DOUG WARNER
Interview 51a
February 28, 1985
Marie Davis, Interviewer
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ABSTRACT: In this interview with Marie Davis, Angelina County native Douglas Warner reminisces about his life working as a logger for the Temple mills in Diboll. He recalls using mules and oxen to haul the logs, and the changes in logging technology from the 1940's to the 1980's. He also mentions the difficulties he had farming and his experiences with moonshine and stills in the 1940's.

Marie Davis (hereafter MD): Today I am talking with Douglas Warner. His address is P.O. Box 197, Diboll, Texas. Today's date is February 28. My name is Marie Davis. Doug, where were you born?

Douglas Warner (hereafter DW): I was born at Hoshall, Texas. September 24, 1915.

MD: Is that about where the Garden of Memories is now?

DW: Yes. Pappa owned a hundred acres there and I was born there and then we moved from there to Diboll.

MD: What were your parents' names?

DW: Enoch Marvin Warner and Laura Massingill Warner.

MD: How many children were in your family?

DW: There was eleven.

MD: Do you know how many boys and girls?

DW: Six girls and five boys.

MD: Five boys. Okay. How long have your kinfolks been in Angelina County?

DW: Well, some came in 1833….some in 1837.

MD: And the Warners came later?

DW: Yes, the Warners….about 1860.

MD: Okay. What…they were living in San Augustine County. Do you know why they came to this area?

DW: Well, Grandpa Warner died and one of the girls. They were buried at McMahan Chapel and Grandma Warner decided she would leave that place. They didn't have any way to travel then except wagons and she came to Wells, Texas, and put in a boarding house. I don't know just how long she run it. Some four or five years. Then she and a lady by the name of Mrs. Estes…Lee Estes's mother put in a boarding house and went to the camps with it. They started the boarding house at the Diboll logging camps and they stayed several years.

MD: Okay.

DW: Mrs. Estes on Sunday morning at church, she would come up to me and put her arms around me and tell me. Said, "Douglas, you had the sweetest Grandmother Warner that ever lived. She was a wonderful person. We stayed in business together about eight years and never had a cross word." She really thought a lot of her.

MD: Okay. Then what did your father do to make a living?

DW: Well, he worked in the woods as a logger. First he drove oxen's for several yeas and then he got to be woods foreman. Then he decided he wanted to farm and he left there and went to farming and logging. He would plow and work the crop in the morning and then would haul one load of logs in the afternoon to Diboll and that is the way he made his living.

MD: How would he haul the logs with oxen to Diboll or with mules?

DW: Mules…eight wheels…Lindsey Wagon.

MD: Okay. Did you spend much time in the woods with him?

DW: Quite a bit up until he died. I had…I got to help him one time cut one load of logs with a crosscut saw, when I was eleven years old and we hauled them to Diboll.

MD: Did you load them after you cut them? Did you all load them and then haul them?

DW: Cut them and loaded them with one pair of mules. Three logs load. You had big timber then….large trees.

MD: Well, then you have spent a lot of time in the woods all these years haven't you, Doug?

DW: Yes. Twenty-six straight years for Diboll salvaging dead timber…pine timber.
MD: Do you miss the fact that everything is fenced off now and put into….?

DW: Posted pastures…

MD: Yes, pastures.

DW: Yes.

MD: You wish it was like it…do you wish it was like it used to be when you could go in the woods?

DW: It couldn't be. The country is settled up too much.

MD: Yes. When you were a boy, you could just go anywhere.

DW: Anywhere.

MD: And hunt?

DW: No posted signs at all.

MD: Are there any virgin pine left?

DW: Very few. They're in places and they are in rough places. The equipment they've got now a days for logging, they can get any of them, but there is a few that they haven't got yet. But they will some day.

MD: Yes.

DW: Very few virgin pines left.

MD: You have heard a lot of talk and your family has lived in the logging camps when they did have the logging camps. Tell me the ones that you remember hearing about. The names of them and where they were located if you remember.

DW: Well, Lindsey Spring Camp.

MD: And the ones that your parents lived at and you remember hearing them talk about.

DW: The Lindsey Spring Camp was the first camp that Southern Pine owned and it was seven miles east of Diboll on Biloxi Creek and it stayed there some seven years.

MD: Yes.

DW: And there was about three, over three hundred people lived there. Worked in the woods.
MD: Did they have the commissary and everything there?

DW: Yes, they had a commissary, grocery, feed and just about anything you wanted.

MD: Okay. And after Lindsey Springs, do you remember hearing them talk about another one.

DW: Yes, they went to camp #1 at Trinity County at Rayville. That camp stayed there about eight or ten years and then they moved to different places. They next one would be Walkerton, Bluff City, and then on to Fastrill. But they had some small camps around like Buggerville, and then I can't….Camp #2, south of Apple Springs. One of my sisters was born there.

MD: Yes. Okay. How old were you when your father died, Doug?

DW: I was fifteen.

MD: Fifteen years old. What did you do to help your family after he died?

DW: Well, I tried farming two years and seen that I was going to starve to death and the family too. So I decided to go to Diboll and see if I could get a job. I went to Mr. Clyde Thompson and he gave me a job. He and Rhoda Faye Chandler taken the typewriter out two miles east of Diboll where we lived and they made a minor's release and my mother signed it. And they put me to work at the planer mill for twenty-four cents an hour.

MD: What was your job at the planer?

DW: Tying flooring.

MD: Tying flooring. Pine flooring or oak?

DW: Pine flooring at that time.

MD: Okay. How old were you at that time? You were seventeen?

DW: Just past seventeen.

MD: I guess you would have to be eighteen.

DW: Yes…..twenty-one.

MD: Okay. And then after you quit the planer, did you go to work for Mr. Devereaux then?

DW: Yes, I went to work for Mr. Devereaux for three cents more on the hour and work it was!

MD: Tell some of the things that you all did.

DW: Well, there ain't enough time to tell it all.

MD: Well, tell some of it.

DW: He was the grandest old man that ever come to Diboll. One of the grandest. He was a heavy construction man. He was a railroad man. Was really what he was. He could build a railroad bridge. He built a bridge across the Neches River out at Gilbert. Of course, that is the same log road that went to Palestine. He drove that bridge and worked it all over and Titus Mooney made two trips from Palestine to Diboll with logs every day.

MD: Is it still there?

DW: Yes, it is still there.

MD: Still there?

DW: They don't use it any more, but it is there.

MD: What were some of the jobs that you all did in Diboll?

DW: Well, when I started to work for him, he was just finishing up some new kilns there, dry kilns. And then we went to work on the power house, behind the boiler rooms. And that was quite a job. It taken us a little over a year to build that. That was the first real power plant they had in Diboll.

MD: Yes.

DW: He was working thirty-two men. Thirty-two of them and we had quite a job on that power plant. And then we had to build a cooling tower for it. Then we come off the cooling tower. Finished up the power plant and cooling tower and went to working on building the handle factory. That was a big job. Mr. Devereaux, he kept plenty of work.

MD: What was the hardest job that you did for him?

DW: Well, it was all hard. Really hard, because we didn't have any mechanical loaders or anything to pick up 12 x 12 x 24' long with…we had to get it with lug hooks.

MD: Yes.

DW: And shovel work and mixing concrete by hand in a mortar box. That was hard work and then shoving those old wheelbarrows that had bushing in them instead of bearings up an incline. The height of the foundation would be twenty feet high and had to build a long hundred and fifty or two hundred foot runway up to the top and dump the concrete off into the form.

MD: All that was done by hand.

DW: It was all done by hand. If he had had an electric mixer and all the trucks and cranes, and things like…he could have built Diboll in a month. He was a good man to work for. All he wanted you to do was to give him a day's work. He really did work. Everything had to be heavy for him.

MD: Yes. Heavy.

DW: Where a 6 x 6 would do, he would use a 12 x 12.

MD: Huh.

DW: But it paid off in the long run.

MD: But he was your friend until he died.

DW: He was my friend. He didn't think no more of me out on the job than he did of anybody else.

MD: Yes.

DW: I had to work to stay there. A man couldn't fool him. He could be gone two hours. If he left you on the job and he would come back and know if you had worked, or not. He had a keen eye.

MD: Then after you left Mr. Devereaux, what did you start doing?

DW: I went to World War II.

MD: Okay.

DW: And then I came back and went to carpentering around different places.

MD: And when did you start contracting logging?

DW: In about 1947 or 1948.

MD: And you did that until you retired?

DW: Yes. I worked for them salvaging timber for about twenty-six years straight.

MD: Now this was dead timber?

DW: Dead timber. Lightning struck timber. Blowed over timber. Bug eaten timber.

MD: Well, tell about a typical day that you had when you were logging starting off at about what time you got up in the morning and just describe your activities during the day, you and your people that worked for you.

DW: When I was logging, I would get up every morning at 4:30 nearly every morning. Be in the woods at daylight. Harness my mules. I would nearly always have a log cutter, you know. Two flatheads with a crosscut saw and we would cut a load of logs. And I would load them. Load them with what they called a….load them on a chain then, had a rolling chain. One end was hooked to the front bolster and the back end to the back bolster and then I had two skid…poles. Skid poles about nine feet long. Put them up in the channel iron on that bolster. Hook your…had a notch in the top of that skid pole and put the chain in it. Stick…sharpen one end that was on the ground. Sharpened it and drive it in the ground where it wouldn't kick up. Pull your logs in…roll them on the chain and then they had a chain in the middle across the truck you called the…chain that you hooked in the rolling chain. They called it an extra chain. Had a flat hook on it. And hook it in that rolling chain and load the logs on it. And if the log…what they call a swelled end…where…on the stump end of it…butt end of it…if it was large, well, you had to hook back toward the back so that log would go up straight. If you didn't the front end would gain on it and it would miss the bolster. That is the way they logged for many years. Well, from the time they started logging back in the….when the sawmill first come in to being. Well, they logged with oxen, mules and horses. Then about 1940….'45, they went to building loaders out of old trucks with booms. Stiff booms on them and they would load them that way by tongs. You had to have two tong hookers then. It didn't make it too much easier.

MD: Yes.

DW: But then when they went….in the '50s, they went to cutting long logs. Tree length and then you had to have something…laid the mules down. Quit using them and pulled them in by Ford tractors and it was a pretty good size tractor, but then they had to go to skidders. They got big skidders now. They got…different companies make them, but they claim the Caterpillar skidder is the best and they got what they call…two gravels on the back of them. They are hydraulic and you back up and get one log. You open it and close it hydraulically. Get one log, pull up, back up, open that one up and it goes around the log and you take off with two full trees. Pretty good….up to twenty-four……twenty-eight inch trees. A cat skidder now can put…

MD: A long time ago, did they have to cut their trees in to two. Make two logs out of each tree?

DW: Some trees had four 16 foot lengths in them.

MD: Oh, is that right?

DW: Most all of them had three.

MD: And now they can just carry the whole tree?

DW: The whole tree on to the mill and they do the…

MD: Cutting?

DW: Selective cutting of it with the saw at the mill.

MD: Yes. When did they start using chain saws instead of cross-cut saws?

DW: Well, they started about 1944. They got the first saws. When….

MD: Go ahead.

DW: They would have to get used to them, you know. And they weren't very good anyway. Gave them a lot of trouble, but they…most old log flatheads, they would take their cross-cut with them too, in case that saw broke down. They could make a day. But they finally got them to working. They are good saws now. Most anybody can use one of them.

MD: Well, when did you first start using a chain saw?

DW: In '47.

MD: '47. Okay. And what time….? How many loads did you make a day, if it was good weather?

DW: Well, it was only how close it was to the mill. I would make sometimes as high as four…four loads a day as close in to the mill.

MD: What was the fartherest distance that you worked from the mill? Do you remember?

DW: About twenty miles. Yes. I logged through Rayville pasture then on across to 103 North over into the…up to the Iron Bridge Road that goes from Wells to Kennard, through there. That was about as far.

MD: If you were that far off you wouldn't….how many loads could you make if you were that far?

DW: Two. Two. I could make two loads a day. Sometimes back before they taken up the tram that goes from Diboll to Palestine. Well, they left it. They taken it up from Palestine down near 103 and then they left it for about ten years and we could throw a lot. A lot of time we could roll our logs off on the track. The loader man at Diboll. They were still running the loader on the log train picking up the logs. The company would put out a lot of logs at Rayville and 103.

MD: Okay, when you got…after you got them on the truck and got them to Diboll what….how did they measure them?

DW: They had a scale stick and when I was loading my logs…well, nearly everybody else did, too. Load my truck ready for the mill, I would mark on mine the length. We wouldn't cut them shorter than a twelve up to a twenty-four and we would mark the lengths in the middle of the log. On the end of the log. The little end…the lengths of them…like sixteens, twelves, fourteens, sixteens, eighteens, twenties, twenty-twos and that is about as long as I ever hauled….twenty-twos.

MD: Well, then how would they….? Did they have some kind of measuring stick when you got them over here to the mill?

DW: They had…you mean to scale them?

MD: Yes, to tell how many feet you had?

DW: Yes, they had a scale stick and they usually used a straight doyle stick all time and a straight doyle sixteen foot log, fourteen inches in diameter. That was one hundred feet and that is the way….

MD: And you were paid by the number.

DW: By the one thousand.

MD: By the thousand?

DW: Board feet.

MD: Yes, in there...okay. So logging has changed a great deal from long, long time ago, hasn't it?

DW: There is as much difference as daylight and dark. Truck driver, all he has to do is to drive the truck. He will run under that hydraulic loader and I have seen….six minutes that loader would have a load of logs on him and what I mean a load. Something like ninety to a hundred ten thousand pounds. Of course, they scale…they scale different now. They weigh those logs and pay you by the ton.

MD: Oh, is that right? Instead….

DW: Yes. They got scales. They weighed them and scaled them for nearly a year and you take on good land, good soil, well the timber is heavier than it is upon the hills where the rocks, and things, post oak land. The timber that is growing in the creek bottoms and branch bottoms has black bark on it and those logs are heavier. So they had to come up with something on that…scaling and weighing too, to get the right amount to pay the men by the ton.

MD: Did you think it was pretty fair? Or had you rather, if you were logging, would you rather have it measured?

DW: Yes. Tree lengths I had rather have it weighed because lot of these…these logs in this country, they taper fast. I had rather have it weighed. Oh, it is fair enough, I guess.

MD: Yes.

DW: They all stay in business.

MD: But they could have a lot more…a lot more trips now to the…

DW: Yes, nothing to….I have cut logs eighty miles from home. Some of the contractors, some of them would make three loads a day and most of them would make two.

MD: Yes.

DW: They had rather have a hauling job. Logging job sixty miles from home than they had three.

MD: Why?

DW: They pay you less. Because you have really got to get up and roll to make any money on a short job.

MD: Oh, well, that makes sense then, doesn't it? They pay you not only by the board feet or the tonnage, but how far you have to bring them.

DW: That is right. Yes.

MD: Doug, when did you retire from logging? From contracting?

DW: I retired in February, 1968.

MD: Well, have you worked any more in the logging business?

DW: I have cut logs about three years for John Ralph Pouland since I retired from logging.

MD: Okay. Is logging very dangerous?

DW: Logging is dangerous, very dangerous. You have got to be on your toes at all times.

MD: Were you ever hurt?

DW: Yes, I was hurt bad in 1948, December 7th. I got my back broke. A log hit me in the back and crippled me up.

MD: Do you think….? What is the most dangerous part? Loading them or unloading?

DW: Well, the dangerous part, before they got these loaders and skidders was unloading. More danger in unloading.

MD: You didn't know which way they were going to roll?

DW: No, you couldn't tell much about a log and they had small short bumpers then, standards. And they had what they called a toggle chain on them and then two more chains was around the whole load and the toggle chain. They put that chain on there and hook it and let it go slack and then roll logs on them on that chain and it would tighten up to hold your load better. Then you topped your load out with the last log you would put the chain behind the front bolster and one ahead of the back bolster and boom them down with boomers. A lot of people got killed booming them down with a boomer. They wouldn't keep their head out from over the boomer handle. Sometimes it would slip off the cheater pipe and come back up and break your jawbone.

MD: Yes.

DW: Yes. People have done that.

MD: Did you ever lose a load of logs on the way to the mill?

DW: Yes, I lost several of them. I fell in two. My truck loaded with logs fell in two bridges in the creeks.

MD: Oh, is that right? Did you get them out or just leave them there.

DW: I got them out.

MD: Did you?

DW: Yes. Rolled them out with my horses. Dangerous. Dangerous. That taught me something. If I didn't know a bridge was good, I would get down and look under it and examine it from then on…

MD: Because you had to travel over just country roads?

DW: Rough country. Logging. Yes.

MD: Doug, since you have lived in Angelina County so long and you know all the pig trail around…did you…? Was you? During the Depression and during Prohibition that time…back in the '30s was there very much bootlegging around in the country?

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DW: Oh, yes. They had to sell it to each other for a long time and wear badges. I drank a little of it myself. Yes, there was quite a bit of bootlegging going on in the '30s, some on up into the '40s but they finally got rid of all of it. They was some good people that made it to make a living for their families. Good people. And they would work, but you couldn't find work. And so they just made a little whiskey and sold it. I remember one night there was a man woke me up about twelve or one o'clock. The wind was blowing out of the north and it was freezing, raining, freezing rain. And he wanted to know if I had something to pull him out of the mudhole down below my house and I told him I had a pair of mules. I said, "Man, it is too bad to get out there." And he said, "Well, if you will get me out, I will give you ten dollars." And I said, "Yes, sir. It ain't too bad." So I hooked them mules up and went down and pulled him out and before we started pulling him out, he said, "Would you like to have a drink?" And I said, "Yes, I will take a little sip." I was freezing you know. So we got back. He had an old van with some heavy wire on the side and curtains over it. Pulled down…and I got up in that truck and he had about five….fifty-five gallon drums of whiskey and about six "Jimmy-Johns" full and he had five gallon "Jimmy-Johns" full. That was what he drunk out of. He was going to the East Texas oilfields, and that was why he could afford to give me ten dollars to pull him out.

MD: He came down here and got it and took it back up to the East Texas oilfields?

DW: He was boot-legging to the East Texas oilfield. That was when the East Texas boom first come on. Quite a bit of it flowing around.

MD: When you were in the woods, did you run up on any stills?

DW: I run up on a few. I would see the smoke from them. But I never would go up to them.

END OF INTERVIEW