

INEZ THOMPSON ASHER
Interview 038a
July, 1984
Megan Lambert, Interviewer
Retyped by Courtney Lawrence

ABSTRACT: In this lengthy interview with Megan Lambert and An Sweeny, Inez Thompson Asher reminisces about living in Fastrill as a child. She remembers the houses, the people who lived there, the boarding house, the school, swimming in the Neches, and shopping in the commissary. Mrs. Thompson compares her years in Fastrill, Diboll, and Houston and recalls the Great Depression in Fastrill. She had a happy childhood and remembers Fastrill with fondness.

July, 1984 between Inez Thompson Asher, Megan Lambert and An Sweeny.
Also present Mr. Leon Brown.

Megan Lambert (hereafter ML): We will make a little test and.....okay, just sit andwe will ask you to say your name, where you were born and when, if you don't mind telling us.

Inez Thompson Asher (hereafter IA): Do you want my married name or my maiden name?

ML: Tell us both...

IA: I am Inez Thompson.

ML: Inez Thompson.

IA: Asher.

ML: Asher. When were you born?

IA: 1915. Bluff City.

ML: 1915. Bluff City.

IA: Yes.

ML: Okay, what would you say was your main occupation in your life?

IA: Trying to see...I am considered legally blind.

ML: Good...well, we have two ways to do this. We can either start by asking you questions or you can start by telling us what you want to tell us about your life in Diboll.

IA: I never lived here except the last four or five years.

ML: I see.

IA: I was married and living in Houston when the camp moved here.

ML: Okay. Well, you have a perspective on Diboll that comes from the last five, or so years.

IA: I guess I have been here, maybe ten...I was trying to think...I came back to recuperate from my hip surgery and my mother was ill and I lost her. Then I wouldn't leave my daddy. Then after he died I didn't want to go back to Houston. It's got too big.

ML: Yes.

IA: So I just stayed here.

ML: You just stayed here.

IA: Yes.

ML: Tell me again what it was that brought you here in the first place.

IA: To recuperate from hip surgery I had.

ML: To recuperate from surgery.

IA: Yes. I lived here one year.

ML: Yes.

IA: In fact, I lived in Dick Albrecht's house. He bought the house from me. I built the house, but my first husband died and I re-married and it didn't work so I just sold the house and went back to Houston.

ML: Well, did either your first husband or your second husband have anything to do with the timber industry?

IA: Oh, no.

ML: No.

IA: Strictly my daddy.

ML: Uh huh.

IA: No.

ML: Tell us about what your daddy did.

IA: He told me that he went to work for them when he was about fifteen or sixteen years old.

ML: What year would that have been?

IA: Gosh...I don't know. He was eighty-six when he died and he died in 1978. (Would have been about 1908)

ML: Okay...way back when.

IA: That was a long time.

ML: Get some kind of number.

IA: I had his two pins...I know the last one was forty-five or fifty years that he had been with the company.

ML: What did he do with them?

IA: Well, he was talking about driving mule teams, back ups. I didn't pay no attention to all that talk about the sawmill. I thought we had plenty of money. We had everything that everybody else had in Fastrill. It was a lot more friendlier than Diboll. Everybody was just friendly and we didn't know what depression was. We thought we had plenty.

ML: Friendlier.

IA: Well, I guess we did...clothes, shoes and everybody was good to each other.

ML: What years were you at Fastrill?

IA: We moved to Fastrill when I was seven years old. (1922)

ML: Seven. And you stayed there about how long?

IA: I stayed there until I was nineteen.

ML: Well, you really knew Fastrill? Tell us about it.

IA: Well, as I say, we went to baseball games on Sunday. Either the company or...on the Fourth of July lots of times we would barbeque, have soda water and stuff like that. Just nothing much there to do.

ML: Yes. How big a place was it?

IA: Oh, gosh...I don't even know. It wasn't big. We had a commissary, post office, a barbershop and drugstore. That was it.

ML: Yes.

IA: And it was all in a row and all the houses...the four room houses looked alike. Little houses all looked alike.

ML: But they were houses and not box cars?

IA: No...they were houses.

ML: I had heard some these...?

IA: No. We didn't live in boxcars but they might have at Bluff City. I don't remember that. No, at Fastrill we had houses.

ML: Uh huh.

IA: And we had lights in the morning from four till six. It give the women time to fix the men's lunches then they blinked and went off and at night they come on and blinked three times before they went off, so you could get to bed.

ML: Did they have whistles, too? For different times a day?

IA: Yes.

ML: Yes.

IA: When I heard that whistle I got home. If we was playing up around the store or commissary as they called it then.

ML: Uh huh.

IA: We got home because we knew our daddy was coming home. Lots of time I didn't see him until the weekend.

ML: Really?

IA: He left so early in the morning and come in so late at night.

ML: About what time at night would he come in?

IA: I would be asleep.

ML: Sleep...yes. Well, the reason I asked about the whistles was, we were talking to Mrs. Lela Weeks yesterday and she told us...

IA: She never lived at Fastrill.

ML: No, she was talking about Diboll, actually.

IA: Oh.

ML: She said in the early days that they had a whistle I believe it was at six o'clock for things like fixing breakfast and lunch.

IA: Yes.

ML: And then after that the women...after they had finished their house work...would go visit each other and the company was worried that they wouldn't get home in time to fix lunch so they blew another whistle at 11.

IA: She can tell you that because I didn't have to worry about anything like that.

ML: Yes. What did you eat mostly there at Fastrill? Do you remember?

IA: Well, we could have any kind of meat we wanted....all kinds of vegetables.

ML: Was it brought in by truck or what?

IA: We bought it at the store. They raised the vegetables. They had gardens and everybody had a cow.

ML: Gardens.

IA: We had plenty to eat.

ML: Uh huh. Did the company sometimes sell cows to you or did they give milk cows or was it just on individual basis.

IA: It was individuals. Of course, they had the commissary there that belonged to the company and the meat market. Because that was all company owned.

ML: Yes. Would you say the prices were subsidized? Were they good prices?

IA: They were good prices but my daddy raised three kids practically on \$1.25 a day for a long time.

ML: Mercy, they were good prices.

IA: And as I said we thought we had everything that everybody else had.

ML: Yes.

IA: In fact we didn't know there was a depression. There was one family there that got flour and things like they give away. The rest of the people there managed. They had something that they took out of the men's pay. If a family had illness or sickness and needed help, they carried it to them and it wasn't charity because everybody paid in on it.

ML: It was like a social security, but it was a social assistance.

IA: I remember that very well. My daddy had smallpox and he was out and not working and they brought it to him and he wouldn't take it. He said there were other people that needed it worse and when he needed it, he would ask for it.

ML: And he never would?

IA: It was his. He paid into it all the time, but he was just that type man.

ML: Yes. Well, I bet that made you all proud of him.

IA: We were running around and waving a flag on the back porch. I tell you when I look back, I said. Kids now don't know what a good time is.

ML: Yes.

IA: Like my son was born and raised in Houston. He would go and visit my mother and I couldn't hardly get him home. He just loved it there.

ML: Yes.

IA: He would practically stay all summer until school started.

ML: In Fastrill?

IA: Uh huh.

ML: Really.

IA: He was little. Then he would come to Diboll.

ML: Yes. It was fun because all the other kids were there.

IA: Yes. All he knew was Houston, the city.

ML: Yes.

IA: They asked him about the milk. And he said he didn't drink cow's milk. He drank richer milk...he would buy it in the store. He didn't even know what cow's milk was. And I didn't think about explaining things like that because I grew up with it. We had a milk cow and my brothers had a bull, or whatever they raise in school.

ML: Yes. Well, can you remember what your earliest memory was of childhood?

IA: Playing in the sand.

ML: Playing in the sand.

IA: Yes, running up to the hotel. The boarding house we called it.

ML: Oh?

IA: That's where we liked to congregate. Where we like to congregate. Up at the boarding house.

ML: What was the name of the boarding house?

IA: I don't know.

ML: Just the boarding house.

IA: Just the boarding house. We just called it "the boarding house."

ML: Would you say there was couple of hundred people in Fastrill, or about...

IA: Yes.

ML: That many...or over a thousand?

IA: Have you all talked to Ruth Currie?

ML: Not yet.

IA: See, she lived there too, and she was married. She probably could tell you more than I can.

ML: Yes.

IA: She lived right next door to my grandmother.

ML: Is she about your age?

IA: She is an older lady than I am, but she married real young...sixteen.

ML: Oh.

IA: So she lived there. We went to Dialville, that is out from Jacksonville. That was entertainment. They had a swimming pool. The family didn't go and I went with the Curries a lot of times. We had a quarter to spend. Of course, that was a lot of money then.

ML: Yes. How long did it take you to get up there?

IA: We had a Model "T" car.

ML: Yes, and you would all pile in.

IA: All pile in and my mother was deaf.

ML: Oh?

IA: She drove all the time and my two aunts, one was two years older and one is a year younger. They seemed like my sisters. We would all get in the car and go riding and she wouldn't pay any attention. We were just a fussing and fighting and she just kept driving.

ML: I was just thinking, sometimes when I am driving with my step-kids, I wish I was deaf.

IA: My grandmother said, "Just go ahead. They can't hear you anyway."

ML: That's neat. Deafness is a blessing sometimes.

IA: We think about all those things. Really, I loved living in Fastrill.

ML: Yes.

IA: When I came back to Diboll. I said I wished my daddy still lived at Fastrill.

ML: Yes. Diboll seemed like a big city at that point.

IA: I like Diboll now. I have made a lot of friends, but it was so different here. You accept the people here in Diboll and then they accept you. They don't accept strangers at first. You accept them and then they accept you.

ML: That is a good way to do it.

IA: That is the truth. There are several of my friends that lives here from Houston. After you accept them, then you are just as welcomed as you can be.

ML: Yes.

IA: But they don't make any effort to accept you. I know that I am talking your church too, but...

An Sweeny (hereafter AS): Oh....

IA: I went and I went and I went. The Vodickas were here and when I moved my membership, I was on crutches. I never will forget it. And I ran into her in Lufkin one day. I was with a friend of mine. Didn't go to our church, she went to the Church of Christ. Mrs. Vodicka says "Why don't you bring her to church with you sometimes." She says if I carried her to church, I would carry her to my church and I had moved my membership. They couldn't forget me, because I had to go up there on two crutches.

ML: Oh, goodness.

IA: But it is funny now. At first I didn't like Diboll at all.

ML: You know, I have a clipping here that came out of the Houston Chronicle just last week about the church problem in Burke, Texas. Did you read about that?

IA: Guess not. That's my problem.

ML: Is this the church you are talking about?

IA: No, I am talking about the Methodist Church here in Diboll.

ML: I didn't mean....okay.

AS: That's Pentecostal.

IA: That is a Baptist church, isn't it? Oh, they have been having....

AS: Oh, they have been having...

IA: They have had fights and knock downs, they tell me in that church.

ML: Yes, well....

IA: We didn't have anything like that....it was just funny that Mrs. Vodicka telling me to...telling Ora Kimball to bring me to church and she went to the Church of Christ. You have heard of Ora Kimball, haven't you?

AS: Yes, the name sounds familiar.

IA: Yes, Ora was loud-mouthed and said just what she thought. Said if I did I would carry her to my own church.

ML: Well, in a way it is kinda refreshing to see people care that much about church, you know, in the community, and yet it gets out of hand sometimes.

IA: Oh, yes. It gets that way sometimes.

ML: I am from Woodville and we hear these church stories all the time, too. Well, tell me when you were growing up in Fastrill, what was your dream for yourself? What did you want to be when you grew up?

IA: To get away from Fastrill because my daddy wouldn't let me go to parties and things in Fastrill. It was a sawmill town and it was too rough for his daughter.

ML: Too rough.

IA: So I married at nineteen years old and moved to Houston.

ML: To get out of there and have more freedom.

IA: Nothing like that, I just wanted to go somewhere.

ML: Yes, just wanted to go somewhere.

IA: I'm telling you the truth.

ML: Yes, I believe it.

AS: Where was Fastrill located?

ML: Good question.

IA: It is in Cherokee County. Do you know where Rusk is?

ML: Yes.

IA: Well, I am not good at directions because they never would let me drive on account of my eyes. I know how to go to a place, but I can't direct anybody.

AS: Well, I know where the Dialville that you are talking about is.

IA: That is out from Jacksonville.

ML: Yes.

IA: Well, Rusk...do you know where Palestine is?

ML: Is it on the same highway? Yes.

IA: I would say Fastrill is between Rusk and Palestine, but you go a different route. Now, I finished school at Slocum, that was...we caught the bus and went to the Neches River and caught the bus, because it is like I said, the ninth grade was as high as you went in Fastrill. And my daddy sent me one year to Livingston to high school. The next year I went to Alto High School. Then they started the school bus to Slocum, so that is where I graduated.

ML: Is that up near Elkhart?

IA: Yes.

ML: Yes, that is a pretty country.

IA: Well, that big cyclone had just hit Slocum, tore it all to pieces. And they built this beautiful new high school back there and it was really something. I know I went one year. Louise Rector, Vine Wells' daughter, she went two years. She is a year younger than me and she is always laughing and talking about she got my basketball suit, because I graduated a year before she did...(laugh) it was so pretty.

ML: Can you tell us anything more about your father's work at Fastrill? I know you said you didn't pay much attention to...

IA: Most of the work that I remember about his work was that he was an engineer on the #12 and #11. I did have two pictures of those trains, but I give them to my brother.

ML: Oh, too bad. Do you have any other pictures that you might like to....

IA: I gave him all of them when I had to move out of that seven-room house. I just couldn't keep them down here. Of course, I think the boys appreciate them more than I do. There was pictures of both trains that he was engineer on.

ML: If they ever want to have some of these pictures considered to be included in this book...historical book, just give us a call. We are looking for pictures.

IA: Oh, Paul made these pictures from a copy of an old, old picture. It was really cracked and battered.

ML: Oh, that's nice.

IA: He did it because my daddy just worshiped his daddy. In fact, when they sent Paul Durham away from Fastrill, we went to **Trount ?**, LA. For one year because we wasn't going to work for Frank **Estes ?** ...Then we went back to Pineland and then back to Fastrill. So we ended right back up at Fastrill.

ML: Okay, then Paul Durham is working with us. He is aware of those pictures?

IA: Oh yes, he is because he made another one for my aunt. Her brother, my uncle who was the fireman. Isn't that what you call the fireman or the engineer. He was the fireman in one of those trains. So she wanted the picture. See, my daddy ask Paul to make it. He didn't make it for me. They are very pretty pictures. My brother had them framed and they are real pretty. I wish I had kept that other one. It was a picture...oh, I don't know how old that picture was of the men out there, the old mules, this old train and had logs and everything. But I give that to him, too. Anytime that they want any of them, I can get them for you.

ML: Okay, great. Well, what we would really like to do....

IA: I don't know if you knew the Foggs, or not.

AS: Yes, I've heard Mrs. Sweeny mention the Foggs.

IA: See Freddie is married to my youngest brother. The one they call "Hot Dog" Thompson, the coach.

AS: Okay, didn't she have the boarding house down here or the old Antler Hotel when....

IA: Mrs. Foggs.....uh huh.

AS: I have gotten bits and pieces from the Turners, Harold and Hazel Turner.

IA: Harold Turner. He lived with us. You couldn't get in the car, he was always there.

ML: Oh, really?

AS: See we lived right cross the street from them for a long time.

IA: See he went with my aunt. The one a couple years older than me. Oh, that Harold was always with us...

AS: He is a mess, isn't he? Lot of fun.

IA: He will stop me in the store and ask me, "Do you remember?" And I'd say, "I can't forget it."

ML: You know this Harold Turner? I have been working in Diboll for two days now and I have already heard two or three Harold Turner....

IA: They call him "Shorty." Of course, I didn't know Hazel...only since I have been here. His daddy was one of the camp doctors.

ML: Oh, I see.

IA: In fact, his daddy delivered my youngest brother.

ML: Oh?

AS: These are some pictures that my mother-in-law had. Both of these are very old. This is Alcedo Camp.

IA: Alceda.

AS: Alcedo, I'm sorry. And that is the people that are in there....

ML: Grandma...James Hill and Gilbert Hill.

IA: Oh, the Hills were there! Yes, now I had a lot of old pictures like this.

ML: Oh, that's a nice clear one.

AS: And this one is Emporia. It has the name of the people on the back, but it's very difficult to read.

IA: Emporia. That is out from Diboll here, somewhere.

AS: She said Emporia was Diboll to begin with.

IA: Yes, that is what I thought.

AS: And then they moved it down this way and it became Diboll. And this is Jack's, my husband's great-grandfather, the one that was a doctor, Will Hill. I think he was the first doctor there.

ML: Wasn't he the one that gave part of his name to Fastrill? The I-L-L came from Will Hill.

IA: Probably was.

AS: She didn't tell me that.

ML: Something like Farrington, Straus and Hill.

IA: P. H. Straus. I remember him very well because we heard that name so much.

ML: He was the superintendent.

IA: He used to come out to the camp. He was over the camps, I guess.

ML: Camp manager?

IA: Because he used to come out there and Wood Russell, he run the commissary out there.

ML: Wood Russell?

IA: Wood Russell and Mr. Hunter and Birch. I believe Mr. Birch is dead. He ended up at Pineland.

AS: Mr. Birch was at Fastrill? See my grandfather worked. My grandparents lived in Pineland forever and he worked for Southern Pine Lumber Company and the Birches lived right across the street from them. I have known them ages.

IA: He operated the commissary there for awhile.

AS: I didn't know that.

IA: Yes, they had one boy.

AS: Yes, he passed away. In fact, Mr. Birch and his son also died.

IA: And the son, too. I didn't know about the son. They run the commissary.

AS: She is still alive.

IA: But they were at Fastrill.

AS: I didn't know that.

IA: Yes, they run the commissary.

AS: Well, I'll be...

IA: You know, money didn't bother us....all our folks had to do was go in the store and say "Charge it."

ML: No wonder you felt rich.

IA: We lived right across from the drugstore one time. Mr. Turner, Harold's daddy was...and I would go over there and I'd buy stuff and give it to all the kids around there.

ML: Yes.

IA: My daddy went over there and told them not to let me have it anymore and I came home bawling, as usual. Then he went over there and jumped on them because they wouldn't let me have it.

ML: Oh?

IA: Really, we would go to the store. If we wanted a pair of silk stockings, which was very rare. We would just say, "Charge it," or I did.

AS: Until daddy found out.

IA: I was the only girl and gee, I was really spoiled. I will admit it now.

ML: He wanted his only girl to have some silk stockings.

IA: And just like I said. His dream was to see that we all had an education. Of course, I just finished high school, but both my brothers went to college.

ML: Did they?

IA: Now you can do things if you want to on a little bit of money.

ML: Yes, you can.

IA: Of course, things were not high like they are now, then either.

ML: It is just wonderful to hear stories of how people made ends meet especially during the Depression. I love that kind of...

IA: I don't see how they did it.

ML: I don't either.

IA: Three kids on a \$1.25 a day.

ML: Really unbelievable. It really is.

IA: Of course...

ML: And presumably a wife too, had to eat.

IA: I don't think the rent was very much. Three or four dollars a month.

ML: Yes. Something like that.

IA: And at Christmas...of course, I don't guess we call them niggers now, but he was Smith. He would go around and pick up the trash and garbage and at Christmas he would pull that old wagon full of fruit and stuff and carry to every family. Well, we just waited for that time to come. We thought it was like Santa Claus coming.

ML: The company would buy the fruit and send him around with it?

IA: Uh huh.

ML: How about parties? Did they have parties for the people at Fastrill?

IA: Like on the Fourth of July and things like that. They did.

ML: Picnics?

IA: Picnics. Yes. One time we would get on the train and go out from Fastrill. They would have big picnics or something.

ML: Uh, a big excursion?

IA: They used to have them all the time, I mean. Big blowouts. Have big ball games. That was our Sunday afternoon entertainment. Ball games. Baseball.

ML: Did just about everybody play or were there teams?

IA: There were teams. They went to Rusk...in fact, Crocket came over and got my oldest brother.

ML: Really.

IA: And kept him there to play. He played for Diboll. Lefty Vaughn was the manager or coach and I went to see them play Huntsville State Prison. And they pitched Buddy, they beat them too. But one time they had somebody else pitching and Lefty says, "I am going to put Buddy Thompson in there." He was just a kid. He wasn't but nineteen or twenty years old, but they said he could pitch.

ML: Yes.

IA: Of course, I wasn't paying any attention to that either. I was probably running around with a couple of girl friends or was looking for boys.

ML: Probably.

IA: (Mr. Brown enters) Now he might could tell you something about Alceda (Alcedo). That is Mr. Brown. He didn't live there, but he worked there.

ML: Worked there.

IA: What was your last name?

ML: Lambert.

IA: Leon?

Leon Brown (hereafter LB): Let me put the cat down.

AS: Hi...how are you?

LB: Fine. Thank you.

IA: This is An Sweeny. That is Jack Sweeny's son's wife.

AS: How are you?

LB: Oh....sure enough?

IA: I want you to start asking...

ML: Megan Lambert.

IA: Megan Lambert, this is Leon Brown.

ML: It is good to meet you.

IA: You may can tell them something about Alceda (Alcedo).

LB: Well. Mighty little that I can tell them about that.

IA: Well, I lived there, but I don't remember nothing about Alceda (Alcedo).

LB: It has been a lot of water run under the bridge since Alceda (Alcedo).

IA: Well, they are in a hurry and they don't want no long story about it.

ML: We're not in a hurry!

LB: Well, just ask me some questions...

IA: Everything you say will be on this tape recorder.

LB: Well, maybe I had better get out.

ML: [unintelligible]

LB: Oh, I think...

IA: Move your chair over there.

ML: Here, you sit there and we will be all fixed....now this is just if you want to do this.

LB: I don't....what else do you want to ask me about it, Alceda (Alcedo).

ML: Tell me your name first.

LB: Leon Brown.

ML: Leon Brown, and when were you born, sir?

LB: December 17, 1903.

ML: 1903.

LB: Now, you can figure up how old I am.

ML: No, I will wait till later and do that. I can't add or subtract.

LB: And ML.

ML: How long did you live in Alceda (Alcedo)?

LB: I never lived there, just visited.

IA: As they sold...they went to Alceda (Alcedo) and peddled vegetables.

LB: Well, just wait a minute. We lived on a farm about three miles from Alceda (Alcedo). A bunch of us boys, we would go down there and play for dances.

ML: Yes.

LB: Well, it wasn't just a regular...you know, like these old country dances. Like the boss and different things would have us down and have a little private dance. And we would go play. Go down there in a horse and buggy and we would go down there and play for the crowd for five dollars.

ML: What did you play?

LB: Either one. The violin or the guitar. Either one that was all they had then. I could play the piano also, but I didn't have one. Violin and guitar. So we thought that was big money.

ML: Yes...uh huh.

LB: It was then...

ML: Yes.

IA: He worked for Dred Devereaux here.

LB: I worked for Dred.

ML: What did he do?

LB: Bridging.

ML: Bridges.

IA: That's what he was doing at Fastrill.

LB: That is what I was doing at Fastrill out there.

ML: Was that building bridges for the...

LB: Mostly....it was done out at Fastrill. We would build a few. If we were going to cross a creek or river, we would go out there and build a bridge.

IA: Or the train.

LB: A lot of them.

ML: Yes.

LB: From here to Lufkin and from here to Fastrill.

ML: How big a town was Alceda (Alcedo)?

LB: Well....

ML: It wasn't a town....camp....everybody laughs at me.

LB: I imagine there was four or five hundred people there.

ML: Four or five hundred?

IA: How many would you say was at Fastrill?

LB: About the same...or something like that. There wasn't much difference.

IA: We had more than that.

LB: May have been.

IA: They had lots of houses at Fastrill.

LB: Well, there was a good many down there. All these little old shotgun houses...

IA: Well, we had four-room houses at Fastrill with a front and back porch.

LB: Well, you were up town.

ML: Well, now I have heard a couple of explanations as to why things are called shotgun houses. What is your explanation?

LB: A little old straight long, house. No side rooms or nothing...like a shotgun barrel, you know. Just straight.

ML: Oh, it doesn't have anything to do with shotgun weddings?

LB: Oh, no.

IA: We had running water at Fastrill. Go out on the porch and turn the hydrant on.

ML: My goodness. But it wasn't in the house?

IA: No.

LB: The lights would go out at nine.

IA: I got cold hands.

ML: And you were supposed to go to bed.

LB: Yes. I had a little experience about that going to bed one night.

IA: He was at the boarding house.

LB: Yes, at the boarding house at Fastrill. Ervelia, that was Willis Jordan's wife, she would ready up our rooms...there were about twelve or fourteen of us old boys. Some

married and most of us single and we...you get in this room and you in this one...you in this one and me in this one...well, before the lights went off I got in there and crawled in the bed...no fans or nothing. It was in the summer...hot. You would fan with a paper if you could find one...but there was an old boy come in there and the bed on the other side about that much difference in them. And he sat down there or squatted down there and he pulled off them tennis shoes and sat them down there. And he crawled in that bed and that odor come up there in my face and I went to gagging. Shuh...of course, we were up stairs a pretty good piece but couldn't get through because they had banisters on the side to walk our walk. And I walked down there. Willis Stephens, a...boy, I found him down there and there was a vacant bed there, and I said, "Willis, anyone going to sleep in that bed?" And he said, "Not as I know of. Hadn't been anyone in here yet." I said, "Willis, I am fixing to be somebody in here."

IA: Louis said, "What is the matter with you?"

LB: I said, "I am telling you right now, there is a dead mule in the world that smells like that. Good gosh, it was stifling."

IA: No problems...just about to stifle him.

LB: Another night one of our boys was sleeping up there...Charlie Bateman.

IA: Annie Laura's brother, isn't it?

LB: He went over next to the window and kicked the old screen off and jumped out of it.

ML: Jumped out?

LB: Jumped out at night and there happened to be a doctor. He was in there as a substitute for the original doctor who was on vacation and he was staying at the hotel. He hit the ground and went over on his face. And all he done was just kinda bashed his nose, but he worked the next morning.

ML: Oh, my goodness.

LB: There was some commotion going on there. No lights on.

IA: This hotel, commissary, I mean, boarding house.

ML: Yes.

IA: Before I was married, my husband came to Fastrill and he stayed at the boarding house. He asked Mr. Jordan about the running water and he said, "Yea, we have running water. You can run up and down the steps and get it." This is the Hills.

LB: The Hills.

IA: You know the Hills?

LB: Oh, yes.

IA: Did that come from Fastrill? That sounds like it.

LB: Billy Hill.

IA: Billy, Gilbert.

LB: Gilbert, Billy. See what was that other one's name?

IA: It is on the back there, isn't it?

AS: Gilbert, James and Billy hill and then she thinks this is grandma. So I am thinking that that was Mrs. Sweeny's grandmother.

LB: That was at Alceda (Alcedo) Camp?

AS: Yes.

LB: Gilbert. He would come out. I have seen him a lot of times going to Fastrill. Then my mother used to peddle turnip greens, buttermilk, ribbon cane syrup and everything in the world at Alceda (Alcedo) Camp.

ML: Where did they make the ribbon cane syrup?

LB: Oh, we made it there on the farm. We had 103 acres. This is a believe it or not, but it is true. There were ten of us children. Eight boys and two girls. And we would keep one hundred gallons for our use until we made up the next year. The most we ever made in one year was twelve hundred eighty two gallons. That was ribbon cane syrup.

ML: That is enough, I think.

LB: It sold for fifty cents a gallon.

ML: Did you have enough pancakes to put it on?

LB: Enough what?

ML: Enough pancakes?

LB: I didn't know what that was. In them days we didn't know what that was.

ML: Or did you put it on cornbread?

LB: We used cornbread and biscuits.

ML: Biscuits. Well, tell me, could we come and interview you? You sound like you know a lot of stuff.

LB: Well, I don't know. I would have to study up on it awhile.

ML: Well, I don't know that there is any need to study up on it.

IA: Get ready to spend all day if you can get him to talking.

ML: Okay. You have said enough for now. We will go back to Inez now. We have got some questions to ask this lady.

IA: Now wait a minute, she is going to ask some question.

ML: Well, I should explain...what I am going to do. That is a good idea.

IA: There were lots of people that lived in the camp. I don't care what anybody says. Now it really was good after Arthur took over because people could buy their homes and used to everybody rented. They didn't buy anything.

ML: Up until what year was that?

IA: What year did Arthur Temple take over. You don't know. You know Henry Temple was here. He died and didn't Arthur take over when Henry died?

LB: Yes.

ML: Well, I think I have this written down. You all, wasn't it 1949? Or so?

IA: About long that time. The camp moved here in '42 from Fastrill.

AS: That was the year I was born. And I was thinking about that. About that time.

IA: It was about that time, but Henry...

ML: She is trying to tell us that she was born in '49. Around about that time.

AS: I was born in 1949.

IA: '49?

AS: '49. I am a baby.

IA: That is the reason....that I say, she don't know...

LB I didn't say that.

IA: But he really made this town.

ML: Arthur Temple.

IA: He started people buying their homes and before that you rented. You didn't buy nothing.

ML: That makes such a difference.

IA: It sure did and he was good to the men. My daddy always...he really thought a lot of Arthur Temple.

ML: Well, you said some people didn't believe that way. Did some people have quibbles with the Temple family?

IA: I don't know. You know, you never do please everybody. There is always somebody don't like something.

ML: Sure.

IA: If they didn't, they better not say anything.

ML: Our impression has been that it was as good and that everybody was happy.

IA: Everybody. We was...happy. We were as happy as we could be at Fastrill.

ML: Yes. I have heard people say that about Diboll, too. We are going to interview people from White City and I wouldn't be surprised if we didn't get that story also.

IA:.....

ML: Well, every place else that I have ever heard about suffered a lot during the Depression.

IA: That is what I am talking about. They suffered more in Diboll than we did at Fastrill.

ML: Yes?

IA: Just like I said there was one family that got...flour and stuff like that and we didn't do without. We always had plenty to eat.

ML: I am going to have to hush him up so I can hear more.

IA: Leon. You are going to have to quit talking. She can't hear the tape when you are talking.

ML: You can go in the living room and talk to her...okay? I'm not going to transcribe this tape. It is going to be some poor unsuspecting person, you know, and they are going to be trying to do this with two voices on there.

IA: I told you that.

LB: Okay, you told me.

IA: Get up and go in the living room.

LB: Inez, hush.

IA: You are scared you are going to miss something.

ML: Save that stuff. We don't want to miss it. We want to come back and talk to you.

LB: Okay.

ML: Okay. Now where were we? Home recipes and remedies. Besides running around after the boys, do you remember anything like going grape picking or anything like that?

IA: Grape picking?

ML: You didn't pick grapes?

IA: No.

ML: Did you pick anything?

IA: No. My daddy picked the berries and things. I didn't do nothing like that.

ML: Your daddy did, I see, you didn't you were in silk stockings.

IA: When I could say, "Charge it."

ML: When you could say, "Charge it."

IA: I can't tell you....you were asking about home remedies. I had pneumonia and I was in the bed sick. Dr. Evans was there and people took turns about sitting up with me because my daddy was trying to work and set up too. So one night my daddy happened to get up and come in there. I was just laying there, I wasn't breathing or anything. They

were sitting in there around an old wood heater. They thought I was asleep. He run and got Dr. Evans. I think they poured a pint of whiskey down me.

ML: The doctor or who?

IA: Yes. The doctor. Trying...but I come out of it. I guess maybe that was all they had.

ML: Sounds like a pretty good home remedy to me.

IA: And they put that old...salve stuff. What do you call it? Oh, something on you, make plasters. Mustard plasters. Or something when you have pneumonia. And we would take three sixes to keep from having malaria. I can remember.

ML: Mustard plasters. What is three sixes?

IA: It is some kind of liquid medicine. It is supposed to keep you from having malaria.

ML: Oh, quinine.

IA: I guess it had quinine in it.

ML: Three sixes, I have never heard of that before.

IA: Well, I think they say three "s" now, but it was three sixes back then.

ML: Did anybody get it? Can you remember? What other kind of diseases did they get up there?

IA: Smallpox.

ML: They got smallpox.

IA: My daddy had it. And a boy my age next door had it. Nobody else.

ML: That's amazing.

IA: And where they got them, I don't know.

ML: Are you sure it wasn't the measles?

IA: No, it was small pox.

ML: Did your daddy suffer very much with it?

IA: Well, as I said, they sent me and my oldest brother to my grandmother's that lived across the street to stay, so we could keep going to school. The youngest boy wasn't in

school and of course, we would slip in and go back over there, so we didn't carry the disease. Nobody else took it. They never did know where they got it.

ML: It is amazing that it didn't break out.

IA: And we had all had vaccinations, too.

ML: Your father had had a vaccination, too?

IA: Yes. But that can happen. My son had all the vaccinations and he took typhoid and it took them twenty one days for it to ever show up and they called it para-typhoid. Got sick right here in Diboll. He rode the passenger train from Houston here and he was so sick when he got here, my sister-in-law went to the house and got my daddy's car. Come got him and carried him to Lufkin. Didn't do nothing. Finally I said foot, I will take him back to Houston. Well, they put him on a test for malaria, but it will cost you \$5.00. I said I don't care what it cost. I just want to know what is wrong with him. So we took him to Houston and it took them twenty-one days.

ML: To figure it out?

IA: To figure it out and he had para-typhoid fever.

ML: Well, tell me about other differences that you notice between now and then. Would you rather be living back then?

IA: No ma'am. I like the convenience now. I am not like some people. Don't give me the good old days.

ML: Don't give the good old days.

IA: You hear that so often.

ML: Yes.

IA: No, I will take now.

ML: It was hard work, I'll bet.

IA: Well yes, of course, you know different now. You can look back and see what you done in the back. And all that. No, I will take now.

ML: Do you feel like your mother had a pretty hard life?

IA: No.

ML: But it was partly because you lived in a company town?

IA: That's right.

ML: Then she wouldn't have had such an easy life.

IA: Well, she washed in an old wash pot, boiled clothes and everything, but she didn't complain.

ML: Kept her healthy. Sure.

IA: She raised three kids and kept house.

ML: Did she do the sewing for the family?

IA: She made everything I wore.

ML: Where did she get the cloth? At the commissary?

IA: Commissary. Every once in a while she would go to Rusk and buy a little bit. Not much. Mostly at the commissary.

ML: Go to Rusk. Big town. Do you remember seeing any....did you ever go to the movie house in Diboll? Did you ever come into town?

IA: We didn't have a movie house. Oh, at Diboll. No, no. As I said, I was already married and living in Houston.

ML: You were married at that time? Well...

IA: Fastrill. We didn't have no movie house.

ML: It was out in the woods.

IA: We went to Rusk to the movie.

ML: Do you think that the changes in transportation have made a great difference in the way we live now?

IA: Oh sure. My grandfather died in Fastrill. They had to carry him on the train around through Diboll some route to get him out from Nacogdoches to bury him.

ML: Oh, really?

IA: We didn't think nothing about it, because that is the way they did it.

ML: Either that or take him on a wagon.

IA: That's right.

ML: I guess people had to spend a much larger proportion of their day getting places.

IA: Oh yes. Just like when we went to Rusk we took cheese and crackers to eat on the way. Gosh, it wasn't very far from Fastrill to Rusk. We thought we were going a long ways.

ML: Yes. Starve to death up there. Did you know how to swim? Did all the kids know how to swim.

IA: Oh, yes. We went to the Neches River.

ML: Yes. Taught each other or did some adult teach you?

IA: That is the only thing that my brother lied about. He went winter and summer in that Neches River. If something would happen at the light plant, they would come get him to go down there 'cause it was most limbs down there in that river. Swim just like a fish, but he got lifeguard certificate in the Navy. So you know he likes to swim.

ML: But he lied about going swimming in the winter?

IA: To my daddy, yes.

ML: He wasn't supposed to go?

IA: No, not in the wintertime it was cold out.

ML: Yes, but he insisted though?

IA: Yes. He went ahead every time he could get away from there. He went swimming.

ML: Okay. Well now, I know that you had a pretty good time during the Depression. You lived in an isolated place.

IA: I didn't know we had a Depression. Now that is the truth.

ML: You didn't hear all the talk about people starving and all that?

IA: No, sir. No, sir. You didn't hear it.

ML: You didn't hear it.

IA: You can ask anybody that is my age. You can go see Louise, any of them.

ML: Louise who?

IA: Louise Rector. She is Vina Wells' daughter.

ML: Oh, yes. You mentioned her.

IA: We never had Hoover hogs. In fact, it is just like I say. I didn't know there was a depression and I married right about that time or a little after and I still didn't know it, because my husband happened to have a good job.

ML: Yes.

IA: But at Fastrill you didn't hear about it.

ML: Did you hear about Roosevelt?

IA: No. Not till about ten or fifteen years later, what all he done. He has told me more than anybody else what he done.

ML: Well, we will get to him. (Leon Brown) I want to hear what you have to say about Roosevelt. I bet he has a lot to say.

IA: He has, too, because I didn't care for him.

ML: You didn't care for Roosevelt?

IA: No. He gave the land away and people sat on their...and not do nothing. That is what is wrong with our country now. Everything is give to them and they don't want to work.

ML: That was the beginning of that kind of thing, wasn't it?

IA: It certainly was. You could just go out and people's land they got land free and didn't raise nothing.

ML: Yes. Well.

IA: You can tell from my conversation that I don't go for that.

ML: Yes.

IA: I believe in working.

ML: Well, I know what you are talking about. I do. Well, let's see how we are coming on our question list. You are doing great. You are covering everything.

IA: Probably covering too much.

ML: No, you haven't. It is wonderful. Well, as long as you are talking politics, what do you think about social security?

IA: Well, I tell you. It is a good thing, but I think it is abused.

ML: Yes. It is.

IA: Especially SSI and Medicare, but I see people going through that grocery store giving food stamps. Young people and they are buying better food than people that's got real good jobs. They buy the best of everything and walk up there and pay for it with food stamps. Why aren't they working?

ML: Yes. Good question.

IA: And the doctors rip them off. They have them come back every month. They hand them their Medicare and Medicare card and the doctor sends it in and they get the money.

ML: Yes.

IA: That makes it hard on a person like me. I draw social security, but I pay the doctor because Medicare don't hardly pay anything, but they can go every month and it don't cost them a penny.

ML: Yes.

IA: And it...that...you holler they are going to cut it off. Cut it back. They are going to have to do something. They are giving it all away.

ML: They say we might not have it much longer.

IA: That is what my daughter-in-law and son say. They never expect to collect it. If they'd pay me what they pay in, I could live real good.

ML: Yes.

IA: She says she never expects to get social security. She is not even looking forward to it. She is doing her own retirement plan.

ML: Yes. She prefers to do an IRA.

IA: Yes, and they work for Exxon which has their own retirement plan. That is the only job that he has ever had. Went to work as hall boy.

ML: Yes. Well....

IA: Social Security. It started out to be a good thing and it got too much money in there and guess who messed it up? Lyndon Johnson.

ML: Lyndon Johnson.

IA: Took it out and put it over in the general treasury and now they are paying everything out of it. And they...they messed everything up. Reagan would be all right if people would help him. They buck him on everything.

ML: Yes.

IA: So if I don't get social security well, I just won't get it.

ML: Tell you what...you and my husband really get along. He is a Reagan man. We have a lot of conversations at our house.

IA: He is probably like me. I don't vote for parties. I don't care if they are a Democrat or Republican. I vote for the person that I think will do the job. Now. Carter, I don't think he meant to be like that. He was just ignorant and didn't know any difference.

ML: Yes. He was ignorant and...

IA: I don't think he meant to mess up anything. He just didn't know any better.

ML: He was good hearted and he thought good heartedness would get him where he wanted to go.

IA: Oh, watch out if you get Mondale in there. Wheeeee.

ML: What do you think that will be like?

IA: We won't get nothing. They will give it all away.

ML: When you were talking about giving away land. Do you think that has made great difference in what the land around here looks like?

IA: Well, now I don't know about that. But I know it started people not to working. Why work if you get it free? There is people that could work right now that is drawing money that they could work.

ML: Well, how would your family have been different if they didn't live in a company town.

IA: I have no idea.

ML: Or instead a small farm?

IA: I have no idea because I know nothing about a farm.

ML: Nothing about it.

IA: Never lived on one. Never visited on one. All I know is sawmill camp and Houston.

ML: Sawmill camp and Houston.

IA: And Diboll.

ML: What do you think about Houston?

IA: Good gosh. Now. Oh, they can have it. I lived there forty years.

ML: Oh, my goodness.

IA: I didn't think nothing about it. We lived in subdivisions. It was just like living in little towns. When I go back to visit my son now, I can't get back quick enough. I love Diboll.

ML: Yes.

IA: Whoo, that town is...traffic and it is just not....it is not equipped for that much people. That many people living there.

ML: Isn't it ironic that in a big town where you are surrounded by people, you can feel so lonely.

IA: Yes. That is right. I was lucky. I had good neighbors, but I wouldn't live there now without I had to.

ML: Well. Now I need to ask you if you can think of any stories that you want to be sure and have on the tape. Funny things that happened or maybe big storms or people that got born in the middle of the night and the doctor had to be called and all that kind of stuff.

IA: The only one that I know is my daddy said he had to get the doctor because I was up under the bed. Fell off the bed and nearly froze to death in the middle of the night. When I was born he had to go out in the middle of the night with snow to get the doctor.

ML: When you were born?

IA: To get him down there. I was ready to be born. He said in the middle of the night he had to get up and go in that snow. Of course, the doctor come to the house.

ML: It was snowing?

IA: Dr. A. T. Talley. He was the doctor here.

ML: Oh, was he a doctor for a long time?

IA: Oh, yes. And then he went to Houston and he was President of Harris County Medical Staff. He got away up there.

ML: Yes.

IA: And started out in a sawmill town.

ML: My goodness. Well, I bet it was....being a doctor in a sawmill camp and there was people always getting strange accidents.

IA: Oh, yes.

ML: Even today I hear about some pretty strange accidents that they have. Well I am about out of questions. Do you have anything you want to....?

AS: No. This is my first experience.

IA: She is too young. She was born in '49. Yes, she could be my daughter. My son was born in '37.

ML: Well, I am about....asked all the questions that I wanted to ask, but.

IA: Well, it is like I said. I remember Fastrill as childhood experiences.

ML: Yes.

IA: All that...in fact, I didn't go to parties at Fastrill because my daddy wouldn't let me, like I told you. They thought sawmills were too rough. Of course, some of them went, but I didn't get to go.

ML: What did you all kids do when you got together? What kind of games did you play?

IA: Like I said...most of them run up and down in the sand playing. Going to the river. I don't know.

ML: Did you play dolls at home?

IA: Oh, yes. I played with my dolls.

ML: What kind of dolls did you have?

IA: I had a beautiful doll. Found it one year before Christmas.

ML: Found it?

IA: Yes.

ML: That is a likely story.

IA: And my daddy. Somebody ask him. Said you shouldn't tell her there is not a Santa Clause. You know what he told them?

ML: Yes.

IA: He didn't believe...in making us believe that. This child over here got more than we got. Then we wanted to know why Santa Clause was better to that child than he was to us.

ML: Certainly.

IA: So when I found the doll. He told me that they were the Santa Clause.

ML: Surely.

IA: And I looked at it now and it was...we did often wonder why some kids got more than we got.

ML: Yes, you wouldn't want to blame that on Santa Clause.

IA: No. But we still acted like we believed in Santa Clause.

ML: Yes, isn't that funny. You can know something and you act different. Now you must have had some....

IA: We had box suppers at the schoolhouse. Bid on your boxes and they would eat with you.

ML: Okay.

IA: And they had Christmas plays there and things like that. I was little and growing up and I never did have no box. I never did get to eat with nobody.

ML: You didn't get a box.

IA: 'Cause I remember my uncles and them. He would go....

ML: Well, now besides running around after boys and going to the river and all that....did you have any chores that you had to do in a small town?

IA: I'm sorry, but I didn't. I told the truth.

ML: That is why you have lived so long.

IA: I didn't. I was the only girl and my mother did the ironing and the cooking. I used to beg and she said I had plenty of time when I got married to work.

ML: And you ended up and you did.

IA: Of course, my brother, he milked the cows. Tried to.

ML: Tried to.

IA: And the youngest one he raised, he fooled with the bulls and things like that, but he was turned that way. I mean he liked to fool with things. He sold a bull that he raised and bought a target.

ML: Bought a target.

IA: We had to sell because he cried. He didn't.....

ML: Oh.

IA: So we had to sell it.

ML: Yes. Where did you all keep your cows?

IA: We had a fence back there. Pen....it was.

ML: It was just a pen for your own family.

IA: Oh, yes.

ML: You didn't keep cows with other people.

IA: No, we just had one milk cow. He had this bull and after that he had some kind of hen. I thought I never would forget the name of that chicken.

ML: It had a name?

IA: Name some kind of chicken. Not Rhode Island...not like that.

LB: Dominecker.

IA: No. It was mixed with something.

ML: It wasn't a bantam?

IA: No.

LB: Game.

IA: No. ...game. They fight.

ML: What color was it?

IA: I don't even remember....that chicken.

ML: A special chicken.

IA: It was a special chicken and Elmer raised it.

ML: Oh, goodness.

IA: My daddy ought to be living...he could tell you.

LB: Dominecker.

IA: He would fill up that book.

ML: Yes. I bet.

IA: There is a lot of people here that lived in Fastrill.

ML: Who all lived there? Do you remember?

IA:Lived there, the Burchfield's lived there, Oran and Jewel Burchfield.

ML: Okay, we have Oran Burchfield's name down.

IA: Mary Kate and Fate Patrick they lived there. Oh, there has been so many of them that has died, too. Of course, Erelia Jordan lived there. She was at the hotel or boarding house.

ML: Did she keep the boarding house?

IA: That is Paul Durham's mother-in-law.

ML: Oh, she was.

IA: Her husband. His mother and them ran it and they lived there.

ML: Yes.

IA: All the children stayed there and worked.

ML: And you all used to kinda congregate at the hotel.

IA: Oh, yes. We loved to go up there and sit on the front porch and see everything that went on. And Lillie Faye. She played the piano all the time up there.

ML: Lillie Faye.

IA: That was Miss Vine's baby sister.

ML: Oh. Play the piano. Did people sing?

IA: Well. I didn't listen to that either cause I never could sing. Leon, did they sing? You never did play the piano, did you?

LB: No.

IA: That family was so funny. She was the baby. And she had an appendix surgery in Jacksonville and something happened. Anyway, they took blood straight from my brother and gave it to her and she died. And the next one was a boy, Willis Jordan. But he died several years ago. And the next one was Ora Kimball. And she died and oldest child is still living. Mrs. Vina, the youngest. They started with the youngest one and the next one, and the next one, and now Mrs. Vine. She is eighty-five. Usually the oldest one goes first.

ML: Yes.

IA: But in that family they started with the baby.

ML: That is strange. Well, be thinking about if there is anybody else.

IA: And anything that you want. Take it out of there. You take it out.

ML: Oh.

IA: I have just talked at random.

ML: Okay.

IA: I have got some old pictures like this. I don't know if they are Fastrill people or who. They belonged to my mother.

ML: Well, if An were to come back sometimes and you could show her the pictures, tell her about them and who is them, and stuff like that.

IA: If I can find them. Do you all still live in Diboll?

AS: Yes.

IA: Where do you live? In South Meadows?

AS: No we live, actually we live in Burke. We live right outside the Diboll city limits.

IA: But you are listed as Jack Cook, Jr...Jack.

AS: Jack Cook.

IA: Yes.

AS: He is not a junior.

IA: Sweeny. Yes. Well, his mother used to come up to the house and visit Pappa. That is the reason I was saying Jack Cook, Jr.

AS: Okay.

IA: Not Junior. Sweeny. I will get it right in a minute.

AS: Sweeny.

END OF INTERVIEW