

RAY PAULSEY

Interview 182a

September 15, 2009, at The History Center, Diboll, Texas

Jonathan Gerland, Interviewer

Patsy Colbert, Transcriber

ABSTRACT: In this interview with Jonathan Gerland, former Diboll Golf Pro and course manager Ray Paulsey recounts his time spent in Diboll overseeing the golf course. Hired in 1968, Mr. Paulsey oversaw the course's construction and opening and then managed the course once open, until 1975. During this time, he worked closely with Arthur Temple, Jr. and Horace Stubblefield. Under his management, the course became one of the best in East Texas. This public, nine-hole course attracted players from across the state and hosted many well-regarded tournaments.

Jonathan Gerland (hereafter JG): Today's date is Tuesday, September 15, 2009. My name is Jonathan Gerland and I'm with Ray Paulsey at The History Center. Today I'm interviewing him and we are going to talk about a few things, but I guess primarily the Diboll Municipal Golf Course. Maybe we can just begin Mr. Paulsey, what brought you to Diboll?

Ray Paulsey (hereafter RP): Well, back in the sixties I came to Lufkin to train for the postal inspection service at the Lufkin post office. I also, had been a golfer most of my life. I was raised around a golf course.

JG: Where was that?

RP: That was in Downers Grove, Illinois. So like I said, I was quite familiar. I had come to Lufkin from Athens where I had been in law enforcement. And a friend of mine that was with the postal inspection service wanted me to come to Lufkin and train to be with the postal inspection service, which I did. And that was in the early sixties, it must have been around 1964 or '65. And, while I was at the post office I started playing golf, at what used to be the Oak Ridge Golf Course in Lufkin. It was out 103 East about a couple of miles from the Paper Mill and it was built by J. Laverne Green who was a paper mill employee. Him and some guys decided they would build a golf course out there for paper mill employees of the Southland Paper Mill. It was a public golf course and it was run by his son at the time, and his wife and family. They lived out there in a house and the front part of the house was the pro shop. But it was a nine-hole golf course; it didn't have any irrigation or anything. And, so I started playing out there and that was the only place that most people had to play that was a public course, was out there at Oak Ridge Golf Course. I lived in Lufkin at that time so I had met a fellow by the name of Spencer Knutson who was with Temple at that time. He was in the Forestry Division. I played golf with him. He was telling me in 1967 about a golf course they were going to build down here in Diboll. I lived right across the street from him at that time and he asked if I had any interest in it, because I did, I'd golfed for a long time and I said, "Shoot yes, I'm

fixing to have to go to Washington, D.C. and I've already been up there and I don't like it." And I said, "If I can find something around here that is suitable, I would certainly be interested."

JG: With your job?

RP: Yes, with my job. I had been in Washington with the postal service and I wasn't too excited about Washington, D.C. And I was fixing to have to be transferred up there, so I said, "Well I would certainly come down here and interview for the job," which I did.

JG: And what was the job title?

RP: The job was, they were looking for a general, at that time they were looking for someone to generally help with the construction of the golf course. The golf course had already been under construction. The weather had been just terrible in 1967 and '68 and they just did not get very far with it. In fact of the matter is, Montgomery Pavement Company out of Harlingen, Texas were the contractors that were moving the dirt. And Mr. Montgomery got killed in a plane crash coming from Wolf City, where he had a golf course going down here. And he got killed and his son had taken over the business, his name was Dick Montgomery, a young man. So anyway, that is how it all...the land actually stood idle for six months or more because of the death of the original contractor, Richard Montgomery. So, like I said, the weather was just terrible, it had been rain and they couldn't do any work and there just really wasn't a whole lot done except the timber had been cleared.

Leon Howard and his brother out of Austin, they were the architects. They laid it out. In fact I think I probably somewhere still have the original plans. If I can dig them up, I'll bring them to you.

JG: Sure. That would be great.

RP: Because I do, I think I still have all the original plans on how it was laid out.

JG: Was it laid out from the beginning as nine holes?

RP: Yes, it was a nine-hole course. The fact of the matter is, where the Atco [Manufacturing] is now, was going to be a quarter horse track. That used to be the old airstrip, that area all down through there used to be the old airstrip. H. G. Stubblefield was one of the pilots and he used to bring in, they used to have a Piper. I forget what size it was that they would bring in and land there on the old strip. And he was one of the pilots at that time. But anyway, and that is, like I said it was a whole complex of things that were going to be developed originally with the golf course. And one of them was a Quarter Horse racetrack. I've got all those plans that show the layout of that, stuff like that. I'll dig them up, Jonathan and bring them to you.

JG: Okay, good.

RP: But anyway, so Spencer Knutson suggested that I come down here and he would get with Mr. Stubblefield, who headed up the parks board at that time.

JG: That is Horace Stubblefield, right?

RP: That is Horace Stubblefield that had Sabine Investment Company, and his wife was a teacher here at the school, Beth. So they set up an interview for me and I had a lot of friends that were with Temple that had put in good words for me.

JG: Who did you interview with?

RP: I interviewed with Buddy Temple, Horace Stubblefield, and I'm not sure who all was involved in that. The interview was at the Pine Bough, the old Pine Bough Restaurant, back in the old dining room. I'm not sure if Mr. Temple was there or not. But anyway, to make a long story short, I interviewed and in a very short period of time they gave me a call and asked me, "Well, the job is yours." The pay was \$400 a month, and I said, "Well that will be fine, no problem, whatever, it's a little less than I'm making." So I went out there and started working and this was before there was any building or anything like that. Mr. Temple told me, "Go up to the Chevrolet place and get you a pickup truck, get you a used pickup truck up there." So I went up there and got an old '64 or 5 model Chevrolet pickup truck, that was my vehicle and I hauled all my junk around in it for the golf course.

JG: Now, your paycheck, was it the City of Diboll?

RP: City of Diboll, City of Diboll.

JG: So you were a city employee?

RP: I was a city employee; I was definitely a city employee. So anyway, in a very short period of time, Marvin Baker was hired to build a pro shop out there. And that is down on what is Arrington Drive, I guess is the name of it, is where the original pro shop and parking lot and things like that were. And that was all constructed in '69 and '70 because we opened the golf course in I think, August of 1970, if I'm not mistaken. Looking at this sign in sheet, I think the first sign in sheet was in August, yes, 8/29 of '70...

JG: August 29, 1970.

RP: ...is when we opened it. So like I say, but my job consisted of a lot of just grunt work.

JG: So the plans had already been drawn out, and by plans I mean...

RP: Oh the blue prints and everything.

JG: ...the lay of the course, everything, so you were supervisor of the project.

RP: Everything had been laid out, everything, general project supervisor, that is correct. So anyway, I got with Mr. Richard Montgomery's son, who is Dickie Montgomery, and those people and I worked very closely with them on the construction. In fact I drove a maintainer and bulldozer and just everything it took to do that. So, and then we got a firm out of Irving Texas, called Ventible Irrigation, and they did the irrigation work. I worked very closely with them on all phases of the construction including the irrigation work and things like that. I was hands on in all of that. Every bit of it was hands on, like I said, I even drove a maintainer and bulldozer, front end loader, what ever it took to get the job done.

JG: Did you have any time to play golf while all this was going on?

RP: There was no golf going on at that time, no. (laughter)

JG: I know it wasn't a course, but anywhere else.

RP: No, I didn't play much of anywhere. It was a twenty-four seven job is really what it amounted to. Particularly after we got the irrigation system in and got all the fair ways leveled and the greens built and constructed. We had a big pile of what we call seed bed material piled up there along what is now Arrington Drive that we had mixed and made that we had brought in. We had a mountain of it to build the greens with. So anyway, shortly after we got the irrigation system in, the pipeline people said they needed, they were going to lay a new pipeline across, what was at that time, the old number five green. I said, "Well, you know, we have a watering system in there," and they said, "Well we are just going to cut on through everything and we will pay for the repair." It was easier for them rather than try to dig around that stuff, so they came in with all their equipment. The pipeline is still there naturally, but they cut right on through all of our watering system and everything else with total disregard for anything and said, "Just send us the bill, we will pay for the repairs."

JG: Now was that before the course opened?

RP: Oh yes, way before, before there was even any grass finished yet. A lot of it had been planted but nothing was there. So...

JG: I guess that contributed to the delay. I know in the newspaper y'all were shooting for July 4th of '70 and it delayed a little bit.

RP: Yes, well it certainly contributed to the delay. We wanted to get, the seed was planted, wasn't planted until July and we had seed bed material, we had sprigs for our greens that was a high bred Bermuda called Tiff 427, is what the sprigs were. They came from Tyler. The District Attorney up there in Smith County was Hunter Brush. And he also had a sod farm up there on I-20 and even...there is golf course up there by his place, Garden Valley, is what it is, but that was Hunter Brush's. And he sold us the sprigs of

this hybrid Bermuda. They had them. So we sprigged the greens and tee boxes with Tiff 427 and in no time at all they came up. And all we had was hand mowers, we didn't have any, I think we had bought two used hand mowers to mow the greens and tees with at that time. And, the greens were huge, they were absolutely huge and so were the tee boxes. But that was a trade of these, Leon Howard and them they designed big greens and big tee boxes. And over the years, certainly they have shrunk considerably, but...

JG: What about sand traps, were they in there initially?

RP: All right, the sand traps were not. That was an afterthought of Mr. Temple's. Mr. Temple came out and we, Mr. Temple and I were very, very close. I got with him everyday during the construction. I got with him everyday and I got with Horace Stubblefield everyday. I would go over to Mr. Temple's office and we would sit and talk and see how things were going and things like that. But we had a daily meeting and Mr. Temple was very much hands on, as far as involved in the golf course and wanting to get it done. And we, the sand traps were an afterthought.

JG: They didn't come until '73.

RP: Right, it was almost three years after we had opened the course.

JG: Any reason why they were an afterthought? Why they were not included?

RP: He just thought it would make the golf course look better and things like that. So he brought...

JG: But, I mean, any indication why they weren't in to start with?

RP: They were never in the design of the golf course. In Leon Howard's design there was no sand traps involved, period. You have to remember this was...back then East Texas golf courses didn't have sand traps, none of them. I mean, all of them were, in fact this was probably going to be the first golf course in East Texas with greens that were constructed the way greens should be constructed, elevated and not just cut out of the flat land that the golf course was built on. The older East Texas golf courses were just built on where they had cleared some land and, then put where they wanted greens and things like that. So these, this was actually the first one that had tee boxes that were constructed with the proper material and also greens that were constructed with seed bed material and drainage and things like that built into them. So, no sand traps were involved in it, and there were several reasons for that. One was where you could get more play. It would keep plays moving smoother and things like that, without sand traps and things like that, there wouldn't be delays of people getting in the sand traps and having to rake them and things like that. And maintenance wise and things like that. When we decided that we were going to put in sand traps, we had to understand that the cost of maintaining a sand trap is almost the same as the cost of maintaining a green. It is a very expensive procedure. You have to build drains in them and you have to go out where the drains are going to be. Then you have to have maintenance of the sand trap – that is even more so

than the greens. It is more expensive to maintain a sand trap properly with the trimming and edging and keeping them raked and things like that. So, that had, the economics of it also contributed to the fact that we didn't have sand traps. But, Mr. Temple decided we were going to have sand traps. So, he brought down....oh...

JG: Jimmy Demerit?

RP: Jimmy Demerit, from Champions Golf Course in Houston. They came out here and Jimmy and myself and Mr. Temple, we went around with a can of spray paint and painted where the traps were going to be with white spray paint. So we had all the traps laid out and Mr. Temple laid out a bunch of little what they call spot traps, just for decorative purposes and you know, for no other reason than that. But, obviously I could see that it was going to be a real maintenance project, so a lot of those traps never got put in. And that did not make Mr. Temple very happy. The fact of the matter is, we had several meetings over that and I told him I had to maintain them and economically I explained to him that I had to do away with several of his little spot traps that he had. Well, I never did convince him of that, but the course got built, the traps got put in without a lot of the spot traps. But, there were some really neat sand traps on what used to be a par three hole, which is part of the finishing hole there, number seventeen now, out at the new golf course, but it was hole number two. At that time it followed par five, which was hole number one over the pond. We had a sand trap there, to the right side of the green that had an island in the middle of it. It was really, really a neat sand trap. It was very unique. It was a big sand trap and had a grass island in the middle of it. In fact, a lot of golfers would, not by design, but would land up on top of that island and play their next shot off of that little island in the middle of the trap, onto the green. So, it was kind of neat. There were a lot of neat greens; I mean a lot of neat sand traps that Jimmy Demerit laid out. In fact, I have some old pictures of Jimmy Demerit with Mr. Temple and myself out there laying them out. Paul Durham came out and took a lot of pictures while we were in the process of laying out the sand traps. But, we got the sand traps laid out and that was another problem because our irrigation system was already in. We really had some problems; we cut a lot of irrigation lines. There were a lot of delays because of that.

JG: You mentioned hole two, I didn't play golf a whole lot, but I played for about a year or two years in college. Of course that is when it was a nine hole. And I remember number two, you were talking about elevated greens, and as I recall the backside of that thing was pretty steep. And I do remember those sand traps around there.

RP: Right, yes. In fact of the matter, that golf course after we were completed with it and it had been opened, say in about 1971 or so, that was recognized as probably one of the finest nine-hole golf courses in the State of Texas. We had University of Houston Golf came up here to play in tournaments with Keith Fergus and a lot of the golfers you used to see on the pro tour came and played at this golf course. And, University of Texas and the fact of the matter is, the coach of the University of Houston team called me once, we were having a tournament out there. And we were really, we really had some neat tournaments. We were co-sponsored by the Holiday Inn when it used to be in Lufkin. And we would have an evening up there before, the day before the tournament and have

Calcutta and things like that. But anyway, we also were known for the prizes that we gave. We gave tremendous prizes. The University of Houston golf folks their whole team was coming up to play in our golf tournament. Well, he called me and told me he didn't like what we were doing. He was afraid his players were going to get in trouble with the NCAA because of the prizes we were giving. They were limited to what they could take. And I assured him that we would stay well within the bounds of the NCAA rules and regulations and wouldn't have any of his people involved in anything that would get them into any trouble. So, he eventually gave us his blessing and let his team come up here and play in our tournaments. So, we had a lot of players from a lot of teams, Lamar Tech in Beaumont.

JG: So these were not necessarily NCAA events, just tournaments that they could do on their own?

RP: Oh no, these were regular amateur tournaments. These were amateur that were flighted and had championships through the fifth flight and things like that. No, they were, but there were rules and regulations on how much NCAA player could contribute to if it was a team event that involved amateurs and things like that. How they could be used and things like that, the amount of money in prizes they could receive and things like that, to keep them as amateurs and be able to play in NCAA. So, we had a lot of big tournaments out there. And like I say, the golf course itself was renowned for being one of the very best nine-hole golf courses in the state. We had people come from all over to play there.

JG: Tell me a little bit, you mentioned Mr. Temple, Arthur Temple, Jr., comment on his interest in this golf course.

RP: Him and Lottie and Bubba Shands and Ann Shands, they would play out there several times a week. And they just, he...Mr. Temple was very hands on and so was Lottie, Lottie was very hands on. The fact of the matter is, we had a hole that was hole number four that went across, coming back towards the club house, went over a pond. Well, Lottie said "no way that a lady could hit from over there. I want a tee built on the other side of the pond for the ladies." So, Joe Bob Hendricks came out the next day and he said "Mr. Temple sent me out here. He wants me to build a tee box on this side of the lake for Lottie and the ladies to hit from." And so, it was just a matter of days that that tee box was constructed and finished and sodded to where they could play on it. So, like I said.

JG: I was tempted to use that tee box at times. (laughter)

RP: But, Mr. Temple and his bunch would play out there, like I said, several times a week. And particularly like I said, Bubba Shands and Arthur and there were a lot of them that used to play at the Lufkin Country Club that would come down here and play because of the course. It was in such good condition and was such a nice place to play so. But, like I say he was very hands on. Mr. Stubblefield was very hands on as he was in any project that he was involved in. He, like I said, we had daily meetings. We had some

confrontations; we had some close calls on me not being here any longer and things like that. (laughter) And one thing that Mr. Stubblefield probably brought to my attention that has helped me through my life, in a lot of things that I do, he told me, he said, "Ray you've got a lot of projects going but none of them are finished." He says, he called me, in fact they had a parks board meeting and he called me in with Woody Ingram, Joe Elliott and some of the other park board members and they were actually going to terminate me because I had so much junk going and none of them finished. He told me, he said, "You know, you've got a lot of projects going, you need to finish some of them." He says "don't start other projects until you finish what you've got." So he taught me a very good lesson in life. To finish rather than having a bunch of things going, have finished projects and then move onto the next project. In that respect, Mr. Stubblefield helped me. Like I said, we had a lot of confrontation, but also we were very good friends. We lived across the street from each other here in Diboll on Booker Street. And, I was around when his family grew up, Gandy and those and Suzanne. So, like I said, I became very close to Mr. Stubblefield even though, like I said, we did have some wars. (laughter)

JG: Now, I think the newspaper referred to you as the golf pro, the professional.

RP: I was, in fact of the matter, I brought with me, I was a Class A PGA Professional. I went through all of their schools. I went through all of their qualifying and things like that. I brought all of that stuff with me; I didn't bring it in. The only thing I brought in was this. But after the interview, I'll be glad to bring those in and show them to you and give them to you and you can have them. But, they are my certificates from the Professional Golf Association of America where I am a Class A PGA Professional, which is the top that you can get in the PGA. I went through all of their business schools and like I said at that time...

JG: Now, this was before you came to Diboll or during?

RP: During the time. The fact of the matter is I had a lot of things going during the time. And that was another thing that me and Mr. Stubblefield used to get to about. I was taking flying lessons at that time to become a pilot. I was also going to Stephen F. Austin State University. In fact, I graduated in 1971. So you can see there that I was doing something besides working on the golf course since my undergraduate degree in business and then I went to graduate school after that. But, like I said I got my undergraduate degree in 1971, so I had quite a few things going other than the golf course. Obviously I was a very busy individual and Mr. Stubblefield would chastise me on that. I had so many things going other than just a golf course. And he told me I needed to put some of them on the back burner and he said, "Concentrate more on the golf course." Because at that time, in 1971, see now when the golf course was originally built there weren't any cart paths. You know, you just went wherever you could with your golf cart. So, probably in about 1971 we started building cart paths out there. I can remember one particular meeting we had when the golf carts were finished and Mr. Stubblefield wasn't too happy because I hadn't filled in with dirt around the edges and, I had all these other projects going, flying lessons and school and all those things. So he told me I needed to concentrate on the golf course, which I did. So, that...I did have a lot of things going.

JG: Who was the city manager during that time?

RP: I don't remember. I know they had several city managers in and out of there, James Dover and some of the other city managers. And I don't remember exactly who was the city manager at that time. The fact of the matter is, most of my dealings, because of the fact that the city manager and some of those other people really weren't familiar with the golf course, were mostly all of my dealings were with the parks board rather than any city official.

JG: And then Mr. Temple.

RP: And Mr. Temple, so I had very little relationship with any city administration.

JG: Okay, right. Okay.

RP: So, even though I was a city employee, I did not have any, didn't report to them in any way at all. I reported to the parks board.

JG: So your budget, you pretty much submitted your budget to Mr. Stubblefield and they took it from there.

RP: That is absolutely correct.

JG: Okay.

RP: Yes, and request for any equipment. At that particular time I was very fortunate in that Mr. Temple was heavily involved because, he really spoiled me. He told me I could get what ever I needed, you know. He said, "You get it, let me worry about it." So we had the latest most up to date equipment at that time and, the fact of the matter is, we were probably the first golf course in the area to have a riding greens mower and sand trap rakes and things like that, that were all automated. You know, nobody else had any of that stuff, but we had it and we had the best equipment for spraying and herbicides and fertilize and things like that. We, in fact of the matter is, we had two railcars of lime that we brought in when we were first constructing the golf course. A hundred and eighty tons of lime that we put on this golf course because they had been under pine trees for so long, the soil was very acidic and we needed to get it neutralized, so they brought in two big rail cars full of lime, in bulk. They would take the trucks over there and they had loaders that would load the trucks and bring it back and spread the lime on the soil before we planted any seed. And, it was just, like I said, we had the best of everything really. That is why we had such a good golf course. We weren't restricted, our budget...I was very free to get anything that I could justify needing. Probably the most trouble I ever got into out there was over, I put out some herbicide too early in the year on the greens. Well, actually it just about killed every grain. In fact, we had to close the permanent greens. I have a brother that is California that was familiar with agriculture and I called him and told him what I had done and he told me he said, "Get powdered charcoal and spray it on

those greens right now.” So, I got down to Houston, got a hold of the chemical people, Goldway Chemical Company down there, and told them what I needed. They got me up here a truck load of powdered charcoal in bags that we mixed with water and sprayed it on all of our greens to try to neutralize the herbicide that I had put on there too early in the year. It wasn’t that it shouldn’t have been applied, it was just a bad time and way too early. It wasn’t warm enough, the grass hadn’t started up and things like that. So, consequently it killed, knocked back all the greens. So we had to close every one of our greens and build a temporary green in front of them or to the side of them or something like that, while we sprayed those greens with a mixture of water and powder charcoal. They were just as black as the earth. They just, I mean it was just unbelievable. People would come in there and be covered with powdered charcoal on their hands from picking up their golf balls that were on the greens that we had sprayed. (laughter)

JG: What did Mr. Stubblefield and Mr. Temple think about it?

RP: They were very upset to say the least, very, very, very upset. Like I said, I have had several close calls.

JG: Was that early on?

RP: Oh yes, it was within the first few years. But, like I said, I had a lot of close calls.

JG: No more greens fees, but blacks fees. (laughter)

RP: That is just exactly what it was for sure. It was a mess. I really learned very...in fact when you are utilizing chemicals you have to...that is why they train you to use them. You know, I’d go to school and things like that on the proper application of herbicides or insecticides or fungicides and things like that. So I did learn, but it was costly to say the least at some times because I misapplied them and things like that. But I did learn.

JG: Comment a little bit on your staff that you had, once the course, I guess, got up and going.

RP: I had two people and myself. We would maintain it. The nine-hole course...

JG: These were full time city employees?

RP: They were full time, yes golf, city employees, yes, employed at the golf course.

JG: Were they just for the golf course or for the whole parks department?

RP: Yes, just for the golf course. I was head of the parks department.

JG: Head of the parks department.

RP: In fact of the matter is, all of those dome top post and things like that, we put all those in, around in the park and things like that. So, like I said, they were golf course employees, but they were city employees that were working full time at the golf course. I hired them and trained them and did like that. I've had...we went through quite a few of them at that time because it was quite an ordeal; it was quite a lot of work. In fact, a lot of times, see we used to not have an automatic sprinkler system. The only automatic sprinklers were on the greens and tee boxes. When we first planted that golf course I had to be out there twenty-four hours a day actually to water at night and things like that, to get the grass up. And, you had to plug in these sprinklers and turn them and things like that. There was nothing automatic about it, they were all...every sprinkler was manual on all the fairways. It was no such thing as an automatic system out there. They didn't go in with an automatic system for several years after the golf course was constructed. The only automatic watering was on the greens and tee boxes. The rest of it was all manual, plug in sprinklers. Many a night I was out there in the mud and stuff, looking for a sprinkler head and things like that. Brings back a lot of, not necessarily happy memories, but a lot of memories. (laughter) But eventually we did get a full automatic watering system. And the people that originally put in our system came down and put in our automatic system also.

JG: Comment a little bit on, you mentioned some of the tournaments earlier, I know the newspaper talked a lot about the Labor Day weekend tournament.

RP: Labor Day was a major tournament, that was a three-day tournament and we used to, it's kind of funny, we used to book it solid. We turned lots and lots of people away on our Labor Day tournament. It was a partnership tournament, three-day tournament. It was a very big tournament in East Texas. It was similar to the Temple Cup at Crown that they have now.

JG: So people from all over came?

RP: Came from all over, Arkansas, Louisiana, they came from all over to play in that tournament. A lot from Dallas and things like that.

JG: Now who was the sponsor of these tournaments?

RP: Well, Holiday Inn helped us, Buddy Temple, you know we got out and hustled stuff up. Spalding, I was on the Spalding staff at that time, so I was able to get a lot of stuff from them because, like I said, being a PGA professional I was sponsored by Spalding. In fact, I've even got my old Spalding golf staff bag in my workshop out there. But like I said, Spalding helped us and things like that. But, the sponsors, like I say, varied. We would get out, everybody would get out and work. We had quite a few golfers that would get out, you know, that were local people, Joe Sample, and some of these other people would get out and hustle up business for you. The fact of the matter is, speaking of Joe Sample, in our Labor Day tournament a lot of these people just took it for granted that they were in it. Well, Joe Sample came in and said, "I'm going to pay my entry fee." I said, "Joe the tournament is full." Which it was. I said, "I'm sorry." Oh, boy he got

really, really hostile at that time. But eventually we were able to get him into it. But that is how that tournament was. It was first come first serve and once it was full it was full. And...

JG: And three-day tournament?

RP: Yes, three-day tournament. We had big events up at the Holiday Inn, had Calcutta and it was really a big thing. The Holiday Inn, with their sponsorship furnished the food and things like that at our Calcutta and it was really a...

JG: Now what is Calcutta?

RP: That is where you buy...it is a gambling procedure that is done in golf where you buy certain players for this because you bid on them, and how much you will pay for that team. You know, to win, place or show, you know, three places and things like that. And all the money that was raised from this would go into the Calcutta, and then the house would take a cut, which was the golf course, and we would pay some of our things that we had out of that Calcutta money and the rest of it would go into the pot. And it would be divided; say the first place team would get sixty percent of the pot. The second place team will get twenty percent or thirty percent of the pot and third place team would get the remainder of how much is in there. So, actually a first place in the, say the championship flight could be several thousands of dollars that they would...

JG: And this is in the seventies, early seventies?

RP: Oh yes, that they would receive under the table naturally, because they were amateurs. But it was a gambling procedure that still takes place to this day in a lot of tournaments. So, but like I say...

JG: So that is why the NCAA was concerned, huh? (laughter)

RP: They were probably concerned over some of that, but like I said, it was all taken care of above the boards. Nobody ever got in any trouble in any of our tournaments. But, that was a procedure that, in fact that was a big event, the Calcutta. Everybody looked forward to that. They still have it, even at the Temple Cup they still have it the night before the tournament. You can bid on how much you'll pay for a team, and you know the winning number, whoever pays the most gets that team. And so much of the pot goes to the winners and second place and third place. It is a neat event.

JG: You mentioned a few local people who have played and we have the list of the first sign in and the greens fees.

RP: And there may be some on the back, I don't know.

JG: Oh, okay.

RP: I don't know for sure, but I happened to have that out at my shop.

JG: Who stands out in your mind as really being top-notch golfers that were sort of regulars there in the early days?

RP: Probably the Still brothers were probably the best golfers we had, that was Malcom, who has passed away and his brother Mike, who lives in Baton Rouge now. They were both golfers.

JG: How do you spell that last name?

RP: Still, S-T-I-L-L. Malcom used to work with the company, in fact he was in purchasing with Don Hendricks. But, they were both probably the best amateur golfers in the area. Mike and Malcom both played on the Armed Forces golf team. They were very good golfers. They used to play out at Oak Ridge with us and things like that, and then they moved down here when this golf course was built. But, we had a lot of good golfers in the area, Keith Spurgess, and I see a lot of these guys on television now that are playing on the Champions Tour, which is the Seniors Tour, that used to play out here a lot, Robert Hoyt and some of those other guys.

JG: Robert Hoyt?

RP: Robert Hoyt, H-O-Y-T, played for the University of Houston. And one neat thing about him, he was six-eight. He was a big man and he could do a trick with a golf ball. He could hit a sandwich and catch it, which is quite an accomplishment. He could take a full swing at a sandwich and pop it up in the air and catch the ball before it hit the ground. Somebody needs to try that if they want to try a trick. But, Robert Hoyt could do that. But, like I said, I'm sure that after we are done here I'll be able to think of a lot of names of people that turned professional that used to play out there on a regular basis.

JG: Did you give lessons?

RP: Yes, definitely. I gave lessons to just about everybody in this town. In fact there is a lot of good golfers that are still around. In fact of the matter is, the school used to come out there, their P.E. classes.

JG: The Diboll High School?

RP: Junior high and high school too, all of them would come out there and I'd give lessons to P.E. classes a lot of times, to boys and to girls P.E. classes. Dr. Eddings' daughter Flossie, and just a lot of them that come to my mind now. Jimmy McClain who is probably one of the best amateur golfers in the area, Gandy Stubblefield, Horace's boy, all of those boys, I taught the Oates boys and things like that. Bill Oates, I taught every one of them how to play golf because they never had a golf course until this one was built. So, anybody who plays golf particularly around this area, I probably taught at one time or another to play golf. So, that, yes we definitely had lessons, and most of them were free. (laughter) But we did give lessons on a scheduled basis. I gave a lot of them to

wives, Dr. Eddings wife and a lot of people, Buddy Zeagler and his wife, things like that. There were a lot, Ann Temple, I mean Ann Shands, who later was Ann Temple. Lottie Temple and all of those ladies I gave lots and lots of lessons to, sure did.

JG: Okay, I'm sure there is other questions that I'm omitting, nothing really comes to mind right now. But, so you came on about '1968 -69, and then...

RP: Yes, '68. In fact Woody Ingram and I came to town at the same time. He came from Center and I came from Lufkin. But, and we became very good friends. He used to play all the time out there.

JG: And then I think you left in the fall of '78.

RP: Yes, I did. I went to work for Champion in Corrigan. I sure did.

JG: Okay, and I think Paul Durham...

RP: I had an insurance agency over here too. I had Diboll Insurance Agency over here that I purchased from Peggy Burt, who is Felton Burt's wife and Carla Elliott, who is Joe Elliott's wife. So, I was in the insurance business for a while.

JG: While you were golfing?

RP: After I got...in between employment. Not while I was golfing, no that was all I had. (laughter) Don't even go there.

JG: In between okay, all right. Can you comment a little bit about that? I know the newspaper ran a little article on you and commented that you were the first and only golf pro the course ever had and I think you were just quoted in the paper as saying, "You were looking for long range career choices and things like that."

RP: I just...you know, in 1975 here in Diboll I had, I was president of the Rotary Club, I was president of the school board and I was president of the Boosters Club all in one year. So, I always had my basket full of things that I was doing you know with Diboll. Diboll is my home, has always been my home, always will be my home. And, I was very, very active in all of Diboll, everything that they did and things like that. So, I've always stayed close to home. I haven't gone anywhere but I tried several different things. I used to own the Western Auto store; I bought it from Arlie Conner. And I, like I said, had an insurance agency, I worked for Champion until they sold out. Then I came to work for Temple, I was at the particleboard plant over here in Diboll for 15 years. And, that is, I retired from Temple and even to this day I have a little janitorial service in Lufkin. So, I stay busy. (laughter)

JG: Well let's move then, you've mentioned some of the civic work you've done, the Booster Club, the Rotary Club, and the school board.

RP: Yes.

JG: Anything you want to share about for instance the school board? What was going on in those years?

RP: Well, you know in the '70's, I'm trying to think, we went through a couple of superintendents at that time. Don Robbins, I believe was one of our superintendents, and at that time was when they were first requiring school board members to be trained by the state and certified to be a school board member. Even after you were elected, you had to go to several schools to...and it started at that time. We had to go to several schools on being school board members. And a lot of things that people...a lot of members of city councils and school boards forget that they are actually, the only time they are school board members is when you are at a school board meeting. Other than that, you are just a private citizen and you know, you don't have any authority other than that. And it is the same way as a council member or anything else. People would always come to me and say, "I want this, I want that" you know, and you as an individual member of a board have no authority to act on anything other than to make a note of it and bring it up at the school board meeting and let the school board or the city council decide on what needs to be done. So, a lot of times, it's hard for people that are on school boards and city councils to remember that they are just members of that board at that particular night or that particular time and that is where the authority ends. You have a vote like everybody else on that board, but that is about it. I was active in that and, like I said, as a Booster Club president you are also involved with a lot of things. You are involved with the Housing Authority, and a lot of other groups as a volunteer Booster Club representative. You have to do with the distribution of the funds that were raised by the Booster Club at Diboll Day and things like that. Of course all these things are evolving now where it is not quite the activities that they were back at that time. There is not quite the involvement because the Booster Club to me was probably the most enjoyable time I had. We used to meet at the Pine Bough, had a meeting room back there where we would meet. So, that will tell you some size of the Booster Club, the active Booster Club, because that room wasn't very big and there were maybe in attendance maybe 20 people or so, all crammed into that room. We used to have a lot of fun at Diboll Day at that time. A lot of shenanigans were pulled that probably now would get you a little misdemeanor charge or something. They were borderline on being legitimate. I remember Joe Denman taking a chance on a color television and he won it, in fact. And they brought it in and they had an old television, console television all painted different colors and presented it to Mr. Denman as a color television. (Laughter) I can remember one particular prank that I pulled while I was president was we sold chances on a .38 special. And I had, Mr. Conner gave me a pistol to hold up, you know a .38 pistol, and I said, "We are taking chances on a .38 special." Well that .38 special turned out to be a bra in a 38 D that I think Joe Sample or somebody won and we gave it to them and that was his .38 special. We did a lot of things like that, and all in good, you know, good-natured fun. And all the money went back to the booster club, nobody profited from it.

The Rotary Club, in fact of the matter is, I don't know if many people know it, but we used to even have an Optimist Club here in Diboll. I was a charter member of the

Optimist Club and it didn't last long in Diboll. I was also a charter member of the Diboll Rotary Club, so I was always quite active in civic events. And, I still, my interest lies in the activities that take place within Diboll.

JG: Right.

RP: That is probably why I'm here. (laughter)

JG: Going back to the golf course, and we mentioned a lot of these other civic groups and organizations, I guess the question stemming from funding and the golf course finances, how was the golf course funded?

RP: Through the city, but I think the city was subsidized through the Temple Foundation at that time. That is where their funds came from. As far as the city giving me a budget and saying all right this is how much money you have to work with. At that particular time there was no such thing as that. Mr. Temple would tell me what he wanted me to get and I would get it. Or, I would present to him or Mr. Stubblefield what we needed and I really wasn't that actively involved with obtaining the funds. I told them what we needed and why we needed it and justified it and if they felt it was justified it was a real...

JG: So you didn't submit an annual budget or anything?

RP: No, not per say. You know back then, times have changed certainly, but there was a trust issue involved. They trusted me with that position to do the right thing. And I was never questioned on it or anything like that and so I know that we can't do that anymore, but back then the element of trust was heavily involved in all of our decisions on things we needed and things like that. They trusted me that I was submitting to them something that we needed and would use and there were really no questions asked. All they asked for was justification on why we needed this piece of equipment and things like that and what it would do. That was one thing like I said, on riding greens mowers, and sand trap raking machines and things like that, if I could justify the need for them and what they would do, what would be the benefits of it and, what was the cost and things like that, we generally ended up with it. I generally didn't submit something that I could not justify as being needed out there at the golf course.

JG: Now on the income side, fees, greens fees, and things like that, how did that ...?

RP: That is a good point, I'm glad you mentioned that. That again comes in with the trust business. What we would do everyday I would take to the city the money that I had gotten the day before from green fees. And it was based on people that signed in, how much the green fee was at that time, a dollar or two or three, what ever it was. I know it was a lot less than it is now, because I can remember that our carts used to be \$3.50 for an electric cart and now it is considerably higher. But, that was another thing. I owned all of the golf carts.

JG: Personally?

RP: Personally, so that was part of my income. That is why I say, I couldn't make it on \$400 to \$600 a month. I think eventually they raised my salary to \$600 a month. But, I had all the, I bought all the range balls, I bought the carts, I did all those things so that subsidized the meager salary that they were giving me so I could survive.

JG: Now as far as setting the greens fees and policies...

RP: The parks board did all that.

JG: Did you have any input?

RP: Sure I did. Yes, I met with the parks board whenever there was a meeting I was center of attention.

JG: What process, do you know what process you went through? Did you look at other nine-hole courses across the state?

RP: Oh yes, I don't think any of that was based on...of course like I said, I don't believe at that time the finances were a problem because of the Temple Foundation. I think with their subsidy the green fees were not a part of it. We didn't even know how many players to base it on, you know, as far as, now it is all computerized and things like that. They know how many played and blah-blah-blah and all of this. We never knew that. And the green fees were never based on that. I think the green fees, individual yearly green fees used to be \$75 for a year.

JG: A whole year.

RP: Now, you know we wanted people to play. It was a public course, we wanted them to come out and play and at that time, like I say, finances were not a problem because of the Temple Foundation. So that was not a consideration on our fees at all, whether we were going to make enough revenue to pay for what we had because everything we had was furnished by the foundation anyway. And so it had nothing to do with the green fees or carts, or any of that stuff. So, that was never a consideration. I never once looked around at other golf courses at what they were charging or anything like that. We tried to keep it as reasonable as we could, whether it would be a fee for them to play. We allowed high school kids and stuff like that to play. We didn't charge them a thing. We just wanted them to be a part of it. It was a part of Diboll and if they couldn't afford to play, they didn't have to pay. You know, I've furnished jillions of kid's golf clubs and things like that to use to play the game and learn the game that are still playing today. And, probably wouldn't have played if the equipment hadn't been furnished to them.

JG: Well I know that year or two that I played was about '89 or '90 and even then the golf course in Nacogdoches and the one in Livingston, the city course in Livingston, you know and Diboll was always, even the nine-hole was the best and the cheapest. And there was a deal at the time, I think it was during the weekdays after four o'clock, or something

and during the summer you could easily walk it and easily get eighteen maybe twenty-seven holes in. And I don't remember what it was, but it was \$10 or less for eighteen or twenty-seven holes. I'm sure it's more now.

RP: I forget what our green fee was, but it wasn't much. I do know that our cart rentals were \$3.50 and for an electric cart, so you can tell I wasn't making much on them.

JG: It says here greens fees will be \$2.00 on weekdays and \$2.50 on weekends. That is when it opened.

RP: Isn't that something.

JG: Students can play for \$1.50 during the week and at the regular rate of \$2.50 on week ends. That was from September 3, 1970.

RP: Trying to...the reason they had to pay a regular fee on the week ends is because of the amount of play we had. You know...

JG: Well, I know even in '89 and '90 you know, you had to have four and you had to have reservations. You couldn't just show up.

RP: Yes, that is correct. It got to be to that point which we really loved because of the fact we had tee times and we had a starter out there on the tee box to start them you know, when they went on their assigned time and things like that. All of those things were important at that time.

JG: There is a photograph of you from '69. (laughter)

RP: Golly, (laughter) isn't that...that is my old white pick up truck. There is my old Chevrolet pick up truck.

JG: He is looking at a news clipping from '69.

RP: I tell you what we did in 1976. I was on the bicentennial committee representing Diboll and Lufkin had a bicentennial committee. We painted all of our dome top post around our parking lot red, white and blue. And our gate we had painted red, white and blue when you came in. So we were quite active in that. In fact, I've got a lot of memorabilia from the bicentennial year. It was things like that that we did that was kind of neat. And like I said, I was very active with that.

JG: There is Mr. Demerit.

RP: Oh yes, that is the picture. That is him right there, sure is.

JG: I think that is when you were at the Pine Bough with you and Mr. Temple and Demerit. So, they were in the cart and they had you walking around.

RP: They had me walking, that is correct.

JG: With the can of spray paint. (laughter)

RP: Yes, that is correct and it was one of those spray paints that was on kind of a long handle type of a deal. Golly! And there is old Woody Ingram's article in the paper too, "Outdoors with Woody" yeah. (laughter)

JG: It said in this 1970 article here that the course was located in east Diboll as part of the new \$350,000 city park. So it was only part of it.

RP: Yes, see that met with the state, you see, we had state funding that was involved in that too. And at that time we had to have a sign posted out there that it was a park of that project from the state.

JG: The Parks and Wildlife Department.

RP: The Parks and Wildlife Department, yes, we had that big sign up on the pro-shop that told all the entities that were involved in building that golf course.

JG: The paper even mentioned the U.S. Department of Interior.

RP: Yes, like I say...

JG: Did you have to work directly with them or was that Horace Stubblefield took care of it?

RP: No, that was all, I never even had anything to do with any of that. I didn't have any contact with them, was never questioned by them or talked to them or anybody like that.

JG: So the parks board handled all that.

RP: They handled all that, it sure was. It was quite neat, and like I said it was very unique, you know. You have to remember how unique that was that we got all of this. And if it wasn't for Mr. Temple and his cronies we wouldn't have any of this stuff.

JG: Right.

RP: When we think of all the things that Mr. Temple did for the whole area, this was one of the major things he did for Diboll, was that park. I used to go over there to the park because I was in charge, I was the park superintendent too and golf pro and all of the above. (laughter)

JG: And all the below. (laughter)

RP: Yes, that is for sure, but it was quite a time, quite an experience for sure.

JG: Well, I think we have pretty much covered all that I had written down.

RP: Well, that is good.

JG: Anything else you can think of?

RP: No, it was just probably the most memorable time of my life was working at the golf course, and with the city and with the people. Mr. Temple and Buddy and I became quite close at that time and, we both stayed in quite a bit of mischief with Mr. Temple. (laughter)

JG: Did he play quite a bit, Buddy?

RP: Oh gosh yes, yes – a lot of times when he was probably supposed to be working. Of course, he was a state representative too and things like that, on the Railroad Commission and things like that.

JG: Did he bring people in to play?

RP: He always brought lots of people. All of them did, Mr. Temple did. They always brought a lot of people in to play. Sure did.

JG: Any other professionals that came through like Demerit? I guess he was the golf champ for a while.

RP: We also have to remember that shortly, the golf course was still open when Crown Colony was developed at that time too. I was approached about that position up there. Mr. Stubblefield, shortly after I left the golf course in '78 and '79 wanted to talk to me about Crown Colony and, I just told him I had just about all the golf I could handle over the last 10 years and I really wasn't interested in anything up there. But I did make lots of trips up there with Mr. Temple and Mr. Stubblefield to look at the dirt work that was being done and look at the layout and things like that, when they were building Crown Colony.

JG: Kind of a consultant or something?

RP: Something like that.

JG: I think in talking with Mr. Temple he credits Mr. Stubblefield with that whole project, Crown Colony. I guess he was the point man on all of that.

RP: He was...Sabine Investment handled all of that up there. They sure did. He had a lot of, Mr. Stubblefield had a lot of projects going. Like I said, things have all changed over the years, but at that particular time Sabine was a pretty big part of Temple.

JG: Now I know the newspapers commented at the time the Diboll course was going in, mentioned it was a nine-hole course, there was always a little mention that “one day” it will be eighteen.

RP: Oh yes, well it was originally laid out as an eighteen hole course.

JG: Well that is what I was meaning earlier when I was asking about the plans.

RP: Oh yes, it was definitely laid out, I’ll find them; they showed the whole eighteen.

JG: They do show the whole eighteen?

RP: Yes, yes.

JG: Do you recall if what they showed then is what is there now, or did they modify it?

RP: I don’t know. I don’t remember at all. I think it has been modified because it was going to be a quarter horse track. One thing I will mention that I didn’t mention that we learned from building this course is, after we built the course, we didn’t have any water for an irrigation system. So Topaz Oil Company, which was a subsidiary of Temple and directly Lowell Wood and Dove Fitzgerald were the geologist that headed up the Topaz Oil. At that time we went all over the area drilling test holes and things like that to find adequate water. We never did find any real adequate water supply. We used, we went a thousand foot well is the one that was originally used and we had Berry Drilling Company out of Corrigan who used to have a motel down there and also did water well work and things like that. But they drilled that first hole, was Berry Drilling Company out of Corrigan that drew this first hole. I’m trying to think, we found a hundred feet of sand, water sand at a thousand feet, and it still wasn’t enough. We had to choke back the well where we could keep pumping to fill up the pond. We didn’t have anything then. When we were drilling, that brings a funny story to mind. When we were first drilling that well, you can see it on the old...let’s see what is that par three hole, now that must be seventeen. Right behind the seventeen green you can see the original well. It is sitting there now, it has all been capped now since that time but that was the original water. Well, anyway, while we were drilling that well, Bennie Brown and Bert Lindsey both rode dirt bikes. I always had a fit with them. (laughter) But anyway, they came out there while we were drilling that hole, that well, that thousand foot well. They came out and “how are y’all doing” and stuff like that. Well anyway, the night before we had a water line break back on what was the old number seven par three hole, it’s the number fourteen now, par three hole there is a little pond off to the left down there. But anyway, they used to ride their bikes in and out of the excavations for our ponds and things like that.

JG: Motorcycles.

RP: Yes, motorcycles, dirt bikes, yes, motorcycles is what they were. Anyway, we had a water line break and it filled that pond over there, which is now the number seven hole. Well Bennie Brown takes off on his bike; I knew just exactly where he was headed over to that excavation that they used to ride through. Well in a little while he came back drenched, covered with mud, dragging his motorbike. He called me a lot of nice names, and I said, “dadgummit Bennie, I forgot to tell you about that thing being filled up with water.” They would always go up and jump over that water. He found out there was water in it and mud and all those things. It probably wasn’t very deep at that time; it was probably only a few feet deep with water because there wasn’t enough water produced to do much damage. That was one of the things that took place. (laughter)

But Lowell Wood and Doug Fitzgerald were instrumental. In fact of the matter is, a lot of our test holes are now, in fact one of them I know is a city well that they use. It was at the end of the old airstrip back over there behind Atco and that. We had drilled a lot of test holes in that area and like I said I think now the city even utilizes some of that. But we learned long before to find water first before you build a golf course because we did not have a water supply, adequate water supply. We didn’t realize how precious water was. Like I say, Lowell Wood and Doug Fitzgerald both had harped on that for years about our water in East Texas being a scarce commodity, good water, and it certainly was. But they spent...we probably spent months drilling test holes and looking for adequate water supply. Fact of the matter was, even at that time we talked about piping water from the Neches up here to have an adequate water supply. That is how desperate we were to find water to water the golf course. So, a lot of things like that you never think about until like now when we are in conversation, but I do remember that we traveled all over this area drilling test holes. We drilled a test hole behind what is now the number fifteen tee box out there. Had a test hole drilled out there, we drilled a lot of test holes around, probably six to ten test holes around this area looking for water that we could get.

JG: Just solely for water for the course?

RP: Strictly for the golf course.

JG: Strictly for the golf course.

RP: Yes, that is something people don’t talk much about, but there was a scarce supply of adequate water for the golf course. In fact, like I said, even on our nine-hole golf course we had a real water problem. Like I said, we had that thousand foot well with a hundred foot of water producing sand, but it still wasn’t enough to adequately water the golf course.

JG: Yes. Well, Mr. Paulsey I sure appreciate it.

RP: Well, I appreciate you taking the time. I’ve got in my car some of those certificates I’m going to bring in and give to you from the PGA.

JG: Okay, well I’ll go ahead and stop the recorder.

RP: Okay, thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW