

A.R. Weber
Interview 54a
April 1, 1985,
Becky Bailey, Interviewer (also present, Mrs. Nancy Weber)
Dorothy Farley, Transcriber
Retyped by Daniel Guerrero

ABSTRACT: In an interview with Becky Bailey, longtime Temple-White employee A.R. Weber reminisces about his younger years learning about the forest products industry and beginning in a creosote plant. He eventually made it to Mr. Herb White's handle factory in Bogalusa, Mississippi, where he managed the factory. When the White family moved the factory to Diboll and entered into a partnership with the Temple family, forming Temple-White, Mr. Weber and his family moved to Diboll. Mr. Weber was in charge of setting up the new factory and hiring the employees. He discussed the process used to make the handles, the lacquer for the handles, and making the different handles for their different customers, particularly the armed forces during World War II. Mr. Weber also discusses the new OSHA regulations from the 1970's.

Becky Bailey (hereafter BB): Mr. Weber, where were you born?

A. Weber (hereafter AW): I was born in Halicon County in Michigan.

BB: Okay.

AW: January 21, 1899.

BB: So you are a turn of the century. Just almost.

AW: Right.

BB: Okay. Mr. Weber, did you have any brothers and sisters or tell me about your family some.

AW: I had one sister that was eighteen months younger than I and she died in 1933. So that time.

Nancy Weber (hereafter NW): Your father died in what year?

BB: What year did your father die? She was asking.

AW: My father died in 1926 and at that time, I was over in Manville, New Jersey, working for the American Creosoting Company. That was at the Colonial Creosoting Company Plant.

BB: Yes. Did you go to college? Attend management school or anything like that?

AW: I was...

BB: Oh, you even taught school. Okay.

AW: I went to...Michigan Agricultural College.

BB: There I see it. Michigan Agricultural College. Okay. And you majored in wood technology. Did they talk much about...?

AW: Michigan Agricultural College. It is Michigan State University now.

BB: Yes. I am trying to think of the word, conservation much. What did... did you learn a lot of things about forestry management and that sort of thing like they have now days?

AW: I am a graduate forester.

BB: Okay.

AW: I graduated in wood technology.

BB: I just wondered if it was a lot different from the people coming out today as far....?

AW: I don't know.

BB: Hear listening to them.

AW: You see. What happened is when I was going to... I started out actually, I graduated from high school and then I went to county normal school. Then I taught school for a year and then after that I had to enlist in the Army. So I enlisted in the Army and I was given a choice of entering the service right now or going to a... for officers training and I chose that and they sent to Michigan... over to East Lansing to Michigan Agricultural College in preparation to going into the officers training school. Then after I hadn't been in there about three months, I guess, forty-five days, I guess. Or something like that and then the Armistice was signed and then I decided to go and take college courses instead of going back to teaching school. I enlisted then in the forestry department of the agricultural college and then in my senior year... junior year in fact, I started taking wood technology and majored in wood technology. In preparation for a job in British North Borneo which is now Malaysia. There was a man that came and interviewed me and set it all up. So all I had to do was to take a special examination and then he would ask for me to come as his assistant. That didn't pan out as General Wood had spent all the money and the Philippines were broke in the forestry department. So they cancelled that. He told me... he warned me about I would have to pass an examination which Professor Chippen, Dean of the Forestry school requested the paper from the government for the test and they informed that it wasn't available on account of

what I just said. So they suggested that I take a regular examination and request Philippine service. And I wouldn't do it because I knew it wouldn't get there. So that fell through. Then I wanted to take... continue with the wood technology because I wanted to go into the automobile industry. At that time they were making wheels out of wood.

BB: You mean the tire? I mean not the tire, but the wheels. The spokes.

AW: Just like a wagon wheel.

BB: Oh.

AW: The fact is, I've got one. I may give that to the museum.

BB: Oh, that would be neat.

AW: It is. The reason I got it is, one day here when I was working over at the office. I guess I was in... probably in the main office there as the manager of production. After Mr. White died, Herb asked me to come into the office which I did and left the plant and I worked from '61 to '66 in the office. But there was a man come out of Houston and I was telling him what I have just said about everything going on... and what happened was in the year, in my junior-senior year, they stopped making wooden wheels and went to wire wheels. So I was blown up in my senior year from the Philippine service, I was blown up from going to work for general motors, I was going to put in for and I had a course in kiln drying and all that, because Michigan at that time, Grand Rapids especially. I had gone to Grand Rapids observing kiln drying of timber, etc. So I had some practical experience and that all fell through. So then since that blew up, I got the job with the Creosoting Company, and of course, I had to go. I had to go in and learn steam engineering, etc. I have an operator's license for a steam engineer. Stationary steam engineer that was made in New Jersey. I had that for five years. Now after doing that, of course, I went with the Temple-White Company. I was using both my experience in the wood field and the engineering field and so that was quite beneficial to me.

BB: So you graduated in 1922?

AW: I graduated in 1922 from Michigan Agricultural College, at that time, which later became Michigan State University as a wood technologist in the forestry department.

BB: Okay. You had roughly about ten years experience before you went to work then for White?

AW: Right.

BB: And it was mainly management?

AW: In management.

BB: Right. Sounds like they moved you around an awful lot. Transfer you...?

AW: They did. I went to one, two, three, four... then I went to Slidell and took over a plant. And then I went to Jackson, Mississippi, and took over a plant for them and was going to be made superintendent of the Jackson plant, which was the largest plant, or at least one of the largest plants in the south. Afterwards we fell out.

BB: And then you went to work for Mr. White?

AW: I went to work on an experimental basis for Mr. White, who had some problems that he thought I might be able to solve for him. They asked me to work for them for three months and make a report of my findings, what they should do to strengthen their operation. So I took....

BB: Okay, now they had this plant was where now?

AW: Bogalusa.

BB: Okay.

AW: And before I got...

BB: And this was the only one that they had or...?

AW: Just the one.

BB: Okay.

AW: See, they started out in the handle business in Indiana and they moved down in 1921 into Bogalusa and started making handles out of pine waste materials. Pine sawmill. That was the largest sawmill in the world. They could cut a million board feet a day and they had seven head rigs there that were double cutters and they cut... they run one month, one million feet a day and they saw they couldn't grow the timber fast enough so they cut them to 750,000 and they run out of timber in 1938 and...

BB: And so they just disbanded.

AW: So then when they run out I moved the plant or over saw taking that plant down and took all the machinery out of the plant in Bogalusa and loaded it into cars and shipped it over to Diboll. And I moved over to Diboll on December 26, 1938 and started unloading that material out of the boxcars in the plant which didn't have a floor in it. Not yet. They had to lay the floor down before I could....

BB: Before you could unload everything.

AW: Move. Unload the cars.

BB: Tell me the difference. There was a sawmill at Keltys. Am I right?

AW: Oh, yes.

BB: Okay.

AW: That wasn't... belong to Diboll. That was the Kurth Lumber Company.

BB: Kurth. Okay. Couldn't think.

AW: Angelina County Lumber Company.

BB: Angelina County Lumber Company. What made Mr. White decide for here, instead of at Kurth because they were a big operation?

AW: I think Arthur Temple sold him on that. Arthur Temple, Sr. convinced him that Diboll and the Southern Pine Lumber Company was a better prospect for waste materials than it would be up at the Angelina County Lumber Company.

BB: What waste material are we talking about now?

AW: Slabs and edgings from the sawmill.

AW: Logs would go through and then they would... they used to make lathe here and then what wouldn't go into lathe they would take and burn and after we came they started making... started making squares from which we turned... they kiln dried the lumber and sent it over to us in the dry form and we turned it into handles. Broom and mop handles.

BB: What kind of... did they use just a regular lathe to turn them in? How did you do it?

AW: No, they had special lathes. Well, it was a Westcott. What they called a Westcott broom handle turning lathe and it made a shaped handle. Back in those days they sold a lot of broom handles that was shaped. Being shaped meant that you have a nice small handle at the top and a heavier handle where the straw went onto the broom was heavier and the best companies, most broom companies were very particular about the shape of a handle. And one time White Wood Products and even Temple-White for the first few years was a criterion by which other handle companies were judged. In other words...

BB: Yours were the best.

AW: We were considered number one. The fact is Mr. White told in this article in the paper that we made about twenty percent of ... ten percent of, I guess, of the broom handles that were used in the world.

AW: Well, in this country.

BB: Oh, in this country. In this country. Yes. Okay, has the equipment changed just a whole lot from that time?

AW: We had... yes, now that was in... we had... we were operating five broom handle lathes and operating five dowel machines and dowel machines is just turning a straight handle. A handle that is 7/8" diameter, or 48" long. Or it could be a 1 1/8", twelve, fourteen feet long or whatever. We got timber for both of them. During the war we made the... what they call "the decontaminated handle" that was... they made a brush. We painted it. Made it out of oak and hardwood handles and painted it with clear lacquer. About three coats of lacquer and then threaded the end of it in which they screwed a brush and then the soldiers used it to wash down the buildings when they were supposedly where gas was sprayed on it. To wash everything down. All the buildings and all the inside and outside were suppose to be washed with a disinfectant to neutralize.

BB: The mustard gas.

AW: The poison gas. That was what was called a "decontamination handle". Then we made navy handles during the World War II. Made and sold it to people that made the mops for the navy. We made a good many of those.

BB: What was your impression of Diboll when you came here in 1938?

AW: Well, I wanted to live in Lufkin.

BB: Why didn't you? You didn't, though. You lived here.

AW: Well, I didn't because Mr. Temple... Henry. That is our present Arthur Temple, Jr., his uncle, thought that the plant superintendent ought to live in Diboll. But I thought... I had one boy that was when I moved here in 1938. Hugh, my oldest son, he was eleven years and I had Larry which was my youngest son. He was... he was three months old. So I figured that I had rather be in Lufkin because of the school but I looked all over Lufkin and there was just one house vacant that I could rent as far as far as I could find out. Well, I kept coming over here during the period that I had taken before I started taking the plant down. I would come over every once in a while to see how they were coming along with the building which we were going to use. And I kept coming over at that time and looking around and had time to see. Looking Diboll all over and looking Lufkin over and I finally decided on the Lufkin deal. I couldn't find a house there. So then, I was talking to Mr. Henry and he said he would build me any kind of a house that I wanted. Anywhere in Diboll.

BB: Oh.

AW: Of course, you know, I would rent and it was very reasonable and he built these four... this house, the house that was between here and the federal savings and loan. There was another house just like this. The one over at the corner where the Marks live, where the Austin's live and the Marks live. At that time the McKinney's lived there and Lee Estes lived there and our foreman for the Lathes Department lived in the house here... Walker.

BB: So these were all brand new houses built just for you, really.

AW: These were brand new houses. They were built for Temple-White.

BB: Well, now at this point... did Temple own part of Temple-White? Did they buy into the company at this point?

AW: When they signed a contract... the company was formed as Mr. White said in his statement, that they owned fifty percent. Now that was a little unusual because I believe we are the only company in town that was half owned by Temple Industries and half owned by the individuals of the other company. One which is different is Borden which is solely owned by..... So those two companies are the only ones that Temple Industries are not wholly interested in.

BB: I see. Okay, what did they provide as part of their contract? What did Temple... for fifty percent of the company, what did they provide?

AW: They provided the building. Furnished us at that time. Furnished us steam at a certain rate for a certain number of years for heating and drying purposes in our paint shop and heating in our plant.

BB: So you didn't have to rent a boiler or anything. They had it all come from the main plant?

AW: No, we got the steam from their boiler. The building and the grounds and we furnished the equipment and know-how.

BB: Okay. What about workers? Were there ample number of people here to furnish your plant?

AW: They were not. One of the things that... one of the considerations that I had an understanding with my move over to Diboll in erecting the equipment in this plant, was that I would have full say of all the employees that were hired. And so then I got at that time Clyde was, Clyde Thompson, was handling the insurance of the employees, etc. Of the Temple industries or at that time, the Southern Pine Lumber Company.

BB: Right.

AW: So I worked with him and the employment office – Jack Sweeny, I believe was in there at that time. He was in the employee... in safety department etc., and between Clyde and Henry and myself, we decided on who would work here and I took as many of their employees that they wanted to give me and the rest, I used the help of Clyde to select the others.

BB: But there was plenty of the local people as far as being a good market...?

AW: They were, believe it or not, believe it or not, in 1939 we had... I had every person working in the payroll was a, when I started the plant, was a graduate, a high school graduate. And we started our first in January 1939, from the first of December, on the first of December we shut the mill down in Bogalusa and started dismantling it and loading it up, marking it and loading it and moving it and on the twenty-sixth of December I started unloading it and in January, I had the plant going.

BB: That was some overtime, I bet.

AW: No, just regular time.

BB: No, just regular time.

AW: I had to wait until they got ... as I said, before I could walk to the end of the building, I had to walk down boards laid across the timbers. Dred Devereaux built the building and he built it pretty strong.

BB: Yes, I have heard that.

AW: He was their foreman and he did a good job and it was built high enough to ship in cars. At that time we didn't have any trucking so it was car door level and that is why it is setting up so high.

BB: Right, for the train. Okay, but you didn't have the nice brick office.

AW: What I was going to say... no, we had... the office was a building that the blacksmith lived in and they moved him from that house and they made it over into an office building for Temple-White and that was right next to the plant. Right next... on the corner. So that was the office building and I had an office in the building with Mr. White and then I spent about three hours in the office and then I would be in the plant the rest of the time.

BB: When you started up how many workers did you have?

AW: I had... when I started up I had high school graduates, as I was telling you. Well, then the war came along. In 1941, December 7th, I was..... December the 7th it was. That was on a Sunday.

BB: Yes... 19...yes.

AW: Herb, Mr. White, Sr., and I were hunting. I think probably in Nacogdoches County. There used to be a little restaurant on the road between here and Nacogdoches. I don't remember if it was in Angelina or Nacogdoches County, but it was fairly close to the river. One way or the other. And we went in there to eat lunch. We had been bird hunting and we went in there to eat lunch and listened to the news on the radio about Pearl Harbor. That was when... about the first month now when... when the draft became effective. They took twenty-six boys out of our plant the first month. Then they... I had to replace them with older people and women. Of course, I used women in the paint shop altogether, but I used women somewhere else, too.

BB: Okay, prior to 1940 you only had women working in the paint shop.

AW: Right, but after that I had to use them during the war. Had to use them doing man's work in different places. Then I used them... some of their older...they moved their camp from Fastrill back here and I tried to use some of their men. The mill #2, hardwood mill closed down and I took their crew and worked them for them until they found a place for them.

AW: We worked... the fact is they were pretty... kinda depended on Southern Pine to furnish us the labor that we needed and we were pretty well able to take care of any surplus of theirs and besides that we had to look around for our own.

BB: How many people did you start the mill with?

AW: About one hundred and ten.

BB: One hundred ten.

AW: One hundred ten employees ran the mill. Oh, I guess about the time the sawmill burned down here in 1968 and when that burned down, then we started to dwindle down a little and had to change operation, etc. Had to reduce our force and had to make some different changes.

BB: Okay, why was that? Because of your... of your source of materials or what?

AW: Yes, about that time... material started getting scarce and then the paper mill started up, plywood pine started up but chips, etc. Took the material that we were used to using for our handle stock. They would pay more per pound for wood fiber than we could pay for the handle. It made the handles cost so much. As I said at the beginning, at one time Temple-White and White Wood Products was the criteria of the handle industry and anybody in the East...anybody that made... sold handles... had to make them as good as Temple-White or they didn't get the business. Then if they didn't make them that good they got a lower grade order. We made handles that we put as much as five coats of

lacquer on their handles. For what at that time was one of the largest and the best broom handle factory in the world. That was the Amsterdam broom. We put on five coats of white lacquer. We were very particular and Mr. White, Sr. was very particular that we had the notches just so far, the throat just so far, that is the small part of the handle, and had the taper just so far because it was a balance. It had to be balanced. The people came from Amsterdam, New York, to our plant to see it and they when we started making handles over here, of course, we had been making them from pure longleaf over in Bogalusa, and when we got over here, we had to take into the short leaf pine and a lighter weight handle. Our handles weighed over in Bogalusa about six hundred eighty pounds on these fine handles that I am telling you about that got five coats of lacquer. Those handles had to weigh six hundred eighty pounds per thousand and about all we could get here was six....

END OF SIDE ONE

AW: They weighed six hundred sixty and they were very well satisfied with what we were producing at that time. But as they retired, and so forth it went down and was taken over by other members of the family and today they are using what we used to call a low grade handle and they are still using low grade handles because that is just about all they can get in the material that is being made now. We used to use stock that was “B” and better lumber in the old Southern Pine grading rules which meant that they didn’t have any defects in them at all.

BB: No knots or any of that kind of thing.

AW: No knots, the biggest knot was an eighth of an inch.

BB: Oh, that is not big at all.

AW: And that didn’t show anything that was painted clear. Wouldn’t have that?

BB: So you painted both.

AW: We made it for O’Cedar Company. We bought, I think, about three million feet of “B” and better lumber over at Bogalusa the last year that I worked there.

BB: You all painted colors, as well as the lacquer. Just anything that somebody wanted.

AW: Yes. The fact is when we came here they were using... going back to handles now. They used to use what we call olack which is something like shellac. And well, I am thinking about what I am hesitating about is, I had a plant. An experimental plant that we built over there before we decided to move over here that was larger probably than any handle factory in the north. We had ten drying timber tumblers and we tried to make them out of green material and they ask me to set up a mill over there. And we did and we used material that they used at the paper mills and split them open and tried to make it out of short logs. The fact is when we moved over here we used... we bought a mill and

put it up over at.... The first year in 1940 and erected it over at Woodville and they later... we found that we were ... I am sorry.

BB: I am going to move this. Now. Here... do that.

AW: I didn't see that. When I look at that. I am sorry but when I look at that I don't see it.

NW: You are on tape, honey.

BB: That is okay. Oneta will understand. So you used....

NW: Oneta is his buddy.

BB: Oh, what am I trying to say. Green logs. Just tried it out.

AW: Going back to the experimental. Yes, we tried it out, of, really, gum and magnolia and ash.

BB: Just things that other people wouldn't use.

AW: Or something else. Other different woods.

BB: Right.

AW: Beech or something like that and we tried it and we figured that we could make some out of beech here, but the beech did not turn out good after we made the mill. We made beech squares over at Woodville in the early '40s and it didn't pan out so they shut that down. Sold... Southern Pine bought it and put a mill, short log mill up at Hemphill. That was our plant that we had over in Woodville.

BB: So it cost too much money for you to cut your own trees and make your own wood stock?

AW: Yes, we couldn't come out on it. Too much waste.

BB: Okay. By 1968 things really started going downhill as far as your wood stock... was hard to get at that point. Okay.

AW: Yes. Yes, I retired in 1966 from the plant.

BB: So what did you all do to.... oh, okay. So you missed out on all that?

AW: In 1966 I retired. The last day in '66 and then spent the next couple of years, Nancy and I, just roaming the country. When we weren't home.

BB: Yes. So you missed out on the decline. Things were still going pretty good in '66?

AW: Oh, yes.

BB: Far as material availability and the market was there, too.

AW: Oh, yes.

NW: Are you going to tell about going back to work?

AW: What?

BB: Oh, you went back to work?

AW: Yes, I went back to work in 1971, 2 and 3.

BB: Why?

AW: Well, they wanted me. See O.S.H.A. come in and I come back to see that the mill put in compliance as best we could and we pretty near did it. Of course, we didn't make it in some of the dust and stuff, but we did come pretty close and I really supervised the contractors putting in the re-wiring of the plant and still keep the plant going. See, I set the plant up and I knew it better than anybody did so I overlooked that. Overlooked and supervised the installation of the wiring and stuff like that. To see that it was fully in compliance.

BB: You knew everything. Yes. Right.

AW: I studied the O.S.H.A. rules and kept up with what the electrical contractor, Temple Associates. They were a good bunch of boys, but still we had to consult the rules and regulations, etc. My job was to see that we kept within O.S.H.A. requirements.

BB: What do you figure it cost the plant to come up to compliance?

AW: Oh, a good many thousands. I did know at one time. I don't know, I think it was ten.... Twelve thousand dollars. Just to re-wire.

BB: Just to re-wire it. It wasn't counting all the filters and all that on the dust?

AW: No. Well, of course, we didn't have all that. We spent quite...

BB: Quite a chunk.

AW: Quite a chunk.

BB: So you heard some of the stuff going on as far as the ... after '68 and in '71, 2, and 3 while you were up there, did you hear them?

AW: Then I, then I have been kind of a consultant for them, off and on. When they wanted to know something about the plant I would tell them.

BB: Yes.

AW: Because I knew pretty well where everything was.

BB: Did it change a lot from 1938 when you set it up till the present day as far as machinery and...?

AW: No, not so much. I mean they still. Well, they stop some of the machines that we were using. Other companies wouldn't do the finishing job that we did. So they cut out some of the stuff and we shut some of our buffing machines down.

BB: But the process has stayed pretty much the same?

AW: That's right. You asked something about... you started to ask about this mill. Maybe it wasn't in connection with this. But you ask about Mr. Owens down there.

BB: Yes. Oh, Owens' mill. Yes.

AW: Mr. and Mrs. Owens. You know, years ago the handle companies were very competitive and I mean pennies made a difference because it was a waste proposition.

BB: Yes.

AW: And of course, we paid at one time \$25.00 a thousand for the lumber. They can't buy the stumpage for two or three times that now, but that is what they bought the best lumber they made. But anyway going back. Mr. and Mrs. Owens... Mrs. Owens worked in Houston. She was an interior decorator and she worked in one of the large department stores, I have forgotten which one, in Houston. And Mr. Owens, he is pretty sharp and I don't know really what he did do, but I know they wanted to go into making squares for the handle company here. They came up and asked for a contract to make the squares from some of the raw materials and we told them they could. Well, they set up and they made a lot of squares for us. Sold us squares. Then they came along... I started to say was... the handle companies were very competitive back in the early days. They first... you couldn't go out and go through the fir mills. Mr. White, they couldn't get in out there because they squabbled back and forth about prices, sales, etc. And customers...

BB: Oh, they were afraid you might pitch up something while you were out there.

AW: And then after we got started here. Herb, when he got out. Herb, Jr. who is now president.

BB: Yes.

AW: Or was day before yesterday.... Of the company. He and I went out to the West Coast a lot and we went through all those companies out there. They showed us everything that they had done. We even went up to Canada and went up to their mills and went through them. They all were very nice. They have shut down all the western mills, no. But one and that is at Eugene, Oregon. At St. Helen's is the only fir mill going. That is the only plant on the West Coast now.

BB: My word.

AW: But anyway, as I was saying, they ... Mr. Owens and... we just... Mr. White's father, Sr. Herb, Sr. He said, "Well, let's...." we discussed whether or not we should open up. We decided it would be best to be as friendly with them as everybody had been with us.

BB: As everybody had been with you all. Oh, I am sorry.

AW: What is that?

NW: Mr. Herb. Herb's father.

AW: Yes. That is a photograph that I will give them. Now it tells who they are...

BB: Oh, good. All right. Great... Okay, so you all were going to be as nice to them as everybody had been to you so you let them in the plant.

AW: So I took them around. I told them. I said they... what they are doing is getting ready to make a handle factory.

BB: And they said... oh, no.

AW: I explained. Now Mrs. Owens was more keen than Mr. Owens and she wanted to know just like...

BB: Everything!

AW: Everything and I stopped machines, opened them up and showed them how the knives were set and they were sharpened and the whole business and I took her from the start of the plant to the finish and I did that several times. They would come over and then they went back and they started up the handle factory at their plant. She designed the doggone thing for them.

BB: Teach you all to be nice, won't it? Well, they are still in business, but I don't think they are as large as they used to be either.

AW: Oh, yes. Probably not.

BB: I know Steve and them haven't done work for them in a long time. For a while they were doing a lot of work.

AW: Oh, yes. They were... they made handles. They made more than we did, I guess, but that...

BB: Where do the handles come from now days? Are they mainly from overseas?

AW: Well, some of them are. Biggest customers we used to have. Some of them are made in the east. Quite a bit now. The second growth, third growth timber. That is growing up there and a lot of them are still using hardwood. They are not as high quality as they used to have. Some of the companies that used our pine handles and fir handles are making their own handles. They have grown and they have expanded their plants and...

BB: It just makes more sense.

AW: And they paint their own handles. Two or three of our old customers that used to buy two and three and four carloads a year.

BB: Just make their own.

AW: They make their own now.

BB: Yes. Well, it is probably the only way they can compete.

AW: That is one reason why we... that's right. That's right. They can make them, but what they are doing... they are getting them shipped in from Mexico, Honduras and the southern and the company... so it is just dog eat dog, but they can make it and make their own handles cheaper than they can buy them.

BB: What was Mr. White like? Mr. White, Sr.

AW: Sr. What was he like?

BB: What was he like? Was he an older man when you came to work for him?

AW: He was about three years older than I am and he and I were good friends before I went to work for them. Mr. Harlan White was the president of the company over there and he didn't want to move over there so they just changed titles. He took... he was secretary-treasurer and he become president of the company over here and Harlan was the secretary-treasurer and he stayed in Bogalusa and he just came over here one. ... Maybe once a month or something.

NW: Mr. White had a hunting accident.

AW: He didn't come very often.

BB: I see. They had two plants then. The one in Bogalusa stayed in operation or...

AW: No.

BB: No.

AW: They had... a wholesale lumber business that they were operating out of New Orleans but they didn't make handles.

BB: I see. They didn't make handles, but it was just one big family company.

AW: One family deal.

BB: Is that still in existence?

AW: No, no. It has been gone.

BB: Okay, tell your impression, you kinda... tell me your impression of what Diboll was like when, I know you wanted to live in Lufkin, but you ended up down here. Why... how did it impress you?

AW: Oh, I liked Diboll. I liked it very much. Finally I said to Henry.... Now you notice in that photograph.

BB: Yes.

AW: We were buying. Want to go back a little bit and tell you why that van is here.

BB: Okay.

AW: That is a van that is standing there. Is a van that S.C. Johnson Company used to make broom handle lacquer? Let me just stop a minute and go back further... now.

BB: Okay.

AW: Lacquer business started up from the old....news.... disposal problem. Egyptian lacquer company got a patent and they started buying up these scrap film from.... news that is the news that used to be in

BB: Sounded like Allen.

NW: He came in the front door....

AW: They started... they started making scrap film.

BB: Yes.

AW: Well, what it was... you know in theaters they used to run five minutes of news and things.

BB: Yes. Yes.

AW: All right.

BB: Yes, I know what you are talking about now.

AW: They would have people that would ... what they call cutters... just editors.

BB: Yes.

AW: Put in a room full of films that people working all the while, all these news people that would take these pictures and send them in and then they edit them and put them together and make news to put out to the theaters.

BB: Yes.

AW: All that scrap they had to do something with it, so they started. It was nitro-cellulose. So they started to dissolving it and they found they could make a thin lacquer in ten seconds. Ten seconds viscosity would... you could put a nice coat of lacquer that was out of this world and they made the lacquer and we started getting it. They came to our plant in Bogalusa and we worked out a place where we could... where we could... I was working with them. That was my job when I first went with them. Two things I had to do. Improve their operating cost and improve their sanding and improve their painting and I worked.... We had a chemist come to our plant out of Sherwin-Williams plant and stayed for, they stayed for a couple of weeks, their main chemist for Sherwin-Williams out of Chicago. And I worked with him making formulas and taking them in to Mr. White. You ask me what Mr. White was like. He was critical of having everything just right.

BB: Perfectionist.

AW: Yes, and he wanted to improve and prove and prove, so he was very particular on it. So when I approved one I would take it in and if he approved it, it was it. But if he turned it down, I would go back and work with them until I got something that I thought the chemist would do, that I thought was good enough and I would take it in and get his approval, both in the sanding and the other and I could talk for hours on that. But anyway this scrap material, while I was still in Bogalusa there, he wanted me to work with this

lacquer and I worked on it and I was working... mixing some of this old lacquer up and see if I could mix in a little of the stuff that they were trying to improve. That was some of my job. Well, when we come along with this, they got it going so good that Dupont bought them out. That is what they were doing with nitro-cellulose was made from the scrap film. That started the lacquer business and then they started improving and all the other companies then. But they had this patent on it you see and Dupont got the patent, bought the company. You see this electric shaver? It's so good, it bought the company.

BB: Yes.

AW: That is the way Dupont did them and but... anyway all the other companies, the paint companies... they had Southwestern in Dallas and a bunch of them.

BB: Yes.

AW: One of the companies that was making, during the war, was making this nitro-cellulose which was a triple "A" requirement. What do they call it? You had to have a, you had to have permit from the government to buy it. I can't think of the term now, but anyway they made this lacquer for the government to paint their airplanes that they made for the war service. Well, they also made this same lacquer was the stuff that we used to paint these wonderful paint for the job that we put on this Amsterdam broom handle that went to New York.

BB: Those five coats? Huh?

AW: To Amsterdam, New York. Five coats of lacquer so there we were. We were stymied. The only place that we could get the lacquer... now this particular lacquer.

BB: Okay. Now you were having trouble getting lacquer during the war?

AW: Well, the kind that we needed for these nice handles.

BB: Okay.

AW: Now S.C. Johnson was the only company. This particular lacquer that we had to produce handles. We were also using this same lacquer and we held that back from these good handles and used it on a war order that was made for ... we made little dowels that was 11/16" in diameter, 36" long. They... we used the 36" from the scrap lumber from the sawmills because 42" and 48" made up broom handles. Then we went down to 36" because they were so much of it that was just a little bit short of the 42". That a big percentage of it, the sawmill says we have to have that too. It was so important that Mr. Henry told me... told Mr. White, and I was with him when he told him, that one time there squares that they sold to Temple-White was the only thing that kept them going. The only thing that they were making any money out of.

BB: And this was in...

AW: It was so important that they sold that short stuff. We had to take that lumber.

BB: Now this was in the '40s?

AW: So we would take those and we were making them into little dowels that were going into a ... into a dowel that had to be painted with two coats of lacquer that would stand 180 degree temperature. I had to test all the lacquer that we had on hand for the government to see that it would stand 180 degrees when it was applied to wood that it wouldn't be tacky... because they had a map. They sent those dowels to a lithography machine company in Cincinnati that made what they called a patrol map for each patrol for the soldiers.

BB: Oh, and it wound around it?

AW: In the field for... for when they were running In the desert.

BB: Yes.

AW: It was so hot that the map stuck together and they were having trouble and they found that they could stand, if they could get a lacquer that stood 180 degrees, they could roll the maps around on it and they wouldn't stick. So I run the test and I found that S.C. Johnson was the only one that could make the lacquer and they were making it. They had all that lacquer consigned for the Air Force to the companies that was making airplanes. And they said, Mr. White said, we didn't write they talked. Everyday we talked to the war department. The war department, of course, my office was there, that was one of the things I had to do was be in on this conversation because I had to furnish them the information that I had.

BB: Information. Yes.

AW: So he said you get the lacquer. You can get it. Mr. White would pick up the phone and call S.C. Johnson and say, "I have got to have a drum of lacquer. We will steal it from the Navy."

BB: We will steal it from the Air Force to give to you to use for the infantry.

AW: And they did that.

BB: And that is all that lacquer that was made from all that film?

AW: We stopped that through train right out here in front of the road that goes into the time office where they punch in, and I would load... I would load about ten thousand of those things every day and send them by express to Cincinnati. I personally put those dowels on that express.

BB: How big would they be? How long?

AW: Thirty-six inches.

BB: Thirty-six inches.

AW: And they would be lacquered for thirty-five inches because the girls would have to dip them. And Mrs. Temple would just chew me out for making those girls bend over so far, but anyway.

BB: Oh, me. Well, it sounds like your business actually increased a great deal during the war.

AW: Oh, yes. But you know this S.C. Johnson so they would start working on getting a little more of our lacquer business and Jimmy, Jimmy Russell... he called on us and we bought a lot of lacquer from them, especially their clear lacquer and they had gotten... they had gotten the formula down and they had changed it just enough so it didn't meet, didn't infringe the patent.

BB: Go around the patent.

AW: And it would still be 130 degree temperature that I could put it. What I did, I put it in the oven that I used to test the lumber that I received to see that the material was dry enough. I put... I would run a moisture content and then would... I put them in this oven. I would paint the little handles about this long with this lacquer and to see which lacquer would stand... the Johnson was the only one. Well, during that period they were sending that van to South America and so they stopped here on the way and they stopped in here to show us and particularly Herb, Mr. White there. Show him what this van was. So we called Henry and Henry and Calvin came up to the ... Calvin was.

BB: Calvin Lawrence? Right? Okay.

AW: Calvin and Henry came up here to see that van and that is why that picture was taken. Somebody took the picture and got us lined up in front. It is a long story for that.

BB: Oh, that is fine.

AW: But that is the reason I did that.

BB: Your house here just looks like it is out in the wilderness. Not right in the middle of town like it is now. You didn't ... when were all these other houses added around here?

AW: Oh, that was added in '50, I guess. Seeing I was thirty. I don't know. They started building these houses then shortly after that. They built some houses on Park Street there.

BB: Yes, and then around here. But you didn't actually own your home here?

AW: No. I rented it up until 19.... I rented it and the only reason that I bought it was that Arthur wanted everybody when he came over... he said the thing to do is for people to own their houses and to take pride in them and he wanted me to buy mine. And I didn't want to because I was paying cheap rent. He says, "I will make you a price that you can't turn down."

BB: And I guess he did.

AW: They did and I couldn't turn it down. So I bought it and of course, when I bought it...

END OF TAPE