

**SAM COLEMAN, SR.**

**Interview 206a**

**August 09, 2010, at the History Center, Diboll, Texas**

**Patsy Colbert, Interviewer**

**Patsy Colbert, Transcriber**

**ABSTRACT:** In this interview with Patsy Colbert, Mr. Sam Coleman, Sr. reminisces about his life in Diboll. Mr. Coleman came to Diboll in 1966 and immediately became active in the community. In 1975 he was elected as the first African American member of the Diboll City Council. Throughout his tenure in Diboll, Mr. Coleman worked at the Fiberboard Plant and as a driver for the Temple family and was a manager at Boggy Slough. He volunteered for many community organizations, including Diboll Day, the Boy Scouts, Little League Baseball and the Boys and Girls Club. Mr. Coleman witnessed many changes in Diboll and his leadership helped smooth the integration process in various parts of the community.

**Patsy Colbert (hereafter PC):** Today's date is August 9, 2010. I'm Patsy Colbert and I'm at the History Center today with Mr. Sam Coleman, Sr. and, Mr. Coleman this is part of our ongoing project of racial integration of the Diboll Schools. We know that you came to Diboll around 1966, I believe, which was kind of in the middle of integration and we know your experience may be a little bit different as far as the school integration, but you've also played a vital role in being a leader of the community. You were also the first black city councilman elected to the Diboll City Council in 1975 and you served in that capacity for 28 years. You also continue to be active in the Diboll community working with the Boys and Girls Club and so, we're just going to start off today by telling me when and where you were born.

**Sam Coleman (hereafter SC):** I was born in New Willard, Texas in 1932, August 28<sup>th</sup>.

**PC:** Okay, you have a birthday coming up.

**SC:** Yes, in a few days. I grew up there. I grew up between New Willard, Texas and Leesville, Louisiana where all my people were from. Now during the school year naturally they enrolled me in New Willard Elementary School and I stayed there until the first grade to the ninth grade.

**PC:** Okay.

**SC:** From the ninth to the twelfth I was in Dunbar High School in Livingston, Texas. I graduated May 22, 1950.

**PC:** Okay. Now, back to New Willard, how was the town set up racially in those years?

**SC:** It was similar to Diboll. You had blacks, whites, Mexican Americans, all were there and the main thing was the lumber company that I found out in later years was owned by

the Temple's. But it was called Long Leaf Lumber Company in New Willard, Texas. It had a pine sawmill and hardwood sawmill, a planer mill and it was lumber was the main industry there at that time. My dad worked there and growing up years they had a big store there kind of like they did in Diboll. They called it a commissary store which, everything you needed was there at that store including the post office was there on one end of the store.

**PC:** Right.

**SC:** I was fortunate enough as I become an early teenager to get a job in that store as a stocker.

**PC:** Oh okay, at the commissary in New Willard?

**SC:** At the commissary, and that tells you something because being a black they asked my mom could I work there and she said yes, as long as I didn't do no heavy lifting 'cause I wasn't big enough to lift nothing. But, I worked there all through high school. I worked there at that store until I got fully grown and left, finished high school and left.

**PC:** Okay, so how would you describe race relations there in New Willard growing up?

**SC:** I couldn't never say it was...as I've seen it in the southern states that didn't happen in New Willard. They had what you called the white quarters and the black quarters but, you lived there, you know, in that area but you could still go from one to the other. We had friends and all races was friends. Everybody knew everybody and the community was, like I say, some blacks here and some whites there. But, in the community where I lived there was a lot of Mexican Americans lived there 'cause just a few houses from our house was Mexican people and as far as I know from a little fellow up they lived there.

**PC:** And everybody got along?

**SC:** Sure did, sure did.

**PC:** You had white friends growing up as a child?

**SC:** Yes, as I got grown and later moved to Houston and I was working for one of the Sakowitz Brothers, clothing store, making a delivery I run up on one of my Mexican friends. He had already moved to Houston, the whole family and we got together again down there. We were all grown people at that time.

**PC:** And how were you treated working at the commissary there?

**SC:** Wonderful, wonderful.

**PC:** And your employer was white of course, but you were treated well?

**SC:** I was treated well, I really was and my dad worked at some parts of that lumber division and he was treated well and as far as I know all of the people were, they really were.

**PC:** And the school that you went to was a segregated school?

**SC:** It was a segregated school. It was just New Willard Elementary I think. It might have been Thompson Elementary in New Willard, Texas. It was all black and then when I got to Livingston it was, the high school was all black.

**PC:** Now, did your family move to Livingston or did you have to attend Dunbar High at Livingston.

**SC:** I attended Dunbar from living in New Willard, we were bussed from New Willard, Leggett and New Willard was bussed to Livingston.

**PC:** Okay, because New Willard was just an elementary school so you had to go to Dunbar at Livingston as a high school, an accredited high school?

**SC:** Right, the school only went to the ninth grade in New Willard.

**PC:** Okay and you graduated in 1950?

**SC:** May 22, 1950.

**PC:** And, what did you do after high school graduation?

**SC:** I moved to Houston and got me a job working at Madding Drug Store. It was called Madding Apothecary, Jones Apothecary which was the same thing as a drug store. I delivered medicine in that area then from that, I moved from that to working for Sakowitz Brothers downtown clothing store.

**(had to pause tape due to a knock on the door)**

**PC:** Okay, and you were telling me about working in Houston.

**SC:** Yes, when I first got down there I got a job hauling medicine. People who were sick would call into the drug store and they had people who would deliver the medicine to them.

**PC:** Okay.

**SC:** The first place I worked was Jones Apothecary, which was a drug store but that is what they called it then.

**PC:** Okay, and when did you come to Diboll?

**SC:** I came to Diboll in 1966. About the year that Kennedy got killed in Dallas I was just coming back to Livingston. I was doing fine in Houston, we had three children, three little boys and we were doing fine. But, I came in one day and we could see that Houston was changing from the city it used to be and I had asked my wife, "Do you really want to raise these children down here?" She told me no right quick. I say, "You want to go back home?" And she said, "Let's do." So, we came back to Livingston and her parents had land and a house and everything so we moved back there. But, that is after I had gone to the Army because I had went to the Army in '52 I think or '53, during the Korean Conflict and I ended up overseas. The war was going on in Korea but they also had a cold war going on and I took sick in California. I took sixteen weeks of basic training in California and after that I took sick and when I did get out of the hospital they changed my orders. I was headed for Korea which was called a Far East Command and they changed it to a European Command which means I went to Germany to still go to Korea. To keep training in Germany and go to Korea but before that time the Korean War was over so, I spent my time in Germany during the cold war and back to stateside.

**PC:** Okay.

**SC:** Then I started working for an oil field pipe testing company, married and started working for an oil field pipe testing company and then I worked there for a number of years and then we decided we would come back here to East Texas and that is where we've been ever since. I came to Livingston and from Livingston I came to Diboll in '66 and been here ever since.

**PC:** Okay, what actually brought you to Diboll?

**SC:** A friend of mine, I was working at Leggett Lumber Company in Livingston driving a fork lift and a friend of mine had heard that they were hiring people in Diboll. The freeway wasn't even finished then.

**PC:** Right.

**SC:** And so he got up here and he was telling one of the men up here that he knew me and I was good at driving a fork lift. And, they needed fork lift operators at the Fiberboard Plant to load cars and trucks and so, I came for an interview and J. D. Johnson interviewed me and he told me after the interview he says, "We'll hire you, you have a job here." He said, "But before you start to work here I need you to do something." I said, "What is that?" He said, "Go back to Leggett Lumber Company and tell that man that you work for that you have a job in Diboll." I said, "Why do I have to do that?" He said, "I'm just asking you to do that." I said, "If I'm thinking right I go back and tell that man I have a job in Diboll, I come back to Diboll and you don't hire me I'm out of a job. I have a family, I can't handle that." He said, "No, give me your hand." I shook hands with J. D. Johnson. He said, "You have a job in Diboll. Just go tell that man that you are working up here." And, I didn't understand any of that so, I go back and I told the guy that I was working for down there, Nolan Ashby that owned that lumber company. He said, "Go ahead on up there but I don't think you are going to like it," and I retired up here.

**PC:** You retired here.

**SC:** But, I found out by working in North Boggy Slough running the club for Temple, Nolan Ashby came up one weekend and I found out that Mr. Temple owned that company too.

**PC:** Okay.

**SC:** So, it just changed from place to place.

**PC:** Now, going back just a second you mentioned, you know, your service with the military and I was reading in an article where you actually played basketball with the special services.

**SC:** I did, I did.

**PC:** And that you were offered a full basketball scholarship to Kentucky State and you declined it so, I wanted you to share that with me, that story with me.

**SC:** I did, I did, a scholarship to Kentucky State. While playing basketball for I think it was the 102<sup>nd</sup> Pioneers we...I was the only player on the team, I think we had fifteen guys, and I was the only player that had started, went to college but never finished. I started at TSU way back there but I didn't finish anything. But, I don't know how Markus Hanes who played for the Globetrotters, he was the man that does all the dribbling around on the floor, he lives, I found out later, over in Ft. Worth or Dallas area, but he sent me a letter after he had contacted Kentucky State and he sent me a letter to just go on up there and everything was ready for me a scholarship and everything was waiting on me when I got out of the army. But, I got out of the Army and went back to Houston and went to work and got a good job and married and I never did take him up on it.

**PC:** Never did play basketball. Did you play basketball in high school?

**SC:** Oh yes.

**PC:** I guess you were a good basketball player.

**SC:** Four years in high school and then two years, I guess, or three years in the Army. I played in California during basic training I played in just a company team.

**PC:** Okay.

**SC:** Then I played in a regimental team overseas and played in Germany and France overseas.

**PC:** Was that just something they did for fun or was this, you know, really serious basketball?

**SC:** No, this was serious stuff they did because we...in basketball, special services they called it, you represented the United States Army when you did that.

**PC:** Oh okay.

**SC:** That is all you did.

**PC:** Was it a segregated team, an all black team?

**SC:** No, it was everybody, all colors was there.

**PC:** Okay, who did y'all play?

**SC:** Other teams, other teams in the Army. They were Army teams we played from other places.

**PC:** Army teams from other places.

**SC:** There were a lot of Army teams at that time, a lot of Special Services.

**PC:** I thought that was interesting when I read that in the army and get to play basketball, something that you loved to do.

**SC:** It was, and I didn't know how important it was until somebody saw me playing, just playing, you know, at the gym one weekend and, he said "why don't you try out for the regimental team." I said "what is the regimental team?" And he said "that is all they do is play basketball." So, I said "okay" and so I had to find out where you go and what you do and I tried out and I made it. I was good enough to make it, I really was.

**PC:** Wow and how long did you play basketball, the whole time you were in the military?

**SC:** I'm going to guess about two years probably straight. Even when they told me it was time for me to come back state side everybody on the team, the captain wanted me to stay and play basketball because we was good.

**PC:** You had other things in mind. (laughter)

**SC:** I think that is why I got these bad knees right now. In fact I know because we didn't have the shoes that they make now. We had commerce or something, just the best you had. But what you did you put on as many pairs of socks in those shoes that you could get on and give you some cushion.

**PC:** Right. Well, that is very interesting. So, you came to Diboll and you started to work for Temple Industries.

**SC:** Temple-Inland at the Fiberboard plant.

**PC:** You started in 1966 at the Fiberboard plant, okay. What was your first impression of Diboll when you came here?

**SC:** Okay, I came up and I met a lot of people including Mr. Shepherd after I started working at the Fiberboard plant. And, if I'm not mistaken they were having a Diboll Day I believe in '66 and that impressed me to see how the town came together and do things. So, Mr. Shepherd got me in on helping do the float at the Fiberboard Plant. I worked, he was manager of the plant and he saw how I was and he took me like under his wing and schooled me on a lot of things. It was his idea that I run for city council.

**PC:** Okay, and we are going to get to that in just a second but, you mentioned the early Diboll Day, do you remember that first year '66, do you remember if it was still segregated Diboll Day or was everything integrated by that point? School integration began in '65 but full integration wasn't until '68, but we know from some Free Press newspaper articles that in '62 and '64 they had separate Diboll Day queens. They had the white queens and the black queens but, I was just wondering if '66 we are not sure when Diboll Day became fully integrated. Just wondering if you remember anything about your first year of Diboll Day in '66 if there were separate queens that year?

**SC:** I can't remember. All I remember is helping decorate a float and being a part of what was going on, Mr. Shepherd just kept me busy doing stuff.

**PC:** Okay, that is something we are still trying to confirm the date of Diboll Day being fully integrated. We are assuming it probably went along with school integration, but just wondered if you remember anything particular.

**SC:** My daughter ran one year, she was a junior or a senior in high school and she ran and she did all right.

**PC:** Okay, and then after that year, your first year of Diboll Day did you become involved with Diboll Day each year since?

**SC:** Each year as long as Mr. Shepherd was involved in it he had me doing something. One year I drove a Cadillac in the parade and it had Temple Studs on the side of it and it had some studs up on top of that car.

**PC:** So, was Mr. Shepherd your boss at the Fiberboard plant?

**SC:** He was there, yes.

**PC:** Now, tell me how it came about you being the first black city councilman.

**SC:** I just attended, listening to Mr. Shepherd I would come down and sit and listen to them and see what they doing and how they work and all that because I had never

attempted anything that major before. And so, in conversation he said, “Why don’t you run for city council?” It is kind of comical, I turned to him and say, “One reason – I’m not white.” He say, “What difference does that make?” I say, “I thought” and really in talking to him “I thought you had to be white and have a college education and I don’t do that.” He said “I can’t figure out something.” I said “what?” “Why come you want to know so much, them on there don’t know nothing.” (laughter) He didn’t say nothing he said the other thing. He said, “Them on there don’t know nothing.” I say, “Well if you think I can.” He say, “I know you can if you run.” So, I ran and the first year that I ran I got a good voter turnout but a lady just barely beat me out by one or two votes. They wanted to know did I want to have a runoff. I said no, because it was the first time a black had ever run and the first time a woman had ever run.

**PC:** Oh okay.

**SC:** I say, “Let her have it.” And, I can’t think of her name now but, she didn’t stay here for about another year. It’s a two year deal but, she didn’t stay for about a year and I think her and her husband moved to Houston and so it came vacant. Anyway, I ran the next time and got it and from then on it kind of snowballed I guess you call it.

**PC:** So, really Mr. Shepherd encouraged you to run.

**SC:** He really did.

**PC:** And how was it...we know you won by being elected but how was it perceived in the community at the time that you were running?

**SC:** It wasn’t easy because it didn’t just...you know, like you would think people would be glad. I learned how to handle it I guess you call it but, it wasn’t a hoop la thing. I kind of eased into it and I watched how things go and I profit from that, you know. Now, not only was Mr. Shepherd very instrumental in that Pop Rich was, Paul Durham. We were all very good friends. We would have coffee and breakfast together, and even Mr. Woods who used to be over the Housing Authority, we were all good friends and we just got our heads together and tried to work things in. Those were the people who kept things going in the city in the right direction.

**PC:** Right.

**SC:** I just kind of teamed up with them.

**PC:** Okay. So, your first year to be elected was 1975, I believe, and you served for 28 years. So, you continually had to run for this office.

**SC:** Yes, every two years I think it was.

**PC:** And you were successful at that and these years were all consecutive years?

**SC:** Right.

**PC:** Okay.

**SC:** This is true, when you are sitting there and you see something needs to be done and you question it, then you mention it and quite often when I first would mention something they would table it 'till the next meeting. Then in the next meeting one of the other councilmen would say the same thing that I said in the last meeting, then they would vote on it. After doing that once or twice I would sit there and not say nothing. Mr. Shepherd called me in his office one day and he say, "You are a very smart man." I say, "How is that?" He say, "I watched you." He was the mayor at that time and he said, "The same thing that one of the other guys come up with you had mentioned it the last time we met." I said, "Yes, I know." He say, "But they tabled it and then they voted on it when somebody else mentioned it." And it would come out in the paper that so and so said something which they didn't I had come up with that idea.

**PC:** I see.

**SC:** But, they grabbed it and run and then they voted on it. So, that went on for a long time and I was never the person that said "look I told you that last week." But, I'd never do that.

**PC:** Yes, you just kind of saw it as the way things were going to operate.

**SC:** That is right, that is right. That is the way it would operate.

**PC:** What about opposition? Do you remember any particular group or any opposition that you went through during those years of running?

**SC:** Well I had some and it was some opposition from some of the black people because what they perceived as a council like when you get on there you can change the way this is done and I had to explain to them when you are councilman in a city and you are spending money from the state you are going to do what they say do or else everybody is going to jail. The state has a way of saying this is the way it's got to be done and all city council has to follow that.

**PC:** Right.

**SC:** You can't just go out there and say we are going to do this. For an instance, one of our fire chiefs went someplace and saw a fire truck and it had just everything that we wanted on it and, they bought that truck. I got a call from the Attorney General's office saying why did you buy that? I said, "We needed it." She said, "But you didn't go out for bids." I said, "I think we did." She said, "What do mean think, you don't know?" I said, "Well the bids are not open while I'm there I think they are open in the evening." She said "Mr. Coleman you find out how that happened. If you do that in the morning I'll personally come and arrest every one of y'all." That is when I got serious about stuff.

And, what had happened the fire chief had seen that truck and came back and got the money and went and got it. Which, sounds like a good deal because the fire truck was a good deal but, when you are spending money and you are part of Texas, the Attorney General has something to do with that. If it's over I think \$5,000 you have to go out for bids you can't just go out and buy it. You have to give everybody a chance to bid on it.

**PC:** You have to follow rules.

**SC:** You have to follow rules. And, when Woody Ingram called me one day and said, "Did the Attorney General call you?" I said, "He sure did." I said, "Talking about arresting us." He said, "Yes, he did me the same way." So, we got serious about that council then.

**PC:** You had to be careful then.

**SC:** Yes, you have to.

**PC:** Now, what about the black community and how did they respond to you as far as a city councilman on the issues that they were concerned with?

**SC:** Everything that they wanted we tried to get done. In fact, I got it done but, it didn't come out the way they wanted. A lot of the people think you got to get up and argue a point. But, I would study what needed to be done and a way to get it done without the argument and we got it done. For instance, the lights are all over the place where at one time it was dark through the community and what I did we had one or two black men on the police department. I told them I said, "Let's ride together and check how the darkness is," and they said, "It's everywhere." So, we got us a pen and a pencil and looked where it needed to be a light on every corner or wherever, however, you know. Then I came back to the council and told them we needed some lights in this area. They wanted to know why I had everything on paper and told them where I needed the lights. Then they told me one time that they had to be so...Clyde Thompson was there then, it had to be so many feet apart and I didn't know all about that I just said it's dark there and it does not need to be dark there. We got little children and grown folks too walking the streets at night in the dark. They are citizens and why don't they have lights and so, we worked that thing out and we got lights, same way with fire hydrants.

**PC:** Good, well good.

**SC:** I could tell them where they were and if a fire break out it was no fire hydrants there and I had everything on paper and when they looked at it they said "yes, he is right." I did my homework.

**PC:** You did your homework first. I guess what I'm trying to get at here, you as a city councilman, do you feel like you were there representing the black community as a whole, and did the black community if they had an issue did they come and talk to you at

your home and do you feel like you were working and representing them or just representing the city as a whole and you just serving your community?

**SC:** I tried to represent the city as a whole and when they had, every now and then, most of the things that they would come talk to me about it really wasn't an issue it was just...I don't know how to describe it but, it wasn't something that the city could do something about. They had paved streets, storm cellars, and gutters already. It was just taking care of what they had, you know.

**PC:** Right.

**SC:** They had nice houses and everything.

**PC:** Okay. Well, you certainly served a long time in 28 years and to be continually reappointed you must have been doing something right, that is for sure. That is great.

**SC:** One thing I found out was that sometimes they were being misled and they were not being misled because of the white people, they were just their thinking was wrong.

**PC:** Okay.

**SC:** Let me give you an instance. I was sitting in church one Sunday and the preacher said, "Brother Coleman is on that city council down there, we don't want no Uncle Tom down there." And, everybody goes Yeah! I have studied on Uncle Tom, they needed an Uncle Tom and they didn't know it. Uncle Tom was a man back in the slavery time. He would go over where the white people were meeting and work around them to find out what they were doing then he would come back to the blacks, the slaves and tell them so they would know what to look out for.

**PC:** Okay.

**SC:** But, see the preacher didn't know that and I didn't get up and say, "You need one." I didn't do that, I just sat there.

**PC:** Well that was just your personality and your character, being more of a listener.

**SC:** Right, right, I knew that they were wrong. I was listening and I said to myself, you need someone to tell you what is going on because you sure don't know.

**PC:** Were you voted in mostly by black voters?

**SC:** No, it was white and black.

**PC:** White and black, okay.

**SC:** One time one of the white voters he put on a big barbecue, I don't remember, I think he put on a barbecue like on a Friday in our community over there, I say our community, had barbecue, drinks for everybody because he was running. I was out of town.

**PC:** In the black community?

**SC:** Yes, I was out of town and so, when the time for election came I was out of town when he did the barbecue. I was in Houston visiting my family and then when the time for election came I had a grandson or son running track for Diboll High School and was in Austin and I was over there watching him run track. I got a call that I won with a landslide. So, I was thanking everybody in the community. They said, "Yes, we went over there and ate that man's barbecue up but we went and voted for you." (laughter)

**PC:** Well, it worked in your favor didn't it? (laughter)

**SC:** Right.

**PC:** That is pretty good. Now, can you recall the first city council meeting after you were appointed, that very first meeting, can you recall how that meeting went and just how you felt? Were you scared, were there any fears and how were you received by other councilmen?

**SC:** They received me but not, I wouldn't say, whole heartedly because they was wondering was I going to come on there and start trying to tear up what they had going. But, what I did as far as I can remember was sit and listen for a long time and listen at how they...I found out that like Mr. Shepherd say, they were repetitious. One would say something and the other would say the same thing in a different way and it didn't...after I got there I said it's nothing important, you know. You don't have to be no genius to do this. So, I just stayed...like the first one or two meetings it was just as if I wasn't there.

**PC:** Okay.

**SC:** You know what I mean?

**PC:** Right.

**SC:** And so, one time Clyde Thompson, he was the mayor then, he looked at me and he said "I'll tell you what we need on this council." I just looked at him, he said "we need a good black on here." So, James Simms was on there with me and he was sitting beside of me and so he said it again "like I said we need a good black." I said "there is James over there." Simms looked at me and said "I'm going to kill you." (laughter) We had a lot of fun about that.

**PC:** So, you didn't go into it to cause opposition, to bring opposition or anything?

**SC:** No.

**PC:** You were there, you really had an interest in it but you went into it learning at first I guess and learning the system.

**SC:** I did, I did. I would just spend time walking and looking and seeing how I could better where we were and that is how I went after it with that point of view.

**PC:** Well good. Is there anything that you can think of that would have been the most challenging part of serving on the city council?

**SC:** Well, if they hadn't received me as they did I guess it would have been more of a challenge. I remember when they got ready...they wanted that club over there.

**PC:** Which club are you referring to?

**SC:** It is not there anymore. I can't think...E.C. Williams.

**PC:** The Family Affair?

**SC:** The Family Affair, that is the name of it.

**PC:** Okay.

**SC:** And everybody was saying that I was going to vote against the Family Affair. So they couldn't have it at city hall there was just too many people. Seems like we moved somewhere down this way. I don't think the building is there right now. But anyway, I don't know how it happened but most of the city council didn't have to vote. It didn't matter to us if they did or not. Seems like we didn't vote, nobody voted against it I don't think it was just all the people wanted it, you want it you got it, you know.

**PC:** But, that particular meeting there was a big turn out?

**SC:** Uh-huh.

**PC:** People that were in favor of it thinking that the city council would be against it?

**SC:** Yes, and it was people that you didn't think was interested in it. They were there and it was one of the biggest things I think ever happened. But, they got the club and some of the people told me after they got it they say "we voted for it but now we can't afford it."

**PC:** So, that was one particular event that you felt was going to be challenging.

**SC:** Right, I thought it was really going to try to...I thought here we go we are going to tear the city apart but, it didn't work out like that.

**PC:** Well that is good. Any other issues you can think of that were big issues during the time that you served?

**SC:** No, something else I had thought of, they had baseball before I came and it was kids over there that played and kids over here that played. And, through Mr. Temple, Mr. Shepherd and all the heads we just started this Diboll baseball and it was for everybody. Well, I was one of the first coaches to coach in that. They had some coaches over there but the whole team was black, and when it came to integration of baseball myself and Howard Mullins did the Yankees and I was the only black at that time coaching. We had a winning team and we did well. We played right where the bank sits now, this building and the bank sits, right along here somewhere.

**PC:** And, the History Center where the practice field and everybody used to practice. Now, do you remember what year that was when they integrated the baseball? That is another area of integration that we are working on.

**SC:** Yes, it really was.

**PC:** We know Milford Ruby and Sonny Neyland and some of those were involved with the Diboll Little League.

**SC:** And Red Oaks, Red Oaks.

**PC:** But, you are saying you were one of the first black coaches after Little League was integrated?

**SC:** Right, right.

**PC:** Y'all had a winning team. How did the black community respond to that when they wanted to integrate the baseball?

**SC:** Well at first they didn't want to because they thought that it was going to be all white and their kids wasn't going to get to play. But, by me being a coach and I had six boys, but about three of them could play, naturally they were on my team that kind of changed the thing.

**PC:** Okay, do you have any photographs of your first Little League team?

**SC:** No, I don't, I really don't. Howard Mullins might I really don't.

**PC:** Okay, you coached with him, y'all coached together that year?

**SC:** Yes, we coached the Yankees.

**PC:** Now, were there black children on the other teams?

**SC:** Yes.

**PC:** So, they were put on all the little league teams so, it was all integrated Little League teams?

**SC:** Yes, it really was. It was a good thing and it was a lot of fun.

**PC:** You don't remember what year it was?

**SC:** I really don't.

**PC:** You came here in '66 and you were a city councilman in '75.

**SC:** That was somewhere around '70 I guess, that is a guess now. I'm not sure.

**PC:** Well we can probably find that out in the newspaper articles or something.

**SC:** I tell you what, Red Oaks can tell you. He was really into it. We worked together with the kids and Sonny Neyland.

**PC:** Now, in getting to the integration of the public schools we know that Freedom of Choice began in 1965 and then full integration took place the fall of '68. Did you have children in public school here during those years?

**SC:** The year in '65, I'm guessing it was '65, my oldest son was at the school where Shirley and I graduated from, Dunbar High School, but Donald Ray went to an integrated school and then the next year we came up here and it was integrated. I think it was '66 wasn't it?

**PC:** '66 was still Freedom of Choice in '66.

**SC:** Freedom of Choice, seems like they went...

**PC:** We had the Temple High School, we had the black school and then '66 was the second year of Freedom of Choice. In '67 they integrated the high school and then '68 was all the schools. So, they might have went...in '66 did they attend the all black school, your children, the first year they came? And, what ages would they have been?

**SC:** I'm trying to think. Sam and Donald were the two oldest ones. They had been in school in Livingston and they were the only two we had. The first year was all black because Sam went there. The next year they were integrated and Donald went there to the integrated school and then we came up here and I think both of them got in the integrated school.

**PC:** Okay. So, they may have in the fall of '66 you may have enrolled them in the Freedom of Choice, the white school.

**SC:** I think so.

**PC:** Do you remember any issues that you were concerned about when you first moved to Diboll as far as the school and enrolling your children in school? Because that was the year of Freedom of Choice and early integration, do you remember anything particular that you were concerned about and your children just starting to school here?

**SC:** I think if I can remember we were concerned that the teachers would still have a job. We didn't want the black teachers to be saying 'well you don't have anything to do now.' We didn't want that but, see everybody was moved over.

**PC:** Right, but you don't remember anything particular about your children as far as any issues the first few years of their school years?

**SC:** No.

**PC:** Okay, and then after full integration in '68, your oldest child, what grade would he have been in? What year was he born, do you know?

**SC:** I don't know.

**PC:** Hard to remember all those years.

**SC:** I want to say maybe about the fourth because they both went to school in Livingston first in first grade.

**PC:** They had already been in an integrated environment so he was used to that.

**SC:** Donald had.

**PC:** Do you remember any issues as they got older like in high school as far as racial issues?

**SC:** I remember, about this time I must have been working at Boggy Slough quite a bit 'cause one time...

**PC:** Working where, I'm sorry?

**SC:** At Boggy Slough.

**PC:** Oh at Boggy Slough, okay.

**SC:** I ran that thing about 30 years I guess. But anyway, seems like Coach Wyatt, Jay Wyatt's dad was the coach, and somebody started something at this school. (pointing to the school behind the History Center)

**PC:** Which would have been the high school then.

**SC:** Yes, and I was really concerned and seemed like Shirley called me and I came in to see if they was all right and Coach Jay Wyatt's dad had gotten all of his team and put them in the locker room and locked the door and say, "Whatever going on out there y'all are not going to be a part of it." It seems like he called the house and told us, "Don't worry about them boys we will bring them home when all this mess is over." He had them locked up in a room over there, the whole team, everybody. So, they weren't a part of that riot stuff and we found out that it was...we were playing somebody outside it wasn't the team, it wasn't the Kuk it was somebody else. It was one of them racial things.

**PC:** Well we know in the seventies, sometime in the seventies, '73 or '74 they had some racial tensions at the high school. Is kind of what you are referring to, would that have been this time frame you are referring to?

**SC:** Something like that, yes.

**PC:** Coach Wyatt would have been there then. Early integration the first year of full integration the coach was Coach Simmons, the first integrated football team to coach them was Coach Simmons. Coach Wyatt came after that so, you are probably referring to that. We had one or two incidents in the early seventies.

**SC:** I remember being at the Fiberboard Plant driving a forklift and you would drive from the car line side over on the other side and park, the lunchroom and whatever and I was getting some water and I got back on the forklift and Mr. George McClain said, "Sam they sitting in down there at the Pine Bough." I say, "Sitting in what?" He say, "You know them people from Houston that come up, those integration people." I say, "Oh yes." He said, "They sitting in over there at the Pine Bough." I say, "Why they doing that?" He say, "They want to see if blacks can eat there." I say, "I eat breakfast there me and Mr. Shepherd every morning." He say, "You going down to sit with them." I said, "Do they pay for that." He says, "I don't know." I say, "Well what I'm doing here y'all paying me to do this. I got a family at the house." I got back on my forklift and went on back to work.

**PC:** So, that was in the early...after integration?

**SC:** You remember how they used to come and sit in and say they wanted to be served and all that stuff. They was doing it all the way from Houston going north with it and I never did go down and be a part of it. I don't know if anybody else did or not.

**PC:** And that was at the Pine Bough?

**SC:** Yes.

**PC:** That is interesting.

**SC:** In the mornings Mr. Shepherd would come over across the tracks to my house and get me and we would come back to the Pine Bough. He, I, Pop Rich, he was over the Free Press, Paul Durham, Mr. Woods, we would all have coffee.

**PC:** Now, was this after integration in '68?

**SC:** I guess it was, it was during that time.

**PC:** And you didn't have any problem going into the Pine Bough?

**SC:** No.

**PC:** Okay, so did you experience any issues with integration in Diboll, experience any type of problems concerning integration or racial tensions in Diboll personally?

**SC:** I can't remember any.

**PC:** Anything at the plant?

**SC:** No, we were pretty well treated right as far as I know.

**PC:** Okay, and when you went to the Pine Bough you were treated well. And, that could have been after integration years since you moved here in '66.

**SC:** I went each morning, went in the front door just went in the door and sit down and had coffee and breakfast. Mrs. Hogue was that her name?

**PC:** Mrs. Byrd Davis.

**SC:** Mrs. Davis, that is right.

**PC:** Okay, so you just remember that one particular incident that this group came in and it was a black group and they were trying to see if they would be served?

**SC:** Yes, but they weren't from here and I didn't go. When George McClain and I were talking I asked him the question, "Do they pay you to go sit there because I'm not going to leave my job to go down there when I got a family at the house?"

**PC:** You had a family to raise didn't you?

**SC:** Right, I didn't have time for that stuff.

**PC:** Now, Mr. Massey was the high school principal here during the integration years and, you being involved in the community I'm sure you knew Mr. Massey well.

**SC:** Sure did.

**PC:** Anything particular that you can share with me as far as any concerns that he had school related?

**SC:** No, I really can't.

**PC:** Did you meet him pretty quick when you moved here? I guess your children would have went to school there.

**SC:** Yes, because the house I bought was right behind his house.

**PC:** Oh okay.

**SC:** Yes, he was just neighborly.

**PC:** Okay, do you remember any issues he had concerning integration?

**SC:** No, I can't remember anything, but he would always keep a level head about everything. And, other people would be raising sand about something and he would just look at them like they thought maybe he was principal over here and he was a teacher or administrator or something but they moved him over. But, I'm thinking he would just say okay this is it, this is it, you know. And, I learned from people like that.

**PC:** Well, he was well liked by everybody.

**SC:** He was, he was a good man, wonderful.

**PC:** He had a lot of issues to deal with at the school.

**SC:** I have a friend in Lufkin, Joe Deason, you probably know Joe, and Joe can tell you anything personally about Mr. Massey because he got Joe out of high school into Prairie View College, Mr. Massey did. He stuck with Joe and told him things, wonderful man.

**PC:** Now, when you moved your family from New Willard to Diboll you really came...

**SC:** Well we came from Livingston up here.

**PC:** From Livingston, excuse me.

**SC:** We came from, I went to New Willard. I was raised up in New Willard and when I left my dad and mom bought a house and moved it to Livingston and then Shirley and I parents, her parents had some land out on a farm on 350 and we stayed there. We came from there here.

**PC:** Okay, when you moved your family from Livingston to Diboll and you had small children, school age children, you didn't have any concerns with the situation of the school as far as integration or segregation?

**SC:** No, we really didn't. We moved to the projects, Mr. Woods was over it and it's amazing we stayed exactly six months from the day we moved in and then we got a home. I'm in that house right now.

**PC:** Wow, you've lived there a long time then.

**SC:** Yes, Mr. Stubblefield had a meeting one night and they had all them new houses over there. He said you could get those. So, after the meeting was over I hung around and I said, "Mr. Stubblefield I am Sam Coleman." He said, "Hi Sam, how are you doing?" I say, "You talk about moving in them homes, houses, homes, how do you do that?" He say, "You want one?" I say, "Yes sir, I got a family and I would like to get out of the projects." In Livingston we had our own home and I was not used to being in the projects. It was a whole new thing for me. He says, "Well I will help you." So, he figured out a way that I could pay \$200 down and move in that house and start paying. So, with working and it just wasn't easy for me and he fixed it where I could go in and pay. I didn't have the whole \$200 and I could go in and pay what I could until I got my \$200 and still stay in the house. Then, from that point on I started paying the notes.

**PC:** Oh wow, so he really helped you to become a home owner. That is wonderful.

**SC:** They gave me the keys to three new houses that nobody was in. They did, and told me to pick the house I wanted. So, I picked one, see I'm a country boy. I want a front porch. I picked the one that had a little porch on it. Frank Griffin was with me and we were walking and looking and underneath the sink in the bathroom was a big hole in that wall that maybe it happened after they put it in and they didn't repair it. I said "I don't want this one it's a brand new house but it's got to be a reason that hole is up under the sink." It had a porch on it, it was next door to me so, we went over and looked at the one I'm in and I said, "Let's get this one." I got some front yard and some back yard and my kids got a place to play so, I'm in that house right now. Somewhere around...I got it in '66 and I want to say '75 or somewhere and they sent me my deeds I had paid it off.

**PC:** That is wonderful. Now, do you know of any incidents that were race related within the community during the integration years? Like I said, that would have been '68 so you would have just been here a couple of years when full integration took place. Say like, if you went to the commissary or you went to the gas station?

**SC:** I'm trying to think. I have heard, this happened before I came that is why I can't say...I've heard that when they had this man Jay Boren as the law enforcement person here that it was some incidents, but as far as I can tell it's like somebody over here got in a fight and he come got you and put you in jail. It's not like you see in the southern states the cross burning and all that. I ain't never seen that in Diboll, I never have, I never have.

**PC:** So, you were treated well from the time you moved here and continue to be and don't really know of any race related incidents?

**SC:** Sure was.

**PC:** Okay, did you ever serve on the school board?

**SC:** No, I just worked with the school board, you know, never have.

**PC:** Okay, and what about your involvement with Diboll Day celebrations? I know you mentioned your first year. Mr. Shepherd really got you involved. You helped with the float for the Fiberboard but, in later years did you ever serve on any committees?

**SC:** I guess you call it...every year from I don't know how long it's been, I'm the guy that gets the chairs and puts them on the float trailer in front of Brookshire Brothers in the judges stand. I've been doing that for...Milford Ruby and I were talking, he said, "When did we start that?" I say, "I don't know, way back."

**PC:** Well, apparently you started your first year here in '66.

**SC:** Right, he said, "Sam that is what you do." I thought the last time we had Diboll that by the time I know anything it was, "Sam you going to get them chairs?" "Yes" that is my job. I get chairs for however many judges they have, tables, the Free Press usually give me umbrellas for them because the sun is shining on them and, then I go to Brookshire's and talk to the manager and he will give me enough water and cokes for them, just the judges, and bring them down and have that right there for them. That is my job, yes.

**PC:** Well that is good. Do you remember anything about the early years when you first moved here as far as like the parade being segregated?

**SC:** No, I really don't.

**PC:** Okay, well we know from some other interviews that Diboll Day was segregated in certain ways but the parade was still one big parade. Everybody that participated they might have been at the end and again we are still trying to figure out about the queens, Diboll Day queens, when it became just one queen's race. Do you ever recall anything Mr. Temple might have shared with you as far as Diboll Day events and it being for everybody, one group?

**SC:** That and he told me when this school thing started he said that it just didn't make sense to him. And he told them in a meeting one night if you don't like, don't want to go over here and blacks and whites don't want to be together he say go on the other side of that bridge down there on the south end of 59. He say, "Why don't you go on the other side of that bridge and do what you want to do. But, between that bridge and here it's going to be like this." And, that is the way it was.

**PC:** So, you remember a particular meeting that he spoke at?

**SC:** It was something pertaining to integration that I guess some people didn't want it and some people was afraid it was going to be like it is down south and after that meeting, and I can't remember where it was, but he spoke and he told them, "That mess just ain't going to be. We are going to be together, we are here together and we are going to be together."

**PC:** Well mostly the sawmill and the working conditions were integrated anyway, you know.

**SC:** Yes, they were.

**PC:** There really weren't any issues there at the sawmill?

**SC:** Not that I know of, I really don't.

**PC:** So within the community they were always good to both groups before full integration. Now, we know that you are very active as a Boy Scout leader so how did you become involved with scouting?

**SC:** Mr. Jim Love saw me I guess on the council or somewhere in a meeting and he said, "Why don't you become a member with the Boy Scouts of America?" I had been a scout leader in Houston at one of our churches down there. I told him what little experience I had and so, he started picking me up and taking me all the way to Tyler to a meeting and I ended up being on the board of directors of the East Texas Area Boy Scouts of America. And, I hold a silver beaver now. It's one of the highest awards you can get.

**PC:** Congratulations!

**SC:** I did all the training that needed to be.

**PC:** Were you actually a scout leader of a Diboll group?

**SC:** Yes.

**PC:** Was it an integrated group?

**SC:** Yes, because I would take them to camp every year and nobody sponsored me and I didn't have vacation. I would just tell them I needed to be off this week and I would leave on a Sunday and take 25 to 30 boys to Camp Pirtle and then come back the next Friday, Saturday and go back to work with no vacation. And, I was spending my own money. I got to talking with, I don't know, Mr. Woods I guess and he told Mr. Temple. Mr. Temple's mother sent Mr. Woods enough money for me to take everybody, I can't remember what store in Lufkin that sold Boy Scouts stuff, get every child I had a uniform

from head to foot, shoes and everything. Mrs. Katherine Sage Temple did that including me, got a uniform.

**PC:** Do you remember what year that was, are you talking like when you first became scout leader?

**SC:** I really don't, I really don't.

**PC:** How long were you involved as a scout leader?

**SC:** For probably five or six, seven years, a long time. But, you know what I did? While we were in Boy Scout camp I had every kid give them a piece of paper, two or three pieces, I want you to write a thank you note to Mrs. Katherine Sage Temple. I'm not going to correct anything you say. You thank her for giving you the uniform and paying for this week up here, whatever you want to tell her, tell her that. I didn't correct, proof read it, and then I wrote her a couple of pages and thanks her and sign it. We put it all and we gave it to Mr. Woods to give her and Mr. Temple said she had that when she died. He said she had every one of them and she would just read them and cry because no one else had ever thanked her for all the stuff she did.

**PC:** Oh, that is wonderful.

**SC:** Our boys did that.

**PC:** Well that taught them a lesson too, you know, so that is wonderful. Well she was very gracious.

**SC:** She was, she was a sweet lady.

**PC:** Did you have the opportunity to meet Mrs. Katherine Sage?

**SC:** Oh yes man, she was a wonderful lady. And, she would talk about her husband just like he was sitting right there.

**PC:** Mr. Arthur Sr.

**SC:** Pictures be saying, "How you doing?" I would get a kick out of that and his sister, I met her through Jack Powell.

**PC:** Mrs. Ann?

**SC:** Busby was a driver, Mr. Temple's driver and Busby we went to Texarkana to the house they were living in. Mr. Temple wanted her back in this area so, Jack Powell, I rode with him. The way that house was built and the way it looked was the same one in Lufkin. The same way that one in Texarkana looked.

**PC:** The Temple home?

**SC:** Yes, she moved up there and then I was with her. They were laughing at me because we were working up there moving out stuff and doing different things and so his sister went and got a Wendy's hamburger for our dinner and a cup of coffee. I say, "That lady don't know too much about black people." He say "why?" I say, "We drink beer with our hamburger we don't drink coffee." They thought they would die. We were just joking. She was a nice lady. They had that home fixed in Lufkin the same way inside the one in Texarkana was. I was a part of that.

**PC:** Now, we also know that you worked at North Boggy Slough and you were like a manager out there?

**SC:** Yes, and cook.

**PC:** Tell me about that and how that came about and what your duties were? When did you start doing that?

**SC:** Oh, way back. The club doesn't even look like it does now, then it wasn't all mortar.

**PC:** Was it pretty soon after you moved here that you started?

**SC:** I was working at the Fiberboard Plant and the first thing I would do, I knew Houston because I came from down there. J.D. (Johnson) would take people to the doctor and sometime he would get turned around and spend a whole day. And in conversation they said something about they had to take somebody to Houston and they didn't have anyone and I said, "Well who you see, I'll take them down there." "You know Houston?" I said, "Where you want to go?" I said, "No joke I delivered for Sakowitz Brothers all over town, River Oaks, you name it" that was an everyday thing. And so I started driving, I'd leave Boggy Slough, no Vernon would have me work in Boggy Slough so I could come and do what he needed done. You know like, if he put me somewhere else he say he couldn't leave here because he got to stay right here, but I worked out of the personnel office in the Boggy Slough area and sometimes I would be at the Fiberboard Plant driving the forklift and Mr. Shepherd say you need to go to the personnel office. I told Ruben Saxton I said "I don't know what they want." I would come down here and somebody had done got hurt and I would take them to St. Luke or whatever in Houston, wait on them, or take them to the doctor. And, J.D. had been doing that and he said he didn't like to do it because it was a long drive and I started doing that and I ended up in Boggy Slough.

**PC:** So, you were still doing your job at the Fiberboard plant at first and then if they needed a driver to take somebody injured to the doctor in Houston they got you to do it because you knew the area well and that way Vernon didn't have to do it, okay.

**SC:** Right.

**PC:** And then from that it led to Boggy Slough?

**SC:** Boggy Slough.

**PC:** So, then at the time when you became the Boggy Slough manager did that...was that your full time job?

**SC:** Yes.

**PC:** So, you no longer went to Fiberboard you just became Boggy Slough manager?

**SC:** No, just stay out there, sleep out there and eat out there. And, in hunting season that is an everyday thing. They party and then when the hunting season is over they still had maybe say you guys are going to come out for two days or whatever. You ain't going to hunt you going to tend to business or whatever and you keep it open, you keep it clean. Jack Sweeny say "you represent the company because the people coming might not never see these guys but, I'm representing them out there."

**PC:** I see.

**SC:** He was always saying I did a fantastic job. I said "we did what we could do and do it the right way with the right attitude."

**PC:** Now, were you the cook too? I know they did a lot of eating out there.

**SC:** Joe Lewis Stephens and I cooked out there for years.

**PC:** I'm sorry you and who?

**SC:** Joe Lewis Stephens, he passed away. He was in the Army and I was a little older than he was and we knew each other from kids up down there at Livingston and I knew he could cook and we worked there for years, night and day.

**PC:** And then when you retired from the company is that the job you retired from?

**SC:** That is what I was doing.

**PC:** Okay, and what year did you retire?

**SC:** In '95 I think.

**PC:** '95 okay, and then we also know that you were awarded Citizen of the Year for Diboll Day 1996.

**SC:** Yes, I was...what year was that because I don't...

**PC:** 1996.

**SC:** '96.

**PC:** I know that was right after your retirement so tell me about that.

**SC:** I was working for Mr. Temple then. I believe I was, driving him.

**PC:** Okay, that was my next question. I know that you drove for Mr. Temple some, did that start after your retirement?

**SC:** Yes.

**PC:** And how did that come about?

**SC:** Seems like somebody said he needed somebody to take him somewhere. I guess Vernon did.

**PC:** So, you had been driving different people anyway.

**SC:** And, I already knew I'm thinking to Houston and I said, "Well if you want me to I'll take him down there." So, I started driving for him and then we started going to Texarkana about twice a month. Everywhere he wanted to go just stay with him and go. After I'd get him there I would go home and he would call me when he needed me.

**PC:** Any interesting story you want to share with me about a trip with Mr. Temple or a conversation with Mr. Temple?

**SC:** Well we always...he was just a down home guy and he took to me I guess because the way I am. I wouldn't say nothing and then he'd say, "Why don't you say something?" I would say, "What do I need to say?" He said, "Well, let's argue." "I don't want to argue with you, you would win anyway, what difference that make?" And, he just wanted to pull out whatever was in...one time going to Texarkana we went in Whataburger I think it was. Is that where you get the dollar hamburgers? Is it Whataburger or Burger King?

**PC:** I don't know.

**SC:** One of them, we got in there and he went over there and ate, I ate, he went and got back in the car. I came on out and we got about twenty five or thirty miles out of Marshall he said, "well I be doggone." I said, "What you being doggone about now?" He said, "You know I didn't pay that lady." I said, "I know that." "How you know?" I said, "Because I paid her." I said, "You know my daddy told me that." "What?" "Running around with white people that ain't got no money you get yourself broke." He just fall out laughing. "Your daddy tell you that." I said, "Yes." He said, "Your daddy a Jew?" I say, "Yes he like a Jew, he an Irishman." He'd ride about another thirty, forty minutes and he

said, "How much did that hamburger cost?" I said, "A hundred dollars." He said, "Ain't no g.d. hamburger cost no hundred dollars." I said, "That is what you get for being rich." (laughing) See he liked that, you know. I said, "That is what you get for being rich." "I ain't rich." "I know it, but folks think you are. See, that is what you get."

**PC:** Now, when you were managing at North Boggy did you still continue to take, drive the people when they needed you too?

**SC:** If they needed me to, we would work out and get somebody else to do that until I'd take him where he needed to go and when he come out there we would just sit and talk for hours. We really would.

**PC:** Mr. Temple, when he came?

**SC:** Yes, 'cause see I'm the guy that like says, "Don't give me a job." I would say, "Come on in here Pop and let me show you something." One time, and everything I showed him, he would enjoy because I got to know the man as a down home person. Ronnie got himself in trouble, spent all evening had me to...you know how a deer mounted with his head like that and some mounted with their heads that way, well he had me to make all them deer heads turn left so when you come in the club and you come to the dining room all them deer was looking at you. Man, all evening I was doing that. So, Mr. Temple came out. "Hey Mr. Temple I want to show you something." "What?" "See them deer, see how they look like they looking at you?" He say "yes" and he had his glasses in his pocket and he took them out of his pocket and he went like that you know, going where all them deer was killed at and he said, "Vernon, all these deer were killed by you, Joe Denman, Jack Sweeny, J. D. Johnson, where them people in the sawmill, where their deer at?"

**PC:** Looking for the working man's deer?

**SC:** Yes, "Them people work out at the sawmill, where their deer? They don't kill no deer out here." (laughing) I went back in that kitchen and I just died laughing.

**PC:** Sounds like you had some good times with Mr. Temple.

**SC:** He was a guy that don't never try to...you know what I mean...what is the word....I can't come up with it but, don't do him like that because he not like that. And, he liked you better if you didn't do it.

**PC:** Well, he was a great man.

**SC:** He would come out there and he'd say "Sam where you want me to sit?" I'd say, "Any where you want to, I'll take care of you, just sit down." He liked that, but if you say, "Well this is for you" and he sit there, he don't like that. Don't do that.

**PC:** He wanted to be treated normal. Now we know now that you are involved with the Boys and Girls Club of Diboll so that became part of your retirement job I guess.

**SC:** Okay, well he wanted me seven days a week and I said “Pop come on.”

**PC:** You’re talking about Mr. Temple?

**SC:** Mr. Temple, I said “I got family man, I like to go to church on Sunday.” “Why you want to spend the whole Sunday...blah...blah...blah.” We would be back and forth and he said, “I’ll tell you what you do, why don’t you get a job with the Boys and Girls Club?” I said, “What do you want me to do, teach?” Well, “Teach them or whatever.” I said, “Why do you want me to work for the Boys and Girls Club?” “I can get you when I want you.” See he built that, he put the money up and everything.” He said, “I can get you when I want you.” I said “okay.” So, Ruben wasn’t going to hire me so Gandy Stubblefield told him said, “If you want the keys to that new building you better hire Sam Coleman.”

**PC:** Told who that?

**SC:** Gandy Stubblefield.

**PC:** So, you started working for Boys and Girls Club and still doing that now?

**SC:** After all these years.

**PC:** And still doing that now.

**SC:** And when Mr. Temple passed I was still working for him.

**PC:** You were?

**SC:** Yes, and since he has been gone I worked for Mrs. Shands when she needs me and Mrs. Duncan when she needs me she calls. They got my number, I go. This past year in November I think, I took Mrs. Duncan to Waco and I took Mrs. Shands to Dallas and all wherever they want to go. If they don’t feel like driving or somebody else they trust they say “Sam come take me and I go get them.”

**PC:** Well that is good. In a Free Press interview that you did I believe at some point you mentioned the most influential people in your life were your mom and dad and that your favorite place outside of Angelina County was Buddy Temple’s Ranch in Freer.

**SC:** Oh yes.

**PC:** Now, do you still get to go down there recently? Tell me about that.

**SC:** Since Mr. Temple passed away I haven't been down there but, that is a nice place, really is, in Freer, Texas. Just stay on 59 and you go right down by it.

**PC:** So, you used to go there and enjoyed it.

**SC:** Quite a bit, quite often. And, it's amazing I used to go there sometime as a worker and I've been as a guest.

**PC:** That is wonderful. Is there anything else you want to share that I haven't asked you about today? As far as you're working career in Diboll or just living here, friends, church just anything that comes to your mind?

**SC:** I am a member of First Shiloh Baptist over there and a deacon over there.

**PC:** At First Shiloh?

**SC:** Yes.

**PC:** And have you attended that church since coming here?

**SC:** Ever since I've been here.

**PC:** I know they are very active a lot of community events.

**SC:** We are working at trying to keep these young people going in the right direction.

**PC:** Well that is a challenge today isn't it?

**SC:** It is, it is. I tell you one thing it's a big challenge to guys like me is getting these little boys to pull these pants up on them. Oh, Lord!

**PC:** Now, one thing I didn't reflect on and that was Juneteenth Celebrations. I know that is a big part of the black community. Anything with Juneteenth, are you involved with that in any way? Do they still do it?

**SC:** They still...to me at one time it kind of went away and it didn't go away because nobody wanted to do it, everybody saw that it wasn't what it used to be. It didn't have that meaning to it and now they are trying to bring that back. Because they had a nice Juneteenth this year with the food and festivities and, they gave me another plaque this year on the nineteenth, myself, James Rhone got one, Cleveland Mark got one.

**PC:** What, a plaque?

**SC:** Yes and it was beautiful.

**PC:** And what was that for?

**SC:** Community service.

**PC:** Oh okay, well that is nice. Well you've certainly been involved with the community and that is wonderful.

**SC:** I'm happy this year will be another Diboll Day. Ken what is Ken's name?

**PC:** Holt.

**SC:** Ken Holt, I was at the doctor, my wife had to go to the heart doctor and he was there and he said we will have Diboll Day this year because they told him to get the electricity going back over there.

**PC:** Yes, there is plans going on.

**SC:** And, they put two nice buildings in the park. I didn't know that and I was over there one day and saw that. That is nice.

**PC:** Right, well good.

**SC:** So, we will try to do what we always do. I guess get them chairs for the floats.

**PC:** Get the chairs for the float will be your job.

**SC:** Right.

**PC:** Well it seems that once you become responsible for something as long as it works they continue that so, that is great. Well Mr. Sam that is all of my questions that I had. I appreciate you coming today and spending time with me. If you can't think of anything else well, that will...

**SC:** I was called by the city manager about a week ago. The red light cameras is a big thing now and I didn't think nothing but, he put me on a committee to say that it's not a thing where...I guess maybe some of the black organizations must have got in on it and feel like they are put in the black community. These are straight on 59 and it's really not a white or black community it's just through Diboll.

**PC:** Right.

**SC:** So, I'm on a committee to say no there is not none over there nowhere, can't speed over there.

**PC:** We don't have any red lights except 59. I was reading that in the paper this week and kind of was confused of how that came about.

**SC:** Oh, that kid the other day made all of us look bad, Jones or whatever his name is, the policeman that messed up.

**PC:** Well Mr. Sam that is all my questions and I thank you for joining me today.

**SC:** I hope I've helped you.

**PC:** Oh, yes sir you sure have. Thank you again.

**SC:** Yes, yes, yes.

**END OF INTERVIEW**