

KENNETH NELSON

Interview 75a

August 17, 1985 Diboll, Texas

Megan Lambert, Interviewer

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ABSTRACT: Longtime surveyor and land and timber expert Kenneth Nelson (1915-1992) discusses topics from his time in the Land and Timber Department. He mentions cattle ranching and Dave Kenley's involvement with the cattle on Temple lands. Nelson, who retired from Temple-Inland as vice president of the forestry division, talks about his job as surveyor – how he got his job during the Depression and how he worked for Mr. Kenley and taught himself to be a surveyor. Also mentioned are the sustained yield program for the timberlands, the reintroduction of deer to East Texas, Boggy Slough, R.E. Minton, and Dred Devereaux.

Megan Lambert: Megan Lambert interviewing Mr. Kenneth Nelson at the Temple Memorial Library, August 17, 1985, in Diboll. I'm told that you are one of the few people who is from here who basically knows all phases of the business and just went right from the bottom to the top and I wonder if you would just start at the beginning and describe how it was to work with the business here.

Kenneth Nelson: Starting from the bottom was right. When I finished high school in 1932, in fact I went to Lufkin High School, transferred from Diboll at mid-term in the eighth grade. Mainly for the purpose of taking shorthand and shop and playing in the band because they didn't have it here in Diboll. My older brother and I went to high school up there and we both finished in Lufkin. Of course, that was in 1932 and there were no jobs to be had at that time, it was during the Depression and our neighbor, from where we lived in the south end of town, Mildred, at that time was Mildred Clarke. She was married to a fellow named Clarke. She was at first Richards and she married a Clarke and he died no, they got a divorce and then she married a Winder. She was secretary to Mr. Kenley, who was in charge of the land and timber division for Southern Pine Lumber Company. She knew that I had had shorthand and typing in high school and also had a night course in the same thing in Satterwhite's Commercial College, even though I didn't finish the course. She asked me if I would like to come up there and get some experience and help in the office, and eventually get a job. I said, yeah, I'd do anything because I didn't have anything to do and rather than just stay at home I did, I went up there. I'd help her file and type, etc., and after a few months Mr. Kenley said that he would test me out and try to help me out as much as he could so he would give me 10¢ a page for typing these big pages of deeds like they have in the county clerk's office where they record these deeds. He gave me 10¢ a page. Well, he didn't know I was quite as good a typist so the first day I made nearly \$3.00 and when he found out what he owed me he said he couldn't stand that, that was as much as his secretary was getting. So he said he was putting me on a salary of \$10.00 a week and that tickled me to death because \$10.00 was a lot of money back then. So I went to work then and after three or

four months I was there that is what he started paying me. My date of employment actually went back to June of 1932. The only ones in his department at that time were Mildred and Mr. Kenley and they had a fellow by the name of E.H. Kirkland a timber buyer, and a surveyor for the company. Later, after two or three years a fellow by the name of L.D. Hall went to work in our division and he was more or less an overseer of some of the land. He would check for depredation on the lands and that kind of stuff, and scale logs, too. While I'm on that subject I might tell you a little instance that happened to Mr. Hall. He was a brother-in-law to fellow from Ft. Worth, I believe his name was W.T. Wagner and he was quite wealthy. He wanted to get in the cattle business and, at that time the company pasture over here in Trinity County, known as Boggy Slough now, was also known as Ray's Ranch. It got the name after Mr. J.J. Ray, who was a retired captain from the military and he was an old cattleman and the company hired him at one time to manage the cattle there at Rayville. They ran quite a few cattle out there for a few years, in fact they imported a lot of Mexican labor and tried to deaden a lot of timber to make more pasture land and they soon discovered the timber was growing back faster than they could kill it out so they gave that up. Anyhow they made money for a while out of the cattle business but they finally gave it up because it wasn't profitable. Then Mr. Hall, who was with the company then, he talked to his brother-in-law, Mr. Wagner, and they decided they would lease the ranch out there and go into the cattle business and so he operated it for two or three years, Mr. Hall did, and while he was out there he was riding in a pickup one day with a shotgun and had his hand over the top of the barrel and it was loaded. They hit a bump or something and the gun went off and shot about half of his hand off. Of course, I knew him before and after and to me, that effected him someway, his mind, because when they finally gave up the ranch out there, called it a losing reposition, he came back and worked full time for the company. At that time we were running a little café here in town, it was the best one in town, the only one in town, it was here on the Old Highway 35 and it was located just south of the Post Office now and known as the "Believe it or not Café". My dad built it in 1928; I'd work up there before work and after work, at night I'd work up there, too. I'd always work there until 8 o'clock and then I'd go to the office and work. Anyhow, Mr. Hall came driving up real fast, stopped in front of this café and jumped out, looked all excited and said "You ready to go to work, Kenneth?" it was a little after 7. I said, "No, Dean, I've got to work here until eight o'clock." He said, "Oh, come on, let's go now." I said, "No, I just can't go now." So he went on. When I went to the office he wasn't there. So an hour or two later word was out that Hall had gone over to the Commissary and they had, they sold guns in there, too, and he went in there. There was a colored man who was the maintenance man for the company named Chester Willis, and he got one of these guns out of the cabinet and held it on this colored man, Chester, and made him go with him and get in his car, told him to start driving. Well, he kept him off the main roads. They drove on the country roads back in the northwest part of the county. Chester told this later, said he just kept driving. Of course he was scared to death. Mr. Hall was wild eyed and all excited and Chester didn't know what it was all about. But anyhow, after about two hours of riding around Chester said Mr. Hall told him "When you drive up in front of this house I'm going in there to use the telephone and you wait for me." He got out and as soon as Mr. Hall went in the house, naturally he took off in the car, back to report it. They called the sheriff's department. He had gone in though and called his wife from this farmhouse

and told her he was sick or something, I don't remember what the conversation was but, anyhow, they got him and brought him home. He had another brother-in-law there in Ft. Worth who was a doctor and he had married his wife's sister. So they carried him over there and left him under the care of his brother-in-law who was a doctor. His wife was a schoolteacher here, Mr. Hall's wife, and they had two little boys, oh, they were two or three years apart, I guess. At that time one was about five and the other eight and every time she would go visit him on the weekend he would want her to bring these two boys over there and she would. He talked to her one weekend, said how about letting them stay with me this week, and she said, "No, I'd better not do it." Anyhow he begged her so much that she left one of them, the youngest one, I believe. And the next day, she came on home. He got the little boy and carried him in the bathroom and cut his throat and cut his own throat and he had locked the door. Of course, the sister-in-law figured something was the matter and she started beating on the door and he finally came running out and the little boy was lying on the bathroom floor dead. He cut his own throat and he ran out in the yard and fell dead. It just so happened if she had left both of those boys he would have killed both of them, I suppose. His mind just snapped. Anyhow, that's the story on Mr. Hall.

ML: You know, I'd never heard that before.

KN: His widow, the last I heard, is still living down at La Marque, Texas. She is a retired schoolteacher.

ML: What year was that?

KN: That was, I'd say back in the '40s, maybe the late '40s.

ML: And how much time elapsed between when he shot half of his hand off and when he kind of went berserk?

KN: I'd say about two or three years after that. To me, I can look back now and feel that that had something to do with it because he was always a very excitable man, big heavy set and it didn't take much to unnerve him.

ML: Aren't you glad you didn't go with him that time?

KN: Oh, yes, he would probably had me doing the driving over there. I don't know what I would have done, I'll tell you. Anyhow, that's the story on Mr. Hall. Let's see, Mr. Hall, Kirkland, and myself and Mr. Kenley and Mildred, that was the land and timber division at that time when I started there. Now, I'd say there are 250 at least employees in land and timber division. But they have a lot more land to look after, too. But anyhow, Mr. Kenley graduated from Huntsville from Sam Houston State and actually, he was a schoolteacher, that's what he – you know, back in those days when you graduated you got a certificate to teach school and you had to teach school a year, I think, of every year you went to college over there. So he taught school in a little old country school in Trinity County and then he finally got this job with the company, he wasn't a surveyor or

a timber man, anything else when he went to work, just sort of worked up to it like I did. But when I started I wanted to be a surveyor and I tried to get Mr. Kenley to show me how, but he was one of these types of people who couldn't show you anything; he was too nervous himself. He didn't have the patience to tell me. Anyhow, he told me that if I wanted to learn to survey that he would recommend one type of book, surveyors' book, Davies Book of Surveying, I believe it was. Couldn't find one anywhere, finally I don't know who told me, but to check with the library of the University of Texas and I found one over there.

ML: Is that D-a-v-e-y?

KN: Davies – I still have the book. It is an old leather bound, worm eaten cover; in fact it was used in the College of the City of New York back in the 1870s. It is just about to come to pieces but, that's what I used to try to learn how to survey. At night I would take some of the old balance sheets that some surveyors of the company had in their files and I'd keep working until I figured out just what they did and how they arrived at those figures over there and then I would go out in the field with my staff compass and that's how I finally learned how to survey. It was just working it out at night.

ML: I really admire that.

KN: At least, you know it when you finally get around to it and you won't forget it. When you learn it the hard way. Mr. Kenley was the type of person, he just couldn't be still and he was awfully quick to fly off the handle. He was good to me other than he was just so tight, he didn't believe in paying much. I'm just rambling here.

ML: I was going to ask you about Mr. Kenley because I heard a story about him yesterday that – the story of the cabbage sandwiches, do you know about that?

KN: Oh, I could tell you a lot of stories about Mr. Kenley. As I said, when I went to work for him he was a cattleman, that was his main love, was cattle. Fact is he had started back in 1926, he had cattle scattered all over Texas practically. He used company lands to run his cattle on, too. Then he had a ranch down in South Texas, just out of Cotulla, down there, he and a partner, he had about four partnerships besides some cattle of his own. When I went to work for him that was part of my job, I had to keep his cattle and the biggest problem was separating those different partnerships. He would write checks and a lot of times he would forget to mark on there what account to charge it to and he was gone so much I'd sweat it out trying to decide which way to charge those things because I knew if I got it wrong, it wouldn't bother Mr. Kenley but it would the other partners. So anyhow, one was the U account. He had a fellow from Burke in partnership named Treadwell, and one named Singletary up in Alto and one named, I believe it was Harden down in Sabine County and then down at Cotulla a fellow named Storey, H.D. Storey. In fact the ranch is still there, the two boys own it now, two boys and his daughter and they have been fighting for eleven years over it, Mr. Kenley's kids. You have probably heard that story, too.

ML: No, I haven't, I would like to hear it.

KN: Well, it's a sad situation. Mrs. Kenley is still living; she is 101 now, 102, or pretty close to it. Finest lady I believe I ever saw. Anyhow she asked me two or three years after Mr. Kenley died.

ML: When did he die?

KN: He's been dead about eleven years now, I guess.

ML: He lived to be pretty old.

KN: Yes, he was up in his 80s when he died. But in his will, I think he let his boys draw that will and it was worded so it was just the biggest conglomeration you ever saw. But when he died – what started the biggest squabble between David and Ed, and of course, the girl's name is Marie. David, when he finished college he went up to Kansas City and went to work for TWA, he was a pilot. He flew their planes a number of years until he lost one of his eyes through glaucoma and then they put him as an instructor for the rest of their pilots and he worked there until he retired several years ago. Ed always stayed down here and helped his dad and helped him out. Of course, Mr. Kenley, in his will, all his children shared alike in his estate. Ed didn't like that a bit because David had gone up there in Kansas City all those years and he wasn't helping at all with the cattle and he got just as much out of it as Ed did. And that started the ruckus then and, Marie, of course, she and Ed were, she was the youngest, and she and Ed always got along so she sided with Ed, against David. I guess they filed at least fifteen or twenty lawsuits against one another and they would cuss each other until it wouldn't wait. And they haven't settled that estate yet and that has been eleven years. That's how come Mrs. Kenley asked me to get into it, to see if I could do something. She said the boys thought a lot of me and Mr. Kenley did, too. So I got in there with Mrs. Kenley's attorney. I had all their land appraised by an outside appraiser and I told them what I was going to do. I'd take these appraisal figures and I was going to make three lots out of it, you know, equal value and was going to have them draw for it. Well, that suited them all, at first, until David kicked up his heels a little bit, he wasn't sure, he just didn't trust us. Anyhow, I went ahead and made up the lots and went over to Mrs. Kenley and she said she thought that was the best way to settle it. So we got them all in the attorney's office up there all at one time. We started drawing and David said, "No, I'm not going to accept it." We said, "Well, we are going to draw for you anyhow." So we had one of the girls in the office draw, each one of them got their portion and it just so happened by the drawing David and Marie got the land over there adjoining Boggy Slough that joined each other which was what they wanted all the time. I think David got the impression that something was rigged.

ML: So Ed and Marie got those lands.

KN: Ed and Marie got those and David got most of the scouting property that had more timber on it than – theirs was mostly pastureland. Anyway, he wasn't going to accept it. We said, "Well, we already have it settle so far was the land." Okay so then they had all

this cattle down in South Texas and they wanted that properly divided. So I hired a surveyor and went down there and had that property divided. I made them draw for which one got the North half, which got the South half and they finally accepted that. Well, they wanted the cattle divided; they must have had eight or nine hundred head of cattle. And I said "Well, why don't we get somebody to estimate how many cattle is on each half right now and just leave those on there. No, No, David wouldn't have it. So we had to go in there and hire people, had to hire a helicopter and I went with the helicopter man and we rounded up all those cattle, put them in pens and was running them out of this chute and this one is David's, this one is Ed's and this one is Marie's. We did that for about a week, and branded each cow with each one of their brands. We kept the bulls to the last, we did the same thing with those, we started running them in there. David was standing there and one little bull came through there, wasn't quite as big as the rest of them. "See there, you are not treating me fair." I said, "We are taking them as we come to them." Anyhow, that is the type of guy I had to deal with over there.

ML: Was he the oldest son?

KN: He's the oldest, yes, just like his daddy. Anyhow, we got all the cattle and then they had cattle here in East Texas and we wanted to get those done, but in the meantime David wasn't satisfied with one tract of land they had over there so he goes over, he and his attorney and hires the same fellow that I had to appraise the whole thing, to go back on this one tract of land and recheck it and he came up with a different figure. I don't know if they talked him into doing it or not, but anyhow, he testified that he had made a mistake the first time and he thought David ought to have more of that tract. Well, that just started the whole thing over. So I just got enough of it and I told Mrs. Kenley I was getting out of it. I said, "I'm sorry I can't finish my job, but I have done all I can do and I just can't put up with David anymore." She said, "Now don't lay it all on David, part of it is Ed." I said "I know that but I can talk to Ed but I can't talk to David. I'm getting out." She thanked me for doing what I did anyway and we turned it over to Judge Wilson. Jim Cornelius, in Lufkin, was Mrs. Kenley's attorney so we went to the judge and told him all we had done. "Oh, yes, I'll take it; I'll get that settled in a couple of weeks. I'll just get ahead and issue a judgment." Well, that has been two years ago and he still hasn't settled the thing. So they are still fighting one another. The only ones getting anything out of it are the lawyers. They are just bleeding the two boys and they don't have sense enough to know what is happening to them. But that is the story of the boys and Mr. Kenley would turn over in his grave a dozen times if he knew he had left it in that condition. But anyhow, a few of the stories on Mr. Kenley when I worked for him. I was doing some surveying for him and he wanted me to go up in Anderson County around Palestine and take a crew and mark all of our boundary lines. We had had a lot of trouble up there with these little peckerwood sawmills coming in, pretending they were buying a tract of timber adjoining the company's, couldn't find the boundary line so they would get over and cut a lot of the company's timber. That was getting to be a nuisance, of course, they knew better. So he wanted me to take a crew and go up there and survey them out and paint the lines. I told him okay. So I had one boy from there who had been working for me for some time so I carried him with me and we stayed in Palestine during the week, stayed at a boarding house, then we would come home on

weekends. Well, I'm not sure what they cost in those days, that was in the early '40s, wasn't very much, but after three or four months I asked Mr. Kenley – of course, at that time our youngest child was about six months old. I said, "Mr. Kenley, if the company will pay my rent I'll just move to Palestine, take my family, it will be cheaper on the company." He hummed and hawed around and said, "See what you can do." So I went up and found a little garage apartment, the rent was \$32.50 a month. I came back and told him and he said, "I'll tell you what, the company will pay \$30.00 if you will pay the \$2.50." So that's the way it was. I paid the extra \$2.50.

ML: Can I stop you for a second?

KN: Right

ML: I think I'm going to have to – Okay, I think we are ready again.

KN: Okay, another instance, I was telling you about this partnership in the cattle that I was keeping. In 1936, that was the year that Al Capone got caught, you know, for evading the income tax, got sent to the pen. Mr. Kenley had heard about it and somebody explained it to him what Al had got sent up for. He had never made a tax return on any of these partnerships. He thought if you didn't make any money you didn't have to file a return. Well, there were ten years on four different partnerships that he had not filed a return. He filed his own, personal.

ML: Do you think he really thought that?

KN: Yes, I think he really thought that. He didn't ever bother to check on the law, he just kind of used his own head about it. Anyhow, that like to have scared him to death. So he called some tax attorney over in Austin and asked me to get all of his records together and he was going to carry me over to Austin and leave me one weekend and work with this tax attorney and try to draw up these ten years back tax returns.

ML: One weekend?

KN: One weekend. So, anyhow, he used to like to get somebody to drive him. He never could drive very good anyhow. So he had a boy from Keltys, called him up and he called me and says, "Get all my records now, we are going to Austin." It was late one afternoon when we started over there and this boy from Keltys was going to drive and he and I were in the car, too. So we got over to, I think it was Brenham, about 9 o'clock that night and he was tired, he was going to sleep. Anyhow he said, "Why don't we stop and spend the night and get an early start in the morning?" I said, "That suites me." So he rents one motel room, had a cot in the back of his car, got the cot out, set it up in the room and let the boy from Keltys sleep on the cot and he and I slept on the bed. It was pretty cool, it was in the fall, next morning when we got up he took a shower. Wasn't any hot water, he said, "You boys got to take a shower." He said kind of nervous, "Oh, you might as well, we've got to pay for it anyhow." We didn't take a shower though because it was too cold. That was another instance; of course, he was having to pay for that. We went on to

Austin; I think we went over there on a Thursday night. I worked Friday; we worked way up into the night every night, Saturday and Sunday. This taxman's office was across the street from the Driscoll Hotel, you know where it is. Well, you know, back in those days that was the best hotel in Austin. I think the room was three or four dollars a night. I stayed there because it was real handy. Well, we got all this, we made these ten years back return and then drew up about a four or five page affidavit for Mr. Kenley to sign explaining why he had not made these returns. Came back and a few days I made out my expense account, had the hotel bill over there. He didn't say anything to me but he told Mildred, the secretary, said, "He knew I was going to have to pay for that and he could have stayed in a cheaper hotel." He just hated to spend money over there at all. Then another time, part of this land down in Cotulla they were leasing. Of course, they had about forty thousand acres they were running cattle on, but they only owned about fourteen and they leased the other from a syndicate out of Minneapolis, Minnesota and he was paying 15¢ an acre a year for it. And somebody had offered them 25¢. It nearly scared him to death because he thought he was going to lose all this land and he had all these cattle down there, and wouldn't have a place to run them. But anyhow, he called them and said, "He sure would like to talk to them about it." They said, "Well, a couple of fellows were coming through Dallas on a certain date and if he wanted to meet them up there and discuss it they would be happy to." So he said all right. He called me up and told me, said he wanted me to drive him to Dallas; he wanted to meet these fellows over there. So I said all right. I picked him up and we drove up there. When we got there we went to the Baker Hotel and he asked the night clerk what the cheapest room they had. He said, "Well, I guess the cheapest room was one of these sample rooms." Where the salesman display their goods. Said, how much is that. Said \$5.00 a night. He moaned a little bit and said, "Well, if that's the cheapest I guess we'll have to." Told me guess we better stay in a kind of decent hotel in case these fellows wanted to come over and see him. I said okay. Anyhow, we went up there and it had one of these beds you pull down from the wall. So just had the one bed, you know. We went to bed and the next morning when I woke up he was lying over there on the floor. I said, "What's the matter, Mr. Kenley, did I kick you?" "No, he said, I couldn't sleep and I always get down on the floor and I get so tired I have to sleep." Well, that's a pretty good reason. He forgot to bring a suit up there. It was during the summer time. He said, "You know, I might better get me a suit to go meet those fellow." He was going to meet them at the depot. Got to make a good impression. I said, "Yes, I guess you should, Mr. Kenley." So he goes down to one of the stores and bought him a Palm Beach suit, it was still in the box. He brought it back up to the hotel and he put that suit on, you can imagine what it looked like, it looked like he had slept in it all night, how wrinkled it was. He said, "You want to go with me to meet those fellows?" I looked at him and I said, "Mr. Kenley, I'd like to look around town, if you don't mind." I wouldn't have walked down the street with him in that suit. Anyhow, he meets those guys down at the depot and I guess they felt sorry for him the way he was dressed and the way he talked. They let him keep the land. Of course, he had to pay the 25¢, he had to match it. But if it hadn't been for that he would have lost it and he would have been in trouble then. I never will forget how he looked in the Palm Beach suit. You were speaking about Gresham, and sandwiches, when we were making an exchange of lands with Angelina County Lumber Company, we were down here in Polk County and we had a big crew of us down there. They had a

crew and we had a crew, there were about fifteen of us down there one day. He went down there with us, he and one of the representatives from Angelina and explained what they wanted done. Nobody carried a lunch because we didn't know what we were going to do. Anyhow, we told him we would have to go back in and eat lunch. "Oh, no, no, you go ahead and start to work," said "I'll go get something for you to eat." He didn't want us wasting any time, so we went ahead to work. He was gone a little while and he came back. He brought one pound of thin sliced ham, boiled ham and one loaf of bread, there were fifteen of us. We had half a slice of ham and one slice of bread, that's all we had for lunch. I guess we were lucky to get that if you knew him. He used to get a lot of fellows around town, especially these truck drivers to drive him down to his ranch in Cotulla and they would help him for two or three days and drive him back home and maybe he would stop somewhere at a farmhouse and buy two or three chickens and he would give them a chicken for their work.

ML: For driving to Cotulla and for their work?

KN: Yes.

ML: What a wheeler-dealer. Well, what was his actual title for the company?

KN: He was manager of the land and timber division.

ML: And under what arrangement with the company – did he run his cattle on their land?

KN: Well, you see, he had charge of them and they didn't care, they just let them run, as long as he looked after the lands they let him have them free of charge. They didn't charge him anything up until Arthur, Jr. came down here. Then he eventually - Mr. Kenley was running cattle at Boggy Slough after Hall and then gave it up. Of course, he wasn't paying anything out there. So Arthur decided he was going to have to pay so he started paying something for it then eventually Arthur, he just didn't want the cattle out there. He thought they were hurting the timber so he made them move them all out of there after two or three years. Of course, he used those lands for years and years and he had some good men as partners. They were doing all the work. See, they were just getting half. He was doing most of the negotiating for lands, and all that kind of stuff. Borrowing money through this federal loan association, he would do all that negotiating but they charged the interest to the cattle, the partner paid his part of the interest, too. So Mr. Kenley was getting a pretty free ride, they were doing all the work and he was getting half the profits out of it. But anyhow, that went on for years and up until he retired but he didn't have but one partnership left, I think, at the time he died and that was Mr. Singletary over here at Alto. But the rest of them they got out of it because they finally figured they were doing all the work and he was getting most of the money out of it, so they got out. But –oh, he was quite a character, Mr. Kenley was.

ML: What other kinds of businesses was he involved in, besides the cattle business, or were there any others?

KN: That was just about it, in fact he had very little stock in the company. I guess he had a little bit but he didn't have anything to amount to. That was about all, you know, that was his life. Mrs. Kenley, she used to tell, she wouldn't eat any of the meat he brought home because she said he never would kill a calf that was healthy. If one got run over by a car, he'd have it butchered and bring some of it home. She used to laugh and tell me she wouldn't eat it. That's about all I ever got out of him. He'd bring me a little meat when they killed a calf, bring me a little beef. As far as paying me for keeping those books, I didn't get anything out of it, at all. And I was so happy when his daughter married an accountant, CPA accountant there in Lufkin. Boy, he turned them over to the son-in-law, but the son-in-law got enough of it so he moved up in Delaware to get away from him. Then his son, Ed, tried to wrestle with it for a while, I think, so I don't know who finally wound up with it, but I would work nights and weekends and everything else. Even had to make his tax returns and I was always scared to death because what he would do when it looked like he was going to have to pay too much taxes on one account, he would juggle his inventory on his cattle. I said "Boy, if he ever gets caught I'd be right in the middle of it because I was having to do it for him." Man, that was the worst job I ever had the whole time I was working with him. Eventually he, well, in fact, I think I got on that when I took charge, yes, back in 1948. He more or less stepped down he'd keep coming up to the office every once in a while but, for all practical purposes I was running the department at that time.

ML: Could you talk about what all that involved, running that department?

KN: Well, of course, in those days we had about two hundred, let me see, how many acres – in 1939 the company owned two hundred thirty-nine thousand acres, free lands, that is land and all, and we wanted to find out if actually we had enough land and timber to go on to what they called the "Sustain Yield" program that is to keep growing as much as you are cutting, perpetual. Because we were just cutting to a diameter at that time, say 12" or 14" stump diameter, everything on the tract, if everything was above that diameter it was clear-cut. So we wanted to see if we could do that so we hired a fellow from, we didn't hire him, they furnished him, one from the U.S. Forest Service and one from the Texas Forest Service to come down and oversee our program. We hired the people but they would oversee it. Fellow by the name of Slater with the U.S. Forest Service and a fellow named Kountze with the Texas Forest Service. So we hired four graduate foresters at that time to help us do this work and I did the checking behind them. When we completed a survey and inventoried the property we found that we did have enough timber to go on a sustain yield basis, that is instead of going in there and cutting a diameter, we'd go mark the trees to be cut. So in 1940 this fellow Slater with the U.S. Forest Service and myself, we marked the first tract of timber on company lands to be cut under the new program and from then on, everything that was cut on company lands was marked to be cut. We didn't let the loggers go out and cut those they wanted to like they had been doing in the past. So that program continued until we merged with Southwestern Timber and Eastex Paper Company in 1973. They had a program of doing both, of marking timber and also clear cutting. So after the merger we started doing both on the whole million acres of land over there. I was a little skeptical and so was Mr.

Temple, on going to that clear cutting, and I don't know that he is still sold on it a whole lot and I'm not either. Anyhow, we know you've got to grow the timber, you have to help it out a little bit, we don't know how much. But, anyhow, I was in charge of all the timber and land, over the surveying crews. I wasn't over the logging, I was just over the areas to tell the loggers where they could log. Clyde Thompson was actually the logging superintendent at that time. And Richie Wells was actually woods foreman, and we had charge of all the records and all that kind of stuff. We were using some of these things in the woods, if you don't already have those things or if you're interested in them.

ML: I was going to ask you for that piece of paper. I want to make a copy of it.

KN: You can have this, because there is no point in me giving all that. Let's see what else I have here.

ML: I wanted to ask you about the deer at Boggy Slough, if I might, because when I interviewed Arthur Temple he said that the deer had been pretty well killed out in East Texas and that in Boggy Slough they were concentrated again because they were protected. Do you think that Boggy Slough had a lot to do with the resurgent of the deer population around here?

KN: Yes, have you had anybody talk about Judge Minton? R.E. Minton?

ML: No.

KN: Well, he was the company attorney and way back there in 1916; I believe it was, when they first started trying to make a ranch out of Boggy Slough, they fenced up a little at a time, trying to protect the deer. Of course, they had quite a bit of trouble keeping the outlaws out there but anyhow, that's when they started in 1916 and kept adding a little more land until they got about twenty-five thousand acres all under fence. They had to keep pasture riders out there. In fact, they had a killing out there at one time. One of the care takers killed a man out there. He was an outlaw that was hunting in there all the time. But getting back to the deer. Yes, that's where it all got started. If it hadn't been for Boggy Slough and the protection they were given out there, there probably wouldn't be any deer in this country. Now, they are all over the whole area and they are having to kill out a lot of the doe deer at Boggy Slough because it is over stocked, there is not enough food out there to take care of them. Anyhow, Judge Minton was instrumental in getting that started, he was really for it. He was company attorney at that time, he was living in Groveton. He and one of Mr. Kenley's brothers were law partners in Groveton for quite a while and Mr. Kenley's brother killed a fellow over there and he had to leave Groveton, he moved to Longview and practiced up there by himself and Judge Minton finally moved to Lufkin. Anyhow, he was still the company attorney. In fact, I did a little work for him while I was with the company. I'd go up there at night and do some typing for him. His daughter was his secretary for a good while but she got a job as a court reporter and when she left he didn't have a secretary and no more dictating. I would go up there maybe one afternoon a week and I'd type it up for him at night. But anyhow, he was quite a gentleman, he was one of these from the old school and he was a

real good lawyer. He wasn't a courtroom lawyer but, as far as titles, he was one of the best title men, I guess in the country. When he said a title was all right you knew it was all right. Now he was also a brother-in-law to Mr. Kenley and he had two sons and two daughters. One of the sons was killed in the service and the other son, older son, died and he worked for the Curtis-Wright Aircraft and that left the two daughters. When he and his wife died, Mr. Minton and his wife died, his two daughters got into a fight just like the Kenley boys and I had to try to help settle that. Mr. Minton had left some mineral rights over in Trinity County and they asked me if I would get those evaluated for them which I did. But kind of the same situation, one of the daughters lived in Shreveport and married a doctor; the other married a pharmacist and lived in Houston. The one in Shreveport had a guest house in the back yard and when Mr. and Mrs. Minton got to where they couldn't take care of themselves she moved them up there and put them in the guesthouse. Well, she kept them for about three years, I guess, or four, before they died. Well, in his will of course, he left share and share alike and this one in Shreveport said "Oh, no, I looked after them for three years; I'm going to get a bigger share of this." The other one in Houston said "Oh, no, you're not, the will says so." They got into a fight, a law suit and they didn't speak for years and both of them seemed to like me. Every time they would come through they would stop and visit with us. So oh, I guess ten years later they both came by one day at the office to see me. They could see how I wondered what they were doing together and they said "Oh, don't worry, we have kissed and made up and everything has worked out just fine." I think one of them agreed to go ahead and give her – she wanted \$30,000 and I think they split the difference and gave her that. That was another one, he was a lawyer and he thought he had his will fixed exactly like he wanted it. Well, I'm sure he did but he never dreamed they were going to get into this, just like Mr. Kenley's sons. Anyhow, that's two situations where the kids fought over what was left.

ML: Gosh, that makes you think about your own will.

KN: Oh, yes, I have re-drafted two or three times to make sure that didn't happen. Anyhow, we had – I'm just rambling here. Have you had anything on Lee, Jim Lee? He was an auditor, I don't know where he came from but this was back in the, let's see, I guess in the early '50s. In remembering dates, I just can't remember them. But Mr. Arthur Temple, Sr. called me one day and said, "I'm sending an auditor down to Diboll to do a little work down there. He doesn't have a car and he can't drive and would you mind driving him around a little bit wherever he needs to go," said "You can use Henry Temple's car" a company car. I said "Yes, I'll be glad to Mr. Temple." Anyhow, Mr. Lee was a great big old red faced Irishman and he stayed over at the library, what we called the library, he stayed over at the library, one of those rooms upstairs. We had this little old restaurant and he would eat his meals up there with us. And every morning he would come up there. Oh, he perspired worse than anybody I ever saw and he kept a handkerchief around his neck. Every morning, when the tomatoes were ripe, that was what he would want to start with, a great big platter of sliced tomatoes, that's about the only thing I can remember him eating but he was a big eater. He liked Michelob beer, draft beer, well, you couldn't buy it anywhere up here, the closest place was Houston. So he would tell me, "I have a little business in Houston, will you drive me down there?" I

said “Yes, I guess so.” So we would wait and go to Houston around three or four in the afternoon. I’d get Mr. Temple’s car, he would just tell him he had some work to do. He would go straight to Kelley’s restaurant right across in front of the Rice Hotel. I don’t know if you remember it being there. They had an oyster bar and they sold Michelob beer on tap. We’d go there and he sat there on that stool, I don’t know where he would put it all, he’d really drink that beer. Then when we were coming back home, of course, it was always at night.

ML: Good thing you were driving.

KN: I was driving. He’d say, he always called me “Young Fellow”. He’d say “Young Fellow?” “Yes, Mr. Lee?” “You might better stop.” “Why?” “I’m going to have to water Mr. Temple’s wheels.” One other time, he would leave a note on my desk if I wasn’t there. He’d say, “Young fellow, come by my room.” “I have a warrant for your arrest.” I’d go by there; I knew what he wanted after the first time. They sold liquor at these drugstores and the taxi stand in Lufkin. You would pay a dime and get a prescription for liquor and they would sell you, well, they wouldn’t sell you but a pint, no a quart, you’d could get two pints and he would want me to go in there and get a prescription and buy him some and then he’d go in there and get some where he would have enough to last. He would always get Cream of Kentucky Bourbon Whiskey. We came back to his room and he would get a big old pitcher of ice water and he would pour out a glass and I would take one, I’d have a little drink with him. Of course, I knew I couldn’t keep up with him. Anyhow, he would always sit on the bed; I’d be over in a chair. After about three or four drinks he would just sit there and talk, you know. He’d say “Young fellow, you know what the governor of North Carolina said to the governor of South Carolina?” I’d say, “No, Mr. Lee.” “A hell of a long time between drinks, let’s have one.” We’d sit there and he would finally lie back on the bed and go to sleep and I’d get up and go home. About once a month that’s what I would have to do for him. And his office, which was right next to mine, upstairs over there, his desk was like this and this was a corner over on the side and the wastebasket was over there. One of these old-timey pen and ink deals; he’d dip his pen in the ink and flip it over there to get the excess ink out before he would write. He had the whole wall splattered with ink. He never did hit the waste basket.

ML: Well, was he getting the job done?

KN: Yes, yes, he was. Actually what he was sent for was to check on some of the employees and finally he succeeded, one of them, he caught him where he bought a bunch of land in his name and used company money and brought some of the timber up here to Diboll and the rest of it he sold to different ones down there and he kept the land. I think Mr. Temple had suspicioned something like that, that’s why he sent Mr. Lee down here. He accomplished what he came down here for, he got that one. But he was one more character, I’ll tell you. I never will forget him. Eventually, when he got his job done, his wife was an invalid, and they moved up in Tennessee somewhere and he died in Tennessee, I think. But he was on up in years when he was down here.

ML: Can I ask you something about the community garden?

KN: Yes, I remember the community gardens.

ML: What kind of setup was that? We were talking about them last night and Marie and George couldn't remember whether each person or each family got their produce out of the garden or if it went into a communal manner to the cannery.

KN: No, each one was assigned a little plot and he was at liberty to grow whatever he wanted to on there. I don't – I never have heard of them doing that, naturally some of them would have better gardens than others would and there were quite a few took advantage of it over there and, of course, they had the cannery and they did a lot of canning here, too. We didn't have a garden over there; we had a garden at home, at our house when I was growing up. Yes, I remember the gardens and the old cannery, too. There were quite a few of them used it, the garden down there.

ML: It sounded like a real good idea to me. Who was in charge of that garden?

KN: I want to say that Pop Jordan was, Lewis Jordan, has anyone told you about him?

ML: No, I heard the name Hendrick mentioned in connection with the garden.

KN: Joe Bob Hendrick? Well, of course, now he looked after it some, too, but I imagine old Lewis Jordan I know he was real active in it at that time. They named the little old baseball field over there in the park, you might have noticed it, they call it the "Lewis "Pop" Jordan Ball Field". It was named after him. He was a big gardener over there and he lived to a ripe old age and he was very active right up until he died. He always had a real good garden and he was all around town, everywhere you looked you would see Pop Jordan down there. I know you have heard a lot about Dred Devereaux.

ML: I have but I would like to hear some more.

KN: Of course, he was really the character of the town. Did you ever hear the story about him reading the newspaper up at the old hotel? The Antler's Hotel?

ML: No, I haven't heard that story.

KN: Well, you have heard about the Antler's Hotel? One day he was sitting on a bench up there in front of the hotel, he liked his little nips once in a while and he was reading the newspaper and it was upside down. Somebody came by said, "Hey, Mr. Dred, if you turn that newspaper up the other way you could read it better." He said, "God damn," said "Any SOB can red it the other way." I've been to the picture show when he would be in there and maybe a Tarzan picture would be on and old Tarzan would get in a tight and it would look like he was going to get hurt and he would yell out "Watch out, Tarzan, look out, they're gonna get you." He would disturb the whole picture show; he was one of those kind. He thought he was the only one in there. He'd drive down the road, he

was always slinging his hands, you know like that, and he would be going from one side of the road to the other because he never did notice the road, he would just point out things if he had somebody in there with him, slinging his arms like that. I know they told you about the one they had the worker on the roof who went to sleep up there?

ML: No, I haven't heard that one.

KN: What it was, they were working on the old, not the kilns, but where they stored the sawdust over there, the fuel house. They were working on the roof, I don't remember who it was on top but they had a pulley and a rope down and every once in a while they'd hoop something on the ground and the man on top was supposed to pull it up and it got to where it was maybe 15 or 20 minutes before the fellow on top would have to do anything. He got drowsy and went to sleep up there. So they were hollering at him, pulling on the rope, ready for him to pull up what they had on the rope, and finally somebody up there woke him up and Dred heard about it. He called all his men "Souls" all the time. Said "Gather round, souls," made them all get in a circle down on the ground, pulled their hats off and looked up and said "Old Lord, let me live until 5 o'clock where I can fire that SOB on top."

ML: Oh, that's wonderful.

KN: George Davis used to tell Doug that was him. You know, Doug worked for Dred a long time. Doug denied it, I think. He was always talking to himself, Mr. Dred, and if he built anything he was construction superintendent here in town and he would always use some railroad iron. When he built something it was there to stay. One morning about 4 o'clock, I was living where I am now; there was a branch out in my backyard. I don't know what he was doing out there; he always got up real early. I could hear somebody out in my yard talking. I looked out the window and it was him, he was talking to himself, looking at that branch. He was trying to figure out how to

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END OF INTERVIEW