

DON ROBBINS

Interview 060a

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Becky Bailey, Interviewer

Retyped by Courtney Lawrence

ABSTRACT: In this interview with Becky Bailey, Diboll Superintendent Don Robbins discusses his long career in education and the challenges and triumphs involved in leading the Diboll Independent School District. He talks about integration and the changing racial makeup of the city and district, the difficulties in raising money for facilities, and the need for expanded buildings and curriculum.

Becky Bailey (hereafter BB): My name is Becky Bailey and today's date is June 7, 1985. I am interviewing Mr. Don Robbins, who is the school superintendent for Diboll Independent School. Mr. Robbins, would you start out by telling me when you were born and where and lived and that sort of thing?

Don Robbins (hereafter DR): I was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, February 19, 1943. I lived there until I finished high school. I'm sorry I gave you the wrong date, that makes me a youngster. I was born in Indianapolis, Indiana on February 19, 1926. Remained there until I finished high school in June of 1943. In July I enlisted in the Army and spent 34 months with the U. S. Army in the Army Air Corps. I was a student and an instructor, became a radio mechanic and a control tower operator. I was discharged on Mother's Day, 1946, May 12. I spent that summer working and then went off to college at the University of Idaho, spent a semester there and transferred to Hardin College in Wichita Falls, but I finished in 1949 with a bachelor's degree.

BB: This is in Texas? Well, you made the rounds.

DR: In the service we made lots of rounds, we went lots of places and found out that it is a real small world in that we are all mostly nomads at heart. I had served as an instructor in the Air Corps, helped set up the control tower school; my senior year in college I also taught, as well as went to school. Graduated in May of 1949. Worked that summer in Wichita Falls and took my first school job in Quanah, Texas, as a teacher and coach. Two years later I went into school administration at Kirkland as a principal and the following year took my first superintendency in Vera, Texas.

BB: So you have been a superintendent ever since then?

DR: No, I had five years in the superintendency, then went to Venezuela, South American as Director of Education for Gulf Oil Company which is the same as being a superintendent. Came back after two years there and went to work for six years in Midland where I was an elementary and secondary principal and central staff person working as an assistant director of business. In 1965 I took a position with the Texas

Education Agency as consultant and school administration and a year later was named Director of the Division of Administrative services. I held that position for two years then assumed the superintendency at Wilmer-Hutchins in Dallas and surrounding area in 1968. Stayed there three years, moved to Tyler to head up Robert E. Lee High School. After three years there I came to Diboll as superintendent of schools in 1974, and have remained here eleven years.

BB: So, really the only time you taught was the first two years.

DR: First three years actually, I was teacher, coach principal and bus driver the third year out.

BB: And have been in administration ever since?

DR: Made \$3,400.00 that year.

BB: Can you contrast what it was like coming from Tyler, a large district in high school and then coming to Diboll? Was it much of an adjustment for you?

DR: No, because I had been in and out of different size school districts. I started out in a school district similar to Diboll, then went into a smaller district as superintendent/principal and then superintendent, from there to a larger superintendency and then the job in South America and then when I came back I went to Midland, Midland is a large system and working with the agency I worked with school districts all over the state. Then moving to Wilma Hutchins, it was a district of some 6,000 students. Then on to Tyler with about 16,000, but the high school itself was a very difficult job. Of course, Wilmer-Hutchins and it's integration was very difficult because it was predominately black.

BB: This is in Tyler, I mean Dallas, right? In '68?

DR: Yes, we had schools in Dallas, Lancaster, Wilmer-Hutchins. We had about twelve or thirteen schools so it was a very different situation. Then coming to Tyler with assisting in their integration we had two thousand and fifty children, about the same number of kiddos that we have in thirteen grades here in three grades there. A very very outstanding high school, but a job that demanded sixteen hours a day, seven days a week. Probably the toughest job I ever had and it was a lot of human relations as well as all the book work.

BB: You said you assisted in integration; they weren't integrated in '74?

DR: There are still school districts that are not fully integrated, today even after – we are talking – the first law came in '54 and the second one came in '64 and we started integration with most districts in '65. Then in '71 there were still school districts with problems who had not fully integrated.

BB: Seems like I heard not too long ago Lufkin even, aren't they still having problems?

DR: There are still school districts who are having boundary problems. There are some who have been in court ever since the law came in. It's a very difficult thing to pinpoint because each situation is unique and different and they have different problems. We are what is called a unitary school system, one place where they can all go, no problems at all. The first year here there were a few problems but those were ironed out. We put in a very strong disciplinary code and from that applied one set of rules for everybody, uniformly and fairly and it all smoothed out. It has been extremely fine here with our first bi-cultural group and then the coming of the Hispanic, the tri-cultural and we could even be quadra-cultural. We had a few Indians from time to time so we had four races here at the same time. This didn't create any problems in Diboll; it has created problems in other areas, especially with the coming in of the South East Asians. They have been presented with problems ever since the influx. We have bi-lingual education here which has worked but it is primarily those who speak Spanish converting to English. Houston and Dallas have as many as forty or fifty languages, depending upon where they came from and it makes their situation much more difficult. This community has accepted the transition pretty well.

BB: Why do you think that is?

DR: Oh, I think primarily because the industry brought the Hispanics in the first place. You know, when I came here this was primarily a pulpwood-cutting white, sawmill black group of people with the office staff and some of the mill workers and then when they needed workers they reached out and brought in, I believe, 100 families from the Valley and this grew as a result of those being transplanted and, liking it, and we began to see people coming from old Mexico, friends and relatives from the Valley. We now have a great number of Hispanics in our school system, therefore in the school district. Families and all.

BB: Is it roughly about a third each or what?

DR: Well, up to grade five this year we were 40% Hispanic and diminishes to a lesser degree as you get to grade 12; I think there were five that graduated out of 104 in the graduation class this year so it gets less and less but it is getting greater each year. The black ratio remains fairly constant and the growth in Diboll has been primarily the Hispanics.

BB: Hasn't the school peaked and even started going down as far as population?

DR: It seemingly peaked about four years ago and we began to lose in elementary every year but we were increasing in junior high and high school. That is still going on for we are getting less kids in the elementary school and within another year though, you will see some of this drop going into the junior high and in about seven years you will see it going on, however, they claim that wave of the babies, the baby boom, that within three years we will begin to feel the impact of the rise, so you have never been able to chart it

in Diboll, it has the craziest ups and downs that you ever saw. You just have to make a guess and then in September take another look in the middle of September and make the adjustments. It is really hard to project.

BB: What kind of dropout rate do we have here? Do you have anything on that?

DR: We don't have any statistics, no, we don't keep any statistics. We get a lot of dropouts between eighth and ninth grades, the majority of dropouts seem to hit about the sophomore year. Now we have held pretty good the last few years, the junior class this year was the lowest number in several years and they are below 90, graduated 104, the sophomore class ran 135 and the freshman class probably 150. Now they are bringing over 165 this next year, which will move that enrollment up a little. The junior high will probably remain pretty stable to have a high seventh and eighth but a lower fourth grade coming in this time to the fifth. The other grades, we have lost three teachers worth of kids in the last three years, that's the elementary – but we have not taken away any teachers, which means our pupil/teacher ratio dropped. And for that reason, House Bill 72 didn't hurt this district too much because we were already below in kindergarten, below the 22, we were at 19. We were right at 20 in the first grade and we were just a kid or two over in the second grade, so looking at probably no change there, at pretty well meeting the law. Then with bringing in the pre-kindergarten, the four years old, we are looking at probably one additional teacher there.

BB: Let's go back to the first again, when you first came. Can you describe what Diboll was like when you first came, you mentioned some problems with integration?

DR: Diboll was a very pleasant, pretty place, very impressive. The school board was tremendously impressive, all seemingly dedicated people, wanting someone to come in with a professional attitude and put on a good school program. It was difficult, I mean, it wasn't difficult coming in and putting on a good program, because the man who preceded me had done a doggone good job. He had done some building that was needed, he had beefed up the program where it was needed so it wasn't too difficult to follow him. But he told me when he left the curriculum was not his long suit and that perhaps I could get some things in that he wasn't able to come up with and it has proven to be that. We have expanded the curriculum tremendously. But Diboll was, to me, a restful place, one that had a lot of community spirit. I got in right at the beginning, was immediately named Vice President of the Booster Club and got my first taste of Diboll Day and that went on rather quickly after we got here. We got here in July and, of course, we have a little trauma because we were trying to find a place to build a home, we also had a son who was seriously injured in a building that was being demolished up at North Texas State; we had an apartment up in Lufkin with two lovely boys, one in casts up to his neck and in a wheel chair bumping everybody around and, during the summer when it happened Dot and Paul were up at North Texas in an apartment. I was maintaining two apartments and trying to build a home all that summer and then get the school off to a good start. So it was rather challenging, but everybody was great. After eleven years most everybody has been terrific throughout the entire curriculum and the thing I found out was that people in Diboll want quality schools and they were willing to work hard to find the wherewithal to

make the programs go. So, we began immediately recruiting quality people to go along with the people who were here. And there was, indeed, a lot of quality already here. So we saw some turnover the first three or four years but then we have had very little turnover in the last four or five years. When they get here they seem to like it and they work well within the system. Now House Bill 72 and Chapter 75 have placed an increasing load on teachers – it has made it a little more difficult for them to be able to actually do the classroom teaching. So, we have tried over here to relieve it as much as we could and a lot of things that come down never reach the class room because we can junk them aside or handle them ourselves without it interfering but still, it has its problems. The community was great then, it is great now. The difference I have seen in the eleven years, the growth in numbers in the school and the difference in the way the industry works. Where we used to have all the executives living in Diboll and there was a lot of working together. Now most of the executives are out and the corporation has changed twice taking different avenues of ways to make money and I don't believe it is as close knit as it was eleven years ago and in prior years. The corporation and the other corporations that pay taxes in this district always stand ready to assist any time there is a need. We manage to do most of it on our own but anytime we have asked for a little bit of assistance it's certainly been there and they have been terrific as far as the relationship between business, community and schools are concerned.

BB: That was one of the questions I had down, was what kind of ties did the company have? When you first came were there any back and forth say we'd like to see this, you know, the school do this or any of that kind of thing?

DR: No, one of the first things that Mr. Temple said to me when we met was "I have a corporation to run, I don't have time to run the school." I said "I appreciate that, Mr. Temple, because I'll handle the school and I certainly don't have time to mingle with you and your corporation." We had a great relationship.

BB: So it was more just the community feeling of trying to do what was best for the kids?

DR: Whatever is best and we said you tell us what you want, the kind of school you want and we will try to make it even better than that. The school board members I have served have all been dedicated. I can remember two or three who came on with axes to grind but they found out in a hurry that one person out of seven really didn't have a lot of impact and that it was a learning process and that often times things appeared one way when you were on the outside but became very different when you were involved with them. I have had a great relationship with all the school board members we have had through the years and there have been several I think – we counted them up one day and I think there were 25 or 26 different board members in the eleven years I have been here.

BB: Has the complexion of the board changed? As far as what – you know – say this one was concerned in the building program, this one was concerned in curriculum, has three been any change?

DR: No, there is only one board member on now who was here as much as five or six years ago. It has changed as far as people but very similar philosophies. There have been people who were concerned with the buildings that we have, those who were concerned with the activities we have and the curriculum and some that were concerned with the things we purchased, and many times would take out their calculators and work with them and offer ideas. We have pointed out to them that school board members are only officially members when they are in session, other times they are just ordinary people, and that they cannot make decisions other than when that board is in session. If their purpose is to set policy and then to allow the school district to operate under that policy hopefully pleasing them and it not, telling us. So it has worked pretty well. We have been fortunate to have some good leadership, the officers that they themselves have selected [unsure of word] And it has been just a fine situation. It is a good school district.

BB: In thinking about the company, there is one more thing I want to ask. Do you on the high school level, within the curriculum, try to formulate programs that will fit in with the industry here so that kids can...

DR: I went again to see Mr. Temple one time about the end of the first year. I was thinking about what I knew of the corporation and I keep referring to him because it is about 60% or 80% of the tax base when you take a look at everything that is related to them. He and I had a little visit; I had looked the corporation over, looking at the products that they turned out. I got it in my mind that there might be some variety and vocational that we could help that would enable the company to have better trained personnel. Very surprisingly he told me that they didn't need anybody mechanically inclined, that if we could turn out people who could take dictation either by shorthand or by Dictaphone and who could type reasonably fast that these were the kind of people they needed in their corporation. Here I was looking at the people who could work on their machinery, people who could work in their plants. This was not what he had in mind so we went back and put Dictaphones in the business department, up-graded it with typewriters. It took us two or three years to completely rectify the situation and we have two full business teachers and they are both very fine. The kids who come out of their classes usually find something worthwhile to do. I was very surprised because I figured our building trades class would need to be beefed up, that we could turn out carpenters or we could turn out welders down in our vocational AG department but that wasn't it.

BB: This is purely personal, this next one – why do you think the bond issue didn't pass, the one that was going several years ago?

DR: It was a matter of misinformation. People who blatantly told lies about the tax base, about what would happen if the bond issue passed. Many of the older folks turned out to vote and there was a concerted effort to scuttle the bond issue even though it was a sizeable tax increase yet it was not out of reason and most of those people who voted against it were told that their taxes would increase but their taxes were frozen and most of them paid no taxes. The school district gave a large exemption to the over 65 people and it is much easier to say bad things to get people to believe it than it is the good things. The need was there, the need was shown, the need is still there and it would require a

larger tax increase now than it would have then. They could have absorbed it very easily at that time and there would have been no unreasonable taxing the corporations; the businesses would have borne the brunt of the building and most of them were willing.

BB: Didn't you say the company would have 60% to 80% of the tax base?

DR: Right. And Temple Inland, or Temple Industries, is on it's own, about 60% of our tax base and when you bring in the related areas of Sabine Investment, Temple Associates, and some of the other subsidiaries then it becomes a pretty large tax bite.

BB: Could you describe some of the needs we have, as you see them still?

DR: Well, never are so called "temporary buildings" satisfactory and we have close to 30 on our campuses which would be one full campus and then some, probably. That in itself is a need where you have to place these buildings in an area that is already too small for the buildings and their use. We have infringed on playground space. We have added at the elementary, you know, two acres on one side and one acre on the other, to relieve that and the junior high school has no playground at all. Their football field, which is the playground, slopes off to the side, there is no band area, it has a re-locatable building. I prefer to call them relocatable instead of temporary or portables, and they are all quality. For the most part they are good buildings, and they are liveable and they make good classrooms.

BB: Well, speaking of the one I was in, it was noisy.

DR: Yes, and the one you were in was the one that was a Title I building that we got from Crockett and transported it in.

BB: I was speaking of the other one. I was in the reading room in the sixth grade and it was noisy. Now mine, that Title I was fine except the light switch was in the wrong place and a few minor things like that.

DR: Right. Well, that was one of those almost "gimmes" when we got that. The others we got by bidding and they came out a little better. We got some from Lufkin that were in pretty good shape but the program was expanded, the children were coming in, we needed one more campus whether it be elementary or secondary and in surveying the community it was felt the need for a new high school. We located the ground, it was forty-two acres, very ample and you need that much space on a good size high school. If you will take a look at our high school over here, the space is all buildings, there is very little area except in the front. This high school is on about seven acres, and it should be on anywhere from 22 to 30 acres. The football stadium is inadequate; there is no physical education fields and while some people say that is not important; it is still a very vital part of the curriculum and physical education is required for graduation. Physical fitness is something everybody needs from the cradle to grave; they need some sort of activity that will keep them in some sort of physical shape. Our vocational programs were and still are good but they were limited. The junior high school has no vocation, they had no

laboratory and it has taken us until this year to be able to come back under 72 guideline and re-activate some sort of lab at the junior high. There is no space over there for really, for computers. Of course, at that time we were not concerned with computers, but we were concerned with the possibility of some vocational programs in the high school and we felt that by building a new comprehensive high school we could move the junior high to the high school building partly and leave part of them over there and move part of the elementary in there and have adequate space for 15 or 20 years at the least. There were many people who felt this was the way to go, there were some that felt another elementary school was all we needed because they didn't want the athletic complex that was designed. There are a lot of people who are shortsighted and who consider that money is too tight and they don't want to turn it loose. I have a letter here that I was just looking at the other day from a tax payer who was upset because his taxes increased and called us a few choice names and said he would sell if they could find somebody for the value that was put on it, that he would sell. So I told Pop to tell him that we would buy it immediately. And, of course, then he didn't want to sell and there is property that we had on the tax roll for \$300 an acre, when we were looking for space was offered to us \$6,000 an acre; yet they didn't really want to give us a price because they thought we might increase the taxes on it. So we had this kind of problem. Then, of course, you have the other end of the spectrum where people think too large, think too big and they want too much. So we tried to reach the happy medium, that which was not real short term, that which would give medium range of time in which to pay for it, get your bond issues down and have something the community could be proud of. Now, we can be proud of what we have but it's really not first class buildings, our buildings do not compare with our program.

BB: Especially elementary, that is a very old building, really. Do you think the racial aspect entered into the bond issue defeat?

DR: No, I think it was strictly monetary. I don't believe, I never at any time could remember that we were objecting to the Hispanics coming, or blacks not liking the whites or the whites the Hispanics, or vice versa. The relationship there has been very good since the first apprehension about the unknown. We are all that way, anything we are not real sure of we take our time in taking a look at it, so this worked out real well for us, that aspect of it. We tried to point out that they are all people that they all have a desire to learn, we hope, and we want to give them the opportunity to learn, we want them to behave and we want them to try. I tell parents all the time, when they come up concerned about children being out of line, you know, our rules are very simple. If you come to school with the desire to learn and you sit there and pay attention and try, we don't ever have to call you. But it is when we have those who don't want to learn, who want to create problems and the support at home is not with the school, then we have to call you and some of them understand that, some of them think you are picking on their kids. There has been no real problem with kids, they are just kids. There are less altercations today than there were fifteen or twenty – twenty-five years ago. It used to be the only way to settle an argument on the school ground, was to go to fist city. We used to take them into the gym and put boxing gloves on them and tell them "Get it out of your system." Then stand there and insist that they do even when their arms, with those

sixteen pound gloves were so tired they could hardly pick them up. They knew that if they didn't get along they were going to be back in that boxing ring and the paddle was used rather strongly, a lot more than it is today. If a kid got a paddling at school, they got one at home when the parents found out about it. That attitude has changed, the whole complexion of civilization, of society has changed. I don't know exactly what some parents have in store for their kids, or what they want for their kids. It is kind of confusing at times, the school still continues to struggle to project something for everyone, the kids going into the world to work and everyone is eventually. Then you have to move them in that direction and give those kids an opportunity to get a high education who desire it by telling them, "Remember, one of these days you are going out into the world to work" so with 80% of all the jobs not needing college degrees, your primary thrust has to be for the kid who is going into society sooner and making sure you don't short change that kid that wants more. I know one or two perennial students that are still in their 40's or 50's who are still going to school, haven't worked yet. But you don't find many of those.

BB: Do we go through two different tracks in high school or is it just one and –

DR: Well, we offer more courses at this high school. If a student were to take every course that is offered it would take eight years, just double the time that is necessary now. About 90% of the kids take the basics, that's the reason you can't get too excited about wanting a curriculum that spans the horizon because only about 10% of the kids take advantage of what is absolutely necessary to get through but you have to have it for those. In this high school we have had classes as low (unintelligible). Now, that is economically unsound but we managed, if they want two years of chemistry we'll give them two years of chemistry; if they want two years of biology they get it; if they want high mathematics, it is going to be there for them. Those kiddos who want, it we are going to try to get it for them. We instituted a career English about eight years ago because I discovered that two-thirds of our kids had no need for English literature, Shakespeare and Hamlet and all of that when they didn't even know how to write a decent letter; they didn't know how to fill out an application; they didn't know how to open a bank account.

BB: What did you call it? Career English?

DR: Career English. So we suddenly, we had three sections, two of them were Career English, the third one took the college bound English IV. Even at that though, they didn't escape some of the culture because we gave them a little bit of the literature along with it but they had practical English. They learned how to write a business letter. They learned how to fill out an IRS form, many, many things that were needed when they got out. I am the same way with that as I was with something that came in many years ago that was just going to be a supplement to our math program, modern math. The next time text books were adopted there were no regular math books, all we had was modern math and it set mathematics teaching back ten or fifteen years. Here we were trying to teach kids a base other than ten when they couldn't even get change for a dollar correct. So, in all the schools that I have been associated with, we still kept the basic math. It made it a little

more difficult on the teachers because of the textbook shortage and kept the other to a minimum but kids who had nothing but modern math have never recovered.

BB: I missed it.

DR: Well, you were fortunate. It was tough and we are still paying for it. Most of our math today though is remedial.

BB: Yes, I have heard that we are pretty far behind.

DR: That's one of the areas that we hope, in this five-year plan, will concentrate on. I just finished it today. Do you recognize it?

BB: Yes, that is from the elementary thing, isn't it?

DR: Yes, I called the principal and said, "I'm stealing something from you." She thought I was getting one of her personnel, she got all upset. I told her that and she said "Why, that's great. Go ahead."

BB: Let's see, what do you think your major accomplishments have been in your eleven years? What are you the proudest of?

DR: Oh, I'm proud of all of it. I would say the school district's ability to be able to provide almost everything that is needed in order to either go into the world of work or college, or any other pro-secondary education. This coupled with our cooperative situation with the county school in meeting the needs of handicapped children was another big factor in the total picture of meeting needs. I'm very proud of the fact that we have been able to attract such quality staff, people who really put the kids out front, we have had, in the eleven years, very few of those we considered too poor to keep and too good to fire. For the most part we have been very blessed with staff. That's from the superintendent, the central staff on up to the custodians who are a vital image of the school district. I'm proud of the respect that has grown for the Diboll police schools and it has far reaching effects. Diboll is known all over this state, we hope, primarily for it's school but a little bit has helped us with the election of a railroad commissioner who also ran for governor and the almost election of an attorney general from Diboll and the fact that the big industry being a world headquarters has far reaching images in the state. One of the most gratifying things that happened was when I was serving as President of the Texas Association of School Administrators and we took our wind ensemble from the band to San Antonio where they performed at the banquet which I presided as President.

BB: When was that?

DR: That was in 1981-1980, and they did such a tremendous job that they received a standing ovation from about 6,000 people at that banquet. We had phone calls and letters from some of my friends throughout the state asking if we could send them some kids of this caliber. I said "No, but I have a few others I could send them." They said we already

have those. There have been so many things that I have been proud of. I've been proud of the support that I received from the school board, the community and the staff.

BB: This dreaming into the future, what do you see in store for Diboll as a school?

DR: I don't anticipate much growth in the next five to ten years, maybe through the turn of the century. From that point on through, with the growing, smallness of the world and the population enlargement, I could see that within the next twenty years, depending on how big industry goes, how the economy in East Texas goes, that Diboll could very well be a city of fifteen or twenty thousand people because the national forest probably are doomed to some extent. I think that as population grows they are going to have to find more places to put people. With some good planning and with solving the water problem that, Diboll, as a city and community, will see some good growth and perhaps some of the things may come in that have not been here but that are prevalent in cities the size of Corrigan and Groveton and I am talking about a good restaurant, car dealers, some other businesses that you might find. We have one little furniture store, Corrigan has two furniture stores that flourish. It is our proximity to Lufkin with the thrust toward Lufkin. You may see some other businesses putting branches here, such as has happened with Home Savings, Lufkin Federal beginning to see a few of those situations come in. I think it will be growth, I don't believe we will go the other way. The proximity to Lufkin does make it difficult and people don't mind driving that ten miles up and ten miles back because once they get there they can spend half a day doing many things that you can't do here. We have – our parks are pretty, they are well established. The golf course is as good as any around, we have ball fields and anything people would want in the way of recreation. We are not far from water sports, the location is ideal for someone who likes to live in a little small atmosphere. And it is a community where people let you live. You do your own thing as long as it is not against the law, not overt so.

BB: It doesn't seem to have the clannish thing that so many small towns get in to, for new people.

DR: No, when people meet on the street, they meet as friends and neighbors or as people. It's not that I live in Carter Drive or that I live in Woodland Addition or I live in South Meadows. No one ever asks you where you live, they just take you at face value and go from there. If it doesn't become a metropolis it still has some things that others don't have. There's quite a bit of apathy here, some people say that is good, it allows us to go on and do what we want to do. I would rather have interest without too much interference. I think there should be more interest taken in the schools, in the city government, in the community itself. But so many people go to work, go home, go to the movies; they do their own thing and the only time they ever visit the school or the city hall is if they have a problem with their kid or their taxes or they have a water problem or a sewer problem, or they have a street problem. So it is only when they have problems that they participate. We don't really have the interest in wanting to be a part of the governing body of the school district or the city.

BB: Have you seen this with the school board elections?

DR: No, we really have very little interest. Some is generated, sometimes there is competition but we have never had five, or six people vying for two places, usually.

BB: I know in Lufkin they get a lot more interest.

DR: They do, because they have had committees working with their schools, I am not criticizing Lufkin but they are pretty far in that direction which I wouldn't want to be that much involved.

BB: There is a happy medium?

DR: A happy medium where you have the interest and you have the suggestion but you don't make suggestions and get mad because they don't take them all. That happens in a lot of places where you get so much community involvement. We have seen a little more involvement here in the last few years with the PTA. You know, the PTA has been on a hill and dale. PTA's are either outstanding or they are poor; there's no middle ground with PTA's. If they cooperate with the principal and they work closely together making things better for boys and girls, then they are outstanding. If they go into it for personal gratification, then sometimes you have problems. It's just a matter of how well people can work together. At this point the school district and the PTA have worked very closely together and it has been a good relationship. Perhaps it will continue for several years but you don't have the interest at the high school, you don't have the interest at the junior high. They tried to get a meeting and I don't think it worked too well, but it works well at the elementary, and really, this is the age group where they are more involved and as the kids get older, the kids say "Look, bug out." But the parents need to know a little more. It is a very complex situation, the school business. It is very rewarding, if it weren't, there would be very few people in it. If you didn't get some reward from seeing kids mature, seeing how they turn out, this graduation class, most of them were in the second grade when I came here and many of them I remember through the years. It's amazing to see them as you remember them and as you see them now. So that in itself is rewarding. To look up suddenly and realize as I did in the grocery store a while ago. A young lady came up and spoke to me, she is a tenth grader. I have known her since she was in kindergarten, she was a little tiger and then suddenly she sprouted and she is a woman now, to come up and smile and say "Hello" and you see how they formed, there is just something there, very gratifying.

BB: With all the – I'm going to do away with Diboll, that is a good place to end it right there. With all the essential elements coming in and House Bill 72 and Chapter 75 what do you see for the future in education for Texas?

DR: Not much change over what has evolved to this point. We are going to see more high tech, we are going to see more emphasis on computer education, on the mathematics involved. I think we are going to see greater concentration on the usage of the English language and its relationships to the various machines. I think we are already experiencing an up-grading, we started this with House Bill 72 and Chapter 75 back four

years ago, began up-grading the curriculum, the revolution that came in with House bill 72 brought with it many, many good things, it also brought some unpalatable things and unmanageable areas. I wrote a little deal in the PTA newsletter this last issue and talked a little bit about that. Reform is good, many of the things they forced upon the schools in short order are not being paid for and the local districts are having to come up with more money contrary to their back patting and how they have held the line on taxes and all that. There are still some areas that they did not provide money.

BB: What areas – like in the four year olds program?

DR: No, they funded the four year old program. The discipline management where they reached across the penal code, the education code and the family code and came up with this deal whereby you can't get rid of kids, you have to determine them incorrigible and that is pretty difficult, and then go from there into a number of alternative programs which means that while we are going through all this some of these pushers over here may still be selling their dope to the rest of the kids and we can't get rid of them. So this has created a problem in the way that thing was structured. There was some relief in the legislative process but they sat on it and let the time run out before they did any fine tuning. The career ladder looked as if it would cost the school district some money, we really don't know what the impact will be. The new block grants, where you get so much per child in average daily attendance means you only have a certain amount of money, say \$1,350.00 per student, and then some of that goes into special ed. Some into vocational, the vocational programs are about 50% funded. Their purpose was to force the local school districts to eliminate the vocational programs because they don't like them. And they didn't have guts enough to eliminate them in the legislative process so it is just like they figured they could force school districts into consolidation, they could close school districts by forcing them to consolidate and various and sundry little items in the law that made it very difficult to administer. Essential elements – terrific – they are not much different than our educational objectives which we put in seven or eight years ago and the pin pointing of them, the making sure that someone has mastered them at the time but we sometimes forget about the regression of young minds where they have difficulty in retaining. So hopefully though in the reinforcement that eventually we may have a better student. We are already seeing that, we have seen yearly a rise in our test scores here and we have seen a rise in the average IQ of this school district. At one point in time it was about 80, it is now in the low 90's which is in the average range. But that runs your spectrum from below 70 to your kids who are up there with 130 and this is an average. We have, within this school district, in each grade, some fifteen or twenty kiddos who can compete with anybody in this world.

END OF INTERVIEW