

Pearl Havard
Interview 73a
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Marie Davis, Interviewer
Retyped by Courtney Lawrence

ABSTRACT:

Born in 1912 as a descendent of early Angelina County settlers, Pearl Weaver Havard spent most of her life in Angelina County. In this interview with Marie Davis, she remembers going to school at Beulah and Diboll, how she played as a child, the fun activities available for teenagers, and the home remedies they relied on when the doctor was too far away. She lived through the Great Depression as a young wife, working her way through WWII at various jobs, including the Diboll Box Factory.

Marie Davis (hereafter MD): Today I am talking with Pearl Havard. Her address is Route 1, Box 494, Diboll, Texas. Today's date is August 8, 1985. My name is Marie Davis. Pearl, when were you born?

Pearl Havard (hereafter PH): I was born March 12, 1912.

MD: And where were you born?

PH: At the old place at Beulah. And it used to be called Lay.

MD: Okay. And that is about how far from Diboll?

PH: It is 7 miles to be exact. That is what we were always told. It is 7 miles from Diboll.

MD: Well, Lay, did it have a post office?

PH: Yes, it had a post office and a small country store.

MD: Who were your parents?

PH: Dave Franklin Weaver and Josephine Calhoun. They married in 1901.

MD: Were they early residents of Angelina County?

PH: Yes, they were of that time. They have been dead, oh, about 25 or 30 years, which would have made them, if they had lived about 105 and 110. That has been a long time. I would call them early residents. But their parents were early residents.

MD: Your mother's parents, when did they come?

PH: That was John C. Calhoun and Sarah, his wife. She was Sarah Drake and they were here right after the Civil War, in 1865. They moved to Texas on Bear Creek.

MD: And your father's?

PH: That was Larkin C. Weaver and wife, Caroline. They came from Georgia. They settled...well, they call it now, Weaver Bend. It is 5 miles south of Old Manning on the Neches River.

MD: Did they get a land grant--any of them?

PH: Well, John C. Calhoun did. But Larkin Weaver--to the best of my knowledge, he bought his land from John Falcom Renfro.

MD: Now, did Mr. Renfro own a lot of land?

PH: Yes, he owned a whole lot. He owned all of Renfro pasture and all of that way back toward the river, down in that area. I don't know how many acres, but it was lots.

MD: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

PH: Well, I had four. Ava died young and then Velma and Earl and Eldridge, five of us in all. Velma and Earl are dead. But Eldridge--Eldridge Weaver, he lives on the old home place. He built him a house over there pretty close to the old house. And he lives there.

MD: And whom did you marry?

PH: Avy Joe Havard, in 1929.

MD: And how many children do you have?

PH: We have two girls. Avy Jean married James McClamey and Wanda Ruth married Bill Goolsby. She married before, but that didn't work out. And so she is living with Bill Goolsby now in Lufkin.

MD: And do you have any grandchildren?

PH: I have seven grandchildren. Geizell got killed when she was thirteen and so I have six now. And eight great-grandchildren.

MD: Okay. Good. So you do have a houseful don't you?

PH: Yes.

MD: And where did you grow up?

PH: In Beulah.

MD: In Beulah. Did you have a happy childhood?

PH: Yes, I did. We had lots of fun. The neighbors all seemed like they were close then. There was more love; I will put it like that. And we played a whole lot with dolls and different things we had to play with then--playhouses made of straw, and broken up dishes and things like that. As I grew up from childhood and got on up into my teens, we had a party on Friday nights. And the kind of party I am talking about is--some people called it square dancing. And the games we played were like "rare back children" and "creely" and "Rosie Ann" and lots more games like that that we played. And we sang ourselves. We made our own music by singing.

MD: Did somebody play for you, too?

PH: No. There was one man, if he was there, or boy rather—if he was there he would blow a harp. He was real good on the song we called "Roxie Ann." And it was real good. It was a whole lot like square dancing. And we would go to different ones houses on Friday nights. At ten o'clock it was over. We had to be home by eleven.

MD: People visited more back then than they do now?

PH: Yes, they sure did.

MD: Did you ever like to walk in the woods?

PH: Yes. My mother...we had a creek that was in the back of our place and she liked to go down there and hunt tracks, which would be the wild animals of the creek, you know. And look in the water at the fish and there would be a big snake in there running around. And we would go in swimming. Of course, all the children liked to go swimming. And we would go down there and all go in swimming and have a big time like that. There was a neighbor boy by the name of Ben Weeks, and he was about four years older than me and he made some "Tom Walkers," which are stilts. They are a pole with a piece of leather that goes around and you stick your foot in it and balance yourself. And he wanted me to have a pair so I could walk over the fence like he did. I learned how and we would walk around. Some of the people around said I was going to break my neck. But I never did fall. Ben, he would say, "Come on, you can do it." So I did it.

MD: You did it!

PH: Yes.

MD: Where did you go to school?

PH: My first school was at Beulah.

MD: At Beulah. Did you have a one-room school when you started out, or did you have separate grades?

PH: No, we had separate grades. Now, the primer which was the pre-age primer and you bought the first book when I started to school, the primer.

MD: You had to buy your own?

PH: Yes, we had primer, first second, third, and on. Beulah had eight grades and then I went to Diboll.

MD: Do you remember who the superintendent was when you went over here?

PH: Mr. Miller at Diboll. My first grade teacher at Beulah was Jessie Reed. She was Jessie Crawford before she married Holland Reed.

MD: How did you get to Diboll? How did you get to school at Diboll?

PH: Well, some of the boys that were going to school out there drove their daddy's truck and he would come around and pick us all up and we would meet down at the road. They would take time about like that. And then later on in the year, one man bought a car and his daughter, Aline Scarborough, she drove the car and she carried us awhile like that--as long as I went.

MD: Do you remember some of the first times you ever went to Diboll?

PH: Yes. About the first time that I can remember--I always think about this because I like pretty roads and I like the countryside and I like houses--just before you get to Whiteoak Creek there was an old house on the left. I don't remember who lived in it, just I remember how it looked. It was just a long house, and the road turned there and went to the right and went through a field and it came out on the main road. There was a bridge there that had banisters, and I remember that. And then another time, I remember Grannie Scarborough--she was a peddler. She peddled buttermilk, butter and eggs. That is why the buttermilk road is called that because there were several over there that peddled from the Beulah community in Diboll.

MD: How would they get to Diboll?

PH: They had buggies. Every one of them had buggies with a horse that pulled it. And she told me one day that if I wanted to go with her I could and I went several times. But this one time, she said, "Get you some eggs and we'll sell them and you can get what you want." Mother gave me a dozen eggs and that brought enough that I bought me some material and my mother could sew and she made me a beautiful dress. From time to time, I went with Grannie over there and different times, I would carry eggs and buy me different things that I wanted.

MD: Great. When you were going to school in Diboll, coming from the country, so to speak, did you feel any different going to school with the town kids?

PH: Yes, I did. Seems like us boys and girls from Beulah stayed together on campus more than we did with the other children. And they were a little bit jealous of us girls from Beulah because the Diboll boys would come out to see us. But we got along just the same. And I had two good friends out there, and I came to know them real well. Their names were Othal and Bob Womack. Abe Womack, their father, worked for Diboll--Southern Pine Lumber Company--and they lived in Diboll. They would come out to our community to our parties. They played the instruments. Bob played a fiddle and Othal picked a guitar and sang.

MD: Now, those were Abe Womack's children.

PH: Yes.

MD: When you were growing up, living seven or eight miles from town, did your mother practice--or did the people in the community--practice a lot of home remedies?

PH: Yes. Today I keep remembering those things. Things like Asafetida...

MD: What did you do with Asafetida?

PH: Well, there were two ways we used it. One was to roll it up in a little ball, put it in a little sack, put a string around it, and hang it around your neck and down in your bosom. And that was to keep the whooping cough or any disease that might approach you away, supposedly. And my sister, Velma, she wore one until she started courting and she got ashamed of it. She said she could smell it and she pulled it off and put it under a board when she went out and when she came back home, she would put it back on because mama wanted her to wear it all the time. And then you could dissolve it in some water and that was good for pain, like at childbirth.

MD: Oh, did you drink it?

PH: Yes. And the sugar and turpentine may still be used. You would put the turpentine on the cut, put a little sugar on it and pour turpentine back on it and tie it up. That was for cuts. Because lots of time in those days, we were stepping on nails, cutting our feet with a hoe or something, and they had to have something like that. And another thing was at night, they would take tallow as they had their own tallow. You would lay down on your back in front of the fireplace, stick you feet out towards the fire and the bottom of your foot would get hot. They would rub that tallow on your foot and it would soak in and that was for sore throat and things like that--if you had a sore throat. And then another remedy--now mother did all of these--eggshell tea was a bad thing to take. And that was for kidney infection or they called it Gravel, then. Now they call it a kidney infection.

MD: What would she do, boil...

PH: Yes. She would take the shells and parch them and then put them in water and let them soak a long time and then you would drink that water.

MD: I had never heard that one before.

PH: Well, then there are just lots more.

MD: Well those are interesting. Pearl, I know that from time to time you have put pictures in the paper of olden times. How did you get interested in doing this?

PH: Well, in looking through my old pictures, I thought, well, those old pictures are something that the younger generation, a lot of people don't have. I said it would be pleasing for the children of today to look back and see their mother and grandmother on a picture. And if the older ones were living they would enjoy seeing their face on a picture. So I got mine first and then I went around calling on people to loan me their pictures. Then I would carry them to the Free Press and Paul Durham would put them in the paper for me.

MD: I know that so many people enjoy those old pictures that you put in there. Is this a hobby with you?

PH: Yes, I have a scrapbook and it is full of them. There are churches, and pictures of family groups, schools, and marriages of long time ago and all those kinds of pictures. Well, from 65 years on back, nothing lately, a long time ago.

MD: Pearl, I have read in the paper about this old home place you all keep up; tell me about that.

PH: Well, getting back to John C. and Sarah Calhoun--when they came after the Civil War, they built a log cabin, one room log cabin. So their family began to come in, and Grandpa John C. made a log cabin, which was called a double ten log cabin. It was two log cabins and a hall between them and then a long porch on the front and back. That was what they had to start with. Well, they cut it from their own timber. It was virgin pine. They did all that and then later on about 1881, he wanted a house and he got his own timber. There was a little sawmill, but I don't know who had the sawmill. But it was pretty close by and it was cutting and ripping these logs open. So he got the man to fix his out of his own timber and he made the old house. It is called the "old house" today. Some of the lumber that is in there is twenty to twenty four inches wide that is the lumber that is in there, and you can see it today...over there in the old house. And it still stands and it has my mother and daddy's furniture in it. We keep it pretty clean for an old house.

MD: Do you ever have reunions there?

PH: Yes, we have a reunion every year there and sometime at Christmas we have our Christmas parties in the families--mama and papa's family.

MD: Where is this located?

PH: It is located off FM road 1818, seven miles east of Diboll on the Gulf Pipe Line Road--the Gulf Pipe Line right-of-way. He built the house there because of the dirt. The dirt over there will grow anything even without being fertilized today. They have the best gardens, and seems like it is always moist there. Old people a long time ago knew where to settle.

MD: Is it close to a creek?

PH: Yes. A creek runs a little ways behind the house. It is called Bear Creek.

MD: Does your brother live near there?

PH: Eldridge lives near the old house.

MD: When you were growing up, do you remember any special people in the Beulah community?

PH: Yes. Brother Meadows. He was pastor of Pine Grove Church.

MD: Is that where you went to church?

PH: Yes. At Pine Grove Church. He was a good friend of ours. Dave Weaver, my daddy, worked for the Gulf Pipeline from the day he married my mother--from 1901--well, about fifty years--he worked for Gulf until he got too old. The Pipeline men or riders were very special to me. They were a lot of fun and our house was midway between Chester, Texas, and Lufkin, Texas, where the pump stations were. And the line riders stayed at our house at night. One came from the north and one came from the south. Noah Kirkland was one of them. He was a good man, and I learned to love Mr. Kirkland. He was a very special person. Henry Tabb was the chief at the Gulf Pump Station at Lufkin. We liked him because he was the one that kept my daddy on, working from the very beginning. Dr. Hawkins...he delivered me and he delivered my first girl. And then Dr. Hancock delivered my second daughter. And then our neighbors. We loved them all. I thought a lot of Mr. Jones, Mr. Weeks and Mr. Scarborough.

MD: Do you have any early memories...

PH: Yes. This is another thing that fascinates me. When I was about six, Bunker Squyres was a log hauler. He would haul logs on the wagon and mules would pull the wagon. He was cutting timber down around Weaver Bend. That is where my daddy's people were. And so we were going down there that night...there was a big celebration the next day. And so that evening, Bunker says to my mother, "I'll take Pearl on with me if you will let her." So I rode that log wagon from Beulah to Weaver Bend through the creek bottoms and all of that and that just sticks with me, riding that log wagon. I was real young then.

MD: Did you have any special games that you all played?

PH: Well, back in the early days, my daddy played a fiddle, and he wanted me to pick a guitar. So he bought me one. I was about ten or twelve years old. And I have always loved to pick a guitar. And we would pick and sing, you know. My mother got sick with rheumatism. She had rheumatism when I was about 15 real bad. We took her to Marlin and I took my guitar. That was my amusement in Marlin because I didn't know anyone. And I would sit out and sing and that would draw attention to the other boys and girls and they all learned to sing. We had singing all the time.

MD: Did you ever go to Lufkin very much?

PH: Yes, my daddy did. I never did go very much. My daddy did. He worked for Gulf and he had to go up there a whole lot. He rode a horse.

MD: Did he ever ride a horse to Lufkin?

PH: Yes, some in the early days. His first car was in 1918. It was an old car. The first new car he bought was in 1922. And then he would go in it, but the roads were bad. It was just a wagon road.

MD: Do you remember what Diboll looked like? You probably came to Diboll more than you did Lufkin.

PH: Yes. Diboll looked like--it was just--the houses were all, weren't many of them painted. Mr. Strauss and the people that ran the office, theirs were all painted: but the others were not painted. There were dirt streets, and chickens and hogs and things like that in the street and on the school campus, everywhere you know. They didn't have any bathrooms or running water. They had electric lights, but that came from the sawmill, drop lights. You could see all the outdoor toilets and the streets were dirt. It was just like anywhere else. Diboll was just as clean as anywhere else. There were a lot of children that grew up out there that made real fine men and women.

MD: When you were small did you have any dreams for yourself?

PH: Yes. I always wanted to go to Hawaii.

MD: Did you ever get to go?

PH: Never did get to go. But instead I went to Vancouver, Canada, and Seattle, Washington, and I accepted that.

MD: Did you ever work outside the home?

PH: Yes, during World War II, we moved to Freeport. Avy Joe worked out there and I worked in the grocery store, checking out groceries. And when I came back, I worked at the box factory here at Diboll, under Mr. Wiley, Richard Wiley and Mr. Campbell. I can't remember the other men, but they were my two main bosses.

MD: Do you feel that there was much difference in when you were growing up and people today?

PH: Yes. People were happier then and they were not as nervous as they are now. People would sit down and talk and enjoy one another and they visited. We were a great hand to go and visit at night, sit awhile and talk. Seems like nowadays people don't have time to visit. They don't have time to sit and think.

MD: Do you remember much about the Depression?

PH: Yes. I had just married, so it hit us pretty hard. We went on for about, well, ten years and it was really pretty hard. Everybody had a hard time. They WPA came in and the CCC boys came in and gave people work and everything was cheap. But there wasn't any money. But when World War II came in seemed like jobs began to open up. People had a better life and had money to spend--began to make new industries and things of that sort.

MD: Do you think social security has been good for most people?

PH: Yes. I don't know how some people could have lived without social security. I think it is a wonderful thing. When President Roosevelt, when he got social security in the act, he said that it was supposed to be for now on...not put in any other act of Congress, but it would be social security only...not taken from nor added to. And I think it is a wonderful thing--if our government nowadays will just leave it alone.

MD: Then you have worked in Diboll at the box factory. Do you think all of these industries in Diboll have been good for this part of the county?

PH: Yes. I do...because it gives people work and the younger generation that grew up, they had to have some work...it gave them work. People have moved in, and it gave them work. And all these new industries they have put in Diboll there once wasn't anything there but a sawmill and this other has given people work and made more things come in like we have today. We have a variety store and have a bank, and we have all these other stores that we didn't have. And if it hadn't been for the industries, I don't think we would have any of these.

MD: When you worked at the box factory, what was your job? What did you all make over there?

PH: Well, I worked with a lady called...her name was Irene, and we matched boards. That was to make boxes for ammunition. The boards were cut over by the saws and then they were put on a flat and rolled over to our machine, and Irene would run it through the

machine and make a groove on one end, and I would turn it over and send it back to her and that would make a groove on the other end. We matched those boards together, put them on a flat and sent them back to the nailer and they nailed them together and made a box for ammunition.

MD: What other kind of boxes did they make?

PH: Well, they made boxes for fruit and sent them to Cali-California and to the valley, for vegetables and fruit and things of that sort.

MD: Was this one of the first industries to employ women in Diboll?

PH: Yes, it really was. I remember I have a friend that when she was young, she had to get work somewhere to help out at home, and she went to the box factory and worked.

MD: What year did you work over there? I believe you told me, but I forgot.

PH: It was about '45 or '46, something like that.

MD: At the end of the war?

PH: Yes, and I got 35 cents an hour.

MD: Thirty-five cents an hour. I know I was talking to someone and they made 24 cents an hour when they started working. But you were glad to get it, weren't you?

PH: Yes.

MD: And most other people were, too. Has life's meaning changed for you since you retired or since you have grown older, has life's meaning changed very much?

PH: Well, it hasn't changed in my way of living too much because I am about the same all the time. I don't change as the world changes. I stay about the same all the time. I do my daily chores at home, and I do my cooking. I do everything. I am content to stay at home. I don't care about roaming too much.

MD: You all are retired. How do you spend most of your days now?

PH: Well, in the summer time, we work every morning--like gardening, canning and mowing the yard and things like that. And in the afternoons, it is hot and we don't do anything. We just sit in the house and read and look at TV. I have a lot of company and entertain.

MD: Pearl, have you enjoyed life. Do you think you have had a happy life?

PH: Yes. I have enjoyed life. I was fortunate to be born in 1912 and I have had all the days of the roaring twenties and that was in the flapper stage.

MD: And you were a flapper, weren't you!

PH: We started bobbing hair, and we started to having our clothing different, mine was. If we had a chew of "Oh Boy" gum, which was like Double Bubble, and a pair of high heel shoes, hose, and a pair of beads, well, we thought we were dressed up.

MD: When you first courted, did you walk, go in a wagon, a buggy or car, Model "T" or something?

PH: We walked. We walked mostly. And mostly my boy friends were out of Diboll. They would hitchhike and come out to Beulah the best way they could. And Pine Grove Church wasn't very active in my day at that time and we had a lady that organized an interdenominational Sunday school at Beulah Church and we went there. I don't know two or three years, and it was real good and we had a house full every Sunday. Like I say, the boys all came from Diboll and Bald Hill. But Diboll had most likely the best boys to my knowledge.

MD: Do you remember when you cut your hair?

PH: My hair never was long. Mama kept it cut off. Not many girls had bobbed hair all their life. They had to cut it off to make it short. And their mothers, a lot of them, didn't want them too--they said it was a sin.

MD: But they wanted to keep up with the times.

PH: Yes. Yes. And it was pretty, too.

MD: Well, today you and Avy Joe enjoy your home and all your friend...

PH: Yes, we have lots of friends and we have a lot of people to come and eat with us. Our main subject is back to our childhood days. And we sit and laugh and look at pictures and talk about the things we did growing up, which has all been good. I once hunted wild game. I was a big hunter. I killed lots of deer and a lot of squirrels. So I enjoyed that. But things run a cycle. I am older now and I have bursitis, and I don't care to shoot a gun because it hurts my shoulder. We have a pretty garden every year, and I try to have a beautiful yard. It takes work, but the doctor told me to never stop with my bursitis. Just to keep working. Not to overdo it, but just to keep my day's work up and it wouldn't get any worse.

MD: I have enjoyed talking to you.

PH: I have enjoyed talking to you.