

LEONARD TEAL, JR.

Interview 197a

May 20, 2010, at The History Center, Diboll, Texas

Patsy Colbert, Interviewer

Patsy Colbert, Transcriber

ABSTRACT: In this interview with Patsy Colbert, long-time Diboll resident and Vietnam Veteran Leonard Teal reminisces about growing up in the African-American community in Diboll in the years just prior to school integration. He recalls his years at H.G. Temple School with Mr. Massey, Mrs. Wallace, Mr. Kenyon, and Coach Ross and remembers playing basketball and football. He also recalls his Sundays spent watching the Diboll Eagles baseball team and the business owners he used to interact with, including the Tanners, Arty Dewberry, and Papp Mathiss. Mr. Teal does not remember any racial problems in Diboll and tells the interviewer that integration was a gradual, but smooth process.

Patsy Colbert (hereafter JG): Today's date is May 20th, I'm Patsy Colbert, and I'm here at The History Center with Mr. Leonard Teal and we are going to be doing an oral history interview today. Mr. Teal if we can we'll just get started if you can tell me when and where you were born.

Leonard Teal (hereafter AT): I was born in 1946, August 27th, Houston, Texas.

PC: And what are your parent's names?

LT: My mother's name is Dorothy and my father's name is Leonard Teal.

PC: Okay, so you are a junior?

LT: Yes, I'm a junior.

PC: Okay. And when did you come to Diboll? When did your family come to Diboll?

LT: We came to Diboll in '52, 1952.

PC: What brought your family to Diboll?

LT: Well my grandfather was sick in Lufkin and my daddy thought he would be close to him so we moved to Lufkin for a year and then my daddy got a job out there at TSE [Texas South Eastern] Railroad for Mr. Tom Welch. It seemed like it was better for us to move to Diboll from Lufkin. We stayed there in Lufkin maybe like eight months to a year.

PC: So, your dad worked for the Texas Southeastern Railroad?

LT: Yes sir, yes ma'am.

PC: What did he do there?

LT: He was a laborer there on the TSE track.

PC: Okay, so you were about six years old when you moved to Diboll.

LT: I was five.

PC: So you started to school at the Diboll school system?

LT: Yes ma'am.

PC: At the H. G. Temple School.

LT: H. G. Temple School from first grade through the twelfth.

PC: Well most of our focus today of the interview is to talk about integration. Full integration for H. G. Temple School was fall of '68 was full integration. What year did you graduate?

LT: I graduated in '66, May of '66.

PC: So, full integration was after you got out of school, but Freedom of Choice was in the fall of '65 and there was only one student there. What was your first knowledge of integration going to take place?

LT: Well, my first knowledge of it taking place was the following school term starting back in the fall of like August of '66, that they was going to consolidate the school.

PC: How did you feel about that?

LT: Well, how I felt about it at the time, I didn't have no feelings because, I knew it was just going to be a matter of time, because they was already started talking about it. See, they had started getting the elementary kids, like first grade, they started going to school over here at the elementary school like first grade. Some of the kids that was going to school, like starting at the first grade like in '65 and '68, they had already started going to school over here at the Diboll Elementary.

PC: Right.

LT: I knew that following year, would be the fall of '67, all of them would be starting school from the twelfth on down to the first.

PC: Right.

LT: They was going to consolidate the whole school district.

PC: Okay, now with you being a graduate of 1966 I guess during your high school days the Temple football team had a pretty good record.

LT: Yes, they had a pretty good record.

PC: Did you play sports at H. G. Temple School?

LT: I played sports for H.G. Temple School for three years. My freshman year I moved back to Houston with my grandmother and I went to school at D.C. Elmore and City Gas for one year. Then, Maurice Jones came that summer after school was out and told me I needed to come back to Diboll and run football because they didn't have no more running backs. And I came back and finished my three years from the tenth to the twelfth here in Diboll, H. G. Temple High.

PC: Playing football for the Temple Tigers?

LT: Diboll...no, Temple Tigers, the H. G. Temple Tigers, yes.

PC: The H. G. Temple Tigers. What position did you play?

LT: My first year I played fullback, my sophomore year and the other two years, the eleventh and the twelfth grade, I played half back, number 22 for Diboll.

PC: Okay.

LT: But, my first number when I played fullback was number 30 and I went from fullback to halfback. I had done the halfback for three years there. No I'm mistaken, I done it for two years, my eleventh grade and my twelfth grade.

PC: And who was the coach?

LT: At that time it was Mr. Archie Seal.

PC: During your high school days Mr. Seal was your coach?

LT: Yes, Archie Seal.

PC: Okay. Did you enjoy playing football?

LT: Oh yes, I enjoyed playing at the time. It gave me a motivation to want to be successful in life.

PC: Oh, well good. What did you do after you graduated from high school?

LT: Well I moved back to Houston and my oldest brother that...I stayed there in Houston about a year. I was working for Sakman Brothers, downtown Houston. I was an elevator porter and he brought me a "Dear Uncle Sam" greeting from Uncle Sam that I had got drafted in the military. And from then on, I went in the service. Me and my wife came back to Diboll. She had to come on back because I was going in the service. I went on in the service and at the time she was pregnant with my first child, my daughter, my first daughter. I told her when I get out of basics and AIT I was going to come back and marry her, which I did and we got married. I went on back overseas, done three tours of duty in Vietnam.

PC: Okay and what is your wife's name?

LT: Eva Teal.

PC: Okay.

LT: And from then on we been together like 43 or 44 years. I came back to Diboll, moved back to Houston, and came back to Diboll. I found out it wasn't nothing in that city, fast life, and I've been here ever since.

PC: Ever since, well that is great. How did your parents feel about integration when it was going to take place in the school system?

LT: Oh they loved it, my mother and them loved it because, my brother Jimmy, he started school over there at Diboll Elementary and they seen how good he was doing, so they didn't have no problem with it.

PC: Okay, so you had a younger brother still in school?

LT: Yes ma'am, Jimmy. Jimmy started over there at Diboll Elementary.

PC: Did he start during the Freedom of Choice years, or after it became mandatory with full integration?

LT: Way before the Freedom of Choice. He never did go to school over there at H. G. Temple High. He was at the age at the time that they was taking just the ones that was just starting to school. They was trying I guess, to work people up. They didn't just, you know how sometime you can't just take a kid and start him to eating meat. You got to start him off on the milk and gradually go to the beef. That is about the way they was doing, it's like a mind thing. So, I guess that is the way the system was set up. Then they going to gradually move them in there.

PC: Did your parents have any concerns that they spoke of?

LT: No ma'am, they didn't have no concerns. It was like the government and the president that was behind it at that time was Kennedy, it had to be Kennedy during integration, yeah, it had to be Kennedy, John F. Kennedy.

PC: Before integration what were your experiences as far as being around the white community?

LT: Well, I still had white friends here in Diboll when we was playing sports and things like that. Because we would come over here and watch them play and they would come by and watch us play. So, we kind of got to know each other that way.

PC: Through the sports.

LT: Yes, through the sports because they had sports and we had sports. And, then they sometimes would come over and practice, not football but practice basketball with us, right there in the gym.

PC: During your high school years you're speaking of?

LT: Yes, even, what's his name? Slim Mettlen, he would play basketball and come over there and practice with us.

PC: So you had interaction with the white athletics before full integration, during your school years?

LT: Yes, before full integration we got to know each other.

PC: Did you have other white friends other than athletic friends?

LT: Yes, like Joe Mack Tanner. Mr. Jim Tanner had a store right there.

PC: Right, I remember that store.

LT: I would go over there and me and Joe we would kick it. At that time we was young boys like, he was a grade up under me though. We was talking, I worked right there at the store with them, Joe Mack, Mr. Jim Tanner and his wife.

PC: You worked at Tanners Grocery?

LT: Yes ma'am, we were real close, yes we were real close.

PC: Did you work there during your school years?

LT: Sometime I worked in the school years because Mr. Jim Tanner, he was off in sports too. He didn't miss a game we played. I don't care where we went, if we went to Callijap Egypt, Mr. Jim would be there.

PC: He would follow ya'll and watch you?

LT: I remember one night we had a game over at Groveton, a fight broke out. Jim was right there amongst of them. That is the night...that is the first time I ever got any stitches. Dr. Eddins put stitches in my eye here.

PC: So y'all traveled around to other towns and played other schools during sports?

LT: Yes ma'am, like, Trinity was in our district, Groveton was in our district, Rusk was in our district. And Lovelady was in our district, and Chester. There was a bunch of schools in our district we played.

PC: Did you have any problems when you traveled to out of town games as far as race relations?

LT: Just one game, just one game. It wasn't a race relation started it. It was just like, we were all consolidated black school. You know how some kids get kind of worked up out there on the field and then the fight just broke out amongst the players.

PC: It was still segregated teams then?

LT: Yes ma'am.

PC: You talked a little bit about this with working at the Tanner's Grocery, but did you have any experience of coming to the establishments and businesses in the white community before integration?

LT: Oh yes, my mother worked at the Pine Bough. At that time you were not allowed to go in the front door of the Pine Bough. She would always fix us something to eat, fix us some food and bring it back there. We would come back over there; you know how kids is, they going to be close to mom. If it's food they gonna find out where it's at. So, we come up there and Mrs. Davis she would let us come back there and wait on us and feed us. So, it really didn't make too much difference as long as we got the food. We accomplished the mission coming over here to see about getting us something to eat. Because, at that time it wasn't no telephones and all that, very few had telephones. I could count the ones on one hand that had a phone. Like now, we got cell phones, telephones and we can call ahead and make arrangements. It wasn't no arrangements, it was just like all of a sudden.

PC: Now, how long did your mother work at the Pine Bough Restaurant?

LT: She worked there until they closed it. Just like you talking about Sam, I don't think he knew Mrs. Davis.

PC: Sam Coleman?

LT: Yes, that was before his time. You know, he was off in all that kind of stuff now, yes.

PC: How...did your mother ever comment about her working relations with Mrs. Davis and working at the Pine Bough? Did she ever express any concerns?

LT: She said she was a nice lady. That is the only thing I ever heard her talking about because, during Diboll Day and her working for the queens and all that, Lisa Burkhalter, that was her girl. She campaigned for her to try to make the queen out of, because she ran the concession stand, my mother, right there at the sign-in gate at Temple Lumber Company here.

PC: Your mother ran a concession stand at the sawmill?

LT: Yes, for Lisa, for Lisa. Yes, right outside the gate there, the concession stand to raise funds for Lisa.

PC: For the queen's race at that time?

LT: Yes, that was her queen, Lisa. (laughter)

PC: In getting to Diboll Day, do you remember when they had separate Diboll Day activities and they had the Walter Allen activities at the park and then the white activities at the Whispering Pines?

LT: Wait a minute, Whispering Pines, that is out there going toward Pine Valley ain't it?

PC: No sir, it would be where the Temple office is now, that was the park a long time ago, Whispering Pines.

LT: Oh yes, I remember that now. I remember that Whispering Pines.

PC: What do you remember about the Diboll Day activities being separate and the Diboll Day queen's races?

LT: Well, when I first came to Diboll, the first Diboll Day we had was like, we went out there and they were feeding barbeque at Ryan Chapel. You know where the Ryan Chapel church is?

PC: Yes sir.

LT: Not that metal building, that log cabin, right there. They served food and stuff on the ground. We went over there, I was just something little small. I can't hardly remember but I know it wasn't at neither one of the parks.

PC: So it was at Ryan Chapel Church that they had a barbeque?

LT: Yes, for Diboll Day that was back like in the early fifties.

PC: They had July 4th company barbeques back before they started Diboll Day in 1953.

LT: That was before yes, I know it was something because, I remembered it was something.

PC: You were pretty little then.

LT: Yes, I was small then.

PC: You remember that log building though.

LT: We went there one time, just one time.

PC: Just one time.

LT: They had barbeque and beans and stuff.

PC: Do you remember how they went about selecting the queens for the black community?

LT: Yes ma'am, I knew. How they would do it, they had it different, when they had black queens and over here they would have white queens. They would run in their own bracket. The whites would run with their bracket for Diboll Day and the blacks would run for over there at Orchard Park by themselves. What did you say the park was named?

PC: The Walter Allen Park.

LT: They would have the one over there by the big office, not the big one...

PC: Whispering Pines.

LT: Whispering Pines.

PC: Okay.

LT: Arthur Temple he would come over there. They always had the greasy pole and them black guys they be trying to get up there to get, I think it would be a hundred dollars or fifty dollars, I forget how much they would put up on top of the pole. They had it greased with axle grease. And Mr. Arthur Temple in some kind of way he would get out there. He wouldn't care nothing about that grease getting on him or nothing and they would just be all on his shoulder, you know, stacked up, one standing here on this one. They were trying to get up that pole to get their money.

PC: So you remember him coming to Walter Allen Park and participating in the activities?

LT: Yes ma'am, yes ma'am, and not just one time. Every time that greased pole would be there he would be supporting them to try to get the money off that pole. (laughter)

PC: What other activities do you remember them having at Walter Allen Park?

LT: They had the queens, the bathing suit queens. They would have for Diboll Day, they would have the queen day and then they would get up on a long flat bed, 18 wheeler flatbed, and then they would start calling off who was the runner up and who was the first place and, on and on.

PC: Okay.

LT: It's been quite a while.

PC: What about the parade? Did they participate in the Diboll Day parade with the white community? Did they just have one parade and everybody participated if they had...

LT: Yes they participated; they would participate in Diboll Day. They even had schools out of Pineland. The whites and all would be in the same parade. They would do the parade together.

PC: Okay, but you remember the black community participating in the parade?

LT: Yes ma'am.

PC: Okay. Do you remember when the new H.G. Temple School was built? You would have been pretty small.

LT: Yes, I remember it. My grandpa helped build H. G. Temple High.

PC: What was your grandfather's name?

LT: Jerry Burns, B-u-r-n-s, my mother's dad, out of Houston.

PC: How was he involved with that?

LT: He helped put the sheet rock up in H. G. Temple High. I think H. G. Temple High was finished in like 1952.

PC: 1953.

LT: Something like that.

PC: So, what grade did you start in the new school?

LT: Maybe like first grade or second grade.

PC: So if it was first grade you never attended school in the old school?

LT: Yes, I attended in the old school.

PC: Oh you did.

LT: Yes, because we played basketball, I didn't play but I remember going to school there at the old school my first year. Like, you know, like...what happened, I'm going to tell you what happened. I never got a birth certificate. I went out to the school house to go to school. They wouldn't let me go to school. I tried to get in the grade with my brother because he was in about the second grade. I was following him. So, I went to school out there about like six months maybe like the first semester and they told me I had to go back home because I didn't have no birth certificate. So, I stayed out of school for like that whole rest of the year. And, I went back the second year and they let me go to school until I finished there, yes finished there. I never had a birth certificate and I'm trying to get my birth certificate now.

PC: So you started school and then they told you you couldn't go to school because you didn't have a birth certificate?

LT: Yes, all my other sisters and brothers got a birth certificate except me. I never seen mine. I got one, I'm trying to get it out of Austin.

PC: Do you remember anything about how they chose the name H. G. Temple to name the school when they built the new school?

LT: The old school was H. G. Temple.

PC: Yes, that is right.

LT: They just moved it down to the new school. It was always H. G. Temple.

PC: That is right, that is right. And you participated in sports during school and everything and attended the games.

LT: Yes, I attended all the games.

PC: Did you attend games of the Diboll High School football boys?

LT: Yes ma'am.

PC: And, how were you treated when you went to the games?

LT: I was treated like everybody else. I would go out there and watch Eugene Capps and Carol Nash and them play football and Eddie Horton. They treated me like anybody else.

PC: Good, what other activities did you participate in during school?

LT: Let me see, mostly just football and track, football and track.

PC: Did you ever hear your younger brothers share any concerns in regards to integration after full integration was implemented?

LT: No ma'am. I had a brother under me and he started over there in like tenth or eleventh grade. He finished school over there with Eddie Horton and Carol and them.

PC: Did any of your friends share any concerns or fears about integration?

LT: They had one bad incident over there but I was in Vietnam. I just heard about it but it wasn't that much to it. They got it straightened out and it was kind of like a little old rally there. But, it didn't amount to much because mostly then Diboll kind of had things under control because everybody was in a small town and everybody pretty well knew each other. That is what was so good about Diboll. But, other than that, that was the only incident I heard.

PC: Do you feel like the integration process as far as the whole community was accepted and was a smooth process?

LT: Yes, because see most of the people that stay here in Diboll, they worked out there at one of the plants or something for Temple. And everybody knew each other because they worked out there hand in hand, you know, and that made a whole lot of difference because nobody wasn't no strangers to each other.

PC: Right.

LT: When you got a larger community, you got a larger town it kind of makes it different because everybody gets to where you kind of spread it out. They don't know each other as well as they would in like a small community.

PC: Now when you left Diboll right after graduation and you went to the Vietnam War, how were you treated as far as race relations?

LT: Well during that time everything was integrated. We didn't have no...I went down to Fort Polk, Louisiana and it wasn't racial, no kind of racial.

PC: What year did you go into the service?

LT: 1967.

PC: Okay.

LT: August 7, 1967.

PC: So just a year after graduation. Can you tell me a little bit about some of the businesses or other establishments in the black community?

LT: Oh, in the black community.

PC: During the time that you were a kid growing up, you know, just name some of them for me.

LT: Okay, they had the black businesses that sold like soda water, candy, cigarettes, and stuff like that, Mr. Arty Dewberry. It was on the, what you call the pipeline. They had different sides, they had the pipeline and then Mr. Artie Dewberry, he had a little old commissary store there. He sold like soda water, candy, cigarettes and little stuff like that, Mr. Dewberry and all. They had another little place there, Mr. Papp, he had an ice cream stand right there by the Shiloh Baptist Church there, Mr. Papp Mathis.

PC: Papp Mathis?

LT: Yes ma'am and he sold ice cream. Oh, don't forget Mr...I can't remember his name right there, but he had a little stand right there too. They both had a stand there right by each other. I can't recall the guys name they been gone so long.

PC: So as a small child, you know, growing up, what would be one of your favorite memories going to a store and getting to get a treat or something?

LT: Oh the favorite store at that time was Mr. Jim Tanner. We would go over there and get them jack cookies. (laughter)

PC: So you went there as a small child and worked there in your high school days?

LT: Yes I worked there with Mr. Jim and them. Boy he was a good man, Mr. Jim.

PC: What did you do for fun as a child?

LT: Oh as a child? Well, I was raised up there with Robert Mettlen and Carl Mettlen and we made a trolley. We had a cable running from this tree up here to down like that and we had a pipe had a rope on it and we would slide it back up to the high part and then we would catch that pipe that was going down in that pavement and we would go like here down through there. Right down there below the graveyard there, what we call Lakeview, right there below Lakeview there. See them guys there were white and we played with them.

PC: So you had interaction with white kids growing up?

LT: Yes, Carl Mettlen and Robert Mettlen.

PC: Did ya'll live close to each other?

LT: Well yes in a way we did because Eugene Capps and them stayed right down there below Little Charles and them where we were raised up.

PC: Was this in the area you are referring to as what they call the Pipeline or would this be more...?

LT: That is what you call mostly like the pipeline yes, they stayed right there in the community and, Joe Mack and them. Don't forget them Havard boys.

PC: The Havard boys?

LT: Yes, them Havard boys. (laughter)

PC: What teachers do you remember from H. G. Temple School?

LT: Oh I remember Mrs. Inez Sibley. I remember Mrs. Ruby Simmons. I remember Mr. Ross, Coach Ross. I remember Coach Allen, I remember Coach Archie Seals. I remember Mr. Willie Massey, Mrs. Louise Massey, the principal and the wife.

PC: Tell me about Mr. Massey.

LT: Oh he was a fine guy. I tell you something about Mr. Massey, he believed in looking after the school. He was just a career man. He would teach us algebra and I never seen him fail nobody.

PC: Oh really!

LT: I never seen him fail nobody. His wife she taught the first grade. Whenever you went through the first grade, you come out of there you done learned something. She ain't gonna let you leave until you learn something, Mrs. Louise Massey.

PC: We know from the records that Herbert Allen was a coach at H. G. Temple School.

LT: Yes, Herbert Allen, yes Herbert.

PC: In 1962 he left the school, do you know anything about him resigning?

LT: He didn't resign. He went to a bigger school in Houston, Klein. You ever heard of Klein?

PC: Yes sir.

LT: He went to be a head coach in Houston at Klein High.

PC: What about the assistant coach Mr. Ross?

LT: Mr. Ross he went to Lufkin. He coached for the Lufkin Panthers.

PC: Okay, were you under them when you were in football?

LT: Yes ma'am Coach Ross and Coach...see the year I finished, the year I went into high school I left because I didn't want to be involved with them because Mr. Allen he didn't allow you no slack. He tried to put that leather on you.

PC: He was tough, huh?

LT: Yes, he tried to put that leather on you.

PC: You didn't think you'd like that too well, huh?

LT: He done got a hold of me one time and I know how I was and I had to leave to get away from him. The year I left, he left. I left in '62 and went to Houston; that is the year he left, and Maurice came to Houston and told me he needed me to come and run the football. That had to be in like '63.

PC: I know you graduated in '66 but I'm just wondering if there was any talk in regards to the boy's athletics at Temple High being discontinued. If there was any talk of that before you graduated.

LT: I knew it before I graduated that that was going to be it, it wouldn't be no more sports there.

PC: Okay.

LT: I was the last team to come through there.

PC: But did y'all know that while you were still in school or was this decision made after school got out?

LT: No we knew it, we knew it.

PC: You knew it was going to happen?

LT: Yes ma'am we knew it.

PC: How did everybody feel about that? Was there any discussion or do you remember anybody sharing their feelings or concerns about that?

LT: No, I didn't hear no concern. It wasn't that much to be said because everybody had already started going, started teaching back over here. They had started breaking the faculty down.

PC: Yes, '66 was when they voted to end the athletic program for that fall.

LT: That is right.

PC: But you graduated in the spring of '66 and the male seniors were taken over to the Diboll High School for athletics.

LT: That is right.

PC: I just wondered if anybody had started discussing that before school got out in the spring.

LT: No, no they hadn't. They hadn't discussed it. We knew before school got out in '66 there wasn't going to be no more athletics over there, that was it.

PC: But they already knew that.

LT: Yes, we already knew it.

PC: Is there anything you would like to share with me that I haven't asked you about?

LT: Not really, you pretty well covered everything. I thought really, you know, I was coming over here for Memorial Day. I had wrote out me a deal, so you kind of got me...I started thinking I should have asked you. I would have been more prepared. (laughter)

PC: Oh! One more question that I thought of. Did you know Mr. Kenyon?

LT: Yes, I went up under Mr. Kenyon one year.

PC: Yes, you would have been under him one year.

LT: He left here and went to Corpus, Corpus Christie.

PC: What do you remember about him, can you share anything about him with us?

LT: I remember one time and I was like in the first grade and he actually got this clock. I didn't know too much about clocks. I took it over there to Mr. Lacey and I told Mr. Lacey and then Mrs. Jerrie Lee Cosey, she was a senior that year. And, I said, "He said to set it, set this clock" and things. They were talking about...she teased me about it for a pretty good while. And, I brung the clock back over there to Mr. Lacey and that was it. That is the only thing I remember about. I was pretty young; I wasn't no more than about five or six years old.

PC: Yes, he left here in '53. Now, when did you come back to Diboll?

LT: I came back to Diboll in like maybe '63.

PC: I meant after your service in Vietnam

LT: Oh, I came back to Diboll like in '71.

PC: And you've been here ever since?

LT: Yes ma'am.

PC: What did you do during those years and retire from?

LT: I worked for Schick Steel up in Arkansas, a millwright, done millwright work. I worked for Brown and Root doing pipe fitting.

PC: Okay, so you didn't work for Temple Industries?

LT: Just a little bit. I never hardly worked for Temple, no more than Temple Associates. I done millwright for Temple Associates up under Mr. Haywood Quarrles.

PC: Oh okay. Did you work with Eugene Capps then? (laughter)

LT: Yes, me and Eugene worked, yes I worked with TC.

PC: Did your father retire from TSE?

LT: Yes ma'am he retired from TSE. Not really retired, he got down sick and got an early leave of absence for being sick.

PC: Do you remember anything about any problems in the community as far as race relations during your growing up or after you got out of school?

LT: I never been in no kind of race relations or riot or anything.

PC: So as a whole, you think Diboll as a whole community got along really well as far as race relations?

LT: Yes, pretty well because I've seen it, but it wasn't here like in the city like Houston and places like that. Diboll has never had too much racial, you know, like riots and stuff like that. They have been blessed to be, just to be honest.

PC: Yes.

LT: You probably haven't heard of it either, you graduated from here. Ain't you from Diboll?

PC: Yes sir, yes sir.

LT: It's always been a laid back town.

PC: For the most part everything that we've heard so far in this project of collecting history on integration everything has gone pretty smooth as far as the transition.

LT: Like I said, it wasn't pushed into it all at once, it kind of gradually took place. You could see it happening all the time.

PC: Did you have a favorite teacher in school?

LT: Yes ma'am, my favorite teacher was Mrs. Wallace. (laughter) You remember Mrs. Wallace?

PC: Mrs. Odyessa?

LT: Yes Mrs. Odyessa Wallace, she never would give up on me. She told my wife she said, "He got everything but manners." (laughter) She told my wife, "He got everything but manners."

PC: She tried to teach you some manners?

LT: Yes.

PC: So, Diboll has been a pretty good place to live hasn't it?

LT: Yes it has. I've lived in the city. I've been like, I've lived in Seattle, I lived for awhile in Seattle and then I lived in Houston and I've been up Arkansas. But, Diboll seems like I always got lead right back to Diboll. I've been lead right back home.

PC: Well that is great. Do you remember the Diboll Eagles baseball team?

LT: Yes ma'am, I remember them.

PC: Do you remember watching them play on Sunday afternoons?

LT: Yes I used to watch them, if I'm not mistaken, right here.

PC: Yes sir, sure was.

LT: It was right here.

PC: The Millers Park.

LT: Yes ma'am.

PC: Tell me about that. Tell me about the baseball games.

LT: Okay we used to come over here and we would watch the baseball games. Sometimes Pineland would be playing Diboll. We had a guy, we had them Cade boys, Billy Cade, Johnny Cade, Joe...let me see...what was his name, John Wesley, and Mr. Big Jim Hall and...I forget a bunch of them.

PC: Now were you just a young boy then?

LT: Yes ma'am, I wasn't even old enough to play myself, all I could do was watch. I was about like seven or eight years old. Then, we had a baseball field over here right out from the school house there, right there...I tell you where it was at. You know where Mr. Massey built that home there?

PC: You referring to the H. G. Temple School?

LT: Yes ma'am. All of that used to be a baseball field for like, what you call that team, the Eagles?

PC: Beside Mr. Massey's house?

LT: Not beside that, all that is what it was before all them houses were built.

PC: Oh, before his house was built.

LT: Yes ma'am. It used to be a baseball field there, a plank, they had a plank fence.

PC: What did they call it? Did they call it anything?

LT: I never did know of...

PC: Just the ball field.

LT: You couldn't see over it because it had the boards, them plank boards up. You know how they kind of had it fenced in.

PC: Did they always...the Diboll Eagles mostly played on Sunday afternoons.

LT: Yes ma'am, that is right. They played like on the weekends and on Sunday's.

PC: Now when you came over here to the Millers Park to watch them play were there white people here watching the games?

LT: Yes, what-cha-ma call him used to umpire over there. What is his name? I'm going to call his name...his daddy was a constable here. Oh, I can't call his name at the time but he is one of my icons.

PC: One of the constables?

LT: Dan Fenley, the Fenley boy, they used to play with them, with Big Jim or something. I remember seeing him at every game, the Fenley guy. Not the oldest one, the youngest one, I don't remember the oldest one. I met him recently.

PC: What else did the community do for entertainment when you were a kid? What other types of things went on that you enjoyed growing up?

LT: Well, going to the swimming pool, coming to the park for Diboll Day and watching the parades, watching them campaign for the queens for Diboll Day. The Easter egg hunt at the park over there, we used to Easter egg hunt.

PC: What community leaders do you remember being involved with seeing that these activities took place?

LT: Mrs....I can't remember, too good now...I done got kind of foggy. I know them but I can't recall their names.

PC: Well is there anything else you want to share with me today about living in Diboll or, just anything you want to share?

LT: Well since it's Memorial Day coming up I wrote this speech I was going to do, but since it's not...you say history and I'm not...I decided...that is the only thing I can remember as the next holiday is Memorial Day so, I had wrote this out and since you said we was taping I wanted to.

PC: Okay, well go ahead.

LT: What Memorial can teach us for what's patriotic in America is everywhere. Memorial Day is a time for us to honor those who perished in service throughout the nation. It is also a time to rejoice in those who still live and remember our fallen comrades.

PC: Okay, that is great. Mr. Teal, I thank you for joining us today and doing this interview with me. I thank you very much.

LT: Okay, if you need me on anything else just let me know and I'll try to do what I can.

PC: Okay, thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW