

JIM DUNLAP

Interview 71a

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ABSTRACT: In this interview with Becky Bailey shortly after beginning his tenure as Superintendent of Diboll Schools, Jim Dunlop talks about his educational background, his experience as an educator, and his hopes and plans for Diboll's schools. Mr. Dunlop taught at Central School from 1969 to 1971, when he moved to Diboll as Civics, P.E., and History teacher. He moved through administrative positions, holding the title of "Director of Special Projects" for 15 months, Elementary School Principal, Business Manager, and Superintendent. He was concerned with Diboll's school facilities, the teachers' working conditions, and providing a quality education for Diboll's children with the money he was given.

Becky Bailey (hereafter BB): I am interviewing Mr. Jim Dunlap in his office. Today's date is June 22, 1985. My name is Becky Bailey. Mr. Dunlap, I am interviewing you because you have just taken over the superintendency of the Diboll School District and I want some of your general impressions of the School District and where we are going, that sort of thing. I would like to, first, start off and ask where were you born and when? Find out something about your educational background and other places you have worked.

Jim Dunlap (hereafter JD): I was born in Gregg County, Texas, in Longview and lived almost all of my life in Panola County, graduated from Carthage schools and attended Panola Junior College, went there two years and from there to Stephen F. Austin State University and majored in Physical Education, P.E., Government and my senior year at SFA I worked at Trout Elementary. I taught P.E., I had all six grades, first through sixth P.E., worked as an aide in the afternoon, took classes in the morning and when I got back over to Nacogdoches at night I officiated basketball or football games and on Saturdays I worked for the maintenance department. Then I graduated in August of '69 with As & Bs in Government and P.E. Went to work at Central High School in the fall of '69, teaching History, World History, American History and P.E. and volunteered to coach a little bit to see if that was what I wanted to do. And coached track there, stayed there two years. I was involved in a lot of extra curricular activities out there, worked a little bit with student council, worked a little bit with some of the other things that they had going at that time. Then my wife graduated from SFA with a bachelor degree and got an opportunity to go to graduate school and have a graduate assistantship and so I signed a contract with Central for another year because it would give her an opportunity for us to live in Nacogdoches and she could finish her graduate work there. We, at that time, that fall, had been offered jobs at two different schools down on the Gulf Coast and we really wanted to go but we felt that since we had both signed contracts for our respective jobs that we couldn't break them at that time and move on to the coast. So we said, well, if

they offered us jobs this year they will next year, too. Not realizing how things worked, we were naïve. But, so I worked at Central one more year and she finished her graduate work, got her masters in P.E. and then the following year, in the spring of '71 she was offered a job as P.E. coach in Diboll. At the time she was offered a job they didn't have a job for me and I had already resigned at Central. I had been in an officer's training program when I was in college but had resigned from that program and was now eligible for the draft and my number was 52 in 1971. I had already passed my physical and at that point the only alternative I had was to find a job some place or else face being drafted. I already had my goal set for what I wanted to do for the next several years so I had to find a job somewhere. She had told Mr. Foster when he called her that she could not take the job down here unless they had a job for me, too. And several days later he called back and said "Yes," they had a job for me, too. So we both came and said "We will come for a year maybe, or two, and then go on down to the coast." That was in 1971, it's almost fifteen years ago. We never made it to the coast. When we got here we found out what a great situation it was and we realized that we didn't want to go anywhere else for a while. So we have been here ever since. I taught High School Civics, I taught P.E., I taught American History, Driver's Education and the first year or so I worked with Coach Cheshire in baseball and, as a result of all those little coaching assignments, (they really weren't assignments they were just volunteer efforts), I decided I did not want to pursue the line of coaching. After all, I was a coach's husband. It was all right being coach of the track team, a volleyball coach and everything here, so coaching kind of fell to second place in, or even third or fourth place in my priority of things to do, but I did enjoy the teaching aspect and that is what I really wanted to do. So I concentrated all my efforts there. Went back to seek a master's degree at SFA at night and, of course, the path of least resistance at that time was Administrative Education and I was not interested in pursuing further work at the graduate level in either Social Studies or Physical Education and I did want the master's degree in something. So I went back to pick up the hours in Administration and found that it was a fascinating study and began to look around at the schools and school districts around me and felt like I had a contribution to make. I wanted an opportunity to get into administration, looked at several school districts in the interview process as I was finishing my mid-management course work and superintendency course work and found that a person who stays in one school district a long time gets a certain perspective and it gives them an opportunity when they go out and look at other schools to see what other schools are doing and compare what you have with what is going on somewhere else. I had a first hand opportunity to really view the quality of Diboll schools by going through the interview process in other schools and, to make long story short, I went to a lot of interviews but never really found a situation where my goals and my family's goals matched what they had to offer. Either they didn't want me or something would happen to cause me not to want to go there. Either one or the other always developed and there was one instance where I really found a job I thought would give me the opportunity to get into administration and things really looked promising there.

BB: Okay, now this is the principalships, that's the way you started out?

JD: Yes, right. And the opportunity really looked promising and I thought I had a good shot at the job but my son was born and ten days after he was born he had to have surgery and that was right in the midst of all that and I felt like I could not leave the Lufkin area at that time because he was still in the hospital. So I called the Superintendent and told him to take my name off the list. I couldn't come under any circumstances and so that was the one shot that I had to leave and a good chance where everything seemed to get together, but that happened and we didn't go anywhere as a result of that. Then the position opened up here at the school district, that Mr. Robbins created as Director of Special Programs where he was removing some of the responsibility from Pop. At one time, Pop Rich, the business manager, had been in charge of everything; he had been tax collector, purchasing agent, business manager; he had a whole series of things that he had to oversee and Mr. Robbins felt like the district was at a point in its development where some of those things needed to be removed from some of his responsibilities and take some relief from Pop's shoulders. So he created a position called "Director of Special Programs" whereby the transportation and maintenance programs were removed from the business manager's responsibility and the federal programs which had been overseen mainly by Mrs. Greer, (she had been responsible for writing up the programs), the high school teacher's aide, had had the responsibility of writing up the title programs for years and no one had really been in charge of administration of programs. They slipped all of these things into the Director of Special Programs slot and I moved into that job in January, or maybe it was February of '77-'78, I believe.

BB: Weren't you principal at elementary?

JD: Yes, that is next. I was in the Director of Special Programs for fifteen months and then Mr. Gartman resigned, or wanted to be re-assigned to the junior high as a teacher and when he resigned I had, in the meantime, after all these things had developed, I had decided that I wanted to be a superintendent, and I felt like in order to be a superintendent I had to have principal experience. I discussed it with Mr. Robbins, even before Mr. Gartman's slot came open, that I needed to find a principal's job somewhere so I was still in the market for the principal's job in some school district and when Mr. Gartman resigned that just seemed like an ideal situation. So I applied for that slot and went over to the elementary school as principal. I was at the elementary school for two years. Pop retired as business manager, which was really a surprise to all of us. I had applied for a couple of superintendentcies while I was elementary school principal but very few districts, almost none, go directly from the elementary principal to superintendent, unless it would be a very small school that really couldn't find anybody else. So I really had no chance at that point in my career; I would either have to take a high school principal's job or another Central office job to lay some more ground work. So when Pop announced his retirement I immediately applied for that slot, as business manager, and felt it would give me an opportunity to learn more about the business end of school operations and look at the overall operations in a frame of reference that was different from the Director of Special Programs; it was just another arm on the administrative end. I moved into the business manager's slot and that was in '82, about four years ago. Of course, from business manager then I was named to the superintendentcy here and so I have run the gambit from classroom teacher to Central office administration to elementary school

administrator, back to Central office and then to this job. By the way, someone mentioned the other night that I had moved from a teacher's job to superintendent. I said "Well, really, from a janitor's job to the superintendency job" because when I was at Panola I was a janitor.

BB: You've seen every end of it now, haven't you?

JD: When I was Director of Special Programs one of my responsibilities was janitor so I've seen a large area of schoolwork at least in Diboll.

BB: Well, looking at all these other districts for superintendent's job and other principal's jobs, how do you think we stack up in Diboll? Like our curriculum, the programs we offer, our facilities, that sort of thing?

JD: Well, to answer anything like that you have to look at the whole total community and work from there. Diboll, being a class 3-A District with 1,850 kids in comparison to other schools of similar size has so much more going for it in regards to, first of all, community. There are very few communities with a town of 5,000 people that compare, first of all, in the area of size. The size of the town, our business district is very small compared to other 5,000 plus populated cities but the quality of life here is such that there is really no comparison because the people in the community are so supportive of the school. They are so supportive of the community; community pride is more than I have ever seen anywhere. It just doesn't exist in so many towns this size like it does here. I mean, how many towns in the country can raise over \$100,000 in six weeks for community effort. It is just not done except in Diboll and how many towns of this size have the library of the quality we have. How many towns have a day care center of the quality that we have. It just doesn't match anywhere as far as looks, nearness, the layout of the town, the kind of people who live here and the support they have for the community in general, not just the school, but the community in general. I haven't found any place in East Texas that comes close to it and, taking that down to the school, that kind of atmosphere that is created in the community, has to be reflected in the school, in the operation of the school and the desire of the community for what they want for the school. I've been to so many schools, either on Southern Association visits where I have been a member of the visiting team or whether I have been there for an interview, or whatever, I've been on a lot of school campuses in East Texas and when you walk into the administration office or the principal's office, or wherever you go, there is something that just overwhelms you about the tone and atmosphere of the community and the students there and the attitude of the faculty of the administration and it just kind of permeates the walls as you walk through there and you can feel the tension or the instability, or you can see the dirt in the cracks or the cracks in the ceiling, or the attitude and smiles on the faces of the people who are working there and there is just so many intangible feelings that you get in some other school districts that makes Diboll a much livelier place to live and to work in. Our people, by comparison, are much more friendly, in a genuine way. Now, you may see other school districts where the teachers are smiling, where they express concern and well being about how things are going, but deep down inside you can really see a genuine feeling of satisfaction among a lot of our teachers,

that they like what is going on. That doesn't mean that we don't have problems. We do have some problems and we do have some concern that we need to address but that is the way it is everywhere. But compare that to teachers in other schools, when they don't even have scissors to cut their paper with, they don't have enough bulletin board paper, they may not even have bulletin boards just to do the necessities for their classrooms; whereas we have never been short of those kind of things. We may run out before the year is over but, at least, when school starts we have plenty of it. Some teachers in some neighboring districts get one little small box with all their supplies in it, crayons, a box of chalk to last them all year and these kinds of things in one little 12 x 12 box and that is their supplies for the year. I know this to be true. But we have...we order thousands of dollars worth of supplies every summer and have it available and teachers don't necessarily have a fight and scramble for it, they go and ask the principal for it and there it is. Haven't you found that to be the case?

BB: Oh yes, we didn't even run out of paper at junior school this year.

JD: Those kind of things, you know, they are not that, well, you don't really see them as being a problem until you don't have those things; then when you don't have them and you have to go out and buy them with your own money, then that creates a problem. Consequently, our teachers overlook that and they look for other things to fuss about. If they had some of the same problems about getting just basic supplies that teachers in some of the other schools have, some of our neighboring county schools have, they wouldn't think that was quite so bad, but part of it is that we have provided those things and we have given them what they need so they can concentrate on teaching. But it is just human nature to find fault in things and you are not ever going to eliminate all this.

BB: Oh well, I have changed my tune since I have gone and talked to a lot of older teachers and how they, we have it awfully easy compared to them.

JD: You know, things are not perfect at all, and there is a lot we can do yet. Still, in comparison to other schools our size and communities our size, our teachers really have it well and we want it that way and the school district wants it that way, so the teachers can concentrate on their job of teaching.

BB: Do we just have a better tax base than some of these other schools or is it mainly administrative?

JD: Well, the whole game of finance is a matter of priorities, and you put your money in those areas where you think the greatest needs are, based on your philosophy and concerns. We do have a good tax situation, we have a good financial situation in Diboll and a lot of it has been prudent management of the funds over the years, too. This is one of the things that Mr. Robbins prided himself on, was prudent financial management and a lot of the questions he had in regard to requests that came through, you know, were based on that; that was his concern and that is what kept us in such good financial shape these last ten years when everybody else was having all kinds of problems. It is just watching every dime that came through to see how it was spent. Billy Reagan said one

time- He and I were talking at a meeting Mr. Robbins had introduced us at a meeting once in Austin, and he came up and put his arm around my neck and said “So you want to be a superintendent when you grow up?” I said, “Yes, I sure do” and he said “Finance, that’s the name of the game”, said “Learn all you can about finance.” That was all he ever said, so really that’s it. It is a matter of priorities and spending our money in the right fashion and I hope to continue some of that. I definitely think it is a good idea.

BB: Well, Mr. Robbins had some definite worries about what the difference in all the legislation is going to mean for our taxes, you know, and the money we are going to have available to spend but the state is asking us to spend a lot more than what the local district will be able to handle.

JD: It is not just Diboll, it is everybody. The trend for the last several years has been to put back upon the local school districts as much of a financial burden as possible; it has gotten to where a dollar amount that comes into the state is just astronomical and, of course, every politician who runs for office likes to tell everybody that I’m opposed to raising taxes. Well, there is no way the state government can continue to finance schools adequately without raising taxes so they go to Austin and make all their pronouncements and speeches and tell the public that they can finance public schools adequately and that it is not going to cost you any more money, while at the same time, mandating programs that do cost money and not providing money to pay for it, so they put it in law that the school districts have to provide certain programs, now you find the money, and take care of it and then they come back from Austin proud of themselves that they have not raised taxes and it is up to the local district to determine where this money is coming from to implement this program and the only way to do it is to raise taxes locally and, consequently, well, I guess the philosophy behind that is put more local control into the hands of the people who feel like things are important. Look at the vocational program, that is one example. The trend nationwide is to reduce funding for vocational programs because the philosophy today is that vocational and technical programs should be, not a part of the second curriculum, but rather it should be the post-secondary concern like at a junior college and in doing that, in following that philosophy that is spreading across the country, they have reduced the amount of money for state, and federal funds for vocational programs. They have said if you want to continue with your vocational people on eleven months and to provide them with all the travel and the extra things that state and federal monies have provided in the past, if you feel like that is an important program for your local district, then you are going to have to pay for it. Which we have to do, we went back and asked our four vocational teachers to write us a justification for their programs and to help us arrive at a decision to continue everybody at their present levels of funding.

BB: Now are you talking about Home EC?

JD: And AG. One of the first things that I had to work with Mr. Greer on was to try to come up with a sensible solution to handling the vocational programs for this next year. As a result of it we eliminated some...we didn’t eliminate any slots; some school districts cut people out of jobs. We didn’t do that, but we reduced the length of time that our two

homemaking teachers work. One of them was working twelve and now its back to eleven and one that was working eleven and now, it is back to ten and a half. I can see down the road some cut backs in vocational agriculture unless the school district, meaning the community, feels that having two twelve month vocational AG teachers is what the district wants, then we will continue that program. But looking at the money down the road, I can't see that they can continue very much longer...

BB: The only way the school district raises money is through property taxes? Is that right or are there other ways?

JD: No, not the only way, we have some federal forest money that comes in, but we never know how much that is going to be.

BB: But I'm talking about local taxes, that's the only way?

JD: Well yes, local Ad Valorem taxes, that's the only source of tax money that we have, but we get money, like I said, from the federal forest money. We get some money from impact aids, which is the money that goes to school districts in lieu of the taxes from the housing authority that's federally owned. We get money off of our cd's, certificates of deposit in the bank, but that is usually our sources.

BB: What sort of needs do you see for our district and what things do you think needs beefed up now that you are-

JD: Okay, as far as the program now, let me get back on that, our program is in excellent shape, we've got a lot of good things going as far as our curriculum. As far as our course offerings, I think we probably offer as much as anybody in the area. I think that we could probably strengthen our math and science departments at the junior high and high school level. Now by strengthening, I mean reduce class load and increase some of the type of activities that we carry on but some of that can be handled in the next topic I was going to bring up. So I guess I will skip on into that one. The greatest need that we have right now is when I came into this job we had 35 portable classrooms. Now, portable, or temporary if you want to call them, classrooms are for one purpose and that is to alleviate a crowded condition at that time. We have some temporary classrooms that we have had for over sixteen years and there are some of those at the elementary and I believe we have one over at the high school that has been there for about that long, longer than I have been here, I know. Everyone having been a part of the process of building those buildings that came about as a result of influx of Mexican-Americans that came into the community in the early 1980's. As a result of the Hispanic influx and because of job opportunities here everyone felt we will go ahead and build the buildings and provide the programs and if the economy falters or whatever, if the growth continues then we will build something. The numbers at that time were in elementary school. When I was principal in 1980 we had to find a place for 850 kids, that was our peak enrollment, and that campus was built for about 350. We had to have portables to put these children in; they came in after Labor Day, so there was no way anyone could predict what was going to happen. I can remember that very well because the day after Labor Day, all of a sudden these mothers

and children came in that nobody had seen or knew anything about and here they were and we enrolled about 50 children that day and most of them were first and second graders.

BB: Did you ever even have enough teachers?

JD: Well, we added an 8th first grade teacher that year and it was really a madhouse for a while. The feeling at the time was, if the economy falters or if the industry does not grow any more, or whatever, they would either drop out or move back or whatever. Everybody just thought it was not a long range thing, that there was no need in considering a building program at the elementary school because there weren't going to be any more coming in, that we had peaked in our enrollment. So the board addressed the issue of a new high school looking at the fact that these children could possibly stay and, if they did, it would take two or three years to build a school, the numbers would grow from elementary to junior high and junior high would come on over here and we could reshuffle the grade alignment with the addition of a new high school. So the decision was made to ask for a bond election for comprehensive new high school plan including the athletic facilities. At the same time, there was an 80% increase in taxes to pay for that. The public felt like that there were two things, the way I perceive the public's feelings, was that the 80% increase in taxes was too much at one time, they just could not see raising taxes that much, it would have been too much, especially with these people on fixed incomes; it would just hurt them too bad. When they paid \$25.00 an acre for that land forty years ago and all of a sudden they are paying more in a year for taxes than they paid for the whole property to begin with, it was just inconceivable to raise their taxes that much. The other thing that I can see as being a reason for it failure, it may not be fair to say this, but it seems to me that some of the comments I heard were racially motivated. That they didn't want to provide our tax money to provide these facilities for these people coming in here at that time. Actually that feeling, I think, was strong among a large segment of the population but with the question of 80% tax increase I think that was equally as strong. It was more than one thing that caused the bond issue to fail as badly as it did.

BB: I think another problem and this is just a parent that has a child in elementary at that time, is that we saw the huge need there and knew there wasn't such a need at high school and thinking why are they doing it this way?

JD: You are absolutely right. The teachers in elementary school were the ones who were facing the problem every day and it was very difficult for them to support building a new high school when they were the ones who were having to deal with the situation then.

BB: Has the population decreased some over there?

JD: Well, the question came up when the economy falters and industry cuts back that the Mexican population would leave but they haven't left. They came over here for the same reason our ancestors came, to make a better life for themselves and their children and this is a perfectly American goal, an ideal for them to follow through with and they are here

in this town, as great as we all know it is, and they want to be a part of this community and they are. They are producing and they are becoming members of the community and consequently they are staying and we are seeing those numbers of kids with Spanish surnames increasing at the high school level; they are not dropping out...everyone thought they might...they are staying in the high school. The number in the elementary is decreasing, they are around 700 now but the reason they are decreasing is because there are no more families coming in. So, in the sense that the school population is leveling off, it has, but it has not decreased. We have been hovering around 1,850 for several years now. The overall population is steady, the junior high is well over 600 and the high school expects to hit about, probably 530 or 540 this year. Of course, it will make it a good medium size 3-A high school, but the total number of students has not changed. The shift in the population is there but still at the elementary school we have a situation where on ten acres of land we have 700 kids on a campus that was built for 300 so we are still twice as many over there than what we should have.

BB: Our class sizes being mandated as being smaller and smaller at elementary level you don't have the facility.

JD: We really weren't hurt that much. Some school districts were running 25 to 30 in the first grade. We were doing great in kindergarten and first grade and second grade. The situation this year was that at second grade, if the projected members of first grade go into second grade then our teacher pupil ratio would have been 23 to 1 whereas we were mandated for it to be 22 so we were just left with 10 kids over what we should have provided. The law says that in order to request a waiver from this 22 to 1 ration that we have to seek out all other means of trying to find additional classrooms including the possibility of building portables, including finding non-school owned space and looking at all the avenues that may be available before you request the waiver. Well, if we had requested non-school owned space I'm sure we could have found some place but I don't want to send children in second grade, one classroom of children in second grade...clear across town to a building that somebody provides for us. So, actually we have two campuses, one for a second grade classroom and the one for all the other children. As far as portable buildings, there was no reason we couldn't build portable, we had the money to build it, so really we could have requested a waiver from that 22 to 1 mandate but we would not have been fulfilling the spirit of the law. We probably could have gotten one but I just didn't feel like that was in the best interest of the school to do it that way. So we presented this proposal to the school board and it was decided that we would go ahead and try to build two more classrooms in addition to the one that we have for the Pre-K. Now the numbers on Pre-K are such that we needed two rooms; our magic number there was 44. We have 49 already signed up and...

BB: And you know you will have more after Labor Day.

JD: And who knows, there is no way to know. So we had decided to go ahead and build classrooms for the Pre K and then add a second grade teacher and reduce that number in second grade. See, we have eight first grade teachers and seven second grade teachers, so in the first grade we were under the 22 to 1, well under that, but when we went to second

grade and had seven teachers that shot the ratio up a little bit. That's why we had to add the second grade teacher. We will be fine this year but we will have to have those mandates of 22 to 1 through the fourth grade eventually and so, where are we going to put portable buildings on the elementary campus now? So, going back to our greatest need being facilities, we are 38 portable classrooms district wide. In order to find out what we need I have drawn up a plan for facility study that will be presented to the board on the 30th of this month. The concept has already been approved, the names of potential members of that committee have been submitted to Mr. Runnels, he and I have developed a preliminary list to send out to the board and let them analyze, and then the names of the committee would be announced on the 30th. The membership will be composed of one teacher from each campus plus one administrator and the remaining members would just be community people trying to find people who represent all segments of the community. The purpose of the committee would be to analyze the needs of the district and determine what those needs are, based on the requirements of the law, based on the curriculum offerings that we may propose. We try to cover all the areas that are of importance to the school district and present their findings to the board and hopefully, according to the time line we have set up, we would have some sort of information to present to the public in some fashion. I don't know who the board would want to handle it but, at least, the committee report would be submitted to the board by possibly midyear. It would probably take the fall semester to examine this.

BB: Okay, you are talking about January or February?

JD: Somewhere along in there, according to the time line we have set up. They may want to take longer than that but...

BB: When you are talking about a big - you don't want to rush into anything.

JD: No, no, no

BB: But you want something people will support this time?

JD: But it has to be a well thought out program; you can't just slap something out and expect people to buy it. It would have to be a well thought out program with a lot of indication as to which direction we are going all along from the beginning of the process to the end, so everybody will have time to analyze it, find out exactly what they want to do. We would be wanting a lot of public input and, hopefully, would get all the concerns out of the way if it should ever reach the point of a bond issue, we don't know, we haven't used that term and have been trying to stay away from that term. But understanding that that has to be one of the options in the future but, again, it is too far ahead to say right now. The committee may recommend to the board that we just continue to do just what we are doing, which is to make do. If that's what the committee says then that is what we will do. The board has the option of accepting the report or declaring if they want to do something different. It will be up to those seven people to make that decision.

BB: In thinking about the school board, do they think that facilities are one of our biggest needs?

JD: Oh yes, definitely. They realize that and they are very aware of what the situation is but they are also keenly attuned to the concerns of the public and they want to be sure that this process is handled correctly.

BB: In talking with Mr. Ramsey, because he was here and helped with things whenever they built the new high school, I asked him why there was a difference in our bond issue being turned down that time, and he said, “Well, everybody knew we needed a new building, everybody in the whole town knew we needed this and I think that is part of what you are going to have to do, make sure that everybody knows how bad it is.”

JD: Well, I think if anyone would take time to drive over to the elementary school and look and find out where we are going to put more portables. Because the law, again this is going back to what the state requires and they are saying “You have to have a 22 to 1 ratio” and I’m for all that, don’t get me wrong, that’s the way it has to be. Those lower numbers mean increased learning for the kids and nobody is complaining about that, but the fact is they are mandating this and not providing any money to pay for it and it falls right back in our laps locally to come up with the money.

BB: I know when I was talking to Mrs. Burkhalter, she had like 45 kids in the third grade or fourth grade class when she first started teaching and she said she didn’t really teach them anything, you just can’t. But aren’t you mandated the amount of playground area that you have and all that, too? Or does that just go by the wayside?

JD: Oh, there are guidelines but those are difficult to enforce, I mean, what is the agency going to do to school districts that doesn’t, you know, it has to be really a flagrant violation of the law. If they came over and looked at the size of our playground and then looked at what goes on in our classrooms, they couldn’t close our school down because we teach school. If it was a situation where it was so bad we could not hold classes and could not teach school, then they could threaten our creditation. But the fact that we are on that campus over there and we are crowded this way we are doesn’t keep teachers from doing a good job and there is nothing the agency can do about that. The only ones that can change the status quo over there are the people in Diboll.

BB: Curriculum, how do you feel we stack up, curriculum-wise and the programs that we offer?

JD: I have been on Southern Association visits to 8 or 10 schools where I have had the opportunity to be a visiting team member and go into different schools and analyze their programs. Most of what I have looked at is Social Studies but when you go in and talk to the kids and the teachers and talk to your fellow-visiting members you learn a lot about that school and what they are capable of doing. One of the most enlightening things about some of those visits is to go into a school and bring in the top 8 or 10 kids in school and set them down in a panel discussion and let us, as visiting team members, grill those kids

about their school and that is really enlightening. Of course, it would have to be the sharpest kids in school and they will tell you exactly the way it is, because they are anxious to share their thoughts. When I have done this I have come back, in almost every case, either impressed with what we are doing or I've come back with an idea of about what would make ours better. And, having looked at others and having looked at ours, I think we do a terrific job. I know at elementary and some junior high grades we are running circles around many schools around here that are accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and schools and we are doing so many good things than they are doing. We are not accredited and yet they are. The reason we are not accredited is because we have never applied. As far as program, off the top of my head I can't think of a single thing that we can change to elementary. I can think of very few changes that we could make at junior high but I can think of several things that we could do at high school but all of them are expensive and one of the things that causes me to be concerned about the changes at high school level was when I was a teacher in high school I had an opportunity to visit the Naval Academy on one of these tours that the Navy pays for and they flew us to Annapolis and gave us a week at the Academy visiting all of their facilities and looking at their programs and stuff, and I came back with a real serious doubt that any of our kids graduating from Diboll High School could go straight from Diboll High School into the Naval Academy. The math and science at our school is not such that a person with that kind, who needs the background in math and science, they couldn't make it there. Our sharpest kids, you know, who are going to pick it up and who are going to learn and catch on quickly, could possibly do some course work maybe at a prep school and get the necessary background. I'm not saying our kids are too dumb to do, I'm just saying that the courses that we offer, Calculus, Trigonometry and the higher math we don't offer on a basis regular enough that it would allow enough students to participate in that kind of situation.

BB: There are not that many kids that take them?

JD: Right. There are only a handful of our kids that take those courses. Consequently they're not offered every year and they, not being offered every year, they don't have an opportunity to take all those courses they need, they can't take, well, I'm not sure which ones they can't take and can take, I'm not that familiar with the courses but they can't take all the courses, they have to take one or the other, some of those higher math's over at the high school simply because there are not enough kids to offer. So in order to implement a program like that we would have to make a firm commitment to math and science and let a teacher teach a class with three kids of differential analysis, or something. It is possible and we offer those things but they just are only offered to those on an occasional basis where there is an interest shown.

BB: How many children do we have that go from high school to college? Do you keep records on that?

JD: I would like to do that, I've never analyzed that so I really don't know but I think that would be an interesting study, to see how many really do.

BB: The only thing I can think to ask you lastly is what do you dream and what do you want to accomplish while you are superintendent? That should be interesting twenty years from now.

JD: Yes, there are not very many who ask me that question. I have asked all of the new applicants who come in here who haven't had the opportunity to teach anywhere yet, what are they going to be doing forty years from now and I think I throw them for a loop and now you are asking me that. I really think that what I would like to see first of all is to try to create an atmosphere in a tone in the campus level so the teachers would feel comfortable in doing their jobs. If I could create an atmosphere so that they don't have to worry about anything except teaching, and if they can concentrate all their efforts on that, based upon the kinds of results that we have been able to achieve in the learning process up to this point, that I have been able to observe over the years, I think the results for the kids would be fantastic. And considering that we already have kids who can perform exceptionally well on achievement tests, I'm talking about individual children over all we are low in a lot of areas but for the exceptional children I'd like to see program emphasis on their needs, but in the long term if all the teachers can teach in an atmosphere where they can be comfortable and can devote their full time to teaching then that will be a major hurdle. At the present time they can't concentrate on strictly teaching when they have to worry about whether they are going to be 10 minutes later because the cafeteria is stacked up full of other kids. They say, "Well, if I leave early enough, if I cut short this lesson and leave early enough I can get in but if I wait two more minutes and finish covering this subject well, then I'm going to have a problem getting into the cafeteria." If they are concerned with things like that and if they are concerned whether they are going to get their feet wet and they are going to have to take time to put on their raincoats and their boots and things to go from the portable building into the PE class or wherever they are going next, those little things interfere with the teaching process. So, all that has to do with facilities and has to do with providing the elements to good teaching situations and I hope to be able to put all those things together.

[END OF INTERVIEW]