

**Southwesterner In Focus  
FROM LABORER TO BUILDER  
BUT UNCHANGED BY SUCCESS**

By Bob Reyes  
EPT Sundial 6/27/65

Joe C. Yarbrough is a builder.

But not of words.

He answers questions with yes or no and rarely elaborates. He is engagingly direct and his answers are punctuated with a hearty "ha."

Yarbrough, unchanged by wealth and evident comfort, maintains that "I am the same man. I haven't changed."

And he means it.

Yarbrough is one of the most successful home builders in El Paso.

He came to the Pass of the North in 1943 from Tyler, Tex., as an employe of the then Civil Aeronautics Administration.

"I was a laborer," he said.

A year later he changed jobs and started working for Standard Oil of Texas here.

Three years later he built a two-bedroom house on North Loop Drive which still stands, although he no longer can remember the exact address.

The object of constructing the house was to include a beauty shop for his wife, Louise.

But things did not pan out that way.

"A man told me he could sell it and he did,"- Yarbrough said.

The house was sold for about \$6,000 or \$1,000 as he remembers.

"This was the, beginning of, a career which has yielded many dividends, in a variety of endeavors.



**JOE YARBROUGH**

His next venture was on Duran Place in the Lower Valley, followed by a bolder effort in Ramona Addition where he constructed about 18 houses in the \$10,000 to \$12,000 price range. He sold them all-and with little difficulty.

**DRAW RECOGNITION**

Most of his houses, many of which have won widespread recognition in the field of home construction, are especially designed for the middle income family. And they are virtually gobbled up.

However, he: also has constructed service station facilities, and shopping centers, such as Scotsdale, Ranchland and additions to Lakeside Center. He also has built a variety of food stores and in recent years has spread to the construction of apartment houses.

“But mostly we build houses—in all price ranges,” he said.

Constantly on the lookout for a vacant lot, Yarbrough has waged his own urban renewal operation. He constructs a new house on the lot and other residents on the block react by attempting to improve the appearance of their homes.

He has no conception of the number of houses he has constructed, but it is safe to say they number in the thousands.

Last year alone he built 112 and claims that the trend is changing to the \$20,000 and better price range in houses.

“The economy is changing. People are able to buy a better home. The market is strongest in the \$20,000 price range,” he said.

He also, has: built homes in Fabens for—again—the middle income facilities.

Mentioned prominently as candidate for public office at almost every local election, Yarbrough, who is a staunch Democrat and a heavy contributor to the Democratic party and its candidates, insists he will not seek public office.

And he answers simply, “I just don’t want, to.”

He was a delegate to the National Democratic Convention and served as local campaign co-chairman for Sen. Ralph Yarborough.

Although his political activities are not prominently mentioned, Yarbrough’s hand in campaigns on the local, state and national levels are evident in the undercurrent of this party. (He is a liberal).

Born on a farm in Smith County near Tyler, Yarbrough, who lost an index finger in a sugar cane mill, is not a coat-and-tie man and, although he can well afford it, will not ride an airplane if he can help it.

“I ride the train, mostly. I fly only when I have to he said.

#### **RECALLS CRASH**

His unhappy experience with airplanes occurred several years ago when a B26 crashed on the Carlsbad Highway. Yarbrough was one of the first to reach the scene and he still recalls the wreckage and the horror of the crash.

Although he only has a high school education, Yarbrough' is a shrewd businessman. He operates a 100-acre cotton farm which eventually will be another of his housing developments, owns a string of registered quarterhorses (one of his main hobbies including fishing), is in the oil well drilling business, heating and air conditioning, garbage disposal, and has other business enterprises.

He, his wife and four daughters, live in a \$100,000 dream house in Desert Ridge and it is perhaps here that he would rather be since his family ties are strong.

It is interesting to note that one-of his fondest dreams has not come to pass.

“I like rock houses and when I came here I used to drive around looking at them. I always wanted one,” he said.

This he has not achieved.

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