

HORACE WARREN
Interview 88a
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ABSTRACT: Longtime Temple employee Horace Warren recalls life at the Alcedo logging camp, at Fastrill, and in Diboll. In this interview with Becky Bailey he reminisces about life as an African American worker – in the woods, on the trains, and in the mills. He also talks about recreation, dance halls, cafes, and churches for the African American workers and their families. Mr. Warren mentions Clyde Thompson, Arthur Temple, Jr., and Mr. Burchfield, as well as a tornado that hit Fastrill.

Becky Bailey (hereafter BB): Today's date is January 3, 1986. I am interviewing Mr. Horace Warren at his home on Pine Street. My name is Becky Bailey. Also present is Mrs. Flossie Warren. Mr. Warren, would you start out by telling me where you were born and what year and that sort of thing?

Horace Warren (hereafter HW): I was born in Camden, Arkansas.

BB: What year was that?

HW: 1910 – July 27.

BB: Didn't you tell me you and your wife were fixing to have an anniversary?

HW: Anniversary?

BB: Yes – 60 years?

Flossie Warren (hereafter FW): 50

BB: I started to say he told me 50.

HW: 50

FW: The 19th of this month.

BB: 19th, so that is something else, are you going to have a big party?

FW: Well, my daughter is giving something, she's taking over and I don't know nothing about what's going on. She made me buy a hundred and something dollar dress and I told her that was just...

BB: Against your religion, huh?

FW: That's right.

BB: Oh, that's neat. Okay, how did you get down to Texas then from Arkansas?

HW: My mother came and got me.

BB: Okay, you lived up there and she was in Texas, had already moved? Okay, where did you go, where did you live?

HW: Well, when we came from Arkansas we stopped at Alceda [Alcedo] Camp, she was staying at Fastrill camp, we stopped down there to see some of her friends and then we went on to Fastrill camp, Cherokee County.

BB: How old were you then?

HW: I started working for the company I was 15 years old.

BB: And that's when you came to Texas, when you were 15? Do you remember anything about the Alceda [Alcedo] camp? What did it look like?

HW: Well, just nothing but big old quarters, quarters weren't as big as Fastrill camp but it was pretty good size quarters, had a corral in it, horses and mules and everything they had at Fastrill, in other words, that was the logging camp, it was right down there, down the creek, the road from Jack Creek. Just down the TSE [Texas Southeastern] track down there, just before you cross the Neches River.

BB: About how many families lived there?

HW: I don't know how many, there were a bunch of them out there.

BB: But it wasn't as big as Fastrill?

HW: No, it wasn't as big but it was a good size camp.

BB: What sort of – did they have, like a commissary?

HW: They had a commissary, just like they did at Fastrill.

BB: Just everything you'd want.

HW: Everything you'd want, right there in that commissary at the Alceda [Alcedo] camp and at the Fastrill camp.

BB: What were the houses like?

HW: Houses? Oh, the houses were, they were in a circle, in other words, the whites and the colored mostly stayed right there together, there at Alceda [Alcedo] now, when they moved to Fastrill camp, the Alceda [Alcedo] camp to the Fastrill, the railroad came down through the quarters. Mr. Patrick was running the light plant and the railroad divided –

BB: So the blacks....

HW: Right over there, Miss Vina Wells, down there. Well, they ran the boarding house. You know Miss Louise, don't you, well, that was her mother; she was running the boarding house.

BB: Yes, she gave me a real good interview with some things; she told mainly about the white part of town.

HW: Everybody got on it like that sitting up there, just seems like it was one, that's all – everybody loved and got along good. And the Spanish lived in a little dip divided up.

BB: A what divide you?

HW: A little old dip down through the quarters. You know Jessie? In other words everybody got along good. Nothing but sand out there but everybody got along. I thought that was the only place there was in the world. We named it Hill City, I'm telling you the truth.

BB: What about schooling out there for the blacks?

HW: Well, the whites had a school out there on that side of the track so we used the church house there for the high school. The church and the school all together was one, you know?

BB: And the company had put the church up, had built the church for you?

HW: The Company built everything out there.

BB: So they built the church for you, too? Did you just have one church or were there several?

HW: Just one church.

BB: What denomination, Baptist?

HW: Now see, on the colored side had one church, they had a church on the white side, too, you see?

BB: And it was just Baptist, too?

HW: Baptist.

BB: What about Alceda [Alcedo] camp did they have churches, too?

HW: They had churches down there. They had two churches down there, too. It wasn't no great big one, it was kind of small, had one for the colored and one for the white.

BB: It was all separated back then.

HW: This fellow stays up here in Copestown, Mr. Harvey Glass, did you know him?

BB: Mr. Glass? No, I don't believe I did.

HW: Harvey Glass, he had a – that's his nephew running that store up there, we were all out there together.

BB: Oh, he was out there, too? So you stayed out there from 1925 to 1942, right? Wasn't that when the camp moved?

HW: I came to Diboll, I got hurt out there in '34 and I come to Diboll. I didn't start staying down here until 1935. I was courting her then and I fell in love and still got her.

BB: Okay, not many people keep them around 60 years, do they? Tell me, how did you get hurt, were you hurt on the job?

HW: Braking – yes ma'am, braking, I was braking on the train out there.

BB: Oh, you were a brakeman?

HW: Yes, I was braking out there, and I was making a flying switch at the rail, they used the rail, had mules and horses and things, to haul logs with. There was a little curve, I had to lean off the caboose to get in the signal and Mr. George told me he would be right there by the Seales Store there. When I came to I was in the Jacksonville Hospital, the old hospital, there wasn't that new one at that time. I didn't remember nothing.

BB: So you just leaned out of the caboose?

HW: Yes, broke my neck, but it didn't break that moral.

BB: Oh my goodness sakes. Well did the company take care of you during that time?

HW: Oh yes, Mr. Clyde Thompson and Miss Rhoda was the insurance. You know Miss Rhoda Faye, don't you? Clyde Thompson, well, he was insurance man for the company.

BB: So they took care of you?

HW: Oh yes, you didn't have to worry about anything. It was really a good company to work for. It is a good company; they will help you if you need it.

BB: Okay, so you spent about nine years at Fastrill? What sort of things did you do for entertainment and tell me about your working hours and that sort of stuff.

HW: I first started working out there at the, I had a hard job, started working in the steel gang.

BB: A steel gang?

HW: I was toting ties, one little old horse and rail. I worked there a long time down there. I was braking, too. In other words, I done everything. I was running engine and everything out there at Fastrill.

BB: Okay, so really you weren't involved with the woods part, you were involved with the train?

HW: They taught me how to handle those engines out there and everything. I worked for George Thomas. Want to know any other names? Big Boy Farrell, Johnny Childress, Les Chester and Mr. Smut Robertson.

BB: Mr. Smith Robinson?

HW: Smut –

BB: Smut Robinson – why in the world did they call him that?

HW: He was a good loader man, too. That's all I ever knew.

BB: Knew was Smut Robinson? Okay, and you said – after the steel gang then they put you on the –

HW: Hooking tongs – that's taking a line, you know, and hooking it onto a log and the loader man would put it in. I did everything out there but cut logs and I didn't want to cut no logs. No, Lord.

BB: Okay, did they have like a wood yard there where you did all this or was this out in the woods?

HW: No, out in the woods. See, they would lay spurs out in the woods and you put all them logs and stacked them beside the track. In other words they had a skidder, horse skidder, I mean, so they had a retail skidder but they wouldn't use that out there.

BB: Not with –

HW: Not a retail skidder cause those retail skidders throw their tongs out in the woods, way out there, and you don't know what they are going to hit. But a horse skidder they pull a line out there, man out there, like you are setting the tongs, you see. Well, I'd ride the horse out there and pull those lines, unhook the horse and you take these tongs and put them into the logs and holler. Everybody knows their holler – I got pulled back two or three times before I learned to get off a horse. They'd drag both me and the horse back. When they go tightening that line, you know, like that horse, he'd know it, he'd go to grunting and trying to pull against it. So I didn't know how to get off a horse, I learned how to get off one from then on. I got over his head. Mr. Powers was setting tongs then, I was driving on the line for him on the skidder.

BB: How many would be on this tong gang that would do this?

HW: Four.

BB: Four? Four lines to go out into the woods?

HW: Yes, go out to the skidder and this fellow down here, Wells, he dead now, you know, where that dog man got that place, that was his home and his brother, he was a drum puller, Harrison Wells, they all gone now.

BB: A drum puller? He was the man that –

HW: Yeah, draw them in. Now he was a drum puller.

BB: All right, now what is that?

HW: That's drawing the logs in, like you get out there, I'd set a tongs out there on that line, I'd holler Wo o o o o – everybody knows the holler – sometimes he'd draw the logs in, put them on –

BB: Oh, so this was mechanical, he wouldn't do it by hand, would he?

HW: No ma'am, by the line. They would set that tong. He had a man on that end and one on this one. Why, you could take a train, a bunch of cars, you know, and put them on there and load logs from one side to the other. They'd load five big logs, when they put them on the side of the track. Oh, that was easy work that end.

BB: Yea, to pull them in to wench them in. Oh, but he would have to know –

HW: He'd have to know your holler, he had to know the one to holler, you see, cause –

BB: He might pull the wrong guy in.

HW: He'd get crossed up sometime, you know, listening at the holler, you know. He couldn't carry on no fun or nothing, had to be on his p's and q's out there. One time a fellow hollered and Mr. Powell was setting then, well he's dead now, Powell, his boy, you may remember, he was the last man that run the loader here for Diboll, Bill Powell. You might have talked with Bill Powell, but that was old man Powell's son he was the last loader man the company had.

BB: What happened whenever he'd pull the wrong guy, did he pull the wrong guy, was that what you were going to say?

HW: At the skidder? Yeah, he shore would if they didn't catch that holler just right. You couldn't holler like the other fellow, you had to have a different holler, heah, you had to have a different holler or you and the horse would go right back to that skidder.

BB: And the horse didn't appreciate it?

HW: No, that horse would be grunting just like he would be trying to talk.

BB: Oh, goodness.

HW: And then after they taken me off that, they put me in the steel gang. I worked in the steel gang til I got hurt.

BB: Working as a brakeman, too? What did the brakemen do?

HW: They would couple cars, like you see them out here, coupling the cars, un-couple them, spot the loading crew, they had a loader before these front loaders. You run the cars under them, called a "Gibbitt" loader. Then they would run under them. Then they cut that out and made the loaders, set them on top of the cars, a rapid loader. That would slide on top of the car, that little old box, just about that high, to keep the slide on the loader from jumping off the car.

BB: Okay, it's kind of like a conveyor belt?

HW: Yeah, just slide like that and the line would pull it.

BB: Then that would just pull them on to the car?

HW: Put the brakes upon the car, the train was there and he would back down them cars. Never had to unhook them, had to load them out that way.

BB: What – that sounds like a good development, what year did that come in?

HW: Well, they moved the camp down here in 1930 – I believe it was 1930 or '32, they moved the camp, but I was already down here.

BB: Yeah, well, I think it was about '42 and those were new then, when they had those? So that was in the 40's.

HW: They had log wagons out there driving teams and everything out there at Fastrill and they changed them and started hauling logs with trucks.

BB: They cut out all that?

HW: Cut out all that skidder stuff, got to hauling logs with trucks then. They been hauling logs with trucks ever since then. This man got his hand in it and he cut it out. Cecil Harper's brother got killed out there on Long Cane out there, I was swamping out there then, when he came in, swamping out there in the woods, saw that rattle snake, place back here off 1818. You hear 'em talk about Long Cane Creek?

BB: Yea, now, it goes through Livingston doesn't it?

HW: That was another one – it was just full of cane out there, rattle snakes out there bigger than your legs, that's where – do you know Cecil Harper?

BB: No, I don't think I do.

HW: He works out here for the company now. He bought a home on 1818, he drove that little old white pick-up truck there for the company all the time. His wife got hurt out there at the plywood. They were loading them logs and trying to put his boom on, threw his chain over, a log fell off and killed him right there. I told them "Let's go home."

BB: You had enough of that.

HW: Yeah, we were raised right up together.

BB: Oh, my goodness, and he just threw it over the...

HW: Went to throw his chain over the log, you know how they got them boomed down?

BB: Yeah, okay, and it just fell off.

HW: The log fell on him. Oh, that working in the woods, it was dangerous, I'm telling you.

BB: Were a lot of people hurt at Fastrill besides you getting your –

HW: Oh, yes, a right smart of them got hurt out there but they weren't braking, you know, like they would get steel in their eyes working on the steel gang or get their hand burnt. I remember one – two fellows getting killed out there that I can remember.

BB: What happened?

HW: Well, one fellow was hauling logs with a truck, a little old west place there – and all of them tried to get – don't drive that truck through there – he said “Yeah, I can make it.” Where they got a log at – he was going to take that truck, they didn't have no top on it, just a naked truck, you know, and everything. He started that truck there, child, and when he made it, made that bad place down there, well, he hit a stump. Well, then where they cut a log down the log piled on him and killed him right there. That other fellow that got killed out there was cutting logs, his wife is here in Lufkin now, isn't she, baby? Cut a log, a tree down, the tree fell and a little old sap, just about the size of your arm, hung on that log, and it came out of there and hit him and killed him right there.

BB: Just a freak sort of a thing?

HW: Yeah

BB: Well, Mrs. Rector has said she couldn't remember too many people getting hurt out there.

HW: No, there weren't many getting hurt out there.

BB: You lived at home during this time? While you lived in Fastrill?

HW: I was living with my mother.

BB: And you had a company house and all that kind of stuff, describe it for me.

HW: Well, it's just these little old houses, they've got them still, little old Red Town houses, they call Red Town, they were little old houses, but they moved them all down here. I ain't seen nobody in the quarters, nowhere around here got one now like that. The Monroes moved to Lufkin, you know, put two of them together and made her a home out of it.

BB: How many rooms did it have?

HW: Well, it had-baby (dog interrupts) got to see the houses, a lot of them.

BB: How many people lived in two and three rooms? How many was in your family?

HW: Nearly everybody had a family out there.

BB: How many were in a family, like in yours, how many were in your family? Just you and your mom?

HW: No, me and my mother, my brother and my sister, we all stayed there together and then my sister got married to Clarence Hunt.

BB: So you had four of you living together in a three room –

HW: Four children and mother made it five.

BB: Made it five, oh. So you had four brothers and sisters and your mom living in three rooms?

HW: No, just four children.

BB: Four children and your mother, so that would be five in that house. What were the rooms, you had a kitchen and a –

HW: Well, the kitchen was kind of made like there here but it was small, you see?

BB: Smaller than this?

HW: Oh yes, they were little old houses, they weren't no great big. It wasn't nothing like this but they were warm.

BB: What were the walls like? Were they painted or wall papered?

HW: No ma'am, just plain – like on these switches at camps, you see, they don't fix up houses like they do in here, you know? They would be warm in the winter time, you see, you got heaters and things in there like that.

BB: So you had wooden stoves? Okay, did you have a heater and a stove, a cook stove?

HW: Had a heater in one part and a cook stove in the kitchen back there.

BB: So you have like a front room and a bedroom and then the kitchen in the back. What did the kitchen look like, did you have a cabinet?

HW: A who?

BB: A cabinet

HW: No –

BB: No cabinet, what did you have in there?

HW: Well, it was like it is here, if you had a table, well, they had shelves so you could stack your stuff on, you know. Didn't have nothing like you could put stuff in, you know, like cabinets.

BB: Like that and close it, it was all open shelves?

HW: You know, in a camp like that they don't go to any expense with stuff like that, you call it Diboll Camp, or whatever they call it, like Camden used to be. They used to have camps, you know, like Camp Ruby out from Livingston. All the big companies, weren't like they are now. They didn't have all that expensive stuff.

BB: So just a shelf and your stove, did you have a sink?

HW: What is that?

BB: Didn't have a sink either, huh? Had a dish pan and just a little wash basin type thing to put it in?

HW: Yeah, didn't have all this modern stuff like this.

BB: No counters or anything like that, just a table. Did they furnish you any furniture or were you expected to get your own?

HW: If you worked you got that yourself. They didn't give you nothing.

BB: Just the bare house and then you had to furnish it?

HW: The bare house and didn't have to pay no rent, light bill or nothing. We had it paid like that. If you can remember Patrick – stayed right down there on the old highway, you know, we all called him Peter Patrick but his name is Fate Patrick, you know, coming up the old highway, you know? Had a little trailer house there on the side of the road, the train hit that man down there, boy that worked in the store, Pat's husband worked in the store there and the track slid down the river there, Fate Patrick's house right by that little old trailer. His father ran the light plant here, had a light plant out there then. Had one at Alceda [Alcedo] and one out there at Fastrill. Lights would be on there until about 9:30, they'd blink them. He would blink them at the planer that that was time to go to bed. They used to link them right here so that made me think then see, when I came here they were doing that in Diboll. Well, they had a light plant out there at the mill then. Didn't have all this light stuff, you know, like they got up here now and paying bills on it. In other words, didn't have to pay any light bills here then. When me and baby married didn't have to pay none.

BB: Right, well, you didn't have a freezer and a washer and a dryer. Okay did they paint the outside of the house?

HW: Oh yes, it was painted red

BB: Oh, they were painted red?

HW: Yes, they were painted red and brown. Had some pretty nice houses over there on the white side but the folks that worked they didn't go to no expense for houses like that.

Looked like a little old box car, that's what they looked like. She got to see them when they were moved here.

BB: Did they have a boarding house on your side of town?

HW: Oh yes, Miss Vina and Louise.

BB: Oh, okay, I know she ran the white boarding house, but did they have a colored boarding house?

HW: Yes, Jack Goff, he's gone now, he had a good boarding house out there.

BB: How many houses did he stick together?

HW: I think he had about – they say three, it would take about three to make a boarding house out for all them folks he had there, them boarders.

BB: Who would stay there?

HW: Everybody – nearly everybody that wasn't staying in no house, you know, they'd rent rooms. He had another, two or three little old houses there he would rent. Didn't have to pay no rent or nothing, just called it rent, you see. A lot of boarders stayed in those houses. Single you know, these single men and all that stuff. And at Miss Vina's boarding houses, I washed dishes in there like I was a woman.

BB: Oh, really?

HW: Miss Louise said I kept that boarding house spotless, had seventy, eighty and ninety boarders, like that, I'd wash all them dishes and clean up those buckets.

BB: When would you do that?

HW: When I got off my job.

BB: You'd work all day in the woods and then come in and –

HW: We knocked off about 4 o'clock, then we would come home. When the boarders got through eating it would be six or seven or eight o'clock when I'd get through washing dishes up, you see.

BB: That's a long day, what time would you start, what time would you go to the woods?

HW: Six o'clock in the morning, see, I was in a steel gang then, at that time. We'd get back – by nine o'clock we'd done made our day. Steel gang had passed the loading crew. So we got another wood foreman called Frank Gitman. Tick bite killed that man. A lot of those old ticks will kill you. It bit him and he never got that head out of there. But he

went there and put the steel gang by the day, loading crew by the day, I ain't never seen that in history. We'd tote ties all day long for \$1.10 to cut all that down.

BB: Is that what you made a day?

HW: \$1.10, I told my little wife, I said "I ain't never worked that hard in my life for a dollar and ten cents."

BB: Not many people would do it nowadays, would they?

HW: No, ma'am, they wouldn't do that now.

BB: Well, you couldn't afford to either, couldn't afford to at \$1.10 an hour.

HW: He was running everything out there, you know – I don't know. Mr. Paul Durham, Mr. Durham's daddy was the Superintendent, you know Paul Durham down here? He was the Superintendent, they got rid of him. He came down here and worked at the mill. Then he went to preaching, they made a preacher out of him but he sure was a good man.

BB: Okay, and who was Superintendent after Paul Durham?

HW: Frank Gitman.

BB: I missed the last name, tell me again?

HW: Frank Gitman.

BB: Gitman?

HW: Yes.

BB: Okay.

HW: There aren't too many of them old timers left and that's Mr. Harvey, Mr. Burchfield. You know Mr. Burchfield, lives right behind the Western Auto, well, we worked together a many a day. Now he can tell you some more about it. Not many of them left.

BB: Okay, so they all worked at Fastrill then? When you got to Diboll was it a whole lot different?

HW: Oh yes, ma'am.

BB: Who did you live with when you came to Diboll?

HW: I stayed with a fellow called Jim Lignons. Then Mr. Clyde, he said “You don’t want to stay over there.” He put me at a boarding house over there. I couldn’t sleep at night. Them bed bugs ate me up all night near about, they were chinchies then. Those bedbugs. I walked all night, they don’t bother you then; I walked all night and the next morning I saw another fellow from Hemphill stayed there and I said, “No sir, I ain’t slept a bit, fighting all night.” He said “Who were you fighting?” I said “Them chinchies.” So he said “Where you want to stay at” Jim Lignons, over there. I know him. I stayed until me and baby married.

BB: How big was the boarding house? I don’t think I have heard anybody describe it.

HW: Well, the boarding house down here?

BB: The boarding house here.

HW: Had two boarding houses here.

BB: Okay, the Beanery and the Star Hotel were over on the other side of the track. Okay, what was the name of this one?

HW: I don’t know, it was just called the boarding house, called mother who’s boarding house? What was Johnny Carol’s mother’s name? But anyway, they just called it the boarding house.

FW: We just called it the boarding house, one of them was made long and it had a hallway and rooms on both sides and the other part, where the lady lived, it had some rooms with the kitchen and everything on that side it was all –

BB: So a wing here with the people and then another wing where they had the kitchen and she lived –

FW: Yes, the kitchen and with some rooms on that part with the kitchen and all, you know, where she cooked was over there. But this other part they didn’t have a cook kitchen or anything, it was just rooms and had a hallway with rooms on both sides. It was pretty large, we thought it was a big place.

BB: Did it have, like a living room, where you could sit and entertain or was it just bedrooms?

HW: Just bedrooms.

BB: Okay, so whenever you were through you just went to the bedroom? And that’s all. Okay, there were two here in town, was the other one as big?

FW: Yes, it was pretty large.

BB: Who ran it?

FW: The same lady.

HW: She asked if there were two here?

FW: Yes, well, see the part where the lady ran was the part that had the rooms which she rented out, you know, mostly. Well, if they ate they had to go to the other part where the kitchen and dining room was and she had some bedrooms over there and they lived in that part, had a porch and everything on it, but the other part was

BB: Were they separated?

FW: Yes.

BB: They were totally two different deals.

HW: They had a partition between them.

BB: Oh, I see. Okay. What did it cost you when you spent the night there?

HW: The company paid it, I don't know what Mr. Clyde and them paid, they would give them something but there weren't any expenses or nothing. Wasn't much if Mrs. Tony was gonna pay it, it wasn't much.

BB: What was in the bedrooms, do you remember?

HW: Just a bed and a dresser, that's all you had.

FW: I don't know because I never did -

HW: Yeah, that's all it was, just a bed and dresser in there, and the bugs, they were there.

BB: Oh, they were there, you know that's the first time I've heard anybody say, complain about bedbugs.

HW: Oh, oh, all night I was hitting and slapping.

BB: You're sure it wasn't mosquitos?

HW: No ma'am, it wasn't no mosquitos and since they changes this here – I told my little wife “Honey, I never want another tacked mattress.” They get in there where the mattress is tacked together, where they have like buttons in there, you know and draw them- no. Lord.

BB: No more, huh?

HW: No ma'am, I told Mr. Clyde "Don't never carry me back there no more."

BB: So, Mr. Ligon did he have anybody else staying with him or just you? Just you and his family, huh?

HW: Yes, his family, Johnny Jones, he was there a while but Oscar and Lester, they were at home and Georgia Mae and Della, they were there.

BB: Thinking back about Fastrill, what sort of entertainment did you have over in that black side of town?

HW: We had a big old dance hall over there.

BB: Oh, they did? They had a dance hall? How often would it –

HW: All time, day and night – they had to go there and tell the man to quit getting up and playing that piano before daylight before the folks could go to work, but he would get everybody up nearly. That place would be full of folks before daylight.

BB: Well, they couldn't sell liquor or anything like that though there?

HW: No, it wasn't no business or anything. Bootleggers were around but they weren't in that part.

BB: Right, so it would have had to have been bootleggers, right?

HW: Yes.

BB: Who ran it?

HW: Jack Goss.

BB: Jack Goss? Is that the same one as the boarding house?

HW: The same one.

BB: Was it a part of the boarding house or was it separated?

HW: Well, he had some rooms at the boarding house. He'd let folks stay in there.

BB: I said was there –

HW: Oh, at the dance hall? He had about three rooms on the side, he would rent them out to folks, let them stay there, he wouldn't get nothing out of it.

BB: Yeah, so it was separated then physically from the –

HW: The whole big boarding house, I mean, I say boarding house, the dance hall, just a big wide place, well, on the outside, it wasn't on the inside of that dance hall, it was on the side where he had the rooms built.

BB: And then he had a separate boarding house where he kept boarders?

HW: The boarding house was off there by itself, the boarding house is where we stayed.

BB: Well, that sounds like a lot of fun, did they have bands or just the piano?

HW: Just the piano, bands?

BB: Did you ever have any bands?

HW: We didn't know nothing about no bands then. Only band we knew anything about, a fellow take a broom handle, rub it on the floor – sounds like a band, but they would jump for it, the cat whiskers –

BB: They liked dancing?

HW: Oh, they danced and I thought I was a blue's singer, I'd get up and try to sing, you know.

BB: Oh, I can just see you.

HW: I cut up, everybody got along. So loving, I'm telling you the truth.

BB: Did they have Juneteenth celebrations or July 4th?

HW: Yes, they'd have them the nineteenth.

BB: What would you do for that, what would the company do?

HW: Play ball, they had a big ball park right off the quarters. We played ball on the nineteenth like that and they'd have barbecues and stuff like that.

BB: Would the company furnish part of it?

HW: Oh, they'd give you some of it but they wouldn't give it all, just like they do here, they can give so much and then –

BB: So everybody would pitch in.

HW: Oh yes, everybody would pitch in there and help out, you know. And have a good time.

BB: What was Christmas like? Was it any different than what we do now, or what do you remember about it?

HW: Oh yes, a lot of times when Christmas would come it looked like a – I don't know what to say but it was good. We would go around the whites over there where they was, we all just got along like - and they'd come over where we were. Fourth of July we'd go over there and fraternize with them. In other words, we just got along good.

BB: Would you play on the different ball teams?

HW: Oh yes, they had a fellow out there playing with the whites. There was a man named "Smokey." The pitchinest man I have ever seen. His home was up there, place Dall, Diaville, near Jacksonville, you remember where Diaville – well, you know what I'm talking about. That man could hit a ball and they could throw two strikes about him and he'd take that next one and he'd hit it. Boy, he could hit that ball.

BB: Pretty good? Did you ever travel around, did your ball team ever go anywhere besides your place?

HW: Oh, we'd go over there in Houston County every once in a while, just across the Sam River that divided Cherokee County. To Houston County, like he's going to Elkhart. We'd go up there to a place called Slocum, we'd go back over in there, played ball. I thought those were the meanest folks there was in the world, over there at Slocum. You couldn't even stop there and get gas, un huh, til that storm come through there, that storm come and like to have wiped Slocum off – Slocum away and you could buy gas then.

BB: What did they have, a tornado or something?

HW: A storm, a twister, just twisted those trees, lots of folks hear me say that, they may not believe it but they just – cows, wagons, they'd have it up in the air. And out in the woods men was hauling logs and that thing set the log car off the track on the ground.

BB: Did it do any damage in Fastrill?

HW: Didn't kill 'nare a mule. There's a fellow there, it's funny but it's true, I don't know how much money he had but fellow there said he had so much money, you know, and that tin – just take tin – like you take a piece of paper and wrap it around your finger, went around them trees like that. We'd pull every piece of tin we could off the trees and maybe some of that money blew under it.

BB: When it blew his house up, huh?

HW: It tore it up – like to have blowed it away.

BB: What year was that, do you remember?

HW: No ma'm, I can't remember what year it was now.

BB: But it was while you still lived in Fastrill, huh?

HW: Yeah, cause the teachers, when we got home the teachers, cause – we were getting in early then, the teachers dismissed the children out of school. Miss Atkins, Miss Teal, what lives here, you know, was teaching over on the side and the white was on that side. As quick as they got the children out of school then-- a piece of something went right down through that school house. And I forget who was standing in front of the office, front of the commissary, but Mr. Burchfield could tell you, but I can't, whoever was standing right in front of the commissary a 2 x 4 from another house went right down through that man's house, just missed him and his wife both, that was on the white side. In the quarters there was a lady named – she died here, Conway, the wife's name and that rain was falling so, they had storm house but they couldn't get in the storm houses so me and her went out there in that water in that ditch, laid down. Had to do that, because it would have blowed us away.

BB: What kind of storm houses did people have?

HW: We had a deep one, down in the ground, big enough you know, you could put chairs in there, sit down in there when a storm came, it couldn't get to them then.

BB: So it just came up real fast?

HW: Yes, oh, that twister just – you know how these tornados come up, all that morning. Well, that was just smoke, he saw all that smoke, they – all them – that's what they call them – storm. And what made the storm houses get full of water, whatever it was, you know, just raised the lids off those storm houses, you couldn't see nothing but the lids, you know, when you go on those steps down there, but when they raised then, them things were full of water.

BB: Oh, goodness.

HW: Lay down – everywhere they could get to lay down to keep from getting blowed off. Them houses, I'm telling you, them houses had halls in them.

BB: Are you thinking like shotgun house with the hall down the middle?

HW: I call it a bungalow – not a bungalow – what do they call that? Shotgun house – see what he wants – okay baby – thank you, sugar boy – if you ever talk with Mr. Burchfield he can tell you a whole lot more than I imagine I can.

BB: Okay – well, I'll have to look him up, he is not one I had on my list.

HW: No use to talk with Mr. Harvey because he – he may not can remember nothing – Mr. Harvey – you can talk with him, now he has a sister stay down here – and a bunch of

nieces down here. When I go down there we have a time down there. "Horace, where you been?" "I been home." "You come down and see us now." I'd go down there and see them sometimes.

BB: Oh me – Mr. Warren, whenever you moved to Diboll, could you describe what colored town looked like at that time, what the quarters looked like to you?

HW: Over here?

BB: About how many people lived here?

HW: In Diboll? I don't know – baby can tell you, there were a bunch of people here. Right there in front of our church there was all houses (Shiloh Baptist Church).

BB: Oh, right up here?

HW: Yes, that was all houses up in there. Houses all back over there where the club is – that club – was nothing but houses – there where the plywood – all houses, nothing but houses.

They had No. 2 mill and the box factory back over there, you remember me talking about the box factory?

BB: Yes, so all the houses were back behind the mill?

HW: At the old box factory, quarters still over there.

BB: Well, didn't the stacks of lumber used to be right up the road here?

HW: Hardwood, hardwood, hardwood yard

FW: Where the plant's over there on this side of the highway, that used to be a lumber yard out there.

HW: Yes, hardwood

BB: So, it all looked a whole lot different than now? How many churches did you have back here during that time, when he came in the early '30's?

FW: Had three.

BB: Had three, can you name them?

FW: Shiloh Baptist Church, there were four – Perry's Chapel, that's the Methodist Church and Church of the Living God.

BB: Now that's on down that way, isn't it?

FW: They call that Dub Ranch. Where they moved those houses that are here now, they put in that – that was woods down there where those little churches are now, that was all woods, they cleared that up and moved us down, most some over here and some down there over by the cemetery.

HW: Yeah, call that Ponderosa by the cemetery.

FW: Back over there, back of the cemetery because my mother – they moved her house over there. So, you know, it was one of those houses over there. And then they moved us on down – and they named that Garrett Ranch and still calls it Garrett Ranch.

BB: Garrett Ranch. That's a strange name, isn't it? Was is after somebody or just –

HW: Just named that

BB: Well, okay, I've got Shiloh Baptist, Perry Chapel, Church of the Living God and what was the other one?

HW: Well, they call it Church of Christ now but we always called it Sanctified Church. They call it Church of Christ.

BB: Okay, which one do you attend?

FW: Shiloh

BB: Right up here, right? Did you have a dance hall here when you - ?

HW: Ma'am?

BB: I said – did you have a dance hall here, too?

HW: Oh yes.

BB: Where was this?

HW: It was right there in front of the church.

BB: In front of this one?

HW: Yes, called South Side.

FW: South Side Café

BB: And so they had a restaurant, too?

HW: In other words, it was right there beside that post, you see where they are trying to go open that gate? Well, me and my wife lived right on down below that, when they came around that post they'd be right on our porch nearly bout it.

BB: Well, you were right there at it, huh? Well, that's okay.

HW: You remember the house I was telling you about, they moved them over there on the Ponderosa behind the cemetery and named it Ponderosa.

BB: And the barbershop and all that was –

FW: Right up there on the front, the barber shop, the café was on this side and the barber shop and our house set back in there.

HW: The barber shop right next to our house.

FW: All that road from that church, across the road down there were houses, clean on down and it was a shop -

BB: All the way down to First Street?

HW: All up side of South First was houses.

FW: Houses on down there where Mr. Smith, you know, all those were houses on this street.

BB: On First Street, right?

FW: Okay, that was the one row of white houses, and then right behind that, where Mr. Smith lived, all those were houses.

BB: Mr. Peters sent us a tape and he said there were some domino parlors around. Were they still around when you were here?

HW: Dominos?

FW: Domino shack, a little place there by Mr. Dan Deberry?

HW: Well, the first one was at the Red Stand.

BB: At the Red Stand?

HW: And there was another little café called the Red Stand.

BB: The Red Stand?

FW: Just about middle ways of the quarters.

HW: And then there was another little old stand that Ottie Dewberry had, just a little domino shack, that was what he had and shine shoes.

BB: Well, would you have to pay to play games or that was just where everybody showed up?

HW: They just showed up there playing dominos, had fun playing dominos. I love to – now she stopped me from playing dominos.

BB: Describe these cafes for me. What did they look like?

HW: Oh, they were nice cafes, they were real nice. The South Side – that was a café and a hall, too, a dance hall together, see?

BB: Oh, I see, the Red Stand was?

HW: The Red Stand was –

BB: Or was it just a –

HW: There was a little café there but there used to be a pressing shop and they made –

FW: On the back.

HW: Pressing shop on the back and a café – I mean –

BB: Oh, a pressing shop, okay.

FW: On the front part was the café.

BB: What would they mainly specialize in, like family style meals or would you go and order?

FW: Hamburgers.

BB: Short orders?

HW: Potato pies and things like that.

BB: What was their favorite?

FW: Potato pies.

HW: I could eat more of them potato pies than anybody, it wasn't no great business, you see.

FW: You know, there used to be a barber shop in there, too.

HW: Yeah, and – in that Red Stand.

FW: Because my mother's husband was a barber and he barbered in there. In there in The Red Stand they had a barber shop and they had a pressing shop, then the little café part on the front.

BB: All the other was in the back? How big a place was it?

FW: It was pretty good size.

HW: It was nearly bout as big as this house is.

BB: Did the company have any part in it or was it –

HW: No, it was built for the folks.

BB: Oh, it was built and then other people ran it? So it belonged to the company really. How what about the...

FW: They probably had to pay a little rent. Our rent was about \$5.00 a month.

BB: Yes, I know, I wish – but then you didn't have anything either. What was your house like when you paid \$5.00 a month for?

FW: Well, it was pretty good, we had to paper it up with newspaper, newspaper to put on the walls and we had two bedrooms and a kitchen, the kitchen and dining room was all together – we had two bedrooms and a porch, that was all we had in our house but it was – some of them had bigger houses.

BB: How many people lived there?

FW: It was just three of us and sometimes my step-brother would be there.

BB: And then your mom and your step-daddy. So there were five in four rooms?

FW: Four.

BB: Four, okay, that wasn't so bad then, that was kind of nice. What did the South Side Café look like?

HW: Oh, it was beautiful, it was pretty and clean around there, they kept it clean around there. It was real nice.

BB: And was it a company built café, too?

HW: Company built that.

FW: They built it.

HW: They built everything you wanted there, anything you wanted...anything that you wanted the company would build it for you, you weren't paying no rent, wasn't nothing – now if you get one now you have to build it yourself. In other words, the company was just naturally born good, it was just good, the folks would work and they got along good and whatever you wanted you go to the company and they would help you out with it. Go to Mr. Temple, Mr. Arthur got a hold to it, you see his uncle and them didn't know what to do with that money, he was going to put that money to work, he put that money to work and it is working for him, too.

FW: Mr. Henry Temple.

HW: Yeah, he died right down there and little Arthur took over. I used to know all them big men but I don't know them – done forgot a lot of them now.

BB: Well, did they have – what did you feel about their open door policies as far as being able to go and talk to them if you had a grievance or felt like something wasn't just right, did you ever feel like you could go and talk to Mr. Temple or to Mr. Henry Temple?

HW: Oh yes, there's no doubt about that – they'd let me talk to them.

FW: He'd let them have money – he was good about that.

HW: Yeah, he helped my – he would send folks that would want to go to Marlin for baths.

FW: Yeah, he sent them to Marlin every year cause – Jack Maynard -.

HW: All that wanted to go.

FW: He had to go every year to Marlin and take hot baths.

BB: For his health?

HW: Yeah, until Mr. Arthur got here, go to Mr. Arthur and --.

FW: Mr. Henry Temple before he died, let them go every year.

BB: Just take off and –

FW: Yes.

HW: Until Mr. Arthur taken over, Mr. Maynard went down there to him and he said “Yeah, I’ll send you but you’ve got to pay the money back.” The man got sick, man like to fell out, Mr. Henry – “Mr. Henry, that’s my uncle, I’m different from him.” He was a real young man when he come here and taken over, too. How old was he, babe? About twenty nine or thirty, wasn’t he? I think he was twenty nine, I believe.

BB: I know he was pretty young. He made a lot of changes when he came. How did you feel about the changes, did you like – did it seem the same to you?

HW: When he changed it?

BB: Yes, whenever he started doing things a lot differently, what did people think about it?

HW: Well, we had to go paying rent, you see, and I wasn’t used to that. That was the big one right there. But if you needed help he’d help you, but you had to pay it back.

BB: Right – and that was unusual?

HW: Yes, right now when I got off from work. I loved them for it, too, when I got down from work Mr. Burkhalter, Mr. J. D. and all, Mr. Joe Denman said “Horace, is there anything you owe on your car?” I said “No sir, I don’t owe anything.” “But if you need us to help you, we’ll help you any time.” That is one thing that is good about them, I love them for it. And I told them, I said “Boss man,” I said, “I appreciate it all, it was my fault if I ain’t keeping a quarter – if I made a dollar just to keep a quarter of it,” I told them, “I appreciate all this, it is my fault it I ain’t got a little money now because you gave me a job and it’s my fault if I throwed it away”

BB: Did you own this house?

HW: No ma’am, we went down there three or four times to sign up and Mr. Stubblefield and Mr. Faircloth, whatever his name is – they were in that office then, where the office was, before they built that new one there. Went down there and sign up and sign up and sign up and go in there. They say “Well, we can’t sell the houses.” I say “Why?” _ “Owe too much, owe the government.” I said “We paid for it.” And so we been renting ever since.

BB: And I know they were really wanting people to buy.

HW: Go down – pay your money down but they give your money back.

BB: Well, I’ll be darned.

HW: He told us said “We’re on Garrett Ranch down here, the money you paid on these houses when you moved in here will go for rent and when you go to sell the house, what you pay the rent on the houses you add that in on you house? They got out of all that, they stopped it.

BB: So it made it real different. Well, do you have anything – we are about out of tape, do you have anything you would like to add?

HW: No ma’am – I just want to be straight all down the line with it. Like I said – if you get a chance now check with Mr. Burchfield, he can tell you a whole lot. You ain’t got his name on there, have you?

BB: Yeah, I wrote his name down a couple of times.

HW: Well, me and him worked together a many a day, and his daughter, I think they are the sweetest things, just like her mother. It was Nell, you know, she works out there in the office. And I’ll say this here then. When I went to work here at the planer I was out in the woods under Mr. Wells, so every time it rained, you know, Mr. Harper got killed there – every time it rained we would have to come in, so I asked them for a transfer out of the woods to the planer. Richie Wells wouldn’t give me no transfer – I said “Mr. Boss man, do you love Miss Vina, do you love your family?” He said “Yes” I said, “Well, I can’t take care of myself and my family, go out there and come right back to the house.” He said “Well, you doing things in the woods, we want to keep you out there.” I said “Yes sir, but I can’t take care of my family if I ain’t working.”

BB: That’s true.

HW: That was when they had that section up there by the railroad and Mr. Wells was staying up there so I went up there and his brother said he would give you a transfer. He stayed in the house right down below Mrs. Joyce, from Seale’s Store, that second house down there. So me and my baby went up there. Said “I ain’t got nothing to write it on, Horace.” I said “Write it on a piece of newspaper will be alright.” I went to work out there at the planer then for \$0.70 an hour.

BB: What year was this?

HW: I don’t know, babe, what year was it? I can’t remember now, but anyway I worked out there at the planer until I ended up with an ulcer, they transferred me out there. I drove a side carriage. Drove them jitneys and worked in them pick up crews. Transferred me over there to the plywood then went to loading those chip cars, no doubt you may have seen them go down the track, a lot of chip cars loaded. I loaded that when I got off from work.

BB: When did you retire?

FW: You retired in '75.

HW: Yeah- '75.

BB: And then you've worked at – as a crossing guard ever since then?

HW: Well, Mr. Dean was talking about that not long ago. Mr. Dean said, "Horace, do you know how long you been down here?" "No sir." I said, "I really don't, I hadn't thought about it." He said "You been here eight years." You been right here on this crossing eight years." See, if I got something to do, take care of my job, I'm going to take care of my job. I ain't had a job –

FW: Mamma died the 26th of January of '77 and you had started working before mamma died. I think it was '76.

HW: I hadn't thought nothing about it, he said "You been here eight years." Went to hauling mail, company wanted me to haul mail for them, post office to the office, he is still doing that. When he lost his wife he still doing the same thing, I been there ever since. I made history on that road down there so Mr. Robbins, he was school Superintendent, he said you in A B class so when he got out, had that big party over there at school?

BB: Oh, for Mr. Robbins? Yeah.

HW: Were you over there, well, you ought to have seen me over there. Me and him hugged up there a while.

BB: Yeah, we were all there.

HW: He told me who was going to be over it, I said "Is he as good as you?" He said "He's a nice man." I said "Okay, then."

BB: Yes, you make me laugh lots of mornings they way you are out there chasing those little kids, waving to everybody.

HW: Oh yea, I'm going to do that – friends – one lady told me oh, she doesn't bring her children over here now – said "I sure do miss you," say "I'd look up and see that smile and them hands go up."

BB: That's right.

END OF INTERVIEW