

Bridge Street: Before the Tornado

Excerpts from [*Oral Memoirs of Lonnie Belle Hodges*](#).
(click on title for the full text of the interview transcripts)

From the mid 1920s through the Waco tornado in 1953, Lonnie Belle Hodges observed Bridge Street from her position as an employee of the Knights and Daughters of Tabor and the *Waco Messenger*.

Interviewed by Vivienne Malone-Mayes on August 30, 1990, in Waco, Texas

Hodges: Before the tornado in 1953, Bridge Street was a very popular business street for Negroes, for their business. It extended from the city hall, which stood in the middle of the Square, to the Brazos river.

Malone-Mayes: Go right on. I'm happy to hear you tell us that.

Hodges: The Mecca Drug Store was on the corner of Second and Bridge Street, owned and operated by Dr. E. E. Clemons, who was a certified pharmacist. Besides prescription medication, you could also get over-the-counter drugs. A regular soda fountain, beauty supplies, also. He employed three or four persons, and had regular delivery service. The second floor of the Mecca Drug Store was offices upstairs, and they were maintained by Drs. Russell, Gordon, Jaques, Sorrelle, and Dr. Adams. . . . The next building consisted of an insurance, the Continental Casualty Company, with S. A. Randle as manager. With him were six or seven agents, and a secretary. Dr. J. W. Fridia had an office in one part of the upstairs. He was an ear, eye, and throat specialist. The next building was a grill, operated by Negroes, a very nice place for sandwiches, salad, and fountain drinks. Then Farmer's Improvement Bank with the honorable R. L. Smith as president. He was also the second Negro to serve as a representative at the capitol in Austin for the State of Texas. The next building was the Smith Printing Company, with A. T. Smith as a manager for some time, and later taken over by L. J. Rhone, who owned it until the tornado. . . .

Malone-Mayes: . . . In fact, most of these events you are reciting now took place, if they were valid, in the 1920s.

Hodges: Yes. From then on to 1953.

Malone-Mayes: Uh-huh. Some of the thirties.

Hodges: See, some of the doctors died or left here and other doctors came in to take their places.

Malone-Mayes: And some of them took those same offices.

Hodges: Yes. Yes, the same offices. . . . The Gayety Theatre was next door to the printing office. That brought worthwhile movies to Waco for the Negro population.

Malone-Mayes: Pardon me a moment. Now, was the name of the theater Gayety, or was the name of the hotel Gayety?

Hodges: Both of them had the same name.

Malone-Mayes: Now, this is in 1920?

Hodges: Yes.

Malone-Mayes: When does the theater change names to Gem?

Hodges: Gem wasn't there. Gem was on the other side of the Square.

Malone-Mayes: I always thought that Gem was on the other side. But many people have told me that the Gem began on Bridge Street, under the Gayety Hotel.

Hodges: Well, that was the Gayety Theatre, and the Gayety Hotel was upstairs. I guess they changed management and renamed it the Gem. I thought the Gem was on the Square. Third and Square.

Malone-Mayes: That's the only place I remember, but then I've been told by several that the first theater on Bridge Street was called Gem. I don't know.

Hodges: Well, I don't know. (laughing) That's all right, what I've always heard.

Malone-Mayes: This is my first time knowing it was called the Gayety Theatre. Do you remember who owned the Gayety Hotel and Theatre?

Hodges: No, I do not. It was owned by Negroes.

Malone-Mayes: You're pretty sure it was owned by Negroes?

Hodges: Yes.

Malone-Mayes: And operated by Negroes?

Hodges: No. They had a white operator. She just brought those pictures—those films in, but it was owned and run by Negroes. And there were two buildings on Bridge Street that were owned by Negro men. Miss Eudora Phillips's father. He owned two buildings there on Bridge. And remained with the family until the tornado.

Malone-Mayes: Um-hm.

Hodges: The next was a furniture store, owned and operated by Mr. and Mrs. Wilson. They carried a line of modern furniture along with antiques. They had lovely antique furniture that they sold.

Malone-Mayes: They were black also?

Hodges: Yes, Negroes—everybody I’m talking about is Negroes.

Malone-Mayes: Okay.

Hodges: The beauty salon was the next door, which was a first-class beauty parlor with several operators. Mrs. Gussie Gill was the owner. And on the corner of First and Bridge was the feed and grain store. Now, that was owned by whites. On the right hand side of Bridge Street going, was the last barbershop owned and operated by Joe Simmons. . . .

Malone-Mayes: Okay.

Hodges: The next was an undertaking establishment, first owned by Lawrence Estelle, and later by W. S. Willis. A first-class grocery store owned and operated by a Mr. Ellis was next. This grocery store was a very thriving business, a meeting place for all of the county agents of the county, and it seemed that the whole Harrison community traded there. The next was a taxi cab station for Negroes who drove taxis. It was operated by Negroes. Blaine Wilkins operated the Brown Derby, in the next building, selling hamburgers and cold drinks. And I have told you about this Mr. A. M. Williamson, who was a long-time citizen of Waco, lived on North Eighteenth Street and Waco Drive, owned two of the large buildings on Bridge Street.

Malone-Mayes: Do you cross the street? And weren’t you going back up toward the city hall?

Hodges: Yes. Going toward the city hall, yes.

Malone-Mayes: You went down from Bridge—

Hodges: Down from the city hall.

Malone-Mayes: —to this feed store.

Hodges: To the first feed store and then—

Malone-Mayes: And then across the street.

Hodges: Yes.

Malone-Mayes: And Simmons Barber Shop was across from the feed store.

Hodges: Yes.

Malone-Mayes: And then you came back up the street toward city hall.

Hodges: Yes. That's right.

Malone-Mayes: Have you completed? I mean, did that finish the block?

Hodges: Yes. It finished that block.

Malone-Mayes: What was on the corner across from Mecca Drug?

Hodges: That was a, oh, some kind of hot dog stand or something like that. I don't know who owned it.

Malone-Mayes: Um-hm.

Hodges: It was not owned by Negroes. It faced the Square. It did not face Bridge Street. It faced the Square.

Malone-Mayes: I see.

Hodges: On the side is where you had—catch the East Waco streetcar. Streetcar coming to East Waco, right there at that corner.

Malone-Mayes: Was Boykins Funeral Home on the Square at that time?

Hodges: Boykins didn't own it. Mr. Dennis owned the funeral home. Estelle sold out to Dennis.

Malone-Mayes: Okay.

Hodges: Boykins worked for Mr. Dennis. And then when they moved to Webster Street, it became Dennis & Boykins.

Malone-Mayes: I see. I see. And then, but Boykins and Dennis worked together at the undertaking business on Bridge Street during the twenties and thirties.

Hodges: Yes. But Mr. Dennis owned the shop, owned the undertaking company. Boykins was working for him.

Malone-Mayes: Oh, I see.

Hodges: He was a young man then, right after the smallpox epidemic. And Boykins had the smallpox very bad, and he was confined quite awhile. He and my brother started with Dennis when they were on Franklin Street between First and Second with another

undertaking company when they were boys going to school. And then, after Boykins got out of the hospital, they went to work for Boykins for Dennis. And then Dennis sold, I mean, gave up that business on Bridge Street and bought a larger building on Webster Street. And it was named Dennis & Boykins.

Malone-Mayes: I see. Wonderful. Let's get back to what you did and what the life was on Bridge Street during this period. How far back do you remember Bridge Street? Can you remember how far? How long? Even when you were a little girl. Maybe we should talk more about you. Were you born in Waco?

Hodges: Born and reared in Waco.

Malone-Mayes: You were born and reared.

Hodges: Just about five blocks from Baylor.

Malone-Mayes: Do you happen to remember the address?

Hodges: Yes, I do: 122 Jones Street. . . .

Malone-Mayes: But tell us about the life on Bridge Street when you were there. And how long—first tell me when you went—do you remember what year you began to work on Bridge Street?

Hodges: I really worked on the corner of Third and the Square for Dr. H. L. Smith as a secretary. There were four of us that worked there. He was the grand secretary of a Negro lodge, Knights and Daughters of Tabor. And we had to come to Bridge Street to catch the streetcar to come home. But now, I worked on Bridge Street on Thursday afternoons for the paper, when we folded the paper to mail it out.

Malone-Mayes: Um-hm.

Hodges: And then on Easter Sunday every year in the afternoon, people would go park there at the drugstore. And we called it the Easter Parade. The people would come by in all their fine clothes and all. And to the drugstore and get a drink or something like that, and laugh and talk because we had nowhere else to go. It was really a very nice street at that time.

Malone-Mayes: Now, this is in the twenties, but I understand Bridge Street got a little bad reputation, being kind of dangerous.

Hodges: In the thirties, yes. In the thirties.

Malone-Mayes: In the thirties it became a little rough.

Hodges: Yes. You couldn't do that then.

Malone-Mayes: No, I see.

Hodges: You'd go through this way. Real fast.

Malone-Mayes: I know. It seems as if there was a great—and most people kept their children and everybody off of Bridge during the thirties.

Hodges: Yes. Um-hm.

Malone-Mayes: But you're saying during the twenties it was very acceptable to be on Bridge Street.

Hodges: Yes, it was. And the early thirties, too.

Malone-Mayes: And the early thirties, and then it changed. Do you know why it changed character?

Hodges: Well, I really don't know exactly how. But one thing I knew was that they opened up so many joints there.

Malone-Mayes: Yes.

Hodges: And there were a lot of folks that liked to drink and cavort and go around. And they made it unsafe for you to go there, to spend as much time as you used to spend there. Now, I started working for Dr. Smith in 1924, and I worked until '34. And in those years, why, Bridge Street was fairly well.

Malone-Mayes: Now, on Saturdays even in the twenties, I imagine, what was it like on Bridge Street?

Hodges: Well, I don't know about Saturdays because I didn't go up there Saturdays.

Malone-Mayes: You weren't there on Saturdays.

Hodges: No.

Malone-Mayes: I see. You were there during the week.

Hodges: During the weeks.

Malone-Mayes: I knew that they said most of the country people came to town.

Hodges: Yes. Harrison was there on Saturdays at Mr. Ellis's Grocery, Mecca Drug Store. That was a meeting place. That's where I met all those folks that came from Harrison. Nell, a friend of mine, Nell Watkins worked there. And they'd come in to buy groceries and pay

American Woodman dues. He was also the secretary of the American Woodman. And members paid their Woodman dues to him.

Malone-Mayes: Uh-huh. Do you remember the Farmer's Improvement Bank?

Hodges: Yes, sure I do. We were right next to it.

Malone-Mayes: I know. You said you were right there next to it. Do you have any idea what was the attitude of the community toward the Farmer's Improvement Bank?

Hodges: Oh, it was a good attitude. Lots of people liked it until it went down. And Mr. Smith also started the Farmer's Improvement addition for Negroes off of First Street, right off the railroad tracks. People bought land and built nice houses there. And it was later bought out for Baylor or something like that. I don't know, I just really don't know. But I knew Professor Smith and his wife and the children, they were members of my church. He was also the second Negro—I think I told you that—was in the Senate in Austin.

Malone-Mayes: Yes, I knew. The state representative.

Hodges: To represent Texas. . . .

Malone-Mayes: . . . But back to Bridge Street and our topic. I think that's what we should do is first: summarize the years that you knew Bridge Street. I mean, just like you knew Bridge Street. When you were a child, you weren't particular on down there on Bridge Street at all. Right?

Hodges: No. No. I wasn't on Bridge Street then, but I did have to pass through Bridge Street.

Malone-Mayes: To go to East Waco.

Hodges: To come to East Waco. My great-grandmother had a brother that lived on the corner of Renick and Old Dallas Road. And as children we walked across that bridge with her going to see her brother.

Malone-Mayes: Oh, yes.

Hodges: But no, we didn't stop on Bridge Street for anything.

Malone-Mayes: Just walked through.

Hodges: We came up First Street to the bridge.

Malone-Mayes: Oh, yes. And you walked across the bridge.

Hodges: Walked across the bridge and went on to Renick Street.

Malone-Mayes: Were you ever frightened walking across the bridge?

Hodges: At first I was, but I got used to it. It was fun to me. We were little children. (laughing) I was about two-and-a-half years older than my brother, but he'd hold to my great-grandmother's hand all the time. But I wouldn't. I was so fast I'd just walk on.

Malone-Mayes: Because that bridge would swing.

Hodges: Fascinating. Yes, it would swing. It was fascinating.

Malone-Mayes: And I'm sure you weren't on it when the wind was too high, were you?

Hodges: No, no, no.

Malone-Mayes: (laughing) Still, you could be walking and a good breeze could be coming. And that bridge would take off. It really would, it really would. But back to Bridge Street. What would you say was the most outstanding business on Bridge Street? By that I mean, it seems from what I've gathered that each business was more or less disjointed from the other. They didn't participate in any—did they participate? For example, Lawyer Evans tried to do some political work.

Hodges: Oh, I forgot about him being on Bridge Street.

Malone-Mayes: Right. What about voting at that time?

Hodges: He was in one of those offices.

Malone-Mayes: Right.

Hodges: Judge Evans.

Malone-Mayes: Judge Evans. He seemed to have been trying to get some type of political activity started among blacks. And his office was on Bridge Street.

Hodges: Yes, it was on Bridge Street.

Malone-Mayes: And how successful was he in getting the businessmen of Bridge Street to really support any type of political movement?

Hodges: Well, for a while they worked—well, they had two organizations. I can't remember the names of the organizations. But they—I think he was the cause of them getting the chance to vote here in Waco, the Negroes, because Negroes used to didn't vote here in Waco.

Malone-Mayes: They didn't vote even in federal elections?

Hodges: No, they didn't vote in anything. . . . He organized some kind of business project first with the businessmen first. He tried to get them. And then he went from church to church and talked with the members of the different churches and asked them to pay poll tax when the time came, so they would be eligible for voting because they could not vote at that time.

Malone-Mayes: They could not vote because they had not paid the poll tax?

Hodges: No, they didn't require them to pay poll tax at that time.

Malone-Mayes: Well, my point is that when they went to pay poll tax, did they accept it?

Hodges: Yes. No, no. Yes, afterwards. After Judge Evans started this movement.

Malone-Mayes: I see. But had anyone tried to pay poll tax before he started that move?

Hodges: I don't think they had. I don't think they had, but they had tried to go to some city meetings. But they were not allowed there.

Malone-Mayes: City council meetings.

Hodges: And if they did go there they had to sit in the back or they didn't have any voice. The judge did a good job, I think, in trying to organize the Negroes to open their eyes to see what was going on, because they didn't know. He did his job I think.

Malone-Mayes: Always, you know, people can always remember the bad things. He had a fight with someone then. Do you remember hearing about that?

Hodges: Somebody, somebody?

Malone-Mayes: He had a fight with—

Hodges: He didn't have a fight; a man jumped on him.

Malone-Mayes: Oh, really?

Hodges: Yes. Jumped on him.

Malone-Mayes: I read that in the Conner correspondence. I don't remember the circumstances around it.

Hodges: You know they always magnify little things like that with Negroes, when you're outstanding. They're going to get something like that on you.

Malone-Mayes: Was this a white man?

Hodges: I don't remember. I think it was a Negro boy. I think it was. But anyway, he was on that case for something. And this man thought that he should do one thing. And he told him and he couldn't do it. It wasn't right; he couldn't do that. And he slapped him with something. I don't know, you know, all about it. In fact, I had forgotten about that issue.

Malone-Mayes: I see that you're a sweet person like that. You'd forget that. (laughing)

Hodges: But now he was recognized at the courthouse. He pleaded cases there all the time.

Malone-Mayes: He pleaded cases and did—

Hodges: Yes he did, was recognized as a lawyer.

Malone-Mayes: I knew he was a lawyer. Now, I'm wondering was he able to actually do cases before the judges in the courthouse?

Hodges: Yes. He did. He would present cases before the judge.

Malone-Mayes: Right.

Hodges: Yes. He was.

Malone-Mayes: And he seemed not to be financially impoverished. But I don't think he was as successful as, say, the physicians and dentists. Do you? Financially, I mean.

Hodges: Well, you know, there wasn't much money then, at that time, but he received his share. That was in the twenties, and Negroes were the only ones who would use him as a lawyer. And they didn't have much money.

Malone-Mayes: I can understand.

Hodges: People, our people, were working for two and half, and three dollars, but not over five dollars a week.

Malone-Mayes: I know. I know.

Hodges: And you can't do anything on that.

Malone-Mayes: Not even in 1917.

Hodges: No. If people hadn't raised gardens and had chickens and hogs, they couldn't have made it.

Malone-Mayes: I know. I know. Back to your involvement with that lodge. You and two or three other ladies worked there.

Hodges: Yes. Freddie Webster, Wilhemena Hamilton, and Nellie K. Watkins.

Malone-Mayes: Oh, yes.

Hodges: Freddie was the head secretary. I was the next and Leola Purnell, Leola Purnell was the third. And Nell and Wilhemena Hamilton wrote receipts.

Malone-Mayes: Hm. But you were not on Bridge. You were on Second Street.

Hodges: No. Third and the Square.

Malone-Mayes: Third and the Square.

Hodges: Third and the Square. Up above Pete's Hamburger Stand.

Malone-Mayes: I've heard Pete's Hamburger Stand. And you were on the second floor?

Hodges: Yes. Second floor.

Malone-Mayes: I see. Now, as you—I don't want to leave Bridge Street, but I do want to go a little bit on Second Street, right? Because it seems that there were more white businesses on Second, like barbershops, office buildings.

Hodges: On the north side of the Square. Now, on the Square on the Second, it's Second Street side. You had a tailor shop there, owned by Negroes. Mr. Hines ran a café there. And somebody else, and this Chinaman. Chinaman Restaurant. Sold drinks. You've heard of that. It was a mess.

Malone-Mayes: Yes.

Hodges: All that was considered the Square all the way around.

Malone-Mayes: Oh, yes. Was Clifton-Simpson Furniture Store on the Square?

Hodges: Clifton-Simpson was on the north side of the Square.

Malone-Mayes: Yes.

Hodges: Now, formerly that was a livery stable where they shod all the—white people had these fine horses. They'd carry them there and leave them. They'd keep them there and they'd keep them clean. And shoes shod, and rub them, and make them shiny and all like that. Because they didn't have places at home to keep them. And I had an uncle that worked there once. And then they sold out, closed or something. Then Clifton-Simpson bought it, and that was the finest furniture store that we had in Waco.

Malone-Mayes: Yes.

Hodges: And R. T. Dennis was the next.

Malone-Mayes: Yes, I remember. As you go around the Square, there are many names that come up that have descendents in Waco, even to this day. Like, you do remember when the Klarases had a restaurant?

Hodges: Who?

Malone-Mayes: Nick Klaras.

Hodges: Yeah, Klaras. Yeah, sure. (laughing)

Malone-Mayes: Uh-huh. I know that Nick's came from the Square. And the Purdells do not have a grocery, I mean a drugstore, now. But it seems as if they had—

Hodges: They did have one. But I don't recall where it was.

Malone-Mayes: Right. And Pete's Hamburger. What about the fish market, was on the Square. There was a fish market. All of these were white establishments.

Hodges: White establishments. Yes.

Malone-Mayes: And then of course—

Hodges: One girl had a tailor shop there—

Malone-Mayes: Now, that we're not interested in.

Hodges: —on the Square.

Malone-Mayes: Kuykendalls. I've heard that name before. He also had a tailor shop on Bridge Street, a second-hand clothes store or something.

Hodges: Second-hand clothes store, yes.

Malone-Mayes: A second-hand clothes store.

Hodges: But he moved to the Square.

Malone-Mayes: Oh, he moved?

Hodges: The south side. The south side of the Square.

Malone-Mayes: Well, you've told me more about his business. Was he near you in any way? Kuykendall?

Hodges: He was three doors down from Pete's Hamburger Stand.

Malone-Mayes: I mean when he was on Bridge Street. Do you remember him on Bridge Street?

Hodges: He was across the street, I think, when—at that time. That's been quite awhile ago. He was close to a undertaker establishment, I think, on Bridge Street.

Malone-Mayes: The reason I ask is because none of his descendents seem to know anything about his business. And they said that he more or less got this education from the Jews or what have you.

Hodges: He did. He did. He was just like that with the Jews. With Nate Chodorow, friend of Nate Chodorow.

Malone-Mayes: Oh, definitely.

Hodges: He and Nate Chodorow were very good friends.

Malone-Mayes: Yes.

Hodges: And he bought clothing from Nate Chodorow to sell at his place.

Malone-Mayes: I see. And seems as if they were kind of a little, warm bond between the Negroes and Jews at that time.

Hodges: It was. It was.

Malone-Mayes: It seems if the Jews, even though they exploited blacks many times, in their rented houses. They helped them many times, to do business.

Hodges: Especially with Negroes, more than the white people did.

Malone-Mayes: Oh, I'm sure. Even by having the rent houses, they were concerned—they at least were involved in the black community.

Hodges: Yes. That's right they were.

Malone-Mayes: . . . Do you think of any other ideas about Bridge Street life? It seems as if your relationship was from Monday through Friday, with Bridge Street.

Hodges: Yes, it was.

Malone-Mayes: And so you were not there on Saturday.

Hodges: On Saturdays, no.

Malone-Mayes: When the country people came?

Hodges: No, I'd have to come and see—Watkins worked for Dr. Smith. And we worked on Saturdays. We'd come down there to catch the streetcar to come to East Waco. Sometimes we'd go to Mr. Ellis's store and talk with Nell awhile before she started working with us. And then, that's the only contact I had.

Malone-Mayes: But you did. But even all around the Square, the country people were there?

Hodges: Yes, they were.

Malone-Mayes: So they were just all over every place including Bridge Street?

Hodges: Yes.

Malone-Mayes: I have heard that business seemed to improve. And I suppose that's when many of them brought their dues in to pay, on Saturday.

Hodges: Yes. They did. To the Woodmans, the American Woodmans. That's what Mr. Ellis was, secretary of the American Woodmans.

Malone-Mayes: Right.

Hodges: And this grocery store.

Malone-Mayes: Yes.

Hodges: And he delivered groceries, too, in a little wagon and a horse.

Malone-Mayes: He would deliver groceries?

Hodges: He would deliver groceries, you know, around the city.

Malone-Mayes: I wish to observe that again, that there was a lot of delivering in those days.

Hodges: Yes.

Malone-Mayes: Like the Mecca Drug Store delivered.

Hodges: Yes.

Malone-Mayes: Now, you're telling me that a grocery store delivered groceries.

Hodges: Yes. Yes.

Malone-Mayes: And I guess they didn't deliver cleaning or anything like that.

Hodges: No. No.

Malone-Mayes: You had to go pick up your cleaning.

Hodges: But it seems as if it was really a very active time—

Malone-Mayes: Very active time.

Malone-Mayes: —for blacks in business.

Hodges: Oh, yes.

Malone-Mayes: Do you have any record of just maybe hearsay or gossip? But how did blacks become so entrenched in Bridge Street? I'm sure at the beginning of the city it had to have been whites. In other words, whites had to have built those buildings.

Hodges: Yes. All, except two.

Malone-Mayes: You get what I'm saying?

Hodges: Now, I guess Mr. Williamson built his own building. But he owned two buildings there, I know.

Malone-Mayes: Who did?

Hodges: Eudora Phillips's father, Mr. Williamson. . . . I say, I guess he built them. He owned two, I know. But I don't know whether he built them or not. But I'm sure, you know, Negroes didn't have any money to do that. . . . And so, some of them sold, I mean, bought the business and then sub-rented. . . .

Malone-Mayes: Well, I'm just wondering what the Square—the Square at one time—I mean, Bridge Street at one time had to be white.

Hodges: I guess it was.

Malone-Mayes: It had to be. And I am curious as, if we could go back or if you could remember hearing anything about the days when there were more white businesses on Bridge. And the blacks more or less moved in, or is it that you think that the whites moved uptown, as they say?

Hodges: They moved uptown. That's about what happened. . . . But I don't know anything right above Bridge Street.

Malone-Mayes: Up Austin Avenue.

Hodges: But I imagine that they moved away, and then the Negroes rented those buildings. But now Mr. Williamson, he bought those two buildings way back there. I don't know what year, but I remember hearing that, oh, for a long, long time. Eudora used to talk about it, especially after the tornado. They were influenced by it. But I don't know how Bridge Street was started. I never heard that.

Malone-Mayes: I just thought maybe someone older than you may have told you something about Bridge Street.

Hodges: I don't know anything about the history of Bridge Street. I mean, that was way back there. I was born in 1898. If Bridge Street was there then, I'm sure it was because it was there when I was little. . . .

Malone-Mayes: . . . Bridge Street lost its good reputation in the thirties.

Hodges: Now, that's when they lost their reputation. The soldiers ruined Bridge Street. Maybe because they felt because they were in the army they could do like they wanted to do, go anywhere they wanted to go, and do it like they—they just made the Gayety Hotel finally, turned into a meeting place. And that ruined the reputation of Bridge Street.

Malone-Mayes: I see. So you give World War II as credit for Bridge Street losing its good name and becoming more or less a street people were afraid to go on Bridge Street.

Hodges: Yes.

Malone-Mayes: And in fact, many families did not allow their children on Bridge Street.

Hodges: No. No, I didn't go on Bridge Street.

Malone-Mayes: Or any of their relatives to even be on Bridge Street. Now, after the tornado, though they tried to rebuild Bridge Street, they never could do it.

Hodges: They couldn't do it, couldn't rebuild it. I imagine it was a matter of money though; that's what I think. It was a matter of money.

Malone-Mayes: But it seems if the tornado did a lot of damage.

Hodges: Whoever owned those buildings wouldn't, you know, wouldn't replace them. And the people that were renting them, those that were renting them, they didn't have money to do it. And they just scattered everywhere. Business places, they scattered all over here in East Waco. Mr. Rhone's printing office moved to East Waco.

Malone-Mayes: Moved to Clifton Street, right? Mecca Drug stayed.

Hodges: Yes. Mecca Drug stayed.

Malone-Mayes: And who else? That's not all.

Hodges: That's not all.

Malone-Mayes: When did the Gayety Hotel close? I remember seeing it as a child. I always thought of it as a dump, you know.

Hodges: Um-hm.

Malone-Mayes: Until I discovered my father had lived there. (both laugh)

Hodges: Well, it was nice. It was nice to start with. A nice place.

Malone-Mayes: Uh-huh.

Hodges: But they ruined it. . . .

Malone-Mayes: It's so—it's a rarity to find anyone down there that's from Waco.

Hodges: It is. From Waco, that's true.

Malone-Mayes: Who was born in Waco. And you are a rare person because I—of a person, at your age who was born in Waco. And you can remember Waco as it's gone through all these changes. And it's gone through so many changes.

Hodges: Lots of changes.

Malone-Mayes: So many changes.

Hodges: Yes. I think Waco's better, but still it isn't up to par yet. . . .