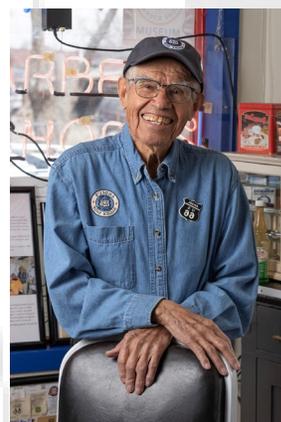




ANGEL DELGADILLO  
1927 -

Honored as 2023 Arizona Historymaker  
Father of Historic U.S. Route 66,  
Businessman



The following is an oral history interview with Arizona Historymaker Angel Delgadillo (**AD**) conducted by Zona Lorig (**ZL**) for Historical League, Inc. and videographed by David Smith on May 26, 2023, at Angel and Vilma Delgadillo's Original Route 66 Gift Shop in Seligman, Arizona

*Original tapes are in the collection of the Arizona Historical Society Museum Library at Papago Park, Tempe, Arizona. Interview edited for clarity.*

**ZL** Angel, first I would like to congratulate you on the honor of being named a 2023 Arizona Historymaker. You recently celebrated your 96<sup>th</sup> birthday and you were born in 1927. Your family came from Mexico and when did your family settle in Seligman?

**AD** They arrived in Seligman in February 1917.

**ZL** And what did they do here?

**AD** Back then in the steam engine days, Santa Fe was to hire 200 people. Their company had eight-hour shifts day and night, day and night. So, my father was already a machinist in Mexico, so he put out the word and he got a laborer's job for the Santa Fe. Then he put out the word he had been a machinist, so next thing you know he's a machinist helper for Santa Fe. So that was his first job in Seligman working for Santa Fe.

**ZL** Seligman was kind of interesting. It was founded in 1886 and quite a few Arizona towns are founded because of mining, silver and copper. But Seligman was different. It was founded because ...

**AD** It was a railroad town. Santa Fe had every building - big buildings, little buildings, to take care of the engines. The engines were taken to the roundhouse. It was a big, big, big building with a turntable where they put the engines. They repaired the engines and the boxcars. Incidentally, my father worked with Santa Fe. My older brothers Juan and Augustine worked for Santa Fe. During the war, I even worked for Santa Fe.

This was a Santa Fe oriented community. Every train, not just one, every train that went east or west stopped here. It was serviced here. They changed crews here, 250 men worked in and out of Seligman from Winslow to Needles. This is where they got off and rested. Here's where they lived; 250 men literally lived here. When they arrived, they couldn't go to work until they had rested four hours. Sometimes, depending on how the traffic was, they rested here for 18- 20 hours at a time.

**ZL** So was it Atchison Topeka and the Santa Fe rail line, and then the Santa Fe branch went south?

**AD** Then they went south of town, yes.

**ZL** How did Seligman get its name?

**AD** Seligman got its name from Jesse Seligman. The Seligman family were quite a few brothers. They came to America one by one from Bavaria, Germany. They became very rich and successful. According to history, Jesse Seligman had to finance the building of the railroad ... in Arizona and heaven knows where else. Seligman was known as Prescott Junction until 1886, I believe. In Seligman it was named Seligman in honor of Jesse Seligman.

**ZL** He never did live here, did he?

**AD** I am not sure.

**ZL** So he did spend some time here?

**AD** He was the man that helped make Seligman.

**ZL** So then the Depression came along in 1929 to 1941 and you were young at the time. But you were 14 by the time the Depression ended. What did your parents do during that time?

**AD** *(laughs)* I grew up with three older brothers, three older sisters, and two younger brothers during the Depression. I didn't go hungry, but my older brothers and sisters did go hungry. They rerouted the Route 66 from in front of my dad's business and our family home. My father was a self-taught barber. He had a pool hall one block south. In 1933, they rerouted it to where it is now, so he went broke. He couldn't feed us anymore, so we were going to join the *Grapes of Wrath* and go to California. My brother Joe told me our family was ready to leave for California. The 1926 Model T Ford had been redone from end to end and it was going to tow a trailer about 18, 20 feet long and X number of feet wide, all eleven of us were going to California. Just a trailer, not a trailer house, just a trailer with maybe boards on the side. But because my brother Juan was playing the trombone which now hangs in the gift shop, and my brother Joe playing the banjo for the Hank Becker Orchestra – Hank Becker worked for Santa Fe. What position he had, I do not know, but he must've had some pull. When he heard that we were leaving Seligman, he was going to lose two musicians from his five-piece band. His wife played the piano, Edmund played the drums, George Evans played the tenor sax, Juan the trombone and Joe with the guitar and the banjo, so when Hank Becker heard he was losing two musicians, during the Depression, he got my brother Juan a laborer's job for Santa Fe. Music kept us in Seligman.

**ZL** So during the Depression, where did they go to play?

**AD** They played out in the ranches and perhaps just locally. When Hank Becker went by the wayside, brother Juan started his own orchestra with brother Joe and town musicians. In 1939, when I was 12 years old, I replaced the last town musician on brother Juan's orchestra. At that moment, it became the Delgadillo Orchestra.

One by one, my older brothers began to replace the town musicians and I replaced the last one. And I want to tell you, for 80 years, for 80 years, I repeat, we played music under the Delgadillo name. The last time that we played music was 2019 under the canopy of the Snow Cap Drive Inn. Brother Joe on the guitar, Juan's youngest son, John Michael, on the drums, me on the tenor sax, with two other musicians. Brother Joe was 99 years old at the time. When he was younger, brother Joe, played his guitar with a 16-piece band during World War II in Germany. He also played the saxophone in the marching band.

**ZL** That's amazing.

**AD** Next to my barbershop, brother Joe had a filling station and a grocery store. And brother Juan had the drive-in Snow Cap. All three of us brothers had business right next to each other.

**ZL** I've read that some places during the Depression, because of the travel to the west, communities prospered. Was that true of Seligman? Doesn't sound like it.

**AD** During the '30s, it quit raining in the midwestern states for five years. History says that a quarter of a million people migrated to California from the midwestern states. We saw that caravan of cars over and over. We saw them. We lived right on 66. We saw all those people that went to California.

Let me get back to the music. When Juan formed his orchestra, we began to play locally. During the war when the service boys were called to go to the Army, we played at the farewell party. Pretty soon we began to play for dances here in Seligman. And before it was over with, we played for public dances from one end of the state to the other.

We quit making music about 1978 because Juan had his business he had to tend to. Brother Joe had his business he had to tend to. I had my business I had to attend to, a barber and a pool hall. By the time we got home it was 3:00 o'clock in the morning and here we had to be ready to go by then. But we kept on making music, donating music for whatever occasions there was here in Seligman. We just liked music, music, music.

**ZL** That's wonderful. What a history. What do you remember most about growing up during the Depression? Besides making music.

**AD** Back then we were all so poor. There was no television. If you had a radio, you were lucky.

**ZL** And where could you hear any music on the radio?

**AD** We had a broken-down radio that, once in a while, it worked some, and about that time it wouldn't work anymore. But anyhow, what I remember the most growing up in Seligman is we had to make our own fun. We played marbles. We played run-chippy-run. We played hide-n-seek. And what I remember so very, very, very well, we made our own kites. In the evening we played pickup sticks. In the evening, you want to realize that the streetlights were not as bright as they are today. And there weren't many streetlights. You want to understand there were very few trees. You want to understand, very few fences. People were so poor. On all around 66, we would be playing, we children would be playing outside and here comes an automobile. We would run all of us to the side of our white house. We would jump up and down as the car came, we would try to stomp out each other's shadows, the cars would take our shadows with them. That was one of our favorite ways of enjoying the evening.

**ZL** How do you think parents today can help their children understand that sometimes life can be very hard, but you can survive and thrive?

**AD** Because of television and all these modern gadgets, so many parents are so busy and it's tough to put food on the table and in some cases, the wife has to work also. But if you love your children so much, you go through the trouble of making sure that they're getting what they need in every respect. *(laughs)*

Now, I remember my sister Antonia. My mother was like a grandmother and my sister Antonia, my oldest sister, did all the cooking. Sister Mary did all the washing of our clothes. Sister Luz did this and did that, whatever. My sister Antonia would roll out homemade tortillas for all eleven of us, three times a day.

**ZL** That took an enormous amount of time, you can't imagine for that large a family.

**ZL** Route 66 was a combination of local, state and national existing roads. And in 1926, the Bureau of Public Roads began its first federal highway system. In 1914, the surface road was designated National Old Trails Highway, but it was re-designated as US Route 66 in 1926. And do you know how many miles that included across eight states?

**AD** Over 2,400 miles from Chicago to Santa Monica. Well, first it just went to Los Angeles, then they extended it to Santa Monica.

**ZL** So the masses traveled on Route 66. The automobile allowed people to travel and see the country. And I've read that Route 66 democratized travel for the American public. It was impossible before that.

**AD** Route 66 I believe was one of the first paved highways, just think almost from coast to coast before the jet, the airplane, before the modern car, it was Route 66 where people just went up and down. And who - who didn't use it? Everybody traveled it. The big bands, the Hollywood actors, who didn't use it? The world used it.

**ZL** Where was the school located in Seligman?

**AD** One and a half blocks west and about two blocks north.

**ZL** You had elementary school and high school?

**AD** From first grade to 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

**ZL** And about how many students were in your graduating class?

**AD** Seis, six.

**ZL** *(laughs)* A whole six?

**AD** Six of us. All six of us graduated in 1947.

**ZL** And then what did you do?

**AD** You want to realize that we were so poor you didn't go out and buy and buy and buy. You made it with your hands. Whether it was digging a ditch or putting a post or repairing something, you learned to use a saw, a hammer, a level. I grew up learning carpentry with my brothers. In school I learned carpentry. I made a lot of things for my home.

**ZL** What did you do after you graduated from high school?

**AD** The fact that my father was a self-taught barber, he went broke in '35.

**ZL** Because people cut their own hair during the Depression.

**AD** Yes, ma'am. So, when I was in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, my dad and mother must have had a conversation, so my mother asked me, "Why don't you try barbering?" And you know what? I took it seriously. We brought my dad's, this chair, home, and I began to cut hair.

**ZL** Right away?

**AD** In the 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

**ZL** Oh, my goodness.

**AD** I was in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade when my mother asked me why don't you try barbering? I became very good with my hands in carpentry, so I would've probably ended up a carpenter having to leave Seligman, perhaps. So, I started cutting hair. My brother-in-law Gaylord Moore, sister Luz's husband, let me shave him. He literally let me shave him. I started using my dad's old pool hall and on July 7, 1947, I started my barber career in barber college in Pasadena, California at 1:00 o'clock.

**ZL** Was there a barber school in Arizona?

**AD** There was a barber school in Arizona, but it was closed.

**ZL** So, you went to California to the American Barber School.

**AD** The American Pacific Barber College. There's my picture and certificate.

**ZL** And how long did that course last?

**AD** One thousand hours.

**ZL** *(laughs)* So how long did that take?

**AD** Five months. I started July 7, 1947, and graduated the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 1947. I had to take the test for an apprentice barber. So, I went to Phoenix, Arizona. It was an oral test, a written test. You had to wash the man's hair, cut his hair, shave him, and give him a massage. I passed the test. Then I had to serve a year and a half apprenticeship. I served a two-year apprenticeship in Williams, Arizona.

Then I had to go back to Phoenix and take the master barber test. Then I could open my own barber shop. Then I opened my dad and mother's old pool hall on May 22, 1950. It was back on the original alignment of Route 66, I was at that location for 22 years, then I moved here 23 years later.

**ZL** Where and when did you meet your wife, Vilma?

**AD** What a story! *(Laughs)* My wife and her sister, Dina, worked at the ORO Ranch for the Green Cattle Company about 40 miles south of town. The bunkhouse cook decided she wanted to come to Seligman to see her granddaughter play a game of basketball. Her granddaughter was going to school somewhere in Prescott or whatever. So, the bunkhouse cook, cooked for the cowboys; my wife cooked for the owners and their guests. So, they came to Seligman, and they found a billfold in front of the courthouse with money in it, \$44. It belonged to a gentleman here in Seligman, who I grew up with. Well, they took the money, and they ended up at the Snow Cap. So, my brother Juan met my wife and her sister. At this time, it was getting close to the school's prom night. I'm already a barber in Seligman. I'm not in high school anymore.

At that time adults went to the school prom too. I wanted to go to the prom. I'm single. So, my brother Juan came to get a haircut. So, we get to talking. "No, I'm not going to the prom, Juan. I've asked all the girls. They've all been asked for." So, he says, "Well I know two good-looking girls down from the ORO Ranch." I says, "Juan, I met that good looking girl." Juan didn't know

it, but the Greens hired people before my wife, and they brought this cook to come to Seligman and I ended up cutting her hair. I met this girl before my wife worked there. She wasn't good looking. *(laughs)* I say, "Juan, don't joke with me. She's not pretty." "I'm talking about the girl that I met." Juan's talking about the girl he met.

**ZL** So you weren't interested.

**AD** I wasn't interested in the girl because I had already met her. The girl before my wife. Juan is talking about the...

**ZL** The girl who became your wife.

**AD** Yes. So, he tried to convince me. I says, "No, Juan, I don't – I don't believe you. I don't believe you." Well, he says, "If you don't believe me," how did he put it? "You don't have to believe me, but there's some good-looking girls that work at the ranch." So, I got interested in it, in knowing that it wasn't the same one. So, through the cowboys that – who I cut their hair – I got the phone number. So, I called Mrs. Green.

**ZL** That's amazing they had a phone out there.

**AD** Oh, wait, listen they – they were rich. It was a cattle company. They were filthy rich. At one time their office was here in Seligman back in the '30s for the Greens, Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Green. Then they moved it to Prescott, Arizona.

**ZL** Oh this is Green Cattle Company?

**AD** Green Cattle Company. They were rich. Their friends were just rich people. So, I finally got interested. I believed Juan, so I called Mrs. Green. "Hello? Hello Mrs. Green. This is Angel." And immediately she called me Angel. It's funny. Mrs. Green, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. She told me "The girls are on vacation. They went home for a few weeks, but I'll let them know that you called when they get back." Sure enough, she called me up, "The girls are back." So, I got all kinds of instructions through my cowboy customers, and I get in the car, and I go and meet the girls. I met Dina first. My wife later told me that she had a boyfriend in Mexico. Dina didn't have a boyfriend, so they both – they were gonna sort of guide me towards Dina. I met Dina first. Then I met my wife, Vilma. She was hiding behind the door with a newspaper in front of her face.

So, I met Dina, then I met my wife, and I immediately liked my wife. Just like that. It was so natural to be with her. And she felt the same. We dated for a year, and we got married in Mexico.

**ZL** Oh, in Mexico.

**AD** First we had to get married here by the Justice of the Peace because in Mexico, if you're not married by the law first, the church won't marry you in Mexico. So, we got married here in April. She quit – her sister quit her job, went to Mexico. A month later, I go to Mexico, and we get married May 11, 1959.

**ZL** And where was that?

**AD** Cananea, Sonora, Mexico.

**ZL** You didn't have to go too far into Mexico.

**AD** No.

**ZL** Just south of Bisbee. Did you ever cut women's hair?

**AD** When the Beatles came to town, they changed the style of haircuts. Men began to leave their hair long. I began to lose business. So, I get in the car, and I go to Phoenix, and I take a course of women's haircuts and long hair. I didn't get very good at it, but I began to get a little bit better, so I did cut a little bit of women's hair, not long, about your length. Not, not long.

**ZL** But short enough, you could.

**AD** Yes.

**ZL** How old were you when you finally quit giving haircuts and shaves?

**AD** I semi-retired July 7, 2022. Twenty years earlier, I retired. No more haircuts. By this time, the news media knows about me because of Route 66. So, the news - the traveling public ended up here. They already knew about me because they saw me on television. I'd been interviewed a thousand times for Route 66. They wanted that man that started the historic Route 66 rebirth. They wanted a haircut or shave. So, for 20 more years, I cut hair and I shaved people from all over the world. Please understand, I became exceptionally good at cutting hair and shaving. Most of 'em wanted a shave because it's something that has been lost from years ago.

On this chair, I would shave 'em, but I always gave the customer more than he paid for, from the

very beginning. I would shave him. Then I would put a partial facial massage and he would conk out. I would have to wake 'em up, we're finished. "Angel, I could lay here all..." "No, you can't. Somebody else." *(laughs)*

**ZL** Somebody else wants in this chair.

**AD** I have such beautiful memories. I have lived a beautiful life.

**ZL** Fred Harvey built hotels throughout Arizona, which encouraged a lot of tourism to this state and Seligman was one of the lucky ones that had one of the six Harvey Hotels. It was called The Havasu, which opened about 1905 and closed in 1954 when the railroad no longer made regular stops in Seligman. You were about 26 when it closed. What do you remember about that hotel?

**AD** Mr. Goins was the last manager. He managed the Harvey House. Back then, why, I do not know, they had a two-story motel in the back of the Harvey House. The men or the workers who worked there lived on the second floor. The ladies that worked there...

**ZL** The Harvey Girls...

**AD** Harvey Girls lived on the first floor. And they had a wood fence all the way around and the story was – the men and the women had to be in their motel by a certain time because they would close the gates to the Harvey House.

**ZL** I didn't know the men had to be...

**AD** This is what I understand. It may be it was just all women. But anyhow, it was a two-story building where the people lived there. That gate was closed, and you had to jump the fence to get in. My sister Luz worked for Fred Harvey. My sister Mary worked for Fred Harvey. Who didn't work for Fred Harvey? It was open day and night. Back then, it was a motel for the tourists. We didn't have motels hardly in Seligman. It was the place.

**ZL** Now your sisters probably lived at home.

**AD** Oh, my sister lived at home. Oh yes, definitely. But so many women came here from Kansas or wherever.

**ZL** It was a wonderful experience for young women.

**AD** Oh my gosh. Yes, ma'am. And the uniforms that they had to wear; lord have mercy. Beautiful

white and black uniforms.

**ZL** I've seen a reenactment in Winslow. They did a great job.

**AD** And you know something else? The troops on the trains would stop here, and they would eat here, some of them. As young boys to be mingling with all these tourists, wow. It was something special. *(laughs)*

**ZL** Well, it opened your world to you.

**AD** We were so poor, and they were so rich. And to mingle with all these *(laughs)*...

**ZL** What impact did closing the hotel have on this economy of Seligman?

**AD** Wow. Between the railroad and the Harvey House, it was a place to work.

**ZL** Yes.

**AD** They hired about every man and woman to work there. When Santa Fe quit using Seligman for a layover, February 5, 1986, the trains just went through and no more did they change crews here. It cost the town of Seligman \$90,000 - what they spent here a year. They had to have a place to sleep. They got haircuts. They played pool. They went to the bar. Some of them lived in the motels. They had a trial run to see if they could bring a train from Winslow to Needles, Needles to Winslow, in 12 hours or less. Rules of the government, not Santa Fe. They had a trial run, so for about two or three months, they tried it and they succeeded. Then they went back to the regular unloading here. But when they finally quit changing crews, when they came back I asked Bartle, one of my customers, "Bartle, you guys will be leaving here one of these days?" "Yes." "Bartle, how much is it going to affect us? How's it going to affect us?" He says, "Angel, when I'm drinking, I spend \$400 at the bar a month." He got a pencil and paper says, "It's gonna cost Seligman \$90,000 a year." That's how much it hurt Seligman. Because I repeat, this was their home.

**ZL** That was a tough period.

**AD** That was in the ten long year period that the world forgot about us. That was blow number two. See, we were bypassed September 22, 1978. Blow number two, believe me.

**ZL** Yes. Well, then later the Santa Fe used the Havasu for offices.

**AD** Right.

**ZL** But the building was so close to the railroad that it was deemed unstable. And so, they demolished it in 2008?

**AD** Santa Fe began to use the Harvey House for offices, but when they quit using Santa Fe, well it was closed. They tried to give it to Seligman Chamber of Commerce. I was President of Seligman Chamber of Commerce way back then. They tried to give it to us; then before it was demolished, they tried to give it to us also. But they told us, you're going to have to destroy so much because the trains will be going by here so fast. How could we the people afford a building like that? So, it was demolished.

**ZL** I'm sure that was a sad day.

**AD** It was a sad day. I mean, history, history, history.

**ZL** Okay, now let's talk about U.S. Route 66. In Arizona it was a major highway from November 11, 1926, to June 26, 1985. That's 59 years and Route 66 was only one year old when you were born. And it was completely decommissioned by the Arizona Department of Tourism in 1984. Interstate 40 opened on September 22, 1978, but Seligman refused to die. So, you knew the Interstate highway was under construction, obviously. What did you think was happening?

**AD** We knew that we were gonna be bypassed someday, but we did not know how devastating it was going to be. You know, I have learned so much about myself, people, and people in charge of jobs whether it's a hospital, whether it's the county, whether it's the state, or whether it's federal. A person in charge, he's in charge. He's the boss. He's tough. He's strong. So, we get bypassed at about 2:30 in the afternoon. History tells us that there was 9,000 automobiles using Route 66 every 24 hours. I'm not exaggerating. The last summer before we were bypassed, you had to stand on the sidewalk and you better look really close, and the first break you get, you run across the street or get run over. It's – it's not a joke!

**ZL** It's a good thing you were younger.

**AD** Yes, ma'am. So yes, I understand we needed the modern freeways. We needed 'em and we need 'em today. I understand that very well. But our government did not provide for us when we were bypassed. I became a very sad, angry person. To begin with, my brother Juan comes to get a haircut one day after we were bypassed and said, "Angel, did you know there isn't one mileage sign between Flagstaff and Ash Fork?" This is 50 miles. There is one mileage sign that says Seligman after you left Ash Fork. Too late. Ash Fork was 21 miles too late. By then the traveling

public have slept, spent their money in Williams and Ash Fork and we were just completely forgotten.

So, Juan comes in to get a haircut, brother Juan. And he tells me, "Angel, there isn't a mileage sign between Flagstaff and Ash Fork that says Seligman on it." You never met Juan. He was a jokester. He liked to joke. I says, "Juan, you can joke with your public like that, but you're my brother, I know you very well." "Angel, there isn't a sign between," he was angry, too, "There isn't a sign." He says, "If you don't believe me, next time you go to Flagstaff, check it out." So not only did we get bypassed, but our government did nothing for we the people of Seligman. To make matters worse, they built a two-bit Mickey Mouse offramp at the east interchange. During the interchange construction, a patrolmen told me about what was happening. I also cut the hair of the patrolmen that worked in Seligman.

Especially when it got dark, a car got off the Interstate and came down. Suddenly the wife and the father, "Hey where are we? We better get back on I-40." They ended up stopping at the worst end of town. Through the Chamber of Commerce, I had a state highway man come to check it out. We picked him up at the airport. He wanted work for Santa Fe, took him out there. You know what he told us? If 50,000 people lived here, we could re-do this. But for Seligman, we can't fix it. Boy, I'm telling you.

So anyhow, we get bypassed September 22, 1978, at 2:30 in the afternoon. The traffic goes to I-40. They take to it like ducks take to water and we were forgotten. But here's what I learned. We humans are creatures of habit. The traveling public got what they wanted, a highway that would take them from point A to point B at 75 miles an hour, or more if they'd get away with it.

Occasionally, traffic came back to Seligman and the men and women that ended up in my pool hall and barber shop, they were all in their 60s, late 60s. They all sounded like a recording. I've heard it for years. You know what they told me? "When I was a little boy," "When I was a little girl, this has got to be the highway that my parents traveled from the midwestern states to California when it quit raining in the midwestern states for five years." I've heard that over and over and over. Finally, I asked myself, what are these people looking for? Why are they getting off I-40? Well, what are you doing here? I asked myself. It finally dawned on me. They were looking for America of yesterday. They were looking for the way it was yesterday. So, I got the idea to get the economy back, all I have to do is ask the state to make Route 66 historic from Seligman to Kingman. Now this is 90 miles.

**ZL** Now where did you get the idea to put historic in front of it?

**AD** My daughter Mirna said we gave it history. We gave it it's rebirth so it's Historic Route 66. It's no longer Route 66. It's historic. Our government decertified it, decommissioned it in 1985. They

removed all the Route 66 signs, and they told the world the end of an era. And you need to understand when our government officials speak, they're the boss. Shut your mouth and just accept it. Well, I didn't accept it.

**ZL** No, you sure didn't.

**AD** I didn't accept it. I had learned that people did not like what they got, they were looking for yesterday. They're looking for ways of yesterday. You go to one of our big hamburger places, you order a hamburger, they give you a number. And when your order's ready, "Number 62." You're not an individual. You're a number. In mom-and-pop businesses, you are an individual. You are treated as an individual. The big conglomerate businessman, get the money, get the money. So that's what the traveling public missed, America of yesterday. And believe me, they're coming from all over the world.

**ZL:** You held your first meeting in February 1987 to suggest Historic Route 66. You hosted that meeting and invited people. But what impresses me is you didn't just host that meeting to talk about this. You actually decided things and got started on a plan that night.

**AD** We called that meeting, and I told my friends. When I was president of Chamber of Commerce – there's so much to it. I did get the Chamber to call the first meeting, February 8, 1987, at the Grand Canyon Caverns. Forty-six people were there at that meeting. In Seligman you could get off I-40 and come here. But between here and Kingman, you couldn't. So, the people between here and Kingman and all the way to the California border, they were hungry. They wanted something done. So immediately, we had the backing of the people. But at this meeting that I called, we formed the Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona. We had elections. We assessed ourselves \$10 and we had people there super dynamic, like Jerry Richard from Kingman, Dave Wesson from Kingman, my brother Juan here, my sister Mary, and a few more and we began to have monthly meetings immediately. But immediately I told 'em how I thought we could get the economy back. My project became a project of the people, by the people, and for the people. Right away, 30, 35, 40, 50 people at these monthly meetings. We had the backing of the people. We had the support of the people. When we wrote a letter to – I'm not gonna use names – Department of Transportation, we were totally ignored. We asked...

**ZL** Now that was from the Association?

**AD** The first letter went from the Chamber of Commerce. The first letter. I'm telling it like it is. I'm not trying to make myself better and I will not make myself worse. I finally got the Chamber to realize it and the first letter went to Department of Transportation, totally ignored.

Hey, I'm in charge. You can't tell me, I'm in charge. That's the way they are. Then the Historic

Route 66 Association, Dave Wesson, wrote the first letter. I signed it as president. Totally ignored. But you know what? Out of the fifteen people, five of us gelled and we were like minded. We all grew up during the Depression when things were not tough, they were double tough. We did not know the word no. We did not know the word, you can't. We did not know ...

**ZL** How to give up.

**AD** How to give up. And in my family, we all had to work together just to eat. So that's the way the other four people were. So that's who they were up against. Five of us and we did not know nothing about giving up.

**ZL** Okay, just for the record, I'd like to tell who the people were officers. This is the Historic Route 66 Association of America. You were president. John Layman of Seligman...

**AD** Vice president.

**ZL** Jerry Richard.

**AD** From Kingman. He was the treasurer.

**ZL** And Dave Wesson.

**AD** He was the secretary.

**ZL** And your brother Juan.

**AD** He was just one of the members.

**ZL** Yes, well I think it's important to note all who were involved in that meeting. So, then you started working with the Department of Transportation in Arizona and they decided to ignore you for a while.

**AD** Yeah, but they thought we would give up and, like I say, we grew up during the Depression. We did not know nothing about giving up. So, we stayed on 'em and stayed on 'em and stayed on They finally recognized us November of 1987.

**ZL** Yes.

**AD** They finally recognized us and made Route 66 historic from Seligman to Kingman.

**ZL** But you know, I can't believe. You started in February, and they paid no attention to you. And by November, they designated it as Historic Route 66. To me that's just incredible, you did it in that amount of time!

**AD** It took us such a long time. You need to understand that after we were bypassed, I talked and talked and talked and talked and I learned no one would listen to me. Here in Seligman at the Chamber of Commerce, I'd talk about it, it won't work. It won't work. I finally told my wife, "Sweetheart, let's go to Kingman and see what these other people think about my idea." I was endorsed by the Grand Canyon Caverns manager. I was endorsed by the Hualapai Indian Reservation. I was endorsed by the Kingman Chamber of Commerce; I have a beautiful letter from the vice president. When I went to Kingman, I said, "I wanna talk to the president." "He's not available." "Well, who's available?" "The vice president is." He endorsed my idea then. Then he sent me a beautiful letter. I was president of the Chamber of Commerce then, so I came back to the next meeting loaded with my cannons. I presented them what? The letter. And finally, that's when the Chamber called the first meeting. But I have learned when you ask people what you think, most of 'em without even thinking say, "It won't work. "

I have learned believe in yourself. That's who will get the job done. I'm so happy to have started Route 66 because I'm helping people, older adults, young boys and girls.

**ZL** After it became Historic Route 66, how soon did visitors start arriving?

**AD** It was right – it seems like right away.

**ZL** Really?

**AD** Bill Leverton... You've heard of Bill Leverton?

**ZL** Oh yes.

**AD** He was the first one to interview me. Bill Leverton told me, "Me and my sidekick were in southern Arizona. We were gonna do an interview. We were having breakfast." Bill Leverton told me, "I opened the newspaper. There was an article about Route 66." He was sharp, Bill Leverton. He called his boss. He says, "I'd like to go to Seligman. There's something very important happening down there. Can we table this project until then?" So, he got permission from his boss to come and interview me. The word got out, what we had done and listen to this. After the state finally recognized us, we were in a hurry to tell the world Route 66 is not dead.

So, we decided to have a program. We called it the Fun Run. This Fun Run started here on Friday, and it ended at the Arizona/California border on Sunday. The Fun Run. On Friday, we fed 600 people at the Seligman school gym. We had to turn people away because there was no more room. The principal was familiar with hosting a banquet and he had to borrow chairs from Ash Fork Public Schools. We fed 600 people. The Delgadillo Orchestra made music. Bobby Troup, who wrote the words to "Get Your Kicks on Route 66" was there. The governor then, Rose Mofford was there; she cut the ribbon to designate Route 66 as a historic highway. At 10:00 o'clock the next morning, we turned the 154 car owners that registered with us loose on Historic Route 66 toward Kingman.

It seems like the world was waiting for Route 66 to be used again. The news media was thick here. I must've been interviewed half a dozen times during the event. My brother Juan also. So, the international news media began to come in. Next thing you know, the traveling public was here from around the world. But why – why did the traveling public give us so much attention? Because the word got out that we had to fight our government in order to give Route 66 its historic recognition. We did the impossible.

We the people, not me. We the people did the impossible, getting Route 66 designated historic from Seligman to Kingman. Then we asked our government, how about the 17 miles east of Seligman? That belongs to Yavapai County. When you add the sections that belong to Yavapai County, we began piling up more and more bigwigs. We succeeded. Then we asked, how about the 50 miles west of Kingman? More pounding. Finally, we convinced the Board of Supervisors of Kingman to bring up the road to state standards. In doing that, Arizona has the longest uninterrupted stretch of Route 66, more than any other state. Arizona has 158 continuous miles.

**ZL** And you're 359 miles in Arizona?

**AD** But 158 miles are just one continuous stretch. And the public loves it. This is why we're alive, doing well, because people want to come to that little town where the people there gave Route 66 its historic rebirth. We did the impossible.

**ZL** I've read that sometimes you have as many as six tour buses in one day.

**AD** Correction - 14, 15 in one day.

**ZL** Oh my goodness.

**AD** Fourteen, fifteen.

**ZL** And they're from all over?

**AD** From all over the world. And there's more coming, more and more.

**ZL** So you have Japan, Canada, the UK...?

**AD** You name it. And they are so grateful. They are so sincere. They're such beautiful people. I want to tell you now, after we gave Route 66 its historic rebirth, I thought that was the ultimate – I thought that was a beautiful – I thought that was the best thing we had ever done. I'm cutting hair and shaving. I'm beginning to see people coming in here and you know where they came from? Not from the USA. They were from international countries.

We have a guest book out here where our visitors could sign, and 90% of the people are from international countries. I'm not complaining. I just learned that we the people in America, we take our country for granted. The international people, some of them have been through several wars. They've lost their homes. They've lost their history. They've lost everything. They read about we the people, what we're doing, so here they come. So, they're coming smiling. They're coming in here shaking my hand. They're embracing me. They're – some women kissing me. They're so grateful. They're so appreciative. I finally realize that in giving Route 66 its historic rebirth, that wasn't the best, it's what has come from it - happy, appreciative people from all over the world. During one of my first 200 interviews, I said, "Route 66 is like an octopus. It has arms." I also said, "In giving Route 66 historic rebirth, we have captured the imagination of the world." I did not know what I said then. I understand it now.

People are so appreciative. Yesterday there were three different groups here, two from Japan. They bring me presents and...

**ZL** What a special life you are living.

**AD** I am the happiest man that ever lived, living or will live. It's you people that keep me this way.

**ZL** Have you learned, and I know some of your family has, in how many different languages can you greet these people?

**AD** When I was cutting hair, doing barber work, I could greet people in six different languages. Just greet them and thank 'em. And you know what? When you do that, "Oh!" They go home and tell their friends and families.

**ZL** *(Laughing)* I'll bet.

**AD** To be – it now is – is beautiful. To be forgotten is sad. And I lived it for ten long years. I know what it is to be forgotten. Just a simple smile to a total stranger. Just a hello. To be recognized is beautiful.

**ZL** So in addition to the buses, you also have motorcycle groups.

**AD** The world in general is just coming to travel Route 66 and the world understands that this little town is where Route 66 got its historic rebirth. This little town.

**ZL** And then you have the bicyclists.

**AD** It's amazing. You know what I want to tell you? Before John Lasseter created his movie, we ...

**ZL** “*Cars*.”

**AD** “*Cars*!” We had nothing but grown people traveling Route 66. Well, let me tell you, he interviewed me for two hours July 12, 2001. After the movie was released, we began to see families with – fathers carrying a baby, pushing a stroller – what are you doing in Seligman with your children? These parents are the little boys and girls that saw *Cars* when they were little. They are married. They have children, so here they come. We have captured the imagination of the people.

**ZL** Yes, you certainly have. You also worked with the Arizona Department of Transportation to preserve, protect and promote Route 66. And you have the classic car show, the Fun Run, which is the first weekend in May. Any other big events like that?

**AD** Let me tell you. When we put on that three-day celebration, it was just going to be for that weekend. We closed our pool hall and barber shop back then. Registration was done in the pool hall for the first five years. Well, that first Fun Run I'm standing out here so happy. Jerry Richard comes running across the street. "Angel, Angel, I've been asked, are you gonna make this an annual event?" I say, "Jerry, the same thing was asked of me. What did you tell them?" He said, "I said yes. What'd you say, Angel?" "I said yes." It became an annual event. We registered 150, three or four years, now we have to set the limit at 900 participants because there's so much interest.

Kingman’s Locomotive Park cannot handle all those people. We had to set a maximum limit. By 10:00 o'clock, when we turn 'em loose on Saturday morning, there are 2,000 people here that attend the event. All the motels are booked in Seligman, and Williams does so very well. The

bars are busy. It's beautiful, beautiful, beautiful.

**ZL** I want to talk about how you keep the road maintained.

**AD** You know what? Do you understand what our leaders understand the most? Money. Our government understands money. Whether it's county, state, federal, it's money. When Seligman died...

**ZL** They didn't care about your roads.

**AD** The Department of Transportation, the government didn't receive any money. It stopped. When we gave it its historic rebirth, they began to see the money again. So, our leaders understand they need to maintain Route 66 to keep the money flowing (*laughs*). I learned years ago, the world revolves around a dollar. Oh brother.

**ZL** You've got winter weather up here and a lot of traffic, so it takes a lot of money to keep those roads in good condition.

**AD** Yes, ma'am. I forget just when, but the county came in and put sidewalks in Seligman. They would put in 50 feet, then dirt, then 50 or 30 feet, then dirt. Why did they come and finish the job after we gave Route 66 its historic rebirth? Money, money, money, money. (*laughs*)

**ZL** Now, I've heard that the Delgadillo family, you own this place, but your brother owns a grocery store next door?

**AD** At one time, my brother Juan had the Snow Cap. My brother Joe had the grocery store, filling station and motel. And I had the pool hall and barber shop. All three of our businesses were next to each other.

**ZL** Half the town.

**AD** My brother Tony was a mechanic. He had a garage. My brother Charles, he pumped cesspools. So, we were all in business.

**ZL** That's amazing.

**AD** But, we were taught to make a living by the sweat of the brows. That's the difference.

- ZL** You won an award or received an award last year, July 18, 2022, from the Governor's Conference on Tourism. They want people to treasure America of yesterday. And you received that award. That was neat. Was there a ceremony for that?
- AD** Oh wow. There was. We had to go to Scottsdale, I think it was five hundred people. And I had to give a speech and...
- ZL** Oh my. And that was really hard for you, I know.
- AD** *(Laughing)*
- ZL** Seligman is 36 miles east of the Hualapai Reservation. What's the relationship between your two communities?
- AD** At one time, they bused most of the children to school here. I used to be the barber for many, many of the families in Peach Springs and back then our pool hall was a place where young boys and girls could come and enjoy themselves and...
- ZL** They go to school here?
- AD** They went to school here, yes. And a few still go to school here. At one time, they brought most of them to Seligman to school here.
- ZL** Where do they attend school now, do you know?
- AD** In Peach Springs. And then I was told that they would bus them to Kingman.
- ZL** Osterman gas station was an ex-Route 66 gas station that's been named an endangered historic site. There was just an article about it in the paper. Do you know anything about that?
- AD** About what?
- ZL** Osterman gas station.
- AD** In Peach Springs? I know the building, yes. They're working hard to restore it. It's costing a lot of money and hopefully they get it restored.
- ZL** It was built by hand with a concrete block kit from Sears Roebuck.

**AD** (*Laughs*) Back then so many buildings were built from rock; built out of rock.

**ZL** Roger Naylor who is Arizona's premier travel writer and columnist for the *Arizona Republic* says, "Route 66 shows the best part of America." He pulled off here because he was hungry, and he was so astounded when he drove into town and there were four tour buses here. But here's a quote from him, "Route 66 saved a bit of innocence, a spirit of adventure preserved a way of life. Angel is the heart and soul of Route 66."

**AD** I have read that (*laughs*).

**ZL** I'm sure you have. (*laughs*)

**ZL** Do you have any advice you'd like to give to today's young people?

**AD** Before I tell you that, I wanna tell you, if I was completely blind, couldn't see, and couldn't hear, I would be just as happy in knowing how our world is today. It's not how I grew up at all. We in America, we have to come to the realization that we live in a beautiful country, that we need to do something in our own family, in our own community, to keep America as we know it. I have learned if you have a problem today and you don't take care of it, the problem will be there tomorrow. In other words, either you pay the price today or you will pay the price tomorrow.

You have to live in a manner today in case you wake up tomorrow, everything will be okay. But so many of us are not living that way and we're not doing our justice for our young children. Little boys and girls with those little phones, they know more about horrible things than I will ever learn with those phones. Parents have got to be more accountable for their actions. When I was cutting hair and barbering, I keyed in. I didn't care whether they were from Germany or America or where – and the parents were so happy, so grateful that I said a few words. It seems like if it comes from a father or mother, it isn't that important. But if it comes from a stranger, it has more power, seems like.

**ZL** So your advice for today's young people is to pay attention to their children.

**AD** Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

**ZL** What do you think about Arizona's future?

**AD** I just – I just hope that we the people will get out and do their share. Whether it's voting or

whether it's looking out for their own children. One person can't do it all. It takes a community. It takes people working together.

**ZL** Well, to celebrate, Route 66 and you will soon both celebrate 100 years.

**AD** I work hard. I walk. I exercise. My wife cooks very healthy food. I want to be here to help celebrate when Route 66 turns 100 years old on November 11, 2026.

**ZL** I think you will be here.

**AD** It will be a big thing.

**ZL** It definitely is.

**AD** You must have the will. Yes, I can do it.

**ZL** You have a lot of energy left. *(laughs)*

**AD** I am blessed.

**ZL** You are.

**AD** I wish more people could be just half as happy as I am. But you know what? I have paid the price as I've come along.

**ZL** Oh yes.

**AD** Day in, day out and not just today. No, day in and day out, you have to pay the price. I repeat, you live today in case you wake up tomorrow. Don't put it off till tomorrow, the problem will still be there tomorrow. So why not take care of it today? Quit your wimping and just do it.

**ZL** Excellent advice. Well thank you very much for a wonderful, wonderful interview.

**AD** My thoughts are that this interview will encourage someone to follow their dreams. It will help someone – maybe not a hundred people at a time, but someone. Then that one person, he spreads out a little bit. And pretty soon it's – it's like an octopus. Life has arms. So, little by little by little, beautiful, beautiful, beautiful.

**ZL** Well thank you.

**AD** Thank you for being here, believe me. I have looked forward to this moment because it's not about me or for me, it's about and for other people.

End of Recording