

**L. D. Smith**  
**Interview 092a**  
**February 13, 1986**  
**Marie Davis, Interviewer**  
**Dorothy Farley, Transcriber**  
**Retyped by Elaine Lawrence**

**Abstract:** Diboll native L.D. Smith, in an interview with Marie Davis, reminisces about life in Diboll. He recalls going to school as a child and teenager, the games boys played to amuse themselves, working at the school during the Depression, and then working for Southern Pine Lumber Company after World War II. He had various jobs, but Mr. Smith spent most of his career as a truck driver, delivering Temple products all of the country. He reflects on changes in the Company and town, and tells about his new found hobby of genealogy.

**Marie Davis (hereafter MD):** Today I am talking with L.D. Smith. He lives at 1408 Ryans Chapel Road. Today's date is February 13, 1986. My name is Marie Davis. L.D., where were you born?

**L. D. Smith (hereafter LDS):** I was born in Diboll, Texas. Our house was right next to the old library building. That was the house I was born in.

**MD:** When were you born?

**LDS:** Sixteenth of August, 1921.

**MD:** What were your parent's names?

**LDS:** Daddy was H. L. Smith. His name was Henry Lonzo, but he was called Lonnie. Mama was Alma Boren. They knew her by Bowen, but her name was really Boren.

**MD:** Would that be Boren?

**LDS:** Right.

**MD:** And what were your brother and sister's names?

**LDS:** My oldest sister was Vivian, married Pate Warner. Marguerite was the next, married Ronnie Chapman. Joe Donald was the youngest, he married Emma Lee James.

**MD:** And whom did you marry?

**LDS:** I married Margie James. She was a sister to Emma Lee.

**MD:** How many children do you have?

**LDS:** I have one child and two stepchildren.

**MD:** And how many grandchildren?

**LDS:** Two grandchildren and four step-grandchildren.

**MD:** Since you were born in Diboll. What are some of your earliest remembrances?

**LDS:** Well, they used to have a board walk from the library to the commissary, and I rode a tricycle down there every day. I would get my tricycle on the store porch and everybody had better get out of the way because I was coming down it. Mrs. Jimmie Ferguson worked in the drugstore, and I would go in and ask her for several things and ask her to charge it to Daddy. Sometimes I would ask her for a sack of Bull Durham and tell her it was for Daddy. She would give it to me and would charge it to Daddy. That didn't last too long, though.

**MD:** When he found out about it?

**LDS:** Yes. Daddy worked at the TSE Depot. He was the Depot Agent. I played around there all the time.

**MD:** Where was the TSE Depot located?

**LDS:** It was right out in front of the sawmill, probably a quarter mile north of the commissary.

**MD:** And you'd go up there and play?

**LDS:** Yes. I would play all over those engines – make out like I was the engineer and ride the train, even go to Lufkin on it. Mr. Bob Cook was the engineer. Junior and I would ride the engine all the way to Lufkin. One of us would be the engineer going to Lufkin, and one would be the engineer coming back. We would even get to blow the whistle and ring the bell.

**MD:** Did you ever ride the log train?

**LDS:** No. We didn't ride the log train. But we would ride that local to Lufkin. I built a railroad in the back yard one time out of stacking strips. I would take a 2 x 4 and put a little strip underneath it where it would ride in between those stacking strips; nail another 2 x 4 on top of it for the engine; use a spool for the smoke stack; use a small nickel snuff can for the domes that was top of it, then I would have 1 x 4's for the log cars. I built a loader with two fish hooks and a spool of thread. I would hook those fish hooks in a small stick and wind it up with the thread on the spool and load it on the train. It ran all the way through our back yard, through Mrs. Steed's back yard, into Rayburn Carroll's back yard. I tore the pickets off the fence and would go through the fence. I got my fingers – had to cut the fish hook out.

**MD:** I think that is real interesting the things kids did back then. What other games did you all play – neighbor boys around?

**LDS:** Well, there wasn't too much to do unless you thought it up yourself. We would walk logs over at the pond, bird hunt with our sling shots – just what ever you could figure up to do.

**MD:** I imagine you stayed pretty busy, didn't you?

**LDS:** We would bird hunt at night with flash lights, shoot the birds while they were asleep. We went swimming in white oak creek.

**MD:** Did you go up above the bridge, or did you jump off the creek bridge?

**LDS:** Well, we had a swimming hole right where the bridge is now, on the south side of it. But there were two more up the creek, one right behind the ball park and one right behind where Gus Allen used to live over there. Dopey Morgan and I believe Mr. George lived there at one time. That's the only three I remember. Well, there was soapstone, but I believe it was on Stovall Creek, but I am not positive about that.

**MD:** You said you played in the pond. Did you ever play in the mill?

**LDS:** Yeah – in it, on it and on top of it, everywhere about it.

**MD:** I guess it is kind of strange how things change. Things seemed so simple back then. Today they wouldn't let kids get near there, would they?

**LDS:** No, they ran everything by steam then and Charlie Turner fired the boilers. You know, they have talked about the cornbread whistle and the biscuit whistle. In the summertime I have been over there and he would let me come in there and I have blown that whistle. He would let me blow it – just two long whistles. But you could go over there anytime you wanted to. I have been over there while they were running. You couldn't do it now though.

**MD:** When you went to grade school over here, was it located where the elementary school is now?

**LDS:** Yes.

**MD:** Do you remember anything special that happened when you were in grade school or any teachers? Did you have any favorite teachers?

**LDS:** Oh, yeah. Mrs. Weise, I remember when I was in the first grade. You couldn't start until you were seven years old. Mary Jane Agee, married Bear Miller, was the first grade school teacher. Old John Ellison was a whole lot older than we were. Don't even

know what grade he was in, but if she got after us to correct us for anything and she couldn't catch us, she would make him go catch us and bring us back and whip us. I remember they had a wooden water tank and it was right on the corner where the sixth grade was. That is where we got our drinking water. They had one fountain right at the tank and one over by the study hall. That is where we got our water.

**MD:** A wooden tank – it came out of a wooden tank?

**LDS:** Yes, a wooden water tank. It wasn't very high and water would be dripping out of it all the time. The first grade, the second grade and the third grade and the fourth grade were kind of together and there was a hall up in there you would go through the hall, to the fifth, sixth and seventh grades. I can't remember when they tore that down though. That is where they would take us in that hall to whip us. Fenner Roth was going to whip me and Junior Cook one day, and he took us out in the hall. When he would start for me, I would go to the other end of the hall and Junior would come to this end of the hall. He would go that way, we would just swap ends. He finally got mad and he tore us up, I want you to know, with a 1 x 4.

**MD:** Did you think Mrs. Weise was partial to boys?

**LDS:** Absolutely!

**MD:** That is the impression I always got, too.

**LDS:** She would let us do anything we wanted to, but she wouldn't let the girls.

**MD:** When you got to high school, they had started – when did they start their first football in Diboll?

**LDS:** 1938

**MD:** Tell me what you remember about that.

**LDS:** It was six man football. And before a person could run with the ball they had to make a two-yard lateral in the backfield – before you could run with it. But the rest of it was more or less the same as eleven man football. Our uniforms were old baggy pants, looked like they were made of canvas. The shirt just had a number on it and nothing else. The helmet was leather, just old hard leather. But we had shoulder pads and hip pads – that was about the only protection we had.

**MD:** And who was the coach?

**LDS:** J. Y. Allen. They called him "Doorknob".

**MD:** Yeah, "Doorknob" Allen. And where did you play, where was the field?

**LDS:** The field was in the old baseball park. The best I can remember, the baseball park was located along about where the highway is now, opposite the old bank building, the old Diboll State Bank.

**MD:** Did you have dressing rooms?

**LDS:** We had a one room shack, about 14 x 14, no lockers, one shower, two long benches to sit on. That was all we had. You put your clothes on the wall on a nail. That was on the school yard and we had to walk all the way to the ball field.

**MD:** Who were the referees? Do you remember anything about the referees?

**LDS:** No, they may have had someone in Diboll, but most of the time it is just like it is now, from some other place.

**MD:** Who did you all play? What towns, what other schools?

**LDS:** There were four teams, including us, and we played each other twice, eight games a year. Hemphill, Shelbyville, Pineland and Indian Village.

**MD:** I was noticing that in 1938 Diboll won district.

**LDS:** Yeah, we won six games and lost three.

**MD:** Did you get any kind of trophy or do you remember?

**LDS:** No. The only thing I remember getting was a pull-over sweater with a big "D" on it. That is, if you lettered that year.

**MD:** Did you have to pay for it?

**LDS:** Yeah, had to pay for it ourselves.

**MD:** Did you have to buy your uniforms or did the school pay for them?

**LDS:** No, the school furnished the uniforms. I said four teams, there were five teams. Hemphill, Shelbyville, Pineland, Indian Village and us. It would be five teams, including us. We would play each of the other teams twice.

**MD:** When you played someone else, did you ride the bus or did you go in cars?

**LDS:** Sometimes we would go in cars because there were not too many boys on the team, if they could get the cars, you know.

**MD:** Can you remember some of the boys that were on the team?

**LDS:** Yes. Probably not all of them, but there was Junior Cook, Franklin Christian, Bobby Farley, Doogan Agee (Jack Douglas), Bill Kelley, Hulen George, Eddie Shaw, Cullen Vaughn, Willie Bishop, Gary Victory, Slick Thompson, - can't remember what his name was, Elzy Thompson, and Charles Devereaux. That is all I remember.

**MD:** Do you remember Maxine Byrd writing the school song and it was the tune to "Alexander's Ragtime Band"?

**LDS:** Yes.

**MD:** I have often wished I could remember the words, but I can't.

**LDS:** Well, the best I can remember – no, that was probably another one. I was thinking about "Diboll will shine tonight". That was for basketball, I believe.

**MD:** Well, there weren't many towns around that had football, this six man football –

**LDS:** It was something new, it was for smaller schools. Of course, Lufkin had eleven man for a long time, I guess.

**MD:** Do you remember any incidents that happened or anything that happened while you all were playing ball?

**LDS:** No, not really.

**MD:** But this was something different, it kind of livened up the school spirit, didn't it? Don't you think?

**LDS:** Yes, it surely did.

**MD:** What other sports did you have?

**LDS:** Well, we had baseball, basketball. When I was in high school they had tennis and track and field.

**MD:** In tennis, did you play other towns?

**LDS:** Yes, in 1933 or 1934 when Roosevelt came out with the CCC and the WPA, all those different projects, they had a deal at school that the students could work after school, building sport things and the government would pay you. It wasn't much. We built a tennis court up by the agriculture building, it was kind of right at the fence there where you came over the school yard fence. It was made out of clay. We built two courts. I worked on it and Orville Donahue worked on it. I don't remember anyone else but there were several of them.

**MD:** Oh yes, I had forgotten that. Well, now they had a basketball court.

**LDS:** The first one that I remember was down where we went to kindergarten. It was the YMCA Building is what it was. It was under a shed all right, but it was open on the sides. Then there was a school building that burned between the old auditorium and the study hall and they cleaned that off and made a basketball court out of it.

**MD:** That was before they got the gymnasium?

**LDS:** Yes.

**MD:** Tell me about the kindergarten.

**LDS:** I didn't go very long. Mrs. Arthur Porter was the teacher. I think you had to pay to go to it. You would have to buy a little chair, a small chair to sit in. I guess I went about a week, and I didn't want to go anymore, so I quit and got my little chair and went home.

**MD:** You had to buy your own chair?

**LDS:** Yes. My daughter still has the little chair. It is a little small baby chair like. But I didn't go too long.

**MD:** You probably didn't get to play enough.

**LDS:** But the next year I started in the first grade.

**MD:** Where was the kindergarten located? You said it was in the YMCA?

**LDS:** Yes, they used to have wrestling matches and boxing matches there. It was down at the far end of the school yard, close to the old highway, you know, where the road was that came through Diboll and on out this way.

**MD:** Yes.

**LDS:** Back up behind that line of houses –

**MD:** Where Ed Day lived?

**LDS:** Yes. Right there is where it was. Right behind where he lived.

**MD:** For a long time seems like there was a lot of plays that the high school put on. When you were in high school did they put on a lot?

**LDS:** Yes, they had a lot of them, but I only remember one that I was in. The name of it was "She will be coming around the mountain". That is the only one I remember. I believe I was a senior that year.

**MD:** But they would draw big crowds, wouldn't they? Everybody came.

**LDS:** Oh yes, it would be full. The best I can remember, they would have it in the afternoon for the students and then they would have one at night for the town people.

**MD:** And then you went in the service after you got out of high school?

**LDS:** Yes. I left December, 1939. I stayed in Houston three days, spent New Year's down there and then they swore us in and sent us to San Antonio.

**MD:** When you came back and was out of the service, did you start working for the company then?

**LDS:** Yes, I didn't want to, but I had to.

**MD:** Well, that is pretty true.

**LDS:** Margie and I got married while I was still in the service. I was in Tucson just before I got out. She was living in what they call those Red Town houses. When I got out that is where we lived and it belonged to the Company. But I didn't intend to go to work until all my mustering – out pay played out. They told me I was going to have to move because I didn't work for the Company. I said, "What if I go to work"? They said, "Well, you can stay". So I had to go to work. I went to work at the planer, the first job I ever had with them, feeding the hog, putting those big old strips in the hog.

**MD:** Now what was the "Hog"?

**LDS:** It was a bunch of big old knives and it would chew it up. It would make chips and sawdust, they would burn it for fuel. That didn't last too long either. I worked for old man Joe Young. I worked for him like I worked in the Army. I would leave fifteen minutes to twelve and come back fifteen minutes after one. He told me he didn't think he needed me any more. I went to stacking lumber down in the lumber sheds after that. Then daddy got sick and I went to pressing clothes over at the shop. I quit the company and pressed clothes for him about three years. Then I went back, then I went back to working for the Company, driving a truck.

**MD:** And you stayed with that all the rest of the time?

**LDS:** Yes.

**MD:** What did you haul and where would your trips be?

**LDS:** When I first started driving, it was mostly just all over Texas. Then they began to branch out later on. Everything was loaded by hand. They loaded it by hand and unloaded it by hand, too. Whenever you got to a yard, it would take all day to get unloaded. As things progressed, they packaged the lumber and loaded with lifts. They would unload it

with lifts, which didn't take long. We hauled nearly everywhere except the far west and the Northwest. We hauled all over the south, far over as New Mexico, Oklahoma and Kansas, Nebraska. I have hauled to Maine and Vermont, but that didn't come too often. They had a pretty big territory they covered.

**MD:** When you first started hauling, what did you haul?

**LDS:** Just lumber. They didn't have any plywood or particle board then. It wasn't too long after I started that they put in a treating plant, or it may have already been there. They made poles and we hauled poles and posts.

**MD:** And then after they put in the new plants, you started hauling all of that?

**LDS:** Yes. That is when trucking picked up. When I first started they hauled a lot by rail. They would load lumber at the planer in the box car. I doubt if there is very little they haul by rail now. Once in a while they will load some on flat cars where they can load it with a lift. All of it is trucked now by trucks.

**MD:** Do you remember what year you started driving trucks?

**LDS:** I started, they had three trucks and that is how I got a job. They put two new trucks on. They had Bill Jones, Carter Strickland and someone else and they put two more on and that is when I went to driving. They built that ammunition Box Factory along about that time, too. We hauled ammunition boxes to Texarkana. That played out eventually.

**MD:** Oh, they made those over here?

**LDS:** Yes. They had an ammunition Box Factory, up by the Treating Plant.

**MD:** I knew the old Box Factory burned down.

**LDS:** Oh yes. The old Box Factory was on the other side of town. They made all kinds of crates, I guess.

**MD:** What year did you retire, L. D.?

**LDS:** I retired in January, 1984.

**MD:** How many trucks did they have when you retired?

**LDS:** Oh, at one time, they had a lot of them, back in the late sixties and early seventies. At one time they had about thirty some trailers and about fifteen or twenty trucks, small Chevrolet trucks. Later on they went to cutting them out. I think there was about 9, 10 or 11, something about like that by the time I quit. I can't remember exactly. But they do not have that many now. Everybody comes in and hauls from here now.

**MD:** They bring their own trucks in?

**LDS:** Yes. There are a lot of them that contract – certain truck lines. I guess the reason they keep what they have is that contractors couldn't get in there at a certain time, they could get it hauled.

**MD:** Did you haul to retail outlets?

**LDS:** Yes and job sites. It was mostly retail outlets.

**MD:** Did the Company have their own mechanic shops to work on the trucks?

**LDS:** Yes.

**MD:** What happened if you had trouble on the road?

**LDS:** You would just have to get it fixed on the road. Used to, we would carry a purchase order with us. Everybody wouldn't honor that, you know. Sometimes they would have to wire you the money to pay for it or you could get credit at some places. But now they give you money to take with you. If it is more than that, then they wire you the money.

**MD:** Did you ever have any bad accidents on the road?

**LDS:** Had one but I wasn't driving. We were driving double. Robert Perry was with me. I was going to sleep and I told him if he got sleepy to wake me up. He got sleep and didn't wake me up and he ran into another truck, the back of it. That is the only one I remember.

**MD:** Did you break down very much?

**LDS:** Yes, when we had the small Chevrolet trucks, but after they got the diesels, not too much trouble with them. I drove a Chevrolet so long that I thought that was the only truck they made. I was proud to get one of those big trucks. It had a sleeper on it. You could lay down and go to sleep.

**MD:** And sometimes you did drive double on long trips?

**LDS:** Yes. In the little Chevrolets, you would just have to lay down in the seat. Of course, you couldn't stretch out.

**MD:** After you unloaded, would you bring something back or would you come back empty?

**LDS:** No, we would always come back empty. But now they have combined Diboll, Pineland and West Memphis. They are all dispatched right out of Diboll. They back haul

from everywhere now. Maybe a Diboll truck will pick up something in Pineland and take it somewhere and West Memphis will pick up here and take some where. They would pick up in West Memphis and take to Pineland. They are all dispatched from right here in Diboll. All three places. There are quite a few pretty good truck lines.

**MD:** When you got somewhere, you didn't have to help unload, did you?

**LDS:** No, that is one thing they did not require of us. But they always told us if that yard, most times they would unload it, but some of them would want you to help. They told us if they insisted on it to go ahead and help them unload and they would reimburse us for whatever time. But mostly we would sleep while they were unloading. But now since they have lifts it doesn't make any difference. They unload with those lifts in fifteen or twenty minutes and you are gone. But when they unloaded by hand, you would be there all day.

**MD:** L. D., since you have lived here so long, tell me some of the changes you have seen.

**LDS:** I have seen the mill go from a steam operated one to a modern electric mill. Back then the Company owned all the houses, but now they would let you buy your own home. I bought mine – three bedrooms, living room, dining room, kitchen, family room, bathroom for \$2,800.00 and paid for it just like I was paying rent each month.

**MD:** When did you buy that? Do you remember what year?

**LDS:** About 1954 or 1955.

**MD:** This was not the one you are living in now, is it?

**LDS:** The house I bought was kind of catty-cornered across the street from Dr. Eddins Office, on what I guess they call the Loop now, Loop 287. But they would let you pay for it just like you would be paying rent all the time which wasn't much. They would hold it out of your check, no interest, no nothing.

**MD:** Oh, no interest?

**LDS:** No interest, no nothing. I bought it for \$2,800.00 and sold it for \$9,000.00.

**MD:** Well, you did pretty good on that.

**LDS:** They didn't have any street lights. No indoor toilets, no hot running water, they went from steam engines to diesels on the TSE. There have been a lot of changes. I have seen them build the handle factory, ammunition box factory, the plywood, fiberboard, particle board. But before, it was just a sawmill.

**MD:** They just made lumber.

**LDS:** Yes, made lumber.

**MD:** Do you think the changes have been good for Diboll?

**LDS:** Oh yes, Mr. Temple has done wonders with this town.

**MD:** Do you think that if he had not come in, do you think it would still be a sawmill or gone by the wayside like so many others?

**LDS:** It probably would have still been a mill, might not have been as good because he is a fine fellow, he is strictly for the people of Diboll. He wanted to do for them everything he could.

**MD:** L. D., why do you think that Diboll never went union?

**LDS:** Well, mainly the Temples were always so good to them. They would give them every advantage they could. A union wouldn't have helped them a bit in the world, only maybe wages. But the wages went up, everything else would go up. That is the reason it never did go union on account they were good to them, did everything they could for them. I know I never did want a union. I guess that is the reason. Everybody else didn't want it either. It never did go union. People just quit coming here to try to get it union, organized.

**MD:** L. D., I know that you have been interested in genealogy for along time. How did you get interested in this?

**LDS:** Well, when daddy died in 1968, I found out that I only knew my Grandpa Smith and Grandpa Boren, but nobody beyond them, and I had never asked him. I was talking to my sister one day that I would just like to know where all of my people came from. That is when she told me they had genealogy at the Kurth Library and we would go over there and look and see what we could find. Sure enough we found – from 1968 – I have been doing it since 1968. I know my second Great Grandfather Smith and my second Great Grandfather Hemphill, that would be on daddy's mother's side. I know my third Great Grandfather on mama's side, the Borens, and a Great Grandfather on her side, the Lowerys, and I found out that he was in the Texas Revolution. I got him a Texas Historical Grave Marker. My Great, Great Grandfather Boren was in the Civil War. My Great, Great Grandfather Hemphill was in the Civil War and my third Great Grandfather English was in the American Revolution, which is the same man that is my wife's third Great Grandfather.

**MD:** That is really something.

**LDS:** My Great Grandfather Lowery was in the Cherokee Indian war, too. It is the most satisfying hobby I have ever had in my life. It just gives you a good feeling to know where everybody came from...Lowery also got a land grant.

**MD:** Where was it? Did you find out where it was located?

**LDS:** Well, it was given in Shelbyville but he could locate it anywhere he wanted to. And it was located up in Gilmer. He sold it, he didn't keep it. But it still goes by the Aaron Lowery survey. That was in 1838. That he got the land grant.

**MD:** Did he get it for fighting in the Texas Revolution? Did he get a land bounty?

**LDS:** No, it wasn't a land bounty. It was for being a citizen of Texas before 1835. If you were married you could get a league, if you were married and had children you could get a league and a labor, and if you were a single man, twenty-one years or older, I believe, you would get just a third of a league, which is a lot of land. And I have a copy of it. I found a marriage license, dated 1826. My Great Grandfather Boren was married in 1828 and I have a copy of it. It is so interesting that when you get started, you won't want to quit. I quit smoking one time, I stayed in the Library so long.

**MD:** Maybe that is a good way to get people to stop smoking.

**LDS:** It is real interesting. I find some people, they don't care about it, even some of my own family don't care about it. Of course, Vivian does. Marguerite and Joe Donald couldn't care less. It doesn't phase them a bit.

**MD:** Well, one of these days they might appreciate what you have done.

**LDS:** You can just keep going back and branching out and branching out. The further back there you get, the more kin folks you have. I have so many now, I couldn't half remember all of them. It is time consuming but a lot of rewards in it.

**MD:** What do you think about this project that we are doing?

**LDS:** I think it is fine. They need something like this. In working in genealogy, most everywhere you look, you find a book on towns, but there is not one on Diboll. It will be nice, maybe a hundred years from now for someone to read about it. Maybe not a hundred years, I sure wish they would, and probably will, get one started in our library – a little genealogy room off to the side, a few history books, viewing machines, and the census. I enjoy looking at the census – not just for my people but people I have known.

**END OF INTERVIEW**