice medicine again if he couldn't save his own family. And one day he walked outdoors, he had a terrible headache. He went out in the yard and he laid down with his neck across the swing board of the children's swing and he noticed in a few minutes that his headache was gone. He started thinking about that and wondering why or what had caused that headache to go away, and he decided that it was the pressure on the muscles and the nerves in the back of his neck that had stopped that pain. Now that's the story that came down through our family of how he started osteopathy, or starting thinking along those lines.

STOKES: Now does the story end there or does it have another chapter?

SURFACE: No, that was the story supposedly of his starting to dwell on why these things happen.

STOKES: That's where manipulation came into the picture then?

SURFACE: Uh-huh. And that's how come... I've seen a picture of him, this may have a large stomach, and he stopped him on the street and he was examining him on the street and he did that often. If he saw somebody that looked sick, why he'd just stop them on the street and he was, according to our family stories, a very..oh, I can't think of the words to describe it.

STOKES: Would eccentric...

SURFACE: Yes, he was very eccentric and a very alone person. He was as my dad used to say "out of this world". He was a natural figure instead of human.

OGELVEY: Did you ever hear any stories that your grandmother, Maurucia, was eccentric or had inherited any of those characteristics from her father?

SURFACE: No, not that I know of. Of course my grandfather, Maurucia's husband, was a staid Englishman and he, as I said, graduated from law at DePaul University and was admitted to the bar but he never practiced law. They bought this farm near Princeton, Kansas, and they lived there.

STOKES: How did he make a living?

SURFACE: Farming.

STOKES: But he had the law degree but never used it in practice.

OGELVEY: He graduated from DePaul?

SURFACE: Yes, DePaul University.

STOKES: Now where did Maurucia, did she go to school?

SURFACE: I don't think so, not that I ever heard. She could have.

STOKES: But you're not aware of it.

SURFACE: I hardly think so, because she was so young when she married. She wouldn't hardly have time.

STOKES: I see.

OGELVEY: Have you ever heard anything about your greatgrandmother, A.T. Still's first wife?

STOKES: Her name was Bond, wasn't it.

OGELVEY: Mary Margaret Bond.

SURFACE: No, I never did hear anything about her.

STOKES: Then most of your life, then, you've been in Texas.

SURFACE: Uh-huh.

STOKES; You've been here 56 years, I believe you say.

SURFACE: I moved here when I was 28.

STOKES: And you're..well, you've told us how old you are then now, haven't you?

SURFACE: Well, yes, I'm 84.

STOKES: Well, bless you. You're a very active 84.

SURFACE: I would be if it wasn't for this surgical disability.

OGELVEY; That's a shame.

STOKES: Yeah, it really is. Have you been active in community affairs here in Borger. You know, Borger has quite a history itself, although it's not as old as osteopathy.

SURFACE: Yes. One of the Texas Rangers was asked where was the worst boom town in Texas, and he said well there weren't any of them a tea party, but Borger was the worst.

STOKES: That was about 1926, wasn't it?

SURFACE: Yes.

STOKES: Well, you came about 8 years later, didn't you?

SURFACE; Yes, it was still a little rough.

STOKES: Yes, it was a very active oil town.

SURFACE: We had several murders after I moved here. They said the only thing you couldn't get away with was stealing a cow.

STOKES: Couldn't steal a cow?

SURFACE: No, just leave the cattle alone. You could murder people but don't steal cattle.

STOKES: You couldn't be a rustler, huh?

SURFACE: No.

STOKES: I see. Now your husband. Give us a little information about him. What was his background?

SURFACE: Well, he graduated from college and went into professional baseball and he ~~played~~ baseball for nine years and stopped and got a job here with Phillips Petroleum Company, and he worked for them until his death which was 34 years that he worked for them.

STOKES: Who did he play for in baseball?

SURFACE: Well, he got as high as Cleveland.

STOKES: Cleveland Indians. What year, do you remember, approximate years that he played?

SURFACE: It was the early 20s.

STOKES: Early, well that would be, would that be before, what was the great famous Cleveland pitcher ~~but~~ the name of Feller?

SURFACE: Bob Feller?

STOKES: Bob Fellers.

SURFACE: Oh, that was years after that. He played, I image, around 1923, 1924.

STOKES: He was in Babe Ruth's day, then.

SURFACE: And it seemed like, wasn't it the Cleveland Whitesox or something.

STOKES; No, I don't believe it was the Whitesox, it was the Chicago Whitesox.

SURFACE: It must have been the Cleveland Indians, cause I have a picture someplace of the whole team.

STOKES: Of the whole team, well you want to hang on to that. That would be a collector's item, I'm sure.

SURFACE: Well, it could be.

OGELVEY: Mrs. Surface, I'm interested in your girlhood in Kiowa. I guess all the Indians were gone then, moved to Oklahoma, the Kiowa Indians.

SURFACE: Well, our county seat is Medicine Lodge and there is a natural amphitheater out there, and that's where the five tribes of the plains signed the peace treaty with the whites, and they enact that every, I believe, five years, and representatives from the five tribes

come to that pageant.

OGELVEY: I guess in those early days when your father first went to Kiowa that was still pretty much pioneer county, wasn't it?

SURFACE: Let's see, we moved there in about 1911. I can remember the first automobile that came to Kiowa. There were just horses and buggies then.

STOKES: Yeah, there weren't many automobiles.

SURFACE: No, but it was a thriving little farming community.

STOKES; And how far is that from Kansas City, about?

SURFACE: Oh it was clear across the state.

OGELVEY: It's close to here. Kiowa isn't far from here.

SURFACE: About 200 miles.

OGELVEY: That's farther than I thought.

STOKES: That's still, by today's standards, just a three hour drive.

SURFACE: It's northeast of here on the main line of the Santa Fe. One of the pasttimes was to go down and watch the trains go through. We had four a day, two east and two west, and that was about all the recreation we had was to get to the depot.

STOKES: We're referring to something that no longer exists except on Amtrak, and that's passenger trains, I presume.

SURFACE: Yes.

OGELVEY: Now, did you get all your schooling in Kiowa?

SURFACE: Uh-huh. I graduated from high school there. I lived at home until I married in 1934.

STOKES: You have one thing in common with me.

SURFACE: What?

STOKES: I married in 1934.

SURFACE: Oh, mine was January.

STOKES: Mine was December, so you're a little older than I am. I got married on Christmas night. How did you meet your husband.

SURFACE: Oh, his folks lived on a farm down in Oklahoma a little ways away from my hometown, and I guess we had barn dances then and everybody went to a barn dance and I think I met him there and it was quite some time after that before we married.

OGELVEY: You were married in 1934?

SURFACE: Uh-huh.

STOKES: And how long has he been deceased?

SURFACE: Since 1974.

STOKES: Then you were married 40 years?

SURFACE: Uh-huh.

STOKES: Well I've enjoyed a little more married life than you have the, I had 55 recently.

SURFACE: Well, that's great.

OGELVEY: And I have 50 coming up this year.

STOKES: Well, are you going to have a 50th celebration?

OGELVEY: Well, the kids of course, wanted to have a big party. We think maybe we'll take a little trip somewhere.

STOKES; Well good. Dr. Ogelbey has got quite a distinguished career. He is a radiologist professionally, but he has done a lot of work in medical humanities and was with the Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine for about 10 years in that capacity, retiring last August, I guess it was, and now he has one of these ... tell us a little bit about your setup down in Ben Wheeler, Dr. Charles?

OGELVEY: Well, we live on a ranch out in the country and we have had this place over 25 years and we have, it's a guest room, and we have a guest house there, and we have three camp grounds, and we have people come and stay with us and what my wife and I do is we are interested in nature and we teach them about nature. We have trails, nature trails, and my wife has training in geology. She was a geology major in college, and she also has a great interest in wildflowers, so she takes care of the geology and wildflowers and I have been interested in birds since I was a little kid and also, Mrs. Surface, have a great interest in Indians and Indian culture and Indian lore, and we have on our place made some replicas of Indian sites, sacred sites, and we have a lot of feathers and rocks and things like that. So we entertain our guests and try to educate them about nature and about some of our lost values in that way on our place. We had, this past weekend a week ago, we had 150 boyscouts there. So we have a busy life.

STOKES: Mrs. Surface, I noticed in sitting here in your living room here on North Main Street, which I understand Robert Ripley once said had the longest Main Street of any in the world, I guess, in his believe it or not, but some people might question that, but that's what Robert said. But nevertheless, here in your living room, I notice that you must have an interest in Indians, because I see pictures and I even see you have a couple of bows here. Do you have an interest in archery?

SURFACE: I did at one time when I was younger. We belonged to the National Field Archery Association and to the Texas Field Archery Association and we made tournaments all over the three state area: Arizona and some in Colorado and Oklahoma and Texas, of course, all

over Texas, and I was field governor for this district up here for about 16 years.

STOKES: I see. About what period are we talking about, the 40s, the 50s?

SURFACE: Well, I was 54 when I started in.

STOKES: Is that right? Well that was back in the 60s then.

SURFACE: 35 years I was in it.

OGELVEY: I'm sure you won plenty of trophies and championships.

SURFACE: Well, I won my class. They were in classes and I won my class several times and one trophy was won for archers over 55, I won that. I have about 40 trophies, I guess.

STOKES: Speaking of trophies, you're looking at quite a trophy holder here, Mrs. Surface. Dr. Ogelvey has run in about, how many, 60 marathons? He's a marathon runner. He's got his share of trophies too, I'll tell you.

SURFACE: I'll bet.

OGELVEY: I image your husband won his share of trophies, too.

SURFACE: Well, sad to say he didn't.

OGELVEY: Oh, you were better than he was.

SURFACE: Archery is a precision sport. You have to do the same thing exactly the same way every time or you don't know where that arrow is going to go. And he wouldn't stick to one bow and one size arrow. He had about five bows and all different sizes and types of arrows, so I was the one that brought home the trophies.

OGELVEY: Good for you.

SURFACE: 'Cause I stuck to one bow.

STOKES: Well, Mrs. Surface, this has been a real pleasure on the part of Dr. Ogelbey and myself in sharing these few moments together with you and trying to kind of pick your brain so to speak of some of your memoirs of the past and you are the last of your particular portion of the Still family and it has been our pleasure to share these moments with you today on the 3rd of April, 1990. Thank you very much.