

LAURA EVANS  
TAPE #5

000'

F: Laura, you represent an era that's past.

L: Very much so.

F: California had its pioneers and -- early days in '49, New Orleans 'n, this is the last frontier, here.

L: Not the last.

F: You did your job well and if you had to do it over again, you'd do it exactly the same way.

L: Yes, but I'd be a little more economical. I wouldn't be drinkin' digitalis now. Oh, but what's the use, money don't buy everything. I'd rather do a charitable act any day. But when they come to me to Salida and say, Boy Scouts, polio (?), red cross -- (I say) I don't know ya, I'm a decent woman housekeeper.

F: You don't have to give 'em anything now. (that you're not a madam)

L: Before, I had to.

F: That's part of the game.

L: Katie, bar the door. Now, although I would love to. The Boy Scouts. I was just tickled to death to take one, buy him a whole outfit, and, the little kids with the bands (dens?) the little hats, oh, I love to do that work. But they got me so damn mean now, that I don't care.

F: (laughter)

L: There was no necessity for this, Fred. (shutting her down) How have they improved it? There is Mary right next door. They never closed her. Ran just the same. But she's such a chippie she can't get anybody with her.

F: How long you been smokin' the Bull Durham & the Duke's Mister (??)

L: Well, that other, I thought I'd change, kept burnin' my throat, though. I don't know, there's somethin' about this. It's got a little flavor to it.

F: How long have you been rolling your own cigarettes?

L: Of and on, all my -- ever since I smoked. Just off and on.

F: Fifty years?

L: Yeah. Fifty-four. Here in Salida.

021'

L: Who you gonna campaign for?

F: Which office?

L: I don't know.

F: Well, I don't know who's gonna be the candidate yet. Campaigned for Thornton for governor.

L: When d'they have another election down there?

F: This year.

L: Oh, do ya? What d'ya elect? Mayor?

F: President is up this time

L: Oh, the hell with that bastard. (Truman)  
(They talk about Truman a bit)

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L: I see that somebody stole that cobra there, and they won't tell the police what they've done with it. Did they find it?

F: I don't think so.

L: Better look up a tree. That's where they live. They don't live on the ground, they live suspended in trees. You know, you take those anacondas down South, there, the ones the niggers are deathly afraid of. And, you don't see 'em. They're suspended in the trees and they just fall right down on ya. They get a little calf, they can hypnotize it. They get it close, and then they squeeze it, eat it like a jelly. Oh I've seen 'em down home.

(They talk a little more about the snake, then Fed asks if she'll be coming to Denver soon)

039'

L: No, Fred. I'm too weak to even walk out the front door. I'm afraid to trust myself on the pavement. This (shot? ) nearly got me, I'll tell you that. But after awhile when the weather gets different. But I miss the car so. And if I did get another one, what would I do with it? No, I've nobody to look after anything.

F: What about Jo-Jo, he around?

L: Oh, he's a hardworkin' little devil now. Oh, yess, he's quite a ladies' man around here.

(She talks about where he works)

046'

F: What kind of a funeral did Frank have?

L: Frank Who?

F: Gimlett.

L: Lovely. Didn't have any military or anything. Just quietly put away.

F: Wanted to come (etc)

L: Oh, it doesn't -- they hardly noticed it. Gimlett wasn't thought so much of here. He was mortally despised by the working class. The railroaders hated him. Now that's the truth. 'Cause he was for the corporations.

(They discuss him a bit)

L: Well, he had a lot of friends out of Salida. He wasn't liked so well here. Pretty determined old devil.

F: Want to hear how this sounds? (She hears it) That;s all there is to it.

L: That's enough. Got a voice like a man, haven't I?

057'

L: Whenever he'd walk here in the room (Gimlett) the railroaders would get up and walk out. They just despised him so.

(They talk ~~about~~ about a ranch he owned or visited)

F: There's a box of crystalized dynamite up there under his bed. Somebody goes to move that it'll blow 'em to kingdom come

L: They can't get it out?

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F: Well, I wouldn't do it. It's been there 30 years.

L: Go on.

F: Yup. I'd be afraid to touch it.

L: Well, there isn't anything up there but two beds fulla ants.

F: He had some gold you know.

(They argue some about how much and what it is worth)

L: No, ho, no. He had a twenty, ten, a five and a two-and-a-half. Now mind ya. Then he had those garters, 'n they had five dollar gold pieces in them.

(chit chat) He has a pair of gold garter buckles of mine. They're antiques, they're .. that size. And I sent his son word, When you open up his box, I'd like to have my garter buckles back.

You see, what he wanted to do -- he was gonna put the five in them and I said, No you're not. You're not goin' to destory them atall. But he was so reluctant and hated to part with those.

Maybe he sold 'em, I don't mind.

F: If you get those back, Laura, I'd like to have 'em.

L: They're gold garter buckles, where you put the garters in and pull 'em and clamp 'em down.

076'

(F: Well, we don't want to tire you out, Laura.

L: You're not tirin' me out. I'm tickled to death you're here.

I'll 'd be lookin' out the front window. (F. chuckles) There ain't a mother's son in the house .. Yeah. .. Two more trains to go ththrough.

F: Railroad men still stay here?

L: Oh, yes. God bless their old hearts. See the other night they had the train here in the yard to turn it around.

(Long discussion about Abbie Costello and his wife and someone they want to bring thru to meet Laura in a few weeks: Mrs. Carr)

L: You bet your life. I'll be tickled to death to see her. Tell her I'm a decent woman housekeeper. (wicked. laughter)

T'ain't my fault -- I'll tell the world.

Well, I'm lucky at that. Everything I do is successful. Of course, there isn't the money in it, but then money don't buy everything.

You know that. And just look at the wonderful men I have here.

But I went from January til April the 24th before they'd look in this neighborhood. I told 'em, I said, I'm gonna tell you somethin' before I forget to: I'm not going to insist, they can come when they want to. Then those that were so high-tone -- I wouldn't give 'em a room. Don't blame me do ya? Lucille says, (hi squeaky voice) 'Mother, how you goin' ta live?' I said, You're not gonna starve. You're gonna starve, go on back to Salt Lake.

(They talk about taking pictures) Fred has her autograph one, says Lil Powers autographed hers, and that he is going to give the photos to the State Historical Society one day.

L: Oh, really? My father was president of the Southern State Historical Society.

F: Quite awhile back, wasn't it?

L: Ooo-oh!

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L: Honest to god, you know, in Mobile, Alabama, where I was born -- He was a Missourian, from St. Louis. I wish to god, that I'd ... you know he was head of the Ku Klux, and there was just seven left out of the regiment, that used to come every Sunday for dinner. You'd get upstairs to the second story front room, you know, and to see those wierd pictures, where they had 'em taken by a campfire (?!! -- burning, maybe) You see? Aw, he was a terror, oo-oh.

No wonder I ran away from home. Seventy-two thousand!!

F: That's what Gimlett said.

L: How did Gimlett ever get that?

F: I don't know.

L: Well, he got me in bad with Lucille on the start, and I just up and told him...

He says, You must remember, your mother is in ill health.

I wasn't. I was just so confounded lazy, that I had no place to go, you see. Alright.

(He says) Now you have her put this in trust, and find out how she's fixed, and all this, that and the other.

What business was it of his or what was it of hers? If I didn't tell him what I thought!

I says, Don't put damn foolishness in that crazy woman's head, because I'm not gonna make no confidante of her. Might as well tell you, it's none of her business. I'm payin' her her salary.

All she does is look at the bed and then run back there and play the piano. Oh, she got so highpowered. HE was the one that was putting it into her head. I said, You'd better look after yourself. Dr. Smith was givin' him shots anyway, but he'd come down here, cold day, shirt open -- walk all the way from here. I'd offer to pay taxis for him, (I'd say) Gimlett, it's too cold for ya. (He'd say) No, no.

You know where he lives, don't ya? Walk over t'the post office, up there, you know -- No, he lives out here on uhh... D,E,F,G,..H.

F: West third and H I think

L: Yeah. I'd say, Let me hire a taxi for you for Christ's sake. (He'd say) No, no, I'll walk. But he didn't last very long. I never wvwn knew he was sick til a lady friend called me up and told me he died.

(They talk about Gimlett's son and where he is these days. Fred & Laura talk about Lil and her house a bit)

L: I don't see how she stays down there by herself. Wouldn't you go crazy?

F: Tried to get her to come up and see you today.

L: Oh, she's so aftaid of that house.

F: Afraid they'll break in.

L: Wouldn't find anything. There isn't anything in there worth havin'. Maybe they might set it on fire and she'd get her insurance. Pay somebody to do it. (laughter)

F: What time you get up in the morning, Laura.

L: 12 o'clock. I never go to bed til four. I walk this floor all night. Nervous, you know. Alone. When I had the boys

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L: cont'd: (When I had the boys) up here playin Pam every night, then I was tired out when I went to bed. Now what am I? I got leaditis. Ever have that?

F: Just in the spring of the year.

L: Ha-ha. Don't make any difference what season it is -- I got it all four seasons. Well, I think March is goin' out very ladylike, lets hope so.

F: (Says they're gonna leave.)

See you a week from today.

L: Yessir. And I hope to Christ I'll be here. I'll still take the digitalis.

F: You'll be here, Laura, I'm not worried about that.

(New session -- they talk about someone falling asleep in the chair, and about coming through to see her with Mrs. Carr in a week or so)

L: Well, I wish you would.

F: What was the trouble with you this time?

L: Pneumonia. And it struck the old gun (gong, gum?)-beater. This is digitalis I'm taking. Oh, it's lonesome nights, you know. By myself here all night. It's no wonder you get to be a nervous wreck. And I have no company. The Pam players, they take 'em all to Pueblo -- so that it's borin' with me

(They talk about Gimlett's death and how she never knew -- 'Well, of course, I never go out of the house.' Then, Fred asks her about Gimlett's story that she was given a blank check when she left the south, and told that any time she wanted to come back, got sick of the west, to fill it out for what she needed & come home. She says that's a new one on her and suggests he was thinking of her escapade with a little Irishman from Cripple Creek who struck it. She got 1,000 dollars a day off him for six days etc. Story is fully transcribed in REEL # 10 p. 55A. They talk about her cook, Elizabeth -- complains about not being able to run a kitchen in her own rooming house because of the state regulations on restaurants. Chit chat. Fred asks her to tell him about Augusta Tabor)

L: Oh, that old sweetheart. Well, all I knew about her was she run the place up there 'n I used to go up 'n I loved to get behind the bar.

F: You told me once about cutting some meat for her.

L: Oh yeah. My god, Laurry, you've ruined me leg. I said, Where in the hell did I get close to your leg? I cut it this way -- she had it this way, don't you see? I ruined the leg.

Fred tells her he's about to take pictures -- asks her to roll a cigarette, etc. Takes one.

L: You bet you didn't get me that time.