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Fort Gibson
Fargo Overland Stage
Apaches and Comanches

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Interviewer.
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Interview with W. F. Knight
825 E. First St. Tulsa, Oklahoma.

I can only give you a brief synopsis of my life this evening as I am ninety-six years old, so I have to take it easy. I was born in 1841, on a Mississippi River packet. This packet, a side wheeler, carrying mail and freight, was owned by my father, William Frank Knight, Sr. I was born on the upper Mississippi, about one hundred miles north of Saint Louis. My mother was Henrietta Vincennes Knight. She was of the Vincennes family, founders of Vincennes, Indiana.

I spent my early boyhood and young manhood in Pike County, Missouri. I knew Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) well, also the original Huckleberry Finn. But all of that is a story in itself.

In 1866, at the age of twenty-five, I followed Horace Greeley's advice, "Go West!" - I travelled. I was planning to go to southwest Texas, but travelled as far as Fort Gibson. It was just a picket and a log house camp, half fort and half residence. It was here that I decided to line up with the Fargo Overland Stage in the Red River Division. You see, in 1866 Anrlington, Missouri, in Pulaski County, twelve miles

south west of where Holla, Missouri, is today, was the terminus of the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad (now the Frisco). From there all mail and passengers to San Francisco went by the Fargo Overland Stage. The route in Missouri was from Arlington, to Lebanon, Marshfield, Springfield, Noel, into ^{the} territory to Salina, to a place near where Muskogee is today, called Lepee, to Fort Gibson then across the Red River to Denison, McKinney, VanAlstine, Dallas, Grand Prairie, Fort Worth, Weatherford on through western forts to El Paso, then on to San Francisco. El Paso is as far west as I ever went. My regular route was from Fort Gibson (Illinois River Division) on south to Red River. You understand of course that there were stage stands every twelve or fifteen miles. It would be interesting to trace those old stage stands and later I may help you to do that.

The Fargo used the Old Concord Stage Coach. By the way, there is only one of these left in Oklahoma according to my knowledge. Pawnee Bill (Major Lillie) has it at Pawnee. I believe there are two or three in Colorado. These stage coaches were drawn by from four to six horses. Relays were arranged according to the lay of the land, that is, prairie or hills. The horses used had to be the very best and ready for a dead run if necessary. The driver and two guards sat on the driver's seat or 'boot' we called it. You see the coach was built like a sled-runner, on sort of a rocker held by straps. This not only

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made it more comfortable (slightly swinging), but thus balanced, was lighter on the horses. There were two wide seats inside, arranged vis-a-vis - which would hold six. They were made of leather and canvas. At the front and back were the boots that was the space back of the front and rear seats. In the front boot we carried the mail and valuables, in the rear boot, luggage, mostly carpet bags.

When there was much registered mail and other valuables a place was made to put this in saddle bags, and have the guard detour on horseback and meet the stage at a designated place. This was especially necessary in bandit hideout regions. The saddle bags were arranged to hold packets about eight by eight by fourteen inches. I had a good Arabian horse along with the coach horses so that I was always ready for a detour. We had hold-ups and many exciting experiences. Our worst trouble was not the Indians, but half-breed whites. I had one run-in with a band of Apaches and Comanches - I carry the mark of it on my neck. I rode twenty-six miles with an arrow in my neck.

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I knew the "Old-timers". I met Pawnee Bill at the train in Caldwell, Kansas, when he was only eighteen years old. I knew General Custer and I will tell you some of the inside story to show how unnecessary his death was, just a trick of that dirty rascal, Major Reno. Custer was a tall fellow with long yellow hair, a very peculiar color of yellow. He wore a goatee. The Indians were afraid of him - thinking he was some spirit. Even in death they did not scalp him.

The only other guard of the old Overland Stage living that I know of is Captain June Peake, living at Dallas, the last I knew of him. After 1876 I went in the mercantile business in western Kansas and did not return to Oklahoma City and Tulsa. Although I am ninety-six I am still on my own. I do gold-leaf lettering and sign painting. I live alone. Our family is long lived. I have a sister, Mrs. E. B. Durham, living in Los Angeles, ninety-nine years old. My Aunt, Mrs. A. W. Johnson of Dallas, founded the Allen Woman's Home there. She lived to be one hundred and three years old.