

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

HAMILTON COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

8

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

9

10

11

12

13

\*\*\*\*\*

14

INTERVIEW WITH

15

LAMBERT LITTLE

16

\*\*\*\*\*

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

1 (INTRODUCTION)

2 MR. EIDSON: Good morning. My name is Jim  
3 Eidson. I'm chairman of the Hamilton County Historical  
4 Commission. Today we're here in the offices of Andy  
5 McMullen, who is in attendance. Also Jane Crouch with  
6 the Historical Commission, with Jason, our videographer,  
7 and Jamie, our court reporter, today to talk to Lambert  
8 Little. One of the things about history is that when we  
9 look at the written accounts of history, oftentimes we  
10 don't pick up the personal experience of people.  
11 Sometime back we made a decision to actually record the  
12 history of Hamilton County by talking to the people who  
13 have lived in Hamilton County, and that's what we're  
14 here to do today. Lambert Little has a long, long  
15 history with Hamilton County, has served as mayor. He  
16 has also --

17 MS. CROUCH: Sorry.

18 MR. EIDSON: He has also served as City  
19 Manager for the city of Hico. So he has a particular  
20 viewpoint on the happenings in our county here, and it's  
21 our pleasure to have him here today. So without further  
22 adieu, Lambert Little.

23

24

1 (INTERVIEW)

2 MR. EIDSON: Good morning, Lambert.

3 MR. LITTLE: Good morning, everybody.

4 MR. EIDSON: Thank you for being here

5 today.

6 MR. LITTLE: It's my pleasure.

7 MR. EIDSON: Well, it's our pleasure --

8 it's our pleasure to have you. You've been a longtime

9 resident of Hamilton County. Most of your life has been

10 lived in the area?

11 MR. LITTLE: You're accurate when you say

12 most of my life has lived -- has been lived here. I've

13 actually had people tell me that I am a newcomer because

14 I've only been here since 1958.

15 MR. EIDSON: Well, how about that.

16 MR. LITTLE: But most of my life has been

17 lived here. I've been around lots of places, worked in

18 other towns, but always kept headquarters in Hamilton.

19 So this is home, yeah.

20 MR. EIDSON: Oh, that's great. Well, tell

21 us about your family and growing up here.

22 MR. LITTLE: I grew up on a cattle ranch a

23 few miles east of town, and it was a lot of fun because

24 we had a gigantic native ranch -- native stone ranch

25 house and lots of room to run and play. We could make

4

1 all the noise we wanted to. We could always do -- we --  
2 we kind of minded our own business, didn't come to town  
3 a lot, but there were lots of things to keep us busy out  
4 there. Cattle. My dad had mechanical abilities. So --  
5 my twin brother and I -- so I had a locked-in playmate.  
6 We always had something to do. We could do mechanical  
7 stuff. We got interested as children in electronic  
8 stuff. That's about the time that the RadioShack stores  
9 first became popular, and we'd just get a handful of  
10 stuff and start building radios and stuff in our own  
11 little workshop. We just -- we kind of had our own  
12 little world there.

13 MR. EIDSON: Oh, that's -- that's great.

14 And that was the Bywaters Ranch; is that correct?

15 MR. LITTLE: No. Bywaters Ranch.

16 MR. EIDSON: Uh-huh.

17 MR. LITTLE: Bywaters Hereford Ranch I

18 think is what it was called.

19 MR. EIDSON: Yeah. What year -- what year

20 did you move onto the ranch there?

21 MR. LITTLE: '57 or '58.

22 MR. EIDSON: Okay.

23 MR. LITTLE: I think my twin and I were

24 about two.

25 MR. EIDSON: Well, what did your -- what

5

1 did your dad do?

2 MR. LITTLE: My dad did a lot of things.

3 I never could quite figure out what he did. When we  
4 were here, he rebuilt drilling rigs, rotary drilling  
5 rigs. As a young man, he drilled gas and oil and water  
6 wells. My understanding is he got a government contract  
7 with the CCC camps, Conservation -- what -- I can't  
8 remember what that acronym even stands for, but it  
9 was --

10 MR. EIDSON: Civilian Conservation Corps.

11 MR. LITTLE: Civilian Conservation Corps.

12 Thank you. He got a contract to drill all the water  
13 wells for those different camps, and that was a big  
14 deal.

15 MR. EIDSON: No kidding. That was a big  
16 deal.

17 MR. LITTLE: So he drilled water wells  
18 when he was here and rebuilt drilling rigs but had  
19 mechanical ability. Invented the mesquite cutting  
20 devices and such as that, and I think some of that  
21 mechanical aptitude may have rubbed off on my twin and  
22 me. I don't know.

23 MR. EIDSON: How about that. How about  
24 that. That's -- do you have any memories of the town --

25 ways that you could characterize Hamilton as you recall

6

1 it growing up perhaps in the '60s?

2           MR. LITTLE: When we were kids, we could  
3 come to town -- obviously we could come to town to go to  
4 school, if we needed -- so we'd go -- there were, I  
5 think, two dime stores. One on -- one on the west side  
6 and one on the south side. There were two grocery  
7 stores as I recall. If we needed clothes, we'd go see  
8 Milton Harelik. I mean, there were lots of things -- or  
9 Garner Alvis -- I think Garner Alvis, as I recall, had  
10 all of the Boy Scout uniforms and such as that, and that  
11 would have been in the '60s. There was a lot going on  
12 in the '60s. Occasionally we would come in for a movie  
13 but not -- really not until high school. We'd just --  
14 we'd come in for groceries, if we needed clothes, or  
15 something. All that was available.

16           MR. EIDSON: Tell us about the Harelik  
17 store, what you remember about going in there, and --

18           MR. LITTLE: I thought that was the  
19 biggest store, and they had the -- the neatest way of  
20 setting up the clothes because they had the old-timey  
21 clothes racks and whatever. I did not appreciate it as  
22 a kid. I appreciate it now. I didn't realize how neat  
23 that was. Of course, Milton was such a cool guy to  
24 visit with, always friendly, and all the people in

25 there -- it was just -- it was fun.

7

1           MR. EIDSON: Great. That's great. What  
2 about your -- your political career, if we can call it  
3 that, with the city of Hamilton? What got you into that  
4 aspect and -- and tell us something about that.

5           MR. LITTLE: I'm embarrassed to tell this  
6 because it sounds hokey. I got involved in local  
7 government because I really wanted to put something back  
8 in the community. I had -- I crashed one of my  
9 airplanes and injured myself pretty badly, and folks in  
10 this town opened up their hearts and wallets and saw me  
11 through the toughest time you can ever imagine. I do  
12 not think I would have survived that physically or  
13 emotionally if it hadn't have been for the citizens  
14 here, the friends that helped me through that. I  
15 literally wanted to put something back. I ran as a  
16 write-in candidate -- I think it was 1988 -- and got on  
17 the City Council, served, I think, four terms on the  
18 Council. Ran for mayor and served one -- one and a half  
19 terms, thereabouts, a complete fluke. I got offered a  
20 job as a City Manager, and since I hadn't had a paying  
21 job in about 20 years, I took it.

22           MR. EIDSON: Excellent. As far as some of  
23 the major projects that you were working on, I think you  
24 had mentioned a water project, the Proctor Consortium

25 and such things. Tell us the story about water.

8

1           MR. LITTLE: Back in the '60s, I think  
2 when one of the last Corps of Engineers lakes that was  
3 built, Lake Proctor -- the surrounding towns formed a  
4 consortium to use Proctor for their water reservoir.  
5 Hamilton, for whatever reason, decided that instead of  
6 buying treated water from the Upper Leon River Municipal  
7 Water District I believe it was called -- instead of  
8 buying treated water, they would have water released  
9 from the dam, let it flow down the Leon River, and we've  
10 got a pump station out east of town on Highway 22, pump  
11 the water a few miles and treat it ourself -- ourselves,  
12 and that worked fairly well. Many times we had to make  
13 improvements to the water treatment plant, but it worked  
14 fairly well. About '87, the powers that be started  
15 talking about building a raw water pipeline from  
16 Proctor. The problem with releasing water down the  
17 river was that every time they released water, a peanut  
18 farmer along the way would drop his irrigation hose in  
19 there and sometimes we would never get water. It was a  
20 big joke in the summers that Hamilton had to ration  
21 water. That's not good for growth. That's not --  
22 that's not good for life. So about the time I got  
23 elected, the process -- the project was in the -- in the  
24 process of development. They had talked about having a

25 bond issue and having people vote, and my recollection

9

1 is they decided to issue certificates of obligation. So  
2 that made things happen very quickly. Engineering was  
3 done. I believe it was a 27-mile pipeline and several  
4 million dollars. It was a big deal.

5 MR. EIDSON: Yeah, that is a big deal.

6 Just to fill me in on this, what's the difference  
7 between the bond election and certificate of obligation?  
8 Is that like a loan or --

9 MR. LITTLE: A certificate of obligation  
10 is where you commit either ad valorem tax revenues or  
11 utility revenues or both to make payments on -- on the  
12 money that you borrow. A bond issue, literally you  
13 would sell bonds and pay them back through ad valorem --  
14 again, through ad valorem tax revenues or -- or utility  
15 sales revenues. The difference is with a bond issue,  
16 the citizens get to vote yes or no. If it's a -- if  
17 it's a big, big project, multiple million dollars, the  
18 citizens typically like to have a chance to say yes or  
19 no. And I do not know what the big rush was, but the  
20 Council, before I got on it, decided to issue  
21 certificates of obligation, which is something that they  
22 could do, and they did that and committed whatever  
23 revenues to pay the loan back, and -- and that's how it  
24 worked out.

25 MR. EIDSON: Excellent.

10

1 MR. LITTLE: I think it's been -- I think  
2 it was -- I think it was a good decision, too.

3 MR. EIDSON: Right. And that -- that  
4 happened while you were mayor; is that correct?

5 MR. LITTLE: On the Council.

6 MR. EIDSON: On the Council.

7 MR. LITTLE: A Council member. That would  
8 have been in '88 and '89, I think. It took more than a  
9 year to finish that project. It was a 27-mile pipeline.  
10 I think 12-inch pipe.

11 MR. EIDSON: That is an accomplishment for  
12 sure. I know that you've had most of your life a great  
13 interest in aviation and that you -- that you have some  
14 familiarity with airports and so forth and so on. Can  
15 you tell us -- tell us about that?

16 MR. LITTLE: Flying has been a lifelong  
17 passion for my twin and me. He actually makes a living  
18 flying. I do it for fun. I cannot remember what year  
19 it was. Sometime when I was on the Council, I mentioned  
20 to our mayor at the time, Joe Crane I believe it was --  
21 the FAA, the Federal Aviation Administration, looks --  
22 keeps tracks of all of the airports and makes sure that  
23 they are up to snuff. In Texas, it's the Department of  
24 Transportation Division of Aviation who will send people

25 out to inspect the airport every few years. The

11

1 inspector came out and said that our airport had some  
2 deficiencies. I think we had about a 3,500 foot strip  
3 and it had been there for many years, and we had patched  
4 on it and replaced lights and such as that. It was  
5 adequate for the town. It wasn't anything special. I  
6 told Mayor Crane that if he would allow me, I'd like to  
7 go talk to him and see what possibilities there were for  
8 grants or whatever, because the City never has money to  
9 go into a big project like for an airport because as  
10 useful as an airport is for a community, there is not  
11 popular support. Citizens seem to think that the  
12 airport is just for rich playboys. Now, that appeals to  
13 me, but -- and I can understand that because not  
14 everybody uses the airport. Just like some people don't  
15 use the rodeo arena at the Fair Park, but it's still  
16 part of the package. Long story short, I got acquainted  
17 with some of the folks at the Division of Aviation and  
18 got to visiting, and -- and they looked and talked and  
19 ran some figures, and they pronounced it would actually  
20 be cheaper for us to build a new airport than to repair  
21 the old one and bring it up to standards to our dismay.  
22 The interesting thing was we got in on the tail end of  
23 the 5 percent matching grants. They're doing 10 percent  
24 matching grants now. So if you have a million dollar

25 project, we would only have to come up with 5 percent of

12

1 that and the other part would be covered by State and  
2 Federal funds. So that was a great coup, but it was  
3 going to be like a two, two and a half million dollar  
4 project, which meant we would have to come up with  
5 hundreds of thousands of dollars, which was a stumbling  
6 block. I am amazed -- we visited with -- Dave Fulton  
7 was the administrator at the Division of Aviation, I  
8 think, and he was new. I think he came from Kentucky,  
9 and he was just there. And he said, "Hamilton, if y'all  
10 get your match money together, we're going to do this  
11 project." "Okay. What's our deadline?" He gave us the  
12 deadline. We called him up on the day of the deadline  
13 and said, "We've got the money." He said, "Ah, I'm  
14 going to have to call y'all back." He was so sure that  
15 we wouldn't come up with the money, I think he had  
16 committed the money elsewhere, but to his credit -- I  
17 salute this guy -- he told us, you know, "I told you I'd  
18 do this if you came up with the money, and you've done  
19 it. So we're going to do this project." The Diamond  
20 Shamrock Corporation had the riverside farm out north of  
21 town, and it would have been so advantageous for them to  
22 have their corporate jet fly into Hamilton instead of  
23 Stephenville or someplace. They just had a 5,000 foot  
24 runway. They contributed thousands of dollars to it.

1 the county with an airport and committed several  
2 thousand dollars. The local pilots' association had  
3 barbecue cookouts, whatever. They would sell barbecue  
4 sandwiches and raised lots and lots of money. We were  
5 able to put the match together, and the City made a  
6 commitment to come up with some money and take care of  
7 the airport. So we ended up with a new airport. I  
8 actually acquired some -- acquired some land adjacent to  
9 the existing strip and built a 5,000 foot runway at the  
10 time. I think it was a 12,500 pound pavement strip  
11 that's been improved since then. So they can land  
12 Falcon 50s and better out there.

13 MR. EIDSON: Wow.

14 MR. LITTLE: It's really a big deal with  
15 the modern visual approach slope indicator lights and --  
16 and such as that, weather observation transmissions that  
17 you can monitor as you fly in. It's a big deal.

18 MR. EIDSON: It is. It is indeed. It  
19 always seemed to me that aviation was kind of part of  
20 the Hamilton culture. We had this conversation over  
21 lunch the other day. My father grew up outside of  
22 Aleman, and when he was growing up riding horse-- -- you  
23 know, horseback was the primary mode of transportation.  
24 I guess they had cars, but they -- usually it was horse

25 and buggy or horses to get around there, but people had

14

1 airplanes. And so there was that collision of  
2 technology between the 19th and 20th century that I  
3 always thought was kind of odd. But I understand that  
4 the airport -- the history of the airport goes way back  
5 to World War II and --

6           MR. LITTLE: As far back as I have  
7 knowledge -- we've talked about a fellow names A.G.  
8 Thompson, a local grocer, and A.G. was involved in what  
9 was at the time known as the Texas Aeronautical  
10 Commission. He served on that commission, and he was  
11 able to get some good things done for the Hamilton  
12 airport, but back during World War II, I understand that  
13 he and a gentleman from Fort Worth named Walter Word  
14 were involved in civilian pilot training. And they  
15 owned a bunch of airplanes. I'm not sure what the  
16 arrangement was with the military, but Mr. Word and  
17 Mr. Thompson both owned Taylorcrafts and Cubs, and  
18 that's what people learned to fly in literally right out  
19 here.

20           I can remember talking to a guy named  
21 Louis Woodall, who was involved in the war effort. He  
22 was in the insurance business in the '60s and '70s, and  
23 I can remember going down to visit with him, and a  
24 couple of times I got -- got him to talk about the

1 training, and he had some great anecdotes. I don't know  
2 if it's appropriate to share them here. Very quickly  
3 I'll tell you that they were trying to develop the  
4 mind-set not so much of secrecy but of security. So  
5 instead of saying "I'm 20 miles east" or "I'm six miles  
6 south of the airport" or whatever, they would use  
7 landmarks, and they would give some moniker for the  
8 landmark they were over. If you're familiar with the  
9 shape of our city lake out east of town, they would say,  
10 "I'm flying over the extracted wisdom tooth." I always  
11 thought that was interesting. That would develop a  
12 sense of security or secrecy or whatever you want to  
13 call it. He also told me that it wasn't all hard work  
14 either, because there was one -- one -- one pilot who  
15 was kind of a cutup, and I'm pretty sure he got into  
16 some trouble occasionally. He -- he got on his radio --  
17 and the radios had to be pretty primitive back then, but  
18 he radioed in and said he wanted to come straight into  
19 the airport, and they said "You need to circle around a  
20 little bit because we got some of the cadets in the  
21 pattern," and he shouted back, "I'm coming in on one  
22 engine." So they scattered all these cadets all over  
23 the county, and this guy few in and landed in a  
24 single-engine airplane. But that's where they -- I

25 think that was the start -- the start of the Hamilton

16

1 airport.

2           Back in the '60s, we actually had a  
3 crosswind strip. It was gravel, and I used to use it  
4 occasionally. And, again, a 3,000, maybe 3,500 foot  
5 paved strip. For the '60s, it was -- it was -- that  
6 was -- that was really something. But the modern  
7 planes, particularly the jets, they need more -- more  
8 length --

9           MR. EIDSON: Right.

10          MR. LITTLE: -- for safety.

11          MR. EIDSON: Right. That's great. Well,  
12 you brought up a few names there. I know, being a young  
13 man like myself, that you have not lived through the  
14 Depression but that you've become very familiar and  
15 friends with people who did. You mentioned a fellow,  
16 Mr. Blue, I think the other day.

17          MR. LITTLE: Clancy Blue.

18          MR. EIDSON: Tell us some stories about  
19 that.

20          MR. LITTLE: I was actually doing some  
21 research work, and I did college pretty -- I think I was  
22 in my 30s, and I actually did not get a degree until I  
23 was late 40s. So I was one of those nontraditional  
24 students that was willing to do research when it came

25 time to do a paper, and we were doing some kind of

17

1 history class, something or another, and I can remember  
2 getting a copy of the -- the teacher's guide for the  
3 book that we had. We ended up -- the -- our professor  
4 said he wasn't able to reach us. He wanted to know  
5 ideas, what can we do, and I suggested you need to bring  
6 us all up in groups and let us each teach one chapter.  
7 At a minimum, we'll all learn one chapter, and he  
8 decided to do that. Well, nobody wanted to be on my  
9 team, and I understood that, too. I took the era from  
10 the Depression to the advent of World War II, I think.  
11 So I got this teacher's guide, and I had about 30  
12 minute's worth of stuff to share with the students that  
13 was in the book that was going to be on a test that we  
14 all had to learn, but then I shared about an hour and a  
15 half of weeks of interviews that I had done with local  
16 people about the Depression years in Hamilton and the  
17 advent of World War II. Clancy Blue was an automobile  
18 salesman. He was involved in a Ford dealership, and I  
19 think maybe his son had a Ford dealership in  
20 Stephenville for many years. Clancy sold my dad a '64  
21 and a half Mustang that we've still got and a '62 Ford  
22 pickup that we've still got, and I got to be friends  
23 with Clancy when I was in the auto body business and  
24 doing mechanicing because he was working at a Ford

25 dealership in Stephenville and he would bring parts in.

18

1 He would drive back and forth because he would deliver  
2 parts to me. I had a chance to visit with this guy, and  
3 then I went to him when it came time for interviews, and  
4 I asked him -- and he -- I will tell you he is not the  
5 only one that had told me this. The Depression years in  
6 Hamilton were business as usual. Nobody had any money.  
7 Everybody was broke. They heard that there were folks  
8 in the big city standing in the soup lines struggling to  
9 survive. It was business as usual here because nobody  
10 had anything, everybody was broke. I mean, it was just  
11 another -- another day on the farm.

12 MR. EIDSON: They were broke to begin  
13 with.

14 MR. LITTLE: Yeah, we were broke to begin  
15 with. It was -- there was no change. But everybody  
16 here had -- had a few cows, had a few chickens. They  
17 couldn't get tires for the car, but they didn't need to  
18 drive the car because you couldn't -- you couldn't buy  
19 gasoline because they didn't have -- I mean, they didn't  
20 have the money. That was kind of frivolous. They  
21 didn't have the money. They would ride a horse if they  
22 needed to go somewhere. It was -- it was -- there was  
23 really no change because they started out broke, and it  
24 was just -- they shared a lot of stuff.

1 I guess I will never forget this. I asked Clancy, "I  
2 understand that everybody was focused on survival, but  
3 there had to be some entertainment. What did people do  
4 for entertainment?" And he reflected for a moment and  
5 kind of chuckled. He said, "I can remember we had  
6 bridge dances." I said, "What do you mean a bridge  
7 dance?" He said, "Well, the bridge at the edge of town  
8 was one of the longest, flattest places where we could  
9 congregate. Nobody had cars. I mean, there wasn't  
10 going to be any automobile traffic. So we'd all collect  
11 on a Saturday night on" -- "on the bridge and have a big  
12 dance." I said, "What did" -- "what did you use for  
13 music?" He said, "Well, somebody would have one of the  
14 windup Victrolas, and they'd bring it out, and we'd  
15 just" -- "we'd" -- "we'd play that, and that's what we  
16 would dance to." Well, I thought for a minute. I said,  
17 "What about records? Did you" -- "what could you do for  
18 records?" "We just played the same old records over and  
19 over again, but we were happy with it." And I said,  
20 "Well, did you wear them out?" He thought for a second  
21 and he chuckled again and he said, "We did not wear out  
22 the records, but the steel needles that you use with  
23 these old Victrolas" -- and if you've ever seen these,  
24 there's a little steel needle about an inch, inch and a

25 half long, kind of a sharp point, you roll this head

20

1 over, and it runs in the groove of the record, and that  
2 was what picks up the sound. He said, "Those steel  
3 needles would wear out." I said, "So what did you do?"  
4 He said -- well, you couldn't buy them. Nobody had any  
5 money to go buy them anyway. He said, "We figured out  
6 that we could cut a sharp Mesquite thorn, and it was  
7 good for about six plays." Now, that's something you  
8 don't get in a history book. I'm fascinated by that.  
9 That --

10 MR. EIDSON: No shortage of Mesquites.

11 MR. LITTLE: -- that -- if he could have  
12 just boxed them up and sold them, that would have been  
13 great. But that's -- that's how it was in Hamilton.

14 MR. EIDSON: My goodness. That's great.  
15 Tell us some stories about Hico. You -- you had

16 mentioned, I think, Bob Hefner, who was JP, and --

17 MR. LITTLE: Bobby Hefner was a really  
18 interesting guy. He was a justice of the peace over  
19 there for many, many years. He was the Billy the Kid  
20 historian over there and has written several books, most  
21 of which -- I have a copy that he tastefully autographed  
22 for me, and I treasure those. Really interesting guy.  
23 And I -- you know, I could talk to some of the  
24 old-timers in Hico, and they remembered this fellow that

25 was known as Brushy Bill, who actually is buried here in

21

1 Hamilton at one of the cemeteries just north of town.  
2 There were still a lot of folks that remembered Brushy  
3 Bill. They described him as an interesting, eccentric,  
4 colorful, however you want to describe it, kind of an  
5 oddball, but he told the same stories all the time, and  
6 there was a ring of truth to them. I mean, he could  
7 show you the scars -- bullet scars, if you will, that  
8 matched all the stories that everybody talked about  
9 Billy the Kid getting shot at and getting shot. I mean,  
10 I'm -- it's a fascinating tale. What Bob told me that  
11 really did have a ring of truth in it -- I asked him,  
12 "What do you do when people ask you? Do you really  
13 believe this or not?" And Bob would smile, and he said,  
14 "I always tell people you don't have to believe it, just  
15 promote it." And, you know, I think that's -- that's  
16 probably the best part of a legend.

17 MR. EIDSON: Well, it certainly has become  
18 part of Hamilton County culture as far as that, and I  
19 think in some -- some ways it's a reflection of our own  
20 connection to the old west and that we see --

21 MR. LITTLE: People love outlaws, too.  
22 Isn't that interesting?

23 MR. EIDSON: I think there's a song about  
24 that, isn't there?

1 some other outlaws from around here. Johnny Harris, and  
2 that name has probably come up. I remember he had an  
3 old gun that allegedly belonged to Bonnie and Clyde that  
4 traveled through here, and you would not think that  
5 Bonnie and Clyde would travel through Hamilton, but when  
6 we were kids and Daddy would be going back to Dallas for  
7 whatever business reason, I can remember going through  
8 Hico, and I can remember seeing a big sign there that  
9 said, "Barrow Rutledge Funeral Home." And I talked to  
10 Bill Rutledge, who was a little bit older than me,  
11 almost a contemporary, a former mayor in Hico. Just a  
12 really interesting guy. He was a funeral director when  
13 I knew him. I was asking him about his funeral  
14 business, and I said, "I can remember Barrow Rutledge."  
15 He said "Yeah," and he told me the guy's name. He said,  
16 "That was Clyde Barrow's uncle." "Really?" He said,  
17 "Yeah. Sometimes Clyde would come through town to visit  
18 with him. We'd all see his old car parked over there at  
19 his uncle's house." Nobody did anything about it  
20 because he never bothered any of us. He would just come  
21 in to visit his family and then move on. But that's an  
22 interesting connection, too. You wouldn't think that  
23 Bonnie and Clyde would appear in Hamilton County, but  
24 there it is.

25 MR. EIDSON: That's interesting. We've --

23

1 we've heard, too, that they -- that Bonnie and Clyde  
2 spent the night in St. Mary's Church. Have you ever  
3 heard that story?

4 MR. LITTLE: Don't know about that.

5 MR. EIDSON: That's one that was shared  
6 with -- on another interview, and also we've heard about  
7 them at Edison Lake, that they -- they hid out on Edison  
8 Lake as well.

9 MR. LITTLE: That would have been a good  
10 place to hide.

11 MR. EIDSON: Yeah, it was a good place --  
12 a good place to hide.

13 So are there other characters out of  
14 Hamilton or Hico that struck your interest?

15 MR. LITTLE: We talked earlier before our  
16 interview, I guess, about war heros and whatever.  
17 There's a bunch of literally World War II war heros --  
18 there would have been World War I heros, but I would not  
19 have known about it then. As a child, I would not have  
20 appreciated that part of history.

21 MR. EIDSON: Yes.

22 MR. LITTLE: I would have taken that very  
23 much for granted. I wouldn't have paid much attention.  
24 Leo Rendessy, I think, was our -- was a band director

25 before my time. I got music lessons from him when I was

24

1 in junior high and early high school, and I think he  
2 would have been associated with -- he -- he would talk a  
3 little bit about World War I stuff. I think maybe he  
4 was the commander of the American Legion for a good  
5 while, too. So, you know, he would talk about that,  
6 but, unfortunately, I just didn't pay it much mind. I  
7 didn't pay it enough attention. I didn't have an  
8 appreciation for it. The World War II stuff, I can  
9 remember getting acquainted with -- we talked about Brad  
10 Boyer. Brad Boyer was a hometown guy, another fellow  
11 who wrote a book that tastefully autographed it for me.

12 MR. EIDSON: Yes.

13 MR. LITTLE: He joined the Royal Air  
14 Force. He -- he joined the RAF before America entered  
15 the war, and he was flying Bristol Beaufighters in  
16 England. And he told me quite a few of the stories, and  
17 many of them were commemorated in his book, I might add.  
18 What he told me that made the most sense was they  
19 issued -- the Bristol Beaufighter was a big, ugly twin  
20 engine airplane. When I say it was ugly, it just wasn't  
21 streamlined, it wasn't colorful, but they had huge  
22 engines, and it would go pretty fast. As they developed  
23 that particular model, they -- they didn't so much add  
24 bigger engines but they did add armament --

25 MR. EIDSON: That was a light bomber?

25

1 MR. LITTLE: A bomber and I think a

2 reconnaissance plane.

3 MR. EIDSON: Okay.

4 MR. LITTLE: Not -- not a big bomb load

5 but more reconnaissance. He used his for

6 reconnaissance, and he kept the first model that they

7 issued. They kept trying to give him a later model with

8 all the armor plating and such as that. He said, "I

9 don't think I want that because that adds weight. I'd

10 rather have this early model because it's lighter and

11 that makes it faster." And he said he outran lots of

12 Germans in that faster, early model airplane.

13 MR. EIDSON: Did Brad Boyer grow up here

14 in town or was he on the outskirts?

15 MR. LITTLE: I think he grew up east of

16 town.

17 MR. EIDSON: Okay.

18 MR. LITTLE: And one of the things he said

19 in his book -- that he talked about, he was in the gem

20 and jewelry business here.

21 MR. EIDSON: Yes.

22 MR. LITTLE: He was a gemologist, as I

23 recall, later in life, and he said that interest was

24 developed out on the river, maybe around the Evergreen

1 MR. EIDSON: Yes.

2 MR. LITTLE: -- I believe is what he told  
3 me, and he would go out digging around and come up with  
4 shiny rocks, and he was just fascinated by them. And  
5 through his life, he got some training and education and  
6 turned that into an avocation, if not a career.

7 MR. EIDSON: Yeah, it's interesting. My  
8 father also grew up outside of town, and Brad Boyer was  
9 one of his heros, and he also ran off and tried to join  
10 the RAF, but because his distance vision was bad, they  
11 didn't take him. Hence, I'm sitting here today. So I  
12 appreciate that.

13 MR. LITTLE: Well, thank goodness for us.

14 MR. EIDSON: That's great. Well, you --  
15 you came through the Hamilton schools?

16 MR. LITTLE: Came through the Hamilton  
17 schools from grade one.

18 MR. EIDSON: Tell us about that.

19 MR. LITTLE: Didn't have any kindergarten.  
20 Started in the first grade in the old school. Now, I  
21 was after -- they talk about East Ward and West Ward. I  
22 had absolutely no knowledge of that until later when we  
23 started trying to build a new school. They were  
24 utilizing some of the old buildings, and then I listened

1 West Ward and football and stuff like that. The  
2 elementary school that we had I -- I believe were old  
3 World War II Army barracks buildings that were  
4 connected, and I think about it now -- and I look at  
5 pictures of it now, and I think that really wasn't much  
6 school, but it had nice polished hardwood floors and  
7 windows that would open, and we had steam heat. That  
8 was all we had. We didn't know any better. We were  
9 happy with it. I was happy with it. I actually think  
10 it was pretty cool looking back, because in the '70s,  
11 there was just an orgy of school buildings across the  
12 state and probably across the United States where they  
13 had big old, ugly buildings, they had no windows and  
14 air-conditioning and heating, and then later on in the  
15 '70s with the energy crisis, nobody had enough money to  
16 pay for air conditioning and heating. They wished they  
17 could open windows. Well, we had windows that we could  
18 open. And I'll tell you -- I'll never forget teachers  
19 kept telling my brother and me "You've got to pay  
20 attention to what we're doing. Stop daydreaming.  
21 You're just staring out the window this whole time.  
22 Nobody is ever going to pay you to stare out a window,"  
23 and actually they do. My twin is an airline pilot and  
24 all he does is get airplanes up at altitude and stare

25 out the window. So, you know, the worm turned. Ha.

28

1 Ha.

2           The -- the school -- the auditorium -- we  
3 had an actual auditorium and a separate cafeteria at the  
4 time. I remember in the late '60s -- mid, late '60s, I  
5 guess, the auditorium burned. I'll never forget the  
6 smell of that. They rebuilt it, and later -- my dad was  
7 actually on the school board in the mid to late '60s,  
8 and I can remember him coming home with tears in his  
9 eyes because the citizens here would not support a bond  
10 issue to build a new school, and I've -- I've never been  
11 able to understand that. If you don't support your  
12 school, that's a sad commentary on the community. I  
13 love this community. I will never understand why they  
14 would not support building a big school. Maybe the  
15 dreams were too big at the time. I remember that they  
16 had hired a superintendent, and his name was Forest  
17 Watson. Forest Watson still lives, I understand. I did  
18 a little research on him about a year ago, and he left  
19 here. He ended up being a superintendent at  
20 Hurst-Euless-Bedford and then different places around  
21 the United States and actually did some school  
22 administration stuff in Russia I understand. A smart  
23 guy. Maybe more than what we needed here, so maybe the  
24 dreams were too big, maybe it scared people. I don't

25 know. The idea back then was to acquire land outside of

29

1 town and have enough growing room where we could add  
2 onto it and have a new stadium, and my best recollection  
3 is there would have been growing room for nearly  
4 anything that we wanted to do. The citizens decided  
5 that was too grandiose, I think. So later we were able  
6 to get rid of the old barracks school. They chopped it  
7 up and sold those pieces to different people. And the  
8 area down there is now, I guess, a parking lot and part  
9 of the practice field and football field. The old  
10 boiler house I think remains. That's where we had  
11 little half-pint cartons of chocolate milk every  
12 afternoon recess. We'd go sit by the boiler -- the  
13 boiler room, we called it. Well, what we ended up doing  
14 was adding onto what was the high school up on the top  
15 of the hill on College Street, I guess, raised an old  
16 auditorium building there that -- I can remember we had  
17 band concerts in there. I would have been in junior  
18 high. It would have been the late '60s. I can actually  
19 remember -- I just thought it was an old building. I  
20 wish it were there now because it was fascinating, but  
21 that was torn down and other buildings there had already  
22 been demolished. So they moved that, kept part of the  
23 building, which is, I believe, the elementary school  
24 now. I'd have to go up there and look at it. Part of

25 the buildings remained, but they have continually added

30

1 on, and they've had to acquire more land up there, but a  
2 big complex with a beautiful, a magnificent auditorium  
3 now is used for many purposes. So we finally did get  
4 some school growth there.

5 I can remember in addition to school  
6 stuff, though, my dad was involved -- Andy, you will  
7 remember the Hamilton Development Corporation. I think  
8 you were the attorney when -- when all that came to an  
9 end, and that was kind of a sad day. My recollection is  
10 when we had the last meeting there, my twin and I came,  
11 and I remember Otto Lengefeld being there, if you recall  
12 that. Correct me if I'm wrong. My -- my recollection  
13 is that many of the local residents, businessmen,  
14 whatever formed a corporation, and I think -- I think  
15 they all contributed \$1,000 and pledged another \$1,000  
16 in an attempt to bring businesses to Hamilton. They had  
17 a couple of false starts. They had -- one business that  
18 came here was a steam cleaner business, and I can't  
19 remember the name of the company, but it was a business  
20 to manufacture steam cleaners, and they operated for a  
21 few years. I think maybe there was a company that did  
22 fiberglass work that came perhaps as a result of that.  
23 The one thing I do remember -- the one success story, if  
24 you will, they brought what became the Hamilton Steel

1 McCaleb Lane. Those buildings are still there as a  
2 machine shop now, I think. Maybe that started out as  
3 the Hamilton Pickup/Trailer Company and that evolved  
4 into Hamilton Steel and now it's the steel company west  
5 of town. I think that started out as Hamilton  
6 Pickup/Trailer Company. That was hard -- I mean,  
7 those -- those individuals that made those commitments  
8 to try to bring businesses here, that was a huge  
9 struggle. I can remember so many of the folks just --  
10 they were just at wits' end trying to figure out what to  
11 do to make the town grow. And after -- after having  
12 seen that and -- and having had several years in -- and  
13 I hope I don't digress too much -- several years in  
14 elected office, I wonder if the town ever will grow.  
15 There's a certain number of folks -- it seems like  
16 there's a certain number of folks that feel like they've  
17 got a foothold and don't want things to change and  
18 there's a certain number of folks that have come from  
19 somewhere else and they know what's available, how good  
20 things could be, a certain number of folks that really  
21 do not understand how the system works and they think  
22 that their \$300 a year in ad valorem tax ought to pave  
23 every street in town, and they have no concept of the  
24 expense of doing the infrastructure improvements that

25 would need to be done in town to make it attractive for

32

1 new businesses. They don't think about the lack of -- I  
2 think of adequate housing for workers, the need for  
3 training for folks that are already here to serve new  
4 businesses. There's -- there's a lot of disconnects  
5 there. It's enormously difficult to make everything  
6 come together and attract new businesses and -- and  
7 generate growth. It's a real struggle, and I think it  
8 will always be a struggle. The good news is a lot of  
9 people like Hamilton just like it is. It has the  
10 country flavor and good folks that I've already talked  
11 about. The downside is, I'm convinced without some  
12 steady growth, we will always struggle to maintain what  
13 we've got. I continue to make this my home, you'll  
14 notice.

15 MR. EIDSON: Yes.

16 MR. LITTLE: I said I'll always have a  
17 headquarters here, and I will continue to make this  
18 home.

19 MR. EIDSON: Yes, sir. Well, Lambert, are  
20 there other -- other topics that you'd like to touch on?

21 MR. LITTLE: I'd get off anecdotes, and I  
22 don't think that's what people here want to --

23 MR. EIDSON: If they're historical,  
24 they're welcome.

1 interested in. I will give it some thought. Maybe we  
2 need to have a second session.

3 MR. EIDSON: A second volume there.

4 MR. LITTLE: I will -- I will -- I will  
5 say, I'm sad that when I was younger, I did not pay  
6 attention to the actual old-timers that were here  
7 because I know there were just a treasure trove of  
8 stories that should have been shared and handed down.  
9 Lots of folks paid closer attention than I did.  
10 Fortunately, I was able to do a little bit of research.  
11 I think the point that I would leave after the -- the  
12 research and talking to the actual old-timers was that  
13 the Depression in Hamilton and Hamilton County -- in  
14 Hico and Hamilton, it was manageable. Nobody had  
15 anything, nobody had anything extra, but they had what  
16 they always had, and, you know, life was still good.

17 MR. EIDSON: Right.

18 MR. LITTLE: When we visited the other  
19 day, I was sharing some stories about World War II  
20 stuff. Again, Louis Woodall I think was involved in the  
21 draft board here, and he had -- my recollection is that  
22 he had mixed emotions about service on the draft board.  
23 It is enormously difficult to spin this wheel or  
24 whatever the lottery system was where they would

25 determine who got called in to service, because if those

34

1 folks got called in to service and did not return, he  
2 felt some responsibility, and he said there were --  
3 there were parents here that wouldn't speak to him ever  
4 again because it was, like, as if it were his fault that  
5 their son went to war and did not return, and that's --  
6 that's a huge burden to have to bear, and that's likely  
7 why few people ever talk about it.

8           The war effort actually hit home. I --  
9 and when I say "the war effort," I'm talking about World  
10 War II. I wouldn't be talking about the Korean War and  
11 Vietnam because I know of -- of survivors, for lack of a  
12 better term, veterans from the Vietnam War, and it feels  
13 like recent history to them. You can talk to them about  
14 it. They will become physically ill when they think  
15 about it. It's just an enormously difficult time, and I  
16 don't know how folks make the adjustments in their lives  
17 to deal with that every day.

18           MR. EIDSON: It's a great sacrifice.

19           MR. LITTLE: Lots of folks in this -- in  
20 this county have made those sacrifices, too, and I'm not  
21 sure that we appreciate it like we should. I don't  
22 think we've heralded it. I don't think we have paid  
23 attention to it like we could have or perhaps should  
24 have.

25 MR. EIDSON: Right. Right. Well, I think

35

1 one of the purposes of this project -- and you're  
2 mentioning that, you know, we haven't talked to the  
3 old-timers as kind of universal. One of the intentions  
4 of this project is to -- is to try to record as much,  
5 you know -- I know you don't think, nor do I think of  
6 myself as an old-timer, but --

7 MR. LITTLE: With a little luck, we'll get  
8 there.

9 MR. EIDSON: With a little luck. Just --  
10 I don't want to impose an anecdote, but I -- I have to.  
11 I saw Mrs. Peaches's grave in the Ireland cemetery. She  
12 was born in 1863, died in 1966. She lived out there  
13 around Aleman. My father introduced me to her probably  
14 not long before -- before she died, but it occurred to  
15 me that she went from Comanches to space travel in her  
16 lifetime. That's --

17 MR. LITTLE: That's fascinating.

18 MR. EIDSON: And that's -- and why didn't  
19 somebody -- I hope somebody did, but we haven't found it  
20 yet, but why didn't somebody sit at her feet and collect  
21 those stories?

22 MR. LITTLE: Sit there with a tape  
23 recorder and --

24 MR. EIDSON: Yeah. Yeah.

25 MR. LITTLE: -- document all that. I do

36

1 have one interesting story, and I think this is kind of  
2 funny. Somebody is going to have to refresh my memory  
3 of the name of the old-timer who donated land for the  
4 courthouse here, built the house where Carolyn Pool  
5 lives.

6 MR. EIDSON: Uh-huh.

7 MR. LITTLE: What is the name of that  
8 individual? Can somebody help me? Whatever -- I'll --  
9 you know, that is well documented. I just can't  
10 remember it at the moment.

11 MR. EIDSON: Nor can I.

12 MR. LITTLE: But that individual donated  
13 land where the courthouse is located with the proviso  
14 that where he built his house, which is about two blocks  
15 from the square -- and Carolyn Pool is a magnificent  
16 home. The proviso that that property -- they would  
17 never have to pay City tax to manage that -- that little  
18 enclave, if you will, is outside the city limits. And I  
19 can remember when I was mayor, John David Pool came down  
20 and playfully complained to me that he can join the  
21 country club in Hamilton but he can't go to the local  
22 dump ground because he's not in the city limits. He's  
23 not a citizen of the city, and I always thought that was  
24 kind of funny. But that reminded me that there were

1 great things. Donating land for a courthouse, that was  
2 probably a huge deal then. It ought to be a big deal  
3 now because we have a magnificent courthouse that's  
4 been -- and probably the third -- third courthouse on  
5 that location, but this one is magnificently restored.  
6 So thankfully we're -- we're paying attention to the  
7 history now.

8 MR. EIDSON: Yes.

9 MR. LITTLE: So that's -- it's interesting  
10 how those things evolve.

11 MR. EIDSON: That's much to be proud of.

12 Any of our panel here have questions for  
13 Lambert?

14 MR. MCMULLEN: I have a question.

15 MS. CROUCH: Andy, go ahead.

16 MR. EIDSON: Oh, sorry.

17 MR. MCMULLEN: Lambert, just so the record  
18 will be clear, I'm Andy McMullen, and I have thoroughly  
19 enjoyed your presentation today.

20 MR. LITTLE: Thank you.

21 MR. MCMULLEN: I really have, and it's  
22 just been so enlightening. And I -- I had no idea I  
23 would ask a question today, but I cannot pass up this  
24 opportunity, which could be a mistake to ask this

25 question, but because of your unique experiences of

38

1 growing up in Hamilton and having served -- which I will  
2 say was kind of a difficult political time in Hico that  
3 you went through.

4 MR. LITTLE: Uh-huh.

5 MR. MCMULLEN: -- as their City  
6 Administrator or is that the wrong terminology?

7 MR. LITTLE: That is the correct term  
8 actually.

9 MR. MCMULLEN: There was -- there was even  
10 some discussion about that --

11 MR. LITTLE: They didn't want to call me a  
12 City Manager because they thought a City Manager would  
13 have too much control.

14 MR. MCMULLEN: Yes. But, Lambert, I  
15 thought that you would be a unique person to perhaps,  
16 based on your experiences, without having -- you having  
17 had the preparatory time to be able to talk about  
18 this -- we are very fortunate in Hamilton County to have  
19 two outstanding towns, Hico and Hamilton, and they're  
20 good people and they're good business people, but do  
21 you -- do you have some thoughts about the differences  
22 between the towns so that going -- the two towns, so  
23 that going forward we might be mindful of that in  
24 working together for the betterment of Hamilton County?

1 can say without making any disparaging remarks. I don't  
2 want anything to come across as negative. We've --  
3 we've talked about the differences in the -- the  
4 citizens and the -- I mean, we're 20 miles apart, lots  
5 of differences in attitudes, lots of -- lots of  
6 commonality there, though. There are lots of  
7 similarities. There are so many things that are the  
8 same. They are intensely proud of their community and  
9 rightfully so. I always wondered if the rivalry between  
10 Hamilton and Hico was just a football rivalry, and it is  
11 more than that. I do not know what it is based on. The  
12 logic is, if you're on one side of the river, be it the  
13 Leon or the Bosque, whichever river you want to talk  
14 about, whatever side of the river you're on, that's  
15 either good or bad and a difficult political time. I  
16 will say I was the first ever City Administrator in  
17 Hico, and that makes it doubly difficult, because the  
18 citizens don't have a clue why I'm there, the Council  
19 members -- they're first administrative, they do not  
20 know how to use me, and the citizens automatically hate  
21 me -- the -- I'm sorry, the employees automatically hate  
22 me. The citizens don't know why I'm there. The Council  
23 members don't know how to use me. The employees hate  
24 me. And, of course, since I was from Hamilton -- am

1 automatically a bad guy. The folks over there hated me  
2 because I was from Hamilton. The folks in Hamilton  
3 stopped liking me because I went to Hico. So you can't  
4 win.

5           The interesting thing is, though, we  
6 started doing some things together. I talk about Bob  
7 Hefner. The way I actually got acquainted with Bob  
8 Hefner, I -- I read in our local paper that they were  
9 doing the Esplanade project there on Pecan Street, I  
10 believe it is, which is one of the main streets in town.  
11 They have all the old buildings. Now, to Hico's credit,  
12 they have maintained their downtown buildings, and it's  
13 kind of a fluke while this happened -- why this  
14 happened. They're all masonry buildings. Apparently  
15 one side of Pecan Street burned turn of the last  
16 century -- the century before last, let me say, around  
17 1900. One whole side of the street burned down. A  
18 couple of months later, the other side of the street  
19 burned down. To their credit, they rebuilt, but they  
20 built in masonry. Those buildings exist. They remain.  
21 They have survived, and they've pretty much kept them  
22 up. To Hico's credit, they have a historical  
23 preservation ordinance over there so that anybody that  
24 builds or maintains on that street has to do it to a

25 certain standard, and that -- that is -- that's so

41

1 important. So they -- they -- they do those things.

2           And I'm going to have to think just a  
3 minute to figure out what direction I was going with  
4 this. They're so proud of their community and rightly  
5 so because it still exists, but we started -- tried to  
6 do some things together. Historical preservation has  
7 become an important thing in Hamilton. It's been an  
8 important thing in Hamilton. So those are things that  
9 we're doing alike. As far as doing things together, I  
10 can remember when I was the administrator over there and  
11 Bill Funderburk was the administrator here. I talked  
12 about paving equipment, items that you use in public  
13 works in the city. There's a certain amount of  
14 equipment that the City of Hamilton has that they use  
15 two weeks out of the year. Well, Hico had a need for  
16 the same kind of equipment, and I sat down with him and  
17 suggested "Why don't we" -- "why don't we combine  
18 resources and buy equipment and share it," and that  
19 would be real easy to do. We kind of worked out the  
20 details, and I presented it to my Council and he  
21 presented it to his Council, I believe, and it just kind  
22 of fell on deaf ears, and I never have quite understood  
23 why. We actually -- I think we agreed to buy one little  
24 piece of equipment, but the citizens -- some of the

25 citizens -- I'll forget this. The question they kept

42

1 asking was, "Who would get to use it first?" You know,  
2 who really cares? That's so petty. There's so many  
3 things that we could do together. But, again, pride  
4 runs deep, and I don't know what the rivalry is. It is  
5 more the football rivalry. They've got a whole lot of  
6 things going on. They are more focused, I think, on --  
7 perhaps more focused on tourism. Next month, they will  
8 have their 15th annual -- what started out as the Hico  
9 Steak Cook-Off Beef Symposium and Tourist Trap -- I  
10 think that would be the official name. They may have  
11 shortened it now just out of convenience, but the  
12 15th -- now, we've had the Dove Festival here for many,  
13 many years, and it's changed some. They've had  
14 different incarnations, for lack of a better term, but  
15 there have been some changes, and they've tried to  
16 protect the cook-off, but they have -- when I went to  
17 work over there, I participated in the second annual  
18 cook-off. It would have been their second year, and I  
19 can remember we estimated that in a town of 1,342  
20 people, we had 6,000 people in town participating in  
21 that cook-off. That's huge. The reason they were able  
22 to pull that off was because they had an enormous number  
23 of volunteers. Volunteers from the school, for example.  
24 Teachers and teachers' aides, all the folks from the

25 school would pitch in to bake potatoes. When you have

43

1 6,000 people to feed, it's going to take an incredible  
2 number of potatoes and, of course, steak -- steak  
3 cookers -- the contestants in the cook-off all had to  
4 agree to cook ten, 20, 30 steaks, which everybody had to  
5 do because that's fun. But you've got to come up with  
6 salad, you got to come up with tea, you got to come up  
7 with the baked potatoes, you got to come up with the  
8 silverware, you got to have -- you got to have tables  
9 where people can sit, you have to have somebody clean  
10 off those tables. It takes an incredible amount of  
11 manpower to do that, and to their credit, they were able  
12 to put together enough volunteers that were willing to  
13 do that. I'm just fascinated they're having their 15th  
14 cook-off this year. So in lots of ways, they're able to  
15 pull together. I think there's probably the same kind  
16 of infighting that we have in Hamilton. Somebody's  
17 always got a better idea but never has the time or the  
18 wherewithal to take a leadership position in some of the  
19 things that happen. I mean, that's -- that's all across  
20 the state, probably all across the nation, but in lots  
21 of ways, Hico is able because of the pride that they  
22 have, because of the unique foothold that they have in  
23 history with -- with the outlaws and the preservation of  
24 the old buildings. They really got -- they have a lot

25 to share. Hamilton has a lot to share. We've tried so

44

1 hard to do so many good things. We have the courthouse  
2 here and the downtown buildings. There's so much that  
3 we need to do. There's so much to be done. There's so  
4 much that has been done. We probably don't appreciate  
5 what all has been done because we now take it for  
6 granted, but I try to remember that. There's a guy here  
7 in town now that is redoing a bunch of the downtown  
8 buildings, and they're just magnificent. You may know  
9 him.

10 MR. EIDSON: I've heard of him.

11 MR. LITTLE: And, Andy, what you and Julie  
12 are doing is just -- it's stupendous. I just can't say  
13 enough good things. There's -- there's so -- I can't  
14 say enough good things about Hamilton. Frankly, I can't  
15 say enough good things about Hico. I made some lifelong  
16 friends over there, tried to make some good political  
17 decisions and get them going in a good direction, but,  
18 you know, they have the same issues there with aging  
19 infrastructure and never enough resources to -- to make  
20 huge improvements. They do a little bit at a time but  
21 never enough resources to do all the things that need to  
22 be done. That may just be universal and maybe -- maybe  
23 that's part of the charm of small town Texas.

24 MR. MCMULLEN: Thank you, Lambert. Could

25 we go off the record just a minute?

45

1 MR. LITTLE: Thank you for that.

2 (RECESS FROM 11:08 a.m. - 11:10 a.m.)

3 MS. CROUCH: Lambert, would you comment on

4 the current situation in Hamilton of maintaining its

5 population and -- but the citizen misunderstanding of

6 lack of growth as being, you know, the comment we hear

7 most often?

8 MR. LITTLE: Jane, I got about three

9 answers for -- for that. I used to make the comment --

10 and having -- having spent many years in local elected

11 office here, what I used to say was that a city is like

12 a shark in the water. If it's not moving forward all

13 the time, it dies. But trust me, I can point out a half

14 dozen towns in Texas that have died and have refused

15 burial. They're just kind of existing. That's not so

16 with Hamilton. That's not so with Hico. They're not

17 growing a lot. I would have to say they're still moving

18 somewhat. There's never going to be enough resources to

19 make all the changes and improvements that need to be

20 done. I hear so much criticism -- that's -- you're

21 exactly right. Many people are critical because, "My

22 water is rusty. I got the roughest" -- "this town has

23 the roughest streets in the state." Think about streets

24 for a minute. And I'll -- I'll -- I'll try not to make

25 this too long. Think about streets, though. Years ago

46

1 we had trails between the towns, and when we ended up  
2 with some gravel in the spots that got muddy, that was a  
3 huge improvement, but then we got gravel all across the  
4 road, and that was a huge improvement. Then we got some  
5 primitive asphalt on there, and that was a real  
6 improvement. Then we got some -- some real nice asphalt  
7 on the roads, and that was great, and then the asphalt  
8 starts coming apart and everybody is upset about it.  
9 Well, you know, it's still better than it used to be.  
10 It's still way better than it used to be, but the cost  
11 of doing the pavement is -- it's incredibly expensive.  
12 I mean, you can talk about thousands of dollars per  
13 linear foot for a 30 wide -- 30 foot wide strip of  
14 pavement. What citizens don't understand is, before you  
15 do that repaving, you actually need to replace all of  
16 the water and the sewer infrastructure underneath that  
17 street because the weight and the vibration of the  
18 equipment that lays that asphalt down is going to damage  
19 the pipes. And we've tried doing that before. We'll  
20 lay some asphalt and then we have to dig it right back  
21 up because pipes break. So it's incredibly expensive to  
22 do it right. So there's a lot of frustration there.  
23 Again, the citizens can be incredibly critical because  
24 we're not -- we're not doing all the things that need to

25 be done. I don't think anybody wants to and I'm pretty

47

1 sure most people, myself included, would not be able to  
2 pay for everything that needs to be done. There's just  
3 no limit to the -- the things that need to be done,  
4 though. Water pipes -- I talk about growth. I'm  
5 convinced that the cities need to have steady growth.  
6 The population of Hico increased 20 people in the last  
7 ten years, and that's just the ten-year census that I'm  
8 thinking of, and I think the population of Hamilton has  
9 hovered right around 3,000 for as long as I can  
10 remember. 2,700, maybe, when I was in school. So it's  
11 been right around 3,000. A little bit of growth. You  
12 know, things come and go, kind of an ebb and a tide, if  
13 you will. I've said many times -- oh, and I hope this  
14 doesn't sound critical of me. We lose -- we lose some  
15 revenue, we lose a lot of leadership when folks -- and I  
16 guess I'm guilty because I have property right outside  
17 the city limits, and that's where I live. Part of it's  
18 because I can say I live outside the city limits, I'm no  
19 longer eligible to run for local office. So when people  
20 ask me to do that, I say, "I can't do it. I wish I  
21 could, but I can't." But think about how many people  
22 are right outside the city limits. We lose not only ad  
23 valorem tax revenue there. We lose a lot of leadership  
24 potential. There's an incredible amount of leadership

25 potential, and they can still contribute to the

48

1 community, but they're not citizens in the strict  
2 definition, and that's -- that's a little bit  
3 frustrating. If we could have some steady growth and  
4 take in some of these folks, we would end up with some  
5 ad valorem tax revenue, possibly some sales tax revenue,  
6 if some businesses grew up like that. With that  
7 additional revenue, I would see applying that to  
8 infrastructure improvements starting in the center of  
9 town and working out. The analogy that I've tried to  
10 use is like MacArthur back in World War II and his  
11 concept of island hopping. You get one island here,  
12 then you skip a couple, and get out there and everything  
13 else kind of gets assimilated. It could be the same way  
14 here. If we could just keep stretching out just a  
15 little bit at a time, we could generate some revenues  
16 that would help make some improvements here. I think  
17 that -- just the concept of growth -- I think many  
18 people equate growth with change, and many people  
19 acquaint change with bad. I don't see it as bad. I see  
20 it as very, very positive.

21 MS. CROUCH: Lambert, you brought up the  
22 issue of annexation. You didn't say the word, but  
23 that's what that is.

24 MR. LITTLE: That's what it is.

1 of a time when the City contemplated annexing and went  
2 forward with it or is it just kind of an idea out there  
3 that sounds like it would be nice?

4 MR. LITTLE: It's kind of an idea out  
5 there that has such a negative connotation. The closest  
6 we came to doing any annexation -- and I got to say, I  
7 dropped the ball on this one. One of the developments  
8 that we had when I was in office was a nursing home out  
9 Highway 22. My recollection is that they were going to  
10 create 50 jobs and -- and build -- maybe they had -- I  
11 don't remember -- 50, 60 rooms and an assisted living  
12 center and whatever. It was a big deal. They needed a  
13 gravity sewer out there, and the City was able to  
14 provide that by running some line. We had to get some  
15 easements across, you know, private property and, of  
16 course, most of that was outside the city limits. So we  
17 had -- but we had to stretch out there to accommodate  
18 them. Annexation had to be involved in that. But it  
19 occurred to me, there is a development out that way,  
20 Indian Oaks, I guess it is. Everybody out there had --  
21 they have large lots, but they all have septic tanks.  
22 And septic systems, the State is really cracking down on  
23 the septic systems, and it's nearly impossible to have  
24 an adequate septic system nowadays on one acre or less.

25 It's just -- it's not good, and when the tanks start

50

1 failing, then all the neighbors suffer, and there have  
2 been some health issues that have surfaced, and I had  
3 the bright idea, if we're running a line right out  
4 there -- a sewer line right out there, we could provide  
5 gravity sewer there. Unfortunately, it would require  
6 that everybody annex their property. Peewee Jones, a  
7 super guy. I can remember he posed a question, "Can you  
8 force us to do this?" And I lost track then. "Can you  
9 force us to do this?" I said "You know, technically I  
10 think we could," but what I should have told him was,  
11 "It doesn't matter if we can force y'all. I'm offering  
12 you an opportunity to fix a problem that everybody's  
13 had, that's only going to get worse, that's never going  
14 to go away. Here's a solution for you. We're making  
15 you an offer." But I focused on his question and I  
16 dropped the ball. So it just kind of fell apart then.

17 I do not see annexation as negative. I  
18 see that as very positive. We need to have some growth  
19 for the town to survive and to flourish. We really do.  
20 I do not know how to change -- you know, over the years,  
21 Andy, you and I have had the conversation about  
22 politics, politician, that used to mean a man of the  
23 people. The word "politician" has taken on a negative  
24 connotation now. The word "annexation" has a negative

25 connotation. So if a politician says something about

51

1 annexation, well, there's two marks against it already  
2 because there's a certain amount of distrust. Maybe  
3 that comes from the Watergate era or -- or whatever it  
4 is. There's a certain amount of distrust of -- of  
5 politicians or the -- the people in -- in power, for  
6 lack of a better term.

7 MS. CROUCH: Did Indian Oaks ever annex  
8 into the city? Is it still --

9 MR. LITTLE: A few have, not everybody.

10 MS. CROUCH: And it is -- because I know  
11 when we annexed into the city, and we did -- Nickelson  
12 is not in the city limits, but the advantage for us was  
13 sewer.

14 MR. LITTLE: Yeah.

15 MS. CROUCH: That's exactly why. Because  
16 we had septic tanks, and they do become antiquated.

17 MR. LITTLE: And part of my frustration  
18 with the City -- and I understand at -- there was a time  
19 with this city -- and pretty much the same thing in  
20 Hico. There was a time when they needed utility sales.  
21 So if somebody was outside the city limits, "Oh, we can  
22 run a water line out there. You'll have to pay an  
23 additional charge" -- "a bonus charge because you're  
24 outside the city limits." If they had dug their heels

25 in then and said "We will provide services, but it will

52

1 require annexation," some of that growth might have  
2 happened. As it is now, we've got some folks outside  
3 the city limits that have some City utilities, and --  
4 and, again, I don't mean to sound negative, but in a  
5 way, that's freeloading, but I understand how it  
6 happened. There was a time when the City needed to have  
7 utility sales. I wish that there was a way that they  
8 had not set that precedent and they could dig their  
9 heels in and say "No more utilities outside the city  
10 limits, and everybody that has utilities has to be  
11 inside the city limits," then as the State cracks down  
12 on the primitive septic systems or whatever, we could  
13 have that growth that we talked about.

14 MS. CROUCH: It may be time for that  
15 discussion again.

16 MR. LITTLE: It -- it may be time, and I  
17 hope that that happens. I may not be the one to  
18 contribute. You know, it's funny, sometimes you can  
19 tell when you're not the right person to contribute.  
20 When I was over in Hico -- let me back up a little bit.  
21 We talked a little bit about our hospital here, which is  
22 one of the greatest things that has happened here. Back  
23 in the '80s, I recall the hospital closing, and we had  
24 about one year to reopen the thing or we would lose the

25 accreditation. Is that the right word? I think that it

53

1 is.

2 MS. CROUCH: Yes.

3 MR. LITTLE: I remember going up there and  
4 doing Sheetrock work and stuff like so many other folks  
5 trying to get the building back in shape where we could  
6 reopen and continue to operate, and, of course, it's --  
7 it's going gangbusters now with the new building and the  
8 old building has been demolished and things are really  
9 going good. And now we've got a clinic over in Hico.

10 Well, let's back up to the year 2000, I  
11 guess, when I first went to work as the City  
12 Administrator in Hico. Hico did not join in with the  
13 hospital district because at the time they had a  
14 hospital.

15 MS. CROUCH: And, in fact, we cut them out  
16 so we could pass that election.

17 MR. LITTLE: They had a hospital, and ten  
18 seconds after the election, their hospital closed. So  
19 they just kind of got left out. And the issue --

20 MS. CROUCH: Yeah.

21 MR. LITTLE: -- apparently has never come  
22 up, but there ought to be some way -- some way to bring  
23 them in, and perhaps the way to do that is to get the  
24 clinic over there. But I can remember talking to the

25 hospital board members or whatever. They said, "Can you

54

1 help us with that?" And I said "I would love to because  
2 obviously I'm pro-hospital and I can see so many  
3 advantages. I know all the people over here to talk to.  
4 I'm probably not the right ambassador for that," but  
5 fortunately it looks like things are happening. So  
6 whatever -- whatever rivalry there is between the  
7 cities, I think maybe it's diminishing, and I'm really  
8 glad to see that, because there's so many good people in  
9 both towns, and we could do so much more working  
10 together than -- than butting heads. It's okay to  
11 preserve that football rivalry, I think, but other  
12 things, we ought to work together.

13 MR. EIDSON: Absolutely.

14 MR. LITTLE: So I see some of those things  
15 happening.

16 MS. CROUCH: Very good point.

17 MR. EIDSON: That is good. Lambert, thank  
18 you so much --

19 MR. LITTLE: It was my greatest pleasure  
20 to be here.

21 MR. EIDSON: -- for -- for being here  
22 today, and that's -- great stories, great history, and  
23 we really appreciate you letting us -- letting us share  
24 your knowledge.

25 MR. LITTLE: You're welcome.

55

1 MR. EIDSON: Thank you.

2 (INTERVIEW CONCLUDED)

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

## 1           REPORTER'S CERTIFICATION

2

3           I, Jamie Cooley, Certified Shorthand

4 Reporter for the State of Texas, do hereby certify that

5 the above and foregoing interview contains a true and

6 correct transcription of all portions of the

7 proceedings, all of which were reported by me.

8           IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, witness my hand on

9 this the 31st day of January, 2019.

10

11

12

---

JAMIE COOLEY, Texas CSR 7274  
CSR Expiration: 1/31/21  
COOLEY REPORTING, Firm No. 702  
8407 Fathom Circle #B  
Austin, Texas 78750  
512-743-5867/512-410-3012 (fax)  
jcooleycsr@gmail.com

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

