

BUDDY BUSH

Interview 155a

January 11, 2000

Jonathan Gerland, Interviewer

Courtney Lawrence, Transcriber

ABSTRACT: In this interview with Jonathan Gerland, E.H. “Buddy” Bush, Jr. reminisces about growing up in Diboll and Newton and Lufkin and working for Temple-White, TexLam, and Deep East Texas Council of Governments. He talks about the Believe It Or Not Café, working for Paul Durham as photographer and film developer at The Free Press, and running Buddy’s Cash Only store.

Jonathan Gerland (hereafter JG): This is Jonathan Gerland and I’m with Mr. Buddy Bush. Today’s date is January the 11th, 2000. I started to say 1999 (laughter)...but, it’s the year 2000. And we are in the library meeting room and we’re just going to ask him a few questions about his memories of Diboll. Mr. Bush, if you can, just start by telling us your full name and when and where you were born.

Buddy Bush (hereafter BB): Ok. Well, my full name is E. H. Bush Jr. And I will use the initials because I never liked the name.

JG: What is the name?

BB: The name is Elbert.

JG: Elbert.

BB: And...I was born in Lufkin, September 23, 1928. My family was living in Diboll at the time. I was probably one of the few children here at that time that was born in a hospital, ‘cause my mother had some kind of an illness – felt like it probably work better in a hospital.

JG: Who were your parents?

BB: That was E. H. Bush and Minnie Jackson Bush. My mother was from Diboll, I don’t think she...she was not born in Diboll, but my grandfather was a sawyer. And...

JG: At one of the mills in Diboll?

BB: Yeah. He was from Diboll, right. And he was sort of a temperamental man and he tended to move around a lot because he would get mad at his employers and they’d get mad at him and whatever. He moved quite a bit. However, by the time he moved to Diboll he was pretty well settled down. I think they moved here around the turn of the century. I’m not sure.

JG: Ok. So he had, so what you're saying is he had worked at other mills before Diboll?

BB: Oh yeah, he had worked...and I think, back in the late 1800's, early 1900's, particularly sawyers tended to move around between mills. Because he had worked in Louisiana, he'd worked...I know Corrigan, 'cause that's coming through here the other day I was coming down here to take some pictures of some tombstones.

JG: Oh ok.

BB: ...he's buried down there.

JG: Yeah.

BB: And...I've been doing some work on my ancestors, trying to see how far back I can go.

JG: Uh huh.

BB: So, that's part of that.

JG: Where was your mother born?

BB: I don't really know. Not unless...well let's see, Polly, Louisiana...which doesn't exist anymore.

JG: Was it a sawmill town?

BB: It was a sawmill town.

JG: Yeah.

BB: Yeah, and when she, like most of the county seats, or in the case of Louisiana the Parish seats, the courthouse burned of course, and the records of her birth burned. So, when she started to apply for social security she had to find people that had known her and I remember her saying that she was born in Polly, Louisiana.

JG: And, tell us a little bit about your early memories of Diboll. Born in 1928...

BB: Yeah.

JG: 'Course you kind of grew up during the Depression.

BB: Yep. Well...

JG: Your parents were living at Diboll at the time you were born you just were born in the Lufkin area.

BB: Right. My dad was a schoolteacher. And he was, I guess, when I was born he was teaching. I don't know if he was teaching here or not, we did live a little while in Louisiana. I don't remember living anywhere except Diboll at that time. I know we were...and well my first memories of it, in a comparative sense it was pretty rag tag looking place because most of what was built had never seen a coat of paint. And the streets were all dirt streets and...Now this is kind of a funny memory, but, I remember I used to have to ride with my dad over to the quarters to pick up a black woman who came and did house work for my mother. And at the backside of the mill they had a lot of lumber stacked up and it was very, it looked like it been there for a long time and it turned grey. And that's strange why I remember that. It's one of the same reasons it's stuck in my mind, I thought, "They must never sell that stuff because it's been there so long." (laughter)

JG: The market was pretty bad huh?

BB: It was I guess. Pretty slow. 'Cause that lumber sure looked like it had been there for many years. (laughter)

JG: Many, many years, huh.

BB: That's strange.

JG: What do you remember of school?

BB: Well, school. Well...when I started in the first grade, of course it was across this old creek there was there and we lived over on the highway...right up here actually.

JG: The old highway that's right up...

BB: The drug store...yeah, the old highway, we lived down a little way. In fact, probably along about where the J. P. office is, in that general area. And...so I naturally, I just walked to school. I had a little dog that would follow me over to school; he'd stand in line with me while I went in the first day. Well, then he'd go back home, and at lunch time he'd be there ready for me to walk home with him. I don't think the school, well, 'course the school were the old style buildings you had in East Texas, since there was no cooling in there they had real high ceilings, high windows, and for heating they would cut hardwood, bring it and pile it up out in the schoolyard. And there was just a world of hardwood out there with the stove. We used to build caves in those things and stuff. We'd have a little ole' cave running all through that hardwood, that's, I guess, the main thing I remember about school. I only went to the third grade and part of the fourth grade here. And then we moved to Newton.

JG: Newton.

BB: Newton.

JG: 'Cause your father wasn't...?

BB: Yeah...he...for reasons which I don't understand, or don't remember...he lost his job here and moved to Newton. And...then later on we moved to Buna and then later on back here. And then he became a coach, well, he was actually junior high Principal in Lufkin later on. So...

JG: I was going to ask you about...you brought us a photo just a while ago of the interior of the, Believe It or Not Café. I started to say Believe It or Not hotel, but, just the café. Tell us a little bit about that...what you remember of that.

BB: Well, I've always loved hamburgers. And I thought that when we got in that café, I thought it was going to be a great deal because I could have a hamburger any time I wanted one. And...shucks, but I finally got to where I was so tired of hamburgers (laughter) I couldn't look one in the face.

JG: Yeah, your father and mother kind of ran it.

BB: Well, yeah...I'm not real clear at this point exactly how it worked but, my grandfather also helped them run it, he was a pretty good cook. And obviously my uncle...

JG: Now, Albert Jackson was your grandfather.

BB: Yeah, yeah. And he was a good cook. I think Daddy really got into that after he lost his job with the school. And I'm not sure how long he just ran that café, I think he did for a while and then he got the job in Newton. So, then my grandparents ran it for a while.

JG: Who...I know you said you're a little unclear about all of it, but, who actually owned the building?

BB: I have no idea. The company I would say actually owned the building. I think that's true because after it quit being a café I think they converted it to a restaurant. For years it was still there.

JG: Yeah, I think a Mrs. Waltman...I forget the first name but she had lived there for a while.

BB: Yeah, I believe that's right.

JG: And Mr. Nelson, Edwin Nelson had told me that his father sort of either organized it or built it, but, I never understood if he actually owned it or not.

BB: Now, I think all the buildings, everything...out, except up in the Copes Town, the company owned all of them and over let's see, Press Holcomb owned some property over there. But, other than that all the rest seemed to be company owned, I'm sure it...

JG: So you think that was part of the company business and they just allowed...?

BB: Yeah, well, they just rented the building.

JG: Just rented the building out, ok.

BB: Yeah, 'cause it was like a hotel. They owned it...

JG: Now, you also mentioned that your grandparents, your Grandfather Albert Jackson had run the Antlers Hotel for a while. Tell us a little bit about that.

BB: Well, actually, I think originally it was he and my Uncle Buster.

JG: Buster Jackson.

BB: Yeah, that ran it...

JG: That was your mother's brother?

BB: Yeah.

JG: Buster. Ok.

BB: Yeah, actually, my mother was how daddy went, because my dad was from Louisiana. (Unintelligible) When he was going to Centenary in the summer he would, he'd play minor league baseball to make enough money to get him through college another year. And...so he was playing in Leesville and my Uncle Buster was playing baseball with another team I think and...they got to be sort of friends. So, my mother came over to Leesville to visit her brother and met my dad. And my dad always said he could never move East Texas girls out of East Texas. (laughter) There was no use in trying.

JG: No use of even trying.

BB: So you were going to wind up, you know, you wound up here living in Diboll. As bad as Diboll looked in the '30's, I tell you what, we thought it was the center of the world. (laughter)

JG: So you came back to Diboll approximately what year and then did you graduate from Diboll High School?

BB: Yeah, yeah...we came back here in '44.

JG: '44.

BB: And I went my junior, senior year.

JG: Ok. And you graduated in what year?

BB: '46.

JG: '46.

BB: Yeah.

JG: Then you mentioned you went into the service.

BB: '46.

JG: '46.

BB: I graduated from high school I think on the 25th of May and a few days, Vernon Burkhalter and I joined.

JG: On the same day?

BB: Well, we joined together.

JG: Together.

BB: But, we weren't together for any period of time. But we did leave.

JG: Where...just briefly, where were you during the service? How long were you there and...?

BB: I was...went from here to Ft. Sam Houston and then to Ft. Knox, Kentucky – took basic training there about eight weeks. Came back on leave for about three weeks and then I went to Camp Filman, New Jersey...got on a ship and went to Italy to Trieste, Italy. And was there for the rest of the time I was in the Army which was November '46 to about April or May 1949.

JG: '49. So you got out before the Korean...?

BB: Just barely, I didn't realize, you know, till I got to thinking about it...realize how close it was. Boy I tell you what I would have sure been dismayed if I thought I was going home and then all of a sudden...but, I came home and decided to go to college since I was eligible for G. I. Bill and went to Stephen F. Austin. And when the Korean War started I was in the reserves so I got recalled and was in the Army for a year...well, not really a year. Probably about 9 months.

JG: I know you've done photography for quite a while...did you get into that in the service or...?

BB: No, I really didn't. I always kind of wanted to do it. It looked interesting to me...so, I don't know when I decided to buy myself a good camera. And...actually Edwin Nelson was the one that told Paul that I was doing photography. Paul was looking for somebody to do some photography for the paper. But, mainly though to do the processing...

JG: Dark room work...yeah.

BB: And I had set up a dark room and all that stuff....so, no real problem with that.

JG: You were doing that at home?

BB: At home, yeah. Well, I was living in Lufkin then. In '62 we moved to Diboll down on Carter Dr., and we built a home. When we built the house I had a dark room built into it which was really nice.

JG: So, you built the home in Diboll.

BB: Yeah.

JG: Ok.

BB: And it was the most convenient dark room I ever had because I had everything built into it. I put in a temperature control system, so, processing film I could do very easily.

JG: When...so you were actually processing film before you moved to Diboll.

BB: Yeah.

JG: About when did you start doing work for Paul Durham and I guess the News Bulletin. Did you do it back when it was that title?

BB: No. Well...let's see I'm not real sure. I think it was...

JG: I think the News Bulletin started after the Buzz Saw ended about '52. I can't remember now when the name changed to Free Press.

BB: I just guess...I probably started processing all the stuff about '59 or '60 or something. Yeah, I'd always...it always sounds fun to do your own enlargements.

JG: Right. That's almost...I mean, that's what I tell people a lot...it's almost like taking another picture. You know, you capture the men on film but then the processing and printing is, you know, you've got as much exposure control there as you do.

BB: When I first started processing kind of a funny thing happened. We went out and took some pictures of our children and at that time I didn't have any way to control the temperature of the water. So I adjusted my belt pan, made it shorter, in order to compensate the fact that the temperature was probably about 100 degrees. And I put it in the water, washed it, and then I hung it up to dry. And I looked up and the gelatin had melted and cracked and started to run off. (laughter)

JG: Started...

BB: So I said, "Well, I gotta do something different. This is not working real well."

JG: Yeah.

BB: And those pictures, they look kind of like you're looking through Jell-O or something.

JG: Yeah, nowadays that'd be artistic. (laughter) How'd you do that?

BB: Serendipity.

JG: So when you had built the house....were you actually doing most, or all, or about how much were you doing for the newspaper, the processing work?

BB: Doing practically all of it.

JG: Practically all of it.

BB: I think all the processing probably and a fair amount of the...

JG: Ok.

BB: I was working at Temple-White.

JG: At the handle factory at the time, also.

BB: Yeah.

JG: So, you're doing your photo processing on the side.

BB: Yeah. I spent nearly all my weekends working on photos one way or another.

JG: I haven't asked you about your personal family. Do you have a wife?

BB: Well, yeah.

JG: I heard you say we.

BB: Well, I'm married to the former Betty Wiley. Betty Sue Wiley of course, it's not popular anymore to have two names. She was the prettiest little girl that walked. And she also was from Diboll. We knew each other in high school...in fact I dated her some in high school. But, she was not the kind of girl I was looking for in high school. (laughter) And...she was actually a year ahead of me in school. She graduated in '45...that was because I was born on 23rd of September which means I was not quite six years old.

JG: Right.

BB: And my dad didn't believe in me getting into school too early so he made me wait around another year.

JG: I was born at the end of August so I was always young for mine and you're old for yours.

BB: Yeah, right. So, we, like I say, we dated in high school. After I got out of the Army she and her family had moved to Lufkin and my dad and mother were living in Lufkin. So...we got together and eventually married. Three children, Karen, who's the oldest. Mark who works down here was the middle child. Our youngest was Carol who is a nurse practitioner in Lufkin. They're all right around here...and you can't get rid of them.

JG: Tell me a little bit about the handle factory, working there. What was your job? Did you have several jobs?

BB: I was the accountant.

JG: Accountant.

BB: Yeah. And I worked there at night, probably the most miserable nine years of my life.

JG: Really.

BB: Yeah. The...

JG: Because of the job, or just the people?

BB: The Whites were...if they weren't crazy they were pretty close to it. It's funny the guy that I took his place was from Michigan. How he wound up in Diboll I have no idea. His name was Tom Kelly...and he'd been showing me the ropes, you know, and he said, "Well, I wanna tell you this before I leave." He said, "When I came here, the people at the plant said, they asked me," he said, "Since you're not from this area we want you to tell us what you think about Whites." He said, "We think they're from Mexico." And he said, "I told them, you know, they couldn't be crazy and be running a fairly good sized business." And he said, "But I have been here three years and I'm ready to tell you right now, by God they're crazy." (laughter) And that was my opinion too. They were crazy. If

you could ever have a management school...these people would have been perfect examples of what not to do.

JG: What not to do.

BB: Because they had a tremendous turnover.

JG: Were they micromanagers or...?

BB: They were just plain unpleasant...about almost anything.

JG: Ok.

BB: And it was...I guess I was brought up in the old school that the boss is right. And, however it didn't take too long before...and it was her who died recently...son. I should have gone...I should have just gone on somewhere else but I liked it and I wanted to stay. It took me a while to decide what I was going to go do.

JG: When did the handle factory shut down?

BB: Well, it was shut down in 8.

JG: In 8.

BB: I believe...yeah.

JG: And so you left about....

BB: I left in '72.

JG: In '72.

BB: Well, actually I left before that. I left, let's see, 1960. '65...I believe, 'cause I worked in the Tex-Lam after that. But I had worked there from '56, yeah '56 to '65.

JG: What was the biggest part of the business then as far as products....what were y'all making in the time you were there. Broom and mop...

BB: Broom and mop handles. Yeah.

JG: You ever make anything smaller like hammer handles or anything like that?

BB: No, you'd have to have hardwood and this was...this whole business was based on the idea of using the waste from sawmills.

JG: So, you're just pine.

BB: Pine. Right. Because yellow pine made an excellent handle for brooms and mops. But it was, like I said, it was based on utilizing waste. And what happened was, they found other ways to utilize the waste that were a whole lot less trouble than making square pine.... particle board and all this stuff...

JG: Fiberboard and wood flour and all that.

BB: ...you didn't have to fool with it like you did to cut those squares. 'Cause they'd take the edgings off of a log and they could take it and you know, cut a square out enough to make a handle out of it.

JG: Right.

BB: Later on, nearly all these companies found ways, better ways, to utilize and besides these people were hard to get a long with if you were providing them with waste products too because they were just difficult to deal with. Scuz to their suppliers as they were to their employees. And so they had a lot of trouble with the people that were supplying them with raw material.

JG: And that was kind of Edwin Nelson's job from what I...travel all around trying to get squares.

BB: That was Edwin's job, to try and keep these people pacified. 'Course Edwin's a pretty good politician and he, would but, you know, if the Whites ever dealt with them they would probably pack up and leave you know. And they had a guy, I don't know if he's still in business now, I'm sure Edwin can tell you his name, Bill something or other is his name, in Groveton. And Edwin told me during World War II he had gotten this guy to make squares for Temple White. And he went over one day and the guy had the machine all packed up for him to take, he said, "Bill," said, "What are you doing?" He said, "I figured out the money can be made in handles that's not in making squares." So he later became one of their major competitors. In fact, I think he had actually a bigger company than they did and I think that's actually, in the end, that's what happened to Temple-White was they got to where the sawmills didn't produce enough waste and you couldn't buy lumber and rip it up and make handles and make money out of it.

JG: Yeah...double the cost.

BB: They were, like I said, they were not good managers. They didn't look to the future, they thought the future was going to be just like the past...it never does. You always got to figure out what's going on and swim with it. (laughter) I was certainly glad that I left when I did because if I had stayed until the '80's I wouldn't have been quite old enough to retire. And then I would have been upstream without a paddle. (laughter)

JG: Yeah. And then what would you do then? Right, right. So, you went directly from there to TexLam?

BB: Yeah.

JG: Tell us about Tex-Lam. What'd you do, same type of work...accounting?

BB: Yeah, yeah. I did.

JG: How many employees did Tex-Lam employ?

BB: I don't really remember, maybe a hundred.

JG: Hundred.

BB: Maybe.

JG: Was it pretty steady work, I mean, was it seasonal or did it just depend on contracts they had or were they able to maintain...?

BB: It depended on contracts...they bid on contracts since they manufactured beams and arches. And it was kind of cyclical, you know, if the economy got down, going downhill, Tex-Lam would slow down. And Don Burnley was the President. And Don was likeable, a likeable guy.

JG: Say that last name again.

BB: Burnley. B-U-R-N-L-E-Y

JG: Burnley. Ok.

BB: Yeah. He had been a salesman at Temple and I think he was sort of, I don't know, he was sort of tired of logging. And so anyway, when they had started out they were partners with the family. But, actually had started the business in Houston and they convinced him to move it up here, and I think Temple was still fifty-fifty partners with them. But they didn't make any money for a long time, and finally Temple exercised their option to take it over completely and that's when they put Burnley in charge of it. It was kind of a funny story in itself. Like I said, they had never made any profit.

JG: Now, that's while it's here in Diboll?

BB: Yeah, they had always lost money.

JG: Ok.

BB: And...so, after I was there for about a year I went in to talk to the sales manager. I said, "Well, how do you calculate what you're charging for this stuff?" They had a formula you wouldn't believe. I mean you could build an atom bomb on it, probably shorter formula. (laughter) It had been figured out by a previous sales manager and it was

one of those things they were just continuing to use it without understanding, you know. And I told them, I said, "Well," 'cause they had talked about putting it on a second shift and running two shifts, the night shift. And I told this guy, make big business, John Rankin was his name, and I told him, I said, "Well, you can run this place twenty-four hours a day, but," I said, "No more than you're charging for it. You'll never make a profit." He said, "Well we can't sell it." I said, "Ok. But you're just going to continue to lose money." And so this went on for about a year and Rankin left and they hired new sales manager named Dick Doonce. And he came in there and he said, "I'd like to make you some profit." He said, "How much do I have to charge? What do I have to do to make a profit?" And I told him, I said, "If you'll mark it all up about 30% you'll make a profit." He said, "Ok." Within three months they made the first profit they'd ever made. And 'course, I mean, this is human nature, Burnley, as soon as they make a profit, he goes into Arthur's office and told him he'd formed a wonder up there and deserved a raise. (laughter)

JG: All it was just raising the selling price.

BB: That's right. It's so ridiculous that you wouldn't think that a company was run like that, but that's how it was, that's all it took. And so he went along for I guess two or three years doing very well. But then, we got into a recession or depression and sure enough you couldn't really charge that price and sell enough to do any good.

JG: Well, were churches a big church...?

BB: Church was the primary, yeah. There was a lot of people that were in...at that time it was probably like jail builders are today. There were a lot of people that did nothing but build churches.

JG: Yeah.

BB: And then the only problem you had with those guys, was a lot of them were fly by night. They would buy your material, then they would build the church, they'd get the money and they were gone. They never bothered to pay. So that was an important part of it, was getting their money (laughter) before they got away with what they owed you.

JG: I know. I just saw the other day the front cover of the 1962 annual report for Southern Pine Lumber Company. It showed the interior of the First Methodist Church in Lufkin.

BB: Yeah.

JG: It said that Tex-Lam...

BB: I know the one in Jasper too personal interest over there....'cause I was working there when they did that. And there's a big shopping center in Dallas I think, Old Town Village, which I have never seen. But I think the last year we were in business that was

the main source, was that one. It's bound to be, you know, 'cause that laminated stuff was beautiful.

JG: Uh huh.

BB: It's expensive but beautiful.

JG: And I suppose the lumber came from the sawmill here in Diboll.

BB: Yeah, yes it did.

JG: Where do they get the glue?

BB: Well, there was... basically there was two kinds of glue, there was kasine, which is what they use to glue these in here. I'm sure they're done with, yeah, they're done with kasine.

JG: We're just looking at the rafters in the meeting room here.

BB: Yeah. And the water proof, which anything that you've got outside they use it, although they did get screwed up occasionally. Put the kasine on the water proof, and when you did it was just like a deck of cards and when it got wet it all came undone. I think the kasine, we primarily got it from foreign... I'm not sure where the waterproofing came from.

JG: These here were probably made by Tex-Lam.

BB: I'm sure they were. I say I'm sure, I'm not really sure. (laughter) They might have been.

JG: Yeah. I would imagine so. I think the building was built in '62.

BB: Tex-Lam, I believe they were in business... they might have been.

JG: Yeah, or '64. Yeah, I know, like I said on the cover of the '62 report it said...

BB: Did it show them? Well I'm sure they did it then. Ok.

JG: Yeah, I mean this was '64 so... I would imagine yeah.

BB: Oh yeah. '64 I'm sure they did it then.

JG: And then I guess they glued them and then had to run them through planers huh? Had some big planers there?

BB: Well, no they didn't run through a planer because they were already planed.

SIDE TWO

JG: Tape to get started. We're continuing our talk about Tex-Lam. So you started Tex-Lam...you did start in '72, you probably started before that you were saying or...?

BB: Well, I started Tex-Lam in '65.

JG: '65.

BB: '64 or '65. 'Cause a side story, in '65 I bought out this little old drive-in grocery up here, used to be right across from the post office.

JG: What was it called?

BB: Buddy's Cash Grocery. (laughter)

JG: Buddy's Cash Grocery. That's what you called it when you had it. What was it before that?

BB: Gosh...let's see...I can't remember. Seems like...

JG: I imagine Louis...

BB: Yeah, yeah...Louis knows 'cause his dad worked for me up there.

JG: Oh ok. So it's called Buddy's Cash Groceries.

BB: Buddy's Cash, yeah...

JG: Approximately what year...I know it's hard to remember exact years but...

BB: Well, some things I remember real well, and some I don't. '65 was the year I got into it.

JG: Ok.

BB: And I got out in '61.

JG: '71.

BB: '71. And Son worked for me I think all the time I was there, Son Landers.

JG: His father...Louis' father.

BB: Louis' dad. I don't know if Louis is a junior or not but he may be.

JG: I think he is and I think his grandfather was Louis also.

BB: A Louis too. Yeah. I guess that's the reason he called him Son because, you know, there was the father and then there was the son. And he was...let's see...that went to Vietnam and got hurt.

JG: Yeah. Right...I think in '70.

BB: Yeah. Well, yeah. We were still going in '71 and I got tired...running a business and working too.

JG: So you were working, doing dark room photography for the newspaper...

BB: Well we had...the photography kind of lapsed because I just got so busy with this other stuff. But, anyway, 'cause that thing, you know, opened at seven in the morning closed at nine at night and that was seven days a week. Boy, I wouldn't do that again (laughter) I owe money anyway. We did that from '65 to '71 and like I said I decided to get out of that and it wasn't, I bet it wasn't nine months by the time I got out of the grocery store until the Tex-Lam started to get into a real economic bind and started losing money. So, I guess the end of '71 they closed it down and I stayed up there until about February I guess of '72. And I went down to the main office for a while, I got this other job at...I got a job at...I got a job with DETCOG.

JG: The Deep East Texas Council of Government.

BB: Council of Government yeah. And...from there, well, I drove back and forth from Jasper for about a year, stayed in Diboll. And then I decided well I'll just go up and move to Jasper. And we stayed there about four years and I got promoted to Deputy Executive Director at DETCOG so I moved back to Lufkin and was in charge of the Lufkin Nacogdoches offices for DETCOG. Stayed there till '83 and the Executive Director left, I applied for the job, I didn't get it so I went and applied for the County Editor's job. Got it, stayed there until...'95 and have been retired ever since. Best job I ever had. (laughter) By far.

JG: You like the management huh?

BB: Right. Right...it's, I run my own corporation.

JG: You had mentioned that after we finish here you're going to go and do, try and take some pictures of some family tombstones and stuff. How much photography do you do now?

BB: Very little.

JG: Very little.

BB: Very little. I...travel quite a bit and so I do some photography when I travel and that's about it. One of the great things about being retired is I've been able to go to Europe and do some pictures over there. I've always been interested in military operations and so I've had an opportunity to go to the World War I western front area, also, to the Dardanelles and Turkey and the D-Day beaches and all that stuff.

JG: Hmmm.

BB: This year I'm gonna go to Belgium and go visit a fellow that I know that lives in London. And were going up to Hadrian's Wall and walk it.

JG: Boy that ought to be interesting. Be sure and...

BB: I'm really having a good time.

JG: Yeah. Be sure and take some pictures of that.

BB: It's a good time I thought I'd never have.

JG: Yeah, well great...that's good that you're able to do that. I'm just now 32 and I'm starting to look ahead to those days, 'course I've got a while. But...

BB: Yeah, now I can...

JG: I don't know how things are going to be 20, 30 years from now.

BB: I can remember after I left Tex-Lam and went down to the main office and I was sitting there one day and thought, "You know, I'm never going to do anything I want to do, all I'm going to do is work. I can see it." But that wasn't true. (laughter)

JG: What did you do at the main office?

BB: Well, that's another horror story. (laughter) They had, you wouldn't believe this thing...they had these little 5 by 7 cards on everybody who had any property financed with Sabine Investment Company.

JG: Hmmm.

BB: And they had all those things in one of these huge file cabinets that had those little, I don't know what you'd call them, anyway, those little cards were stacked on there and you'd pull it out and they had...my job was to take the payments that came in and figure out how much of it was interest, how much was principal or escrow accounts.

JG: Now these are, most likely, houses that were being paid rent on?

BB: Yeah. Well, I don't know...

JG: Left over of the company housing.

BB: Yeah, may have been, but, most of it was property was financed out on the place.

JG: Oh ok. Oh that, ok.

BB: And...

JG: So it wasn't just Diboll this was all over.

BB: Oh no, it was huge; it was everywhere.

JG: Yeah.

BB: And unlike most places, it was fairly well organized. They didn't, you know, if you bought property from, or if you had it financed by Home Savings or something like that, they'd give you a payment book. They didn't do that. You know, and so, that was the first task was to figure out what property this payment was for. Because all you did, you get a check.

JG: Yeah, with a dollar amount on it.

BB: And, you're not even...and the check may say John Brown but the property may have been Willie Smith's, you know. So that, it didn't look like much of a job but it really was a pain.

JG: Yeah, yeah.

BB: And, I went to this guy that was older than I and said, "You know, it looks like to me this is something you ought to put on a computer. You got a computer?" "Oh no, no. I'm not interested in that. Just keep doing it like you are."

JG: Who was the person?

BB: Brad Leroy. Brad...and so I said, "Shoot, if I'm gonna do this the rest of my life I don't know what I'm going to do." (laughter) And...so I'd already told my wife I said, "Well, you know," if school was out I would go down to Houston and see if I could get a job. And I said, "I'm just not going to do this for the rest of my life." And it happened that there was a guy that was working for DETCOG, came over for me to do his tax return. And he said, "Well we're looking for..." So I went and talked to the guy, in fact the DETCOG office was here in Diboll. And...they were moving it to Jasper but they were still here and so I went to talk to the guy. I never heard anything from him so I figured well, they hired somebody else. And then one day he popped up and asked me if I could come to work. And, I said, "Well, I felt, you know, like I ought to give them two

weeks notice.” And I did. And it was the hardest job I’ve ever had...rewarding...because...

JG: How many counties are in that...30, 38?

BB: 12.

JG: Oh, just 12. Ok. Hold on just a second.

BB: 12. Yeah, when I went there, there was 13 but Hardin County dropped out, Hardin County moved to the Golden Triangle area. It seemed like they had more in common for a while.

JG: Yeah, Jefferson and Orange County.

BB: It was, like I said, it was a hard...I worked all the time. It was an interesting job.

JG: So you actually lived in, your family lives in Jasper?

BB: Yeah, we moved over there in '73.

JG: Ok.

BB: We stayed there until '77, then back to Lufkin. I was, I don't know, I had never been in management. I was always interested in trying to get into management, so when there was an opportunity came open so I applied for it and came over here, like I said, over the Lufkin and Nacogdoches offices. Kind of like I told the Executive Director when I applied for the job, I said, “I just don't have any experience with it.” And I said, “I may not know what to do, but I know a heck of a lot of things not to do.” “I've had a lot of experience with some very bad managers; I think I'd be no less.” And I think I did a good job, I'm proud of the job I did.

JG: And when did you, you told me this earlier and I forgot, you retired for good in... '95, '95.

BB: Yeah, I retired in '95. Yeah. That's, it's...I think it's good that I could...it's actually marvelous to get to this stage in your life where you can do what you want to. I always thought, you know, like I said when you were thirty, when I was thirty I'd kind of like to be a millionaire 'cause I can do what I want to do. (laughter) Not that I wanted the money particularly, except just to have the independence to do what you want. That I think everybody should at least get to this place 'cause it's great. (laughter) Absolutely great.

JG: Just one other thing I wanted to ask you, we had mentioned Professor Jackson in there earlier, do you have many memories of him? Pretty much what everybody remembers?

BB: Well...I used to, you know, see him and speak to him.

JG: I understand he worked for TSE [Texas Southeastern] Railroad.

BB: Worked at TSE.

JG: Was kind of like the watchman or...

BB: Well that's relatives in Diboll, 'course I don't have any relatives to speak of here now except Jack Devereaux and Frank Devereaux are there.

JG: How are you related to Jack?

BB: Huh...well, that's really complicated. (laughter) I don't know if you know where his mother and father used to live here on a street there. But anyway, there were two houses right next-door...Mrs. Houge later on wound up in this other house, the one on this side. But, when I was little the Devereaux's lived in one house, my grandfather lived in the next house. And they had married brothers and sisters. Brothers and sisters had married. The Devereaux's, Dred Devereaux's wife was Annie Jackson.

JG: Hmmm.

BB: And my grandmother was Minnie Devereaux, originally married to Albert Jackson...and they were neighbor's that lived right next store. And...so, I'm not sure exactly what...I got a chart the other night and we figured out all this cousin once removed and all this.

JG: Yeah.

BB: But, Jack was, let's see Jack was my...he was my grandmother's nephew.

JG: Hmmm. Ok.

BB: And my mother's cousin. So I don't, maybe probably a second cousin or something like that, I don't remember now exactly 'cause I did look it up and I knew exactly what we were. But there's also Frank. Now, he and Frank are first cousins. Jack and Frank.

JG: Jack and Frank.

BB: Yeah. Frank, when I was a little boy his father ran a filling station just over in Nacogdoches County. There was three brothers: Charles, and Frank, and Jim Bill. Jim Bill committed suicide back in the '50's. Charles as far as I know is still alive, and Frank of course lives here. So, like I said, I had a lot of relatives in Diboll, then I could...cousins and uncles and all that stuff.

JG: So, did you ever work for Dred Devereaux?

BB: No...no, Dred's kind of an interesting situation...when I was a little boy I couldn't say Dred but I called him Dick.

JG: Dick.

BB: I called him Uncle Dick.

JG: Uncle Dick.

BB: Uncle Dick. And...when I was, I don't know seven or eight years old he took me out with him and absolutely walked my butt off. I was so tired when I...

JG: Yeah, where were you walking in the woods or along the tracks or...?

BB: Yeah, well he'd take you out on, you know, he was in charge of the maintenance crew for TSE and he took me out there somewhere on that railroad and brought me back. We went into the planer I think and I, you know, when you're little, you know, you're real sensitive to these things. I don't believe I ever heard as much noise in one place in my life. (laughter) Blew me out.

JG: Did the planer...

BB: The planer...it was tough. But he was a funny character.

JG: Why were you going with him at age seven and eight?

BB: I have no idea. I just wanted to go, you know.

JG: Just wanted to go.

BB: Just wanted to go out with my Uncle Dick. He promised me he'd take me out. And he'd always have a dog. I always liked dogs. He was a big dog lover. And he'd tell me good stories, you know.

JG: Yeah.

BB: How old men like to tell little kids some of things that nobody else will believe but little kids will believe it. And he was a good story teller.

JG: I've had a talk with several people about Mr. Devereaux and George Honea who...

BB: Yeah...

JG: You know George.

BB: Yeah.

JG: He's got some funny stories about him.

BB: Well he was famous for his cussing.

JG: Yeah. I've heard that.

BB: He could cuss big time. And I think I kind of follow suit on that, I used to, when I'd hire a secretary for DETCOG I'd ask them, I said, "Does it bother you? Because, I'm not sure that I can stop doing it. I've quit a lot of things, I never drank very much and I quit smoking a long time ago but I do curse a lot. If that bothers you I'll try to control it, but I can't guarantee it will always work." (laughter) Yeah, he was...my grandpa said, "If he wasn't involved in it, he would make up the story." 'Cause I remember one time, I think it was the Buzz Saw, they had an interview with him – supposedly San Francisco was in an earthquake or something. He was just sitting there lying...he wasn't even there. He told me somewhere else that he...(laughter)

JG: Yeah, I said we've, got a Pine Bough coming out, I've been through with it for months it's just taken forever to actually get the thing printed and, you know, proofed and all that but...I put a little article in there on Devereaux and I didn't even go into that about the San Francisco thing.

BB: I'm not sure it was true anyway. 'Course it may have been.

JG: Well, yeah...and 'course a lot of that, he was interviewed in 1954. The Forest History Society came down and interviewed him and, yeah there was just some overlap with dates and time and stuff that I didn't really... (laughter) but anyways. Yeah, he was quite a character.

BB: Big talker. Anything to get your attention, he'd probably tell you about it.

JG: Well, we can go ahead and stop the tape and we appreciate you coming down and doing this for us.

BB: Ok, well, I've enjoyed it.

END OF INTERVIEW