

**H. EDWIN NELSON**

**Interview 151a**

**August 4, 1999 at Lufkin, Texas**

**Jonathan Gerland, Interviewer**

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**ABSTRACT:** In this interview with Jonathan Gerland, Edwin Nelson reminisces about his life in Diboll. The son of Southern Pine Lumber Company's timekeeper, Nelson talks about growing up and going to school in Diboll and Lufkin, his jobs at the planer and in the car line, and joining the Navy during World War II. He also discusses working at the Believe it or Not Café (and serving Clyde Barrow, of Bonnie and Clyde fame) and starting the first fire department in Diboll.

**Jonathan Gerland (hereafter JG):** Today is August 4, 1999. I'm Jonathan Gerland and I'm here with Mr. Edwin Nelson and we are going to do an oral history recording today. Mr. Nelson could you state your full name?

**Edwin Nelson (hereafter EN):** Yes, Hym an Edwin Nelson. I'm named after both grandfathers.

**JG:** Ok. Both your grandfathers. Could you tell us when and where you were born?

**EN:** Nacogdoches...

**JG:** In Nacogdoches.

**EN:** ...on East Main.

**JG:** Ok. Do you remember the birth date?

**EN:** August 20, 1912.

**JG:** 1912. And who were your parents, your mother and father?

**EN:** Fred and Ora Nelson, Doolittle Nelson.

**JG:** And you said you were named for both of your grandparents?

**EN:** Yes, Grandpa Nelson and Grandpa Doolittle.

**JG:** Ok. Do you remember what your father was doing in Nacogdoches when you were born?

**EN:** Yes he was working for some lumber company. He went to work for that...over there at Pollok. And we moved over there from Sutherland Mills. And he was store

manager there for a while and then he took this bookkeeping, I mean this timekeeping job here in Diboll. And we moved here in 1913.

**JG:** 1913. So you were in Pollok for just a short time, just prior to that.

**EN:** Yes.

**JG:** And then became timekeeper here for Southern Pine Lumber Company?

**EN:** Yes.

**JG:** Ok and did you go to the Diboll schools?

**EN:** Yes we went to Diboll Schools here. And we had a ...I was working at the planer and they had a fire over there and one of the buildings burned. And the old man, he thought he was putting water on that fire and he put some coal oil.

**JG:** Was that a school building?

**EN:** Yes.

**JG:** Do you recall what year that was?

**EN:** No, I don't. That was when I was working at the planer.

**JG:** You were working at the planer. Was it during the summer maybe?

**EN:** No that was uh....

**JG:** Were you out of school?

**EN:** Yes.

**JG:** You were out of school then? What do you remember of going to school at Diboll?

**EN:** I went here in second grade, come from Nacogdoches. Took the first grade there and moved down here. And old man Gaines was the Superintendent and Ossie Thompson, she was Ossie Green then, she was my teacher. She was going with Clyde Thompson, and she would put notes in a book and have me deliver them to Clyde. Then they finally got married. I was living in, I don't know whether in Seattle, Washington, or Nacogdoches or Arkansas when they got married.

**JG:** Do you remember Elodie Miles?

**EN:** Yes.

**JG:** Did you have her as your teacher?

**EN:** No, no, no.

**JG:** You were older. She just taught elementary grades didn't she?

**EN:** Yes, see I had Jewel Estes and Teenie Singleton. And then I had...I moved on out to Washington and stayed out there in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade and come back here to Jacksonville and I entered the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Then I entered the 6<sup>th</sup> grade in Nacogdoches. Then I moved, I think I went to Arkansas...no, yea I went to Arkansas and then we moved down to Nacogdoches.

**JG:** Were you moving with your family during this time? Your father had different work?

**EN:** Yes, uh-huh. And we stayed here in Nacogdoches and then...they all go here. They all gathered; they knew Daddy from the start. So they come up there every Sunday and just crowd that yard full and begging him to come back and take the timekeeping job. So they forced Mr. Strauss to call him up and to tell him he could have the job back. So we moved back to Diboll. And he enjoyed all the Mexicans and all them, the Italians and all that. They brought him cigars and brought him wine and stuff. Oh they was crazy about him.

**JG:** Why do you think they liked him so much?

**EN:** He was just good to them.

**JG:** He was just good to them.

**EN:** Yes ole Big John was the boss of all the Italians. There was Luke and Martinez and I forgot all of them. But they all moved to Houston and the last time I heard they was working down there.

**JG:** So what year did you finally come back to Diboll?

**EN:** In 1923.

**JG:** 1923. Did you finish school at Diboll?

**EN:** No ole Bear Miller crowded me out. Christian Enlow was teaching Spanish and I was taking Spanish from her. I was sitting up there and so, I didn't know it but she went and told him a bunch of junk. He came in there and he was going to jump all over me. Man he was mad. I didn't know what in the world he was talking about. He jumped trumps on me. And when he did we all quit then and went to Lufkin, Hamptom Byerly and Jack Tucker, and Kenneth and David Dial.

**JG:** Kenneth was your brother?

**EN:** Yes, and David Dial and so mebody else, we all went to Lufkin. I'd bring 'em back and forth in the old Willis. Course at night every time it would fog that distributor would go dead on us. And we put up with that a year or two. Then we was coming back it started raining up there about where thang-a- ma-doo lived. And we all got out and went running in the rain. He told us to come in his house so we stayed in there until it slacked up.

**JG:** This is when you were commuting back and forth to school. So you and these other fellows you mentioned would drive every day to Lufkin?

**EN:** Yes. I played baseball on Lufkin's team until Ned Shands, he kinda caused trouble there. And Coach Kellam he said, "You go take a shower." So I just went on home. I didn't go back any more.

**JG:** Did you graduate from Lufkin High School?

**EN:** Yes, 1931.

**JG:** In 1931. Well what do you remember of those years as far as the Depression?

**EN:** Well I was in the first World War I Depression. And we had brown sugar and whole wheat bread. But some of that was just old black bread and mostly cornbread. And we all suffered through that. Then there was the sugar and stuff stored up over there and it would rain and all on it and poor old boys didn't get to enjoy it either.

**JG:** Now was this during World War I that you are talking about?

**EN:** Yes World War I. Then the Depression, I was...Kenneth and I and all of us were going to Lufkin on (unintelligible) when the depression started. So I told them that morning, I went by and told Daddy and them I said, "Y'all better sell." I said "the stock market is gonna crash today." And they didn't believe me. So I come back and man they was a sick bunch. They had lost their money and lost their health and things.

**JG:** Why did you think the market was going to crash?

**EN:** It just told me right then...

**JG:** You just knew.

**EN:** ...and I remembered it. And I told them they better sell today and they didn't believe me. So now in 1999 that woman predicted way up there in New Jersey and all, she sent me that and she is a psychic. And she says that the stock market is going to crash and be a way worse than in 1929.

**JG:** What did you do after you graduated from high school?

**EN:** Oh, I worked out at the mill, Mill 2 over there. I worked when Arthur's daddy was having a hard time trying to make a living. I worked for sixteen and two-thirds cents an hour, ten hours a day. It was hard. And then Mary's uncle, he was foreman, and he come by and said...didn't want us to even take a drink. I was out there trying to blow my nose, that old sweet gum, dried sweet gum and get in the dust, so I was out there blowing my nose and Dewey said, "You better get back on the job." And I said, "No I'm gone." And after that he put 5 men on that job trying to tail that edger and couldn't do it.

**JG:** When did you get married?

**EN:** I married in 1936.

**JG:** 1936.

**EN:** The centennial.

**JG:** The centennial.

**EN:** I went to Dallas on my honeymoon.

**JG:** And who did you marry?

**EN:** Mary Smith, Mary Gertrude Smith.

**JG:** Mary Gertrude Smith.

**EN:** We went together 4 years before we married.

**JG:** Where did you meet her?

**EN:** She come by the house and Mom ma told me, said that is a nice girl for you to get. So we met on July the 4<sup>th</sup>. We had our first meeting and from then on we went together for 4 years.

**JG:** She was from Diboll?

**EN:** Yes she graduated from Lufkin, I mean from Diboll High. She was valedictorian.

**JG:** So how long did you work at Mill No. 2 during the '30's?

**EN:** I didn't work too long with Dewey and them on hardwood. He didn't want me to take a drink and all so I quite right quick. I worked I guess about 6 months there. And then I went on down to the car line there and went to work for Mary's other Uncle Jeff Jayroe. And I worked there and then when Jeff, he got sick and all and died, I went to

work for Bruce Christian. Bruce Christian put me out on the send in. And we was picking up flooring. And that big strong looking colored fellow, he was a young fellow - he and I worked together, Ace Tolbert, and he kinda looked after me. And then all them old fellows, the colored fellows that had been on the job a long time, they knew I'd burn out about 2 o'clock. But they all come around and helped me. They told me what to do. And I worked out there for years until my daddy got sick and everything, pneumonia and everything. And they put me in there in the time office. I was running the time office. Reggie Rutland, old man Rutland's nephew was helping me. And I asked old man Rutland for a raise and he said he wasn't paying me but \$50 and I was working about 70 hours a week. I told him "Uncle Bud" I said, "if you don't you're going to regret it." He said, "Oh Reggie knows more about the job than you do." I said "No Uncle Bud I was raised on the job." And so it wasn't too long until Reggie took a running fit. And he just didn't know what to do. And it was all on account of a few little 'ole cents the social security was off. And I was hunting that social security. And I said "Uncle Bud what do you think about that now?" He said, "Edwin you was right." So I held it down by myself and Vivian Smith worked over in the ladies department. She come over there and helped me, that is the only thing that saved me. And then Noah Horn went to work in there and my sister-in-law they went to work in there and helped me. Then about that time Mr. Temple he had Calvin Lawrence that they was putting all kind of balance budgets together. And he owed Calvin so he had Calvin... Calvin quit over at Hemphill and went clean out to New Mexico and tried to have a butane business and all that. So he went broke. And he come back there and asked old man Temple for a job. And old man Temple put him in there as timekeeper over me. And man I had hell with him. And Noah did too.

**JG:** So you were in the main office as timekeeper?

**EN:** Oh yes and poor old Noah, he went into the Navy. He said I'm not going to stand this. So Noah went into the Navy and I went up there and he told Wes, they ask all kind of questions. He said, "You go on back home and be drafted. You'll be just as well off." And then I tried the Air Corps, and tried the Navy again. Then I went down to Houston and spent a half a day in the recruiting Army office. And he asked me all kind of questions. He said "you go back home and be drafted," said, "you'll be all right." So I come on back and was satisfied then. So I waited and I went by the recruiting office, not recruiting but the old, where you're drafted. And she says "I'm gonna make out your draft notice next month." I said "all right." So I waited and she didn't make it out. So she strung me along about a year like that. Then one day I went by there and I said, "you got my papers ready?" And she said, "no I'm making them out right now." I said "Well hand them to me." I asked her "Who else is going to be drafted?" She said "That Bell boy at Diboll and Aden Johnson and all." So I went on there and told them boys said "Y'all going to get your papers tomorrow." And man it scared them half to death. Aden said, "I want to go in there where my brother was in the Army." And I said, "no Aden you are going to be with us." So we went up to the recruiting office there and that fellow Hanson, he asked me all kind of questions and I put down Army finance first. He said well we don't need that. He said the Army might need you pretty bad but we need you worse. So he stamped Navy all over my papers. And then he asked Aden Johnson said, "you want

to be in the Navy?” He said, “No I want to be in there where my brother was.” He said, “well I’ll give you time to think it over.” He said, “Well you’ve had time to think it over” and he stamped Navy all over it.

**JG:** He stamped Navy, so he went to the Navy.

**EN:** Yes, Aden and I went in together and we came out together.

**JG:** I want to go back just a little bit. Do you remember the day that Diboll got the news that T.L.L. Temple died?

**EN:** I was over there then delivering papers. And...

**JG:** Over where?

**EN:** Over at the library, where CISC is now.

**JG:** Where did he die?

**EN:** He died in the library.

**JG:** Uncle Tom, T.L.L. did?

**EN:** Yes, Archie Carrier brought him back from Houston. He was sick and all then. And Archie Carrier didn’t want to wait on him any more. And...

**JG:** No I’m talking about the founder of the city, T.L.L. Sr. Is that who your talking about?

**EN:** No that is T.L.L. Jr.

**JG:** No I’m talking about Sr., Uncle Tom?

**EN:** Oh you mean when I met him?

**JG:** Well didn’t he die about 1935?

**EG:** No, no, I don’t think so.

**JG:** I think that is when he died. I was wondering if you remembered, you know I was just wanting to know since you lived during that time maybe what the town’s reactions were when they received the news that he died.

**EN:** It wasn’t nothing. They didn’t understand it. Uncle Tom used to come out and go all around and see everybody, shake hands with them. He would come up this header to the send in. And I’d be right there waiting on my buggy and he’d shake hands with me and

all and then go on around. He knew who I was on account my daddy worked for him so long.

And he visited everybody then he would come on back around.

**JG:** Tell me about the Believe it or Not Café.

**EN:** Well, Luke Phillips married my daddy's niece. And he come there and he was a famous cook from Jacksonville. And he wanted to have the café so we built it for him.

**JG:** We being who?

**EN:** My daddy.

**JG:** Your dad.

**EN:** Yes, so we built it for him.

**JG:** Do you remember what year that was?

**EN:** I believe that was 19....along about 1929 I believe or somewhere along.

**JG:** '29.

**EN:** Anyway, he run it a while and then he left. And then...

**JG:** And that was Luke Phillips that left? And where was he from?

**EN:** Jacksonville.

**JG:** Texas?

**EN:** Uh-huh. And that other boy I forgot his name. He had a sister that had leukemia or something or another. And he run it a while and then he quit. Then we had a fellow, I forgot his name. Anyway, he was tied up with the court over them people that come there and robbed me. Anyway, that old Clyde Barrow and that gal...

**JG:** Bonnie?

**EN:** Yes.

**JG:** Bonnie Parker?

**EN:** Yes they appeared there one night and everybody disappeared out of that café. And I didn't know it. I was playing the old Atwater Kent. I had that Atwater Kent program on. They was...Clyde...lets see what's his, Clyde...

**JG:** Clyde Barrow?

**EG:** Yes. Anyway he explained to Raymond Hamilton about how this short wave worked. I had it on short wave. And they was telling about the break over there.

**JG:** So Bonnie and Clyde came to the café?

**EN:** Yes.

**JG:** About what year?

**EN:** Let me see that was right after I graduated I think. That would be about 1932 or...yea '32.

**JG:** And you were listening to the radio when they came in?

**EN:** Uh-huh.

**JG:** What did you normally do there at the café?

**EN:** I helped cook and everything.

**JG:** You helped cook?

**EN:** Yes, and wait on tables and things.

**JG:** Ok, so you were listening to the radio when they came in.

**EN:** Yes.

**JG:** Did anybody recognize them?

**EN:** Yes. All them boys never...sit there, and there was their picture on the paper. So he just reading there, and he saw them and he just got up and eased out. So they watched him. So all them niggers in the back was sitting there they saw him and recognized him. So they moved out. I didn't know nothing about it.

**JG:** So the blacks were in the café too?

**EN:** Yes. I went around there and they finally told me. I ask E.C. Cloud, I said, "What is the matter, who is that?" He said, "That is Raymond Hamilton and Clyde Barrow." Said, "I don't know whether they got Bonnie in the car or not." They had left it running. It was an old Chrysler car. It made a loud noise. So I didn't know it, they was parked down here on the creek out there.

**JG:** White Oak Creek?

**EN:** Yes, right in Diboll there. And they stayed there two or three days – had old E.C. Cloud, they knew him, spoke to him and all. So that rascal said I gotta go home and punch my beard. All right he had to come down here and wait on them and see what they wanted. And then they robbed Mrs. Ella one night and robbed my café and cleaned me out. And he give it to Clyde and Bonnie. I didn't know it at the time.

**JG:** Who did that?

**EN:** E.C. Cloud. See they knew him and he was helping me run it.

**JG:** Was he from Diboll?

**EN:** No he was from Corsicana and they knew him up there some way. Anyway I never did know the connection. But during this raid the Warner boy was standing there behind the door. He was a little old kid and he come down to get some hamburgers for some of them and he was standing, hid behind the door and I didn't know it. So all the time they was in there he was hid behind the door. So after it was over he was telling me about it. He was hid behind the door and all.

**JG:** Who was that? The Warner boy?

**EN:** Yes the Warner boy.

**JG:** Do you remember his name?

**EN:** Let's see there was Marvin and Doug...

**JG:** Is that any kin to Richard Warner?

**EN:** No Richard Warner was different ones. He was kin to the Ryan's and all.

**JG:** Ok. Where was the café? Where was it located? I think Lee Estes's garage was there kinda beside it wasn't it?

**EN:** Yes, we was right by (unintelligible) garage. And then we had the golf tournament just on the other side of it. That was all woods over there then.

**JG:** The golf, was that miniature golf?

**EN:** Uh-huh.

**JG:** And that was behind the store?

**EN:** No, that was on up past the café. We had it out there.

**JG:** Ok. So the café was on this side of the highway down the road a little ways from where we are now at the library. Is that correct?

**EN:** Yes over yonder.

**JG:** It wasn't where the highway is today but the other highway, old 35.

**EN:** Old 35. And we was right on it. And we was hauling cotton to Galveston then and them trucks were running all night. Those Model T's and Model A's and all. And they had hard times then. See we sold a complete meal for 35 cents. And many people had plenty to eat then but that is all...

**JG:** When did the café close? What became of the café?

**EN:** Mr. Bush and his family run it a while. I forgot somebody else. And finally they took it over and made a dwelling house out of it.

**JG:** Made a dwelling house out of it.

**EN:** Uh-huh.

**JG:** You were mentioning the blacks were eating there. How many...was that common?

**EN:** Yes, uh-huh.

**JG:** Was that the only eating-place in town, in Diboll?

**EN:** Yes, see the whites was in the front and the blacks was in the back. They had a special place for them. And...

**JG:** Were there any other cafes in Diboll during that time?

**EN:** No. Before then there was one right across the railroad track called The Green Lantern. That was a pretty nice café then. They didn't stay in business long.

**JG:** Was that run by the company? Or was that someone's business?

**EN:** No the company didn't run it.

**JG:** The Green Lantern. I think I remember reading something about you tearing down the Beanery, the old boarding house. Tell me about that.

**EN:** Yes. Ed Jr. and I...

**JG:** Ed who?

**EN:** Ed Steed Jr.

**JG:** Ed Steed Jr.

**EN:** Uh-huh. He and I worked on it. And my hands would be so swollen so I couldn't even blow with my hands from tearing them windows and things out.

**JG:** Was this while you were in school?

**EN:** No it was in the summer time.

**JG:** In the summer time. But were you school age? Or were you already out of school?

**EN:** I might have still been in school. That was in...

**JG:** You graduated in '31 you said?

**EN:** Yes, uh-huh. Right in there some place is when we tore the old Beanery down. In other words Wes Ashworth and all of them took the old tin off of it. And we tore the rest of it down. And that man was just paying me a dollar a day for nine hours. And I said well I can't stand it too much, I said my hands are swelling. So I went on out and went work to for Mr. Jayroe on the car line.

**JG:** On the car line. Making railroad cars?

**EN:** No, that's a Southern Pacific....Southern Pine Lumber Company. That is the car line where they got all the cars tracked and the men would put lumber in each one of them.

**JG:** Oh loading the railroad cars. Ok. Where was the beanery?

**EN:** It was right on down from the Star Hotel and then the Beanery was on down here.

**JG:** Ok. Tell me where the Star Hotel was?

**EN:** It was right across from the library, right across there.

**JG:** Ok, so the building that is there now, the Christian Information Service Center?

**EN:** That was Mr. Temple's library. That is where he always stayed.

**JG:** The Star Hotel was right across the street – across the railroad from that.

**EN:** Yes, they run it, I forgot how long they run it. And then Mr. Temple opened up the Antlers.

**JG:** The Antlers. Tell me about the Antlers, what do you remember of the Antlers Hotel?

**EN:** Well old man Cammack he had a nice place.

**JG:** Where was he from?

**EN:** I don't know. I don't remember now. But he had birds and everything stuffed around in there. He had it just natural. They built it out of logs and things but they didn't treat them with nothing. So the weevils and all got in them.

**JG:** Termites?

**EN:** Uh-huh. And destroyed it. Then they tried to tear it down but it was built so they couldn't tear it. So Ewell Brown said, "well all we got to do is just burn it up." So they set a fire and burned it.

**JG:** Do you remember who burned it? Was Mr. Temple, Arthur Temple, Jr.? Was he involved in burning it?

**EN:** I don't know whether he was in there or not, but Jewel Brown set it afire.

**JG:** Jewel Brown set it a fire.

**EN:** Jewel is dead now.

**JG:** Ok. What do you remember...did you eat there a lot?

**EN:** No, I didn't.

**JG:** We've got a photograph that shows you and the fire department standing out in front of the truck.

**EN:** I was chief of the fire department.

**JG:** You were chief of the fire department. Tell me about that and when...was that the first fire department?

**EN:** Yes, uh-huh.

**JG:** When did that organize?

**EN:** We had a homemade truck. Mr. Temple...I was in the time office and Mr. Temple came in there and said he wanted to establish a fire department. And he asked me, said, "Can you take charge." And I said, "Yes." And I don't remember who else was with me. Anyway Noah he wasn't there, I mean he wouldn't take it. So I had Ed Strickland and

Garvey Walker and all those. Jim Fuller and all them who was in the men's department store, he run that. And then they all helped me. Edgar Austin, Frank Austin and James Willey.

**JG:** This is Arthur Temple, Sr. who you are talking about, Mr. Temple?

**EN:** No, Arthur Jr.

**JG:** Arthur's dad? Oh Arthur Jr.

**EN:** Uh-huh. Mr. Temple from over at Pineland, he was here then. He was manager.

**JG:** Henry Temple.

**EN:** Yes. Henry had a false alarm over there. Made a flag nailed up on the building. I was up at the handle factory then. We had them little old buggies we pulled. And we were the first ones over there. Mr. Temple made a note of it. And you see when I moved up to the handle factory as bookkeeper, Wilbur Fogg and Berniece Hines said, "oh you ain't got no business being head of the department." So they took it away from me. All right I was satisfied. I went on. They had Rat Johnson in the fire department. All right and then the house next door to the handle factory office caught fire. So my crew went over there and had the hoses on it and everything before anybody else got there. And then one of the two men, colored men that worked in my fire department they went in the Navy. And I didn't know it, where they went. So I was in the Navy office there and I was in the pay office there. And they said a couple of colored men wanted to see me. And I went up there and there both of them was. Oh they was glad to see me. So I kept in contact with them and then when one of them, the largest one died, he died with kidney trouble. They didn't see after him right. The other one he made a famous cook. He had books there from Greece and everything kinda cooking. He made a good cook. I went by there one night, I was on guard duty, and I told him I said, "I don't have nothing to eat." He said, "alright I'll make you a big sandwich." And he made it and man I had plenty to eat. And then I went over around the bakery and the boys from Lufkin there they was down there at the bakery. And they give me a whole bunch of donuts in a big old thing. So I was around all them night fire plug watches and I give one of them boys some donuts. Alright so when I finally went back around they said, "we got to go have a drink" said, "we about starved." Clyde let every one of them off and go get a drink. And I had to stand in their place.

**JG:** Well what, after you finished up your military service in World War II, when did you come home?

**EN:** I come home as soon as I got discharged. And old man White wanted me to go back to work.

**JG:** What year was that?

**EN:** 1946.

**JG:** Ok. The fire department, was that before the war?

**EN:** Yes.

**JG:** The fire department was all before the war.

**EN:** Yes, you know, I asked Mr. White and them to give me some money. No, no they wouldn't put a darn nickel out of it. So I sent and ask Stubby Offenhauser in Texarkana, and I told them I said, "I want to handle the fire department down here." They was carrying all the insurance for Southern Pine and Temple White and all of them.

**JG:** So what you are talking about now is after the war?

**EN:** Uh-huh.

**JG:** Ok. So you were trying to get....

**EN:** No before the war.

**JG:** Oh ok.

**EN:** So Josh Morris, he sent me \$25. So we bought us some shirts and things all then and some badges. We had our own...we paid for our own department. We credited him. And old Josh didn't send me anything.

**JG:** And who was Josh?

**END OF SIDE ONE**

**JG:** Ok, who was Josh?

**EN:** Josh Morris was head of the Offenhauser Insurance Company.

**JG:** In Texarkana?

**EN:** Uh-huh. They carried all the insurance on the company and the subdivisions.

**JG:** Ok. And that was all before the war?

**EN:** Uh-huh.

**JG:** Do you remember approximately what date, what year that might have started, the fire department?

**EN:** Oh we started just...when they come out with all these fire carts you had on there and different things the fire department made you...if you had a chemical fire it showed you how to do. So when I had all that I put all those signs in the plant and had them painted red and all. The old man and them they didn't agree with it at first. But they was real pleased with it. So when I come back out of the Navy he told me about it. He said, "well I kinda appreciate what you done." So we had a ... I went out on the road and I told them, yes they wanted me to beg them to take the book keeping back. I said, "no I don't want it. I've had enough bookkeeping in the Navy." So they put me out as a raw material buyer. And I went out and got established and went up to Nacogdoches and I knew Uncle Charlie Williams. Uncle Charlie Williams was head of the Frost Lumber Company and I told Arthur about it and I said him and Momma and all of them was raised up at the outfit and all then. And they used to call him Silkshear Charlie.

**JG:** And that was the Frost Johnson's there in Nacogdoches?

**EN:** Yes. Uncle Charlie was store manager and everything. And then he got to be manager. And so he had took a liken to me and I told him I said, "Uncle Charlie we need to make squares and I need squares." And Uncle Charlie said "all right." So he said "Edwin we gonna make squares." So I went on down there and told Mr. White and them, I said, "I'm gonna get some squares in there." So Mr. Webber said, "I bet you a chicken-ninny you don't do it." And about that time the truck drove up with a load of squares and I said, "all right you chicken ninny."

**JG:** Now when you say squares what do you mean by that?

**EN:** That was the squares to make the broom handles out of.

**JG:** The broom handles, ok.

**EN:** So they made some and Uncle Charlie stuck to his word. And then he liked that so he asked me about Waskom, he said, "they make squares over there." I said "yes and that man that is the manager" I said, "he is pocketing the money though. He is not...the company is not making it." And Uncle Charlie said, "you check up on that for sure and let me know." I said "all right." So I went over there and interviewed him. I knew what he was doing. So he was pocketing the money. Them boys was paying him. So I said all right. So I went over to Louisiana checking on the mills over there. I went by the Shreveport office and talked to the manager there and he said, "Will you do me a favor?" Said, "I want you to go around to them mills and check up and see if that manager there is pocketing the money," he said, "I'm not getting nothing out of it." I said "all right." So I went down and saw who it was and said all right. So I asked him about making squares and all. "Oh no, no, no." So this man was making squares there right at the time. So this man finally came and started making squares for us. So I come in and found that out. I went back and told that manager I said, "he was pocketing the money." He said, "well I'm sure glad and I appreciate that." So I was getting squares from his other mill. So Mr. White and them they kinda messed up the deal and cut me out. So I went over to another lumber company way up in Louisiana. And they was making squares for me. And first

thing I know Mr. White, the bookkeeper Buddy Bush he made a mistake and sent them too much money on a check. So old man White he called me in, me and Buddy. And he said you got to go over there and see them and get that check back. I said "Mr. White you better be careful about that." I said, "they may get mad and quit." He said "No go over there." And we had to go over there and get that check right then. That man said "we quit right then." So I lost that one. And I lost one or two more and...

**JG:** And all this time you're buying squares to make the broom handles for the broom factory for Temple White.

**EN:** At one time I had this place covered up in squares. They had to quit. So they finally ended up there they couldn't get no squares. They got some other men tried the job after I quit and they couldn't get them. So they finally had to close down. So they sold out everything here.

**JG:** Just couldn't get enough stock.

**EN:** No, no, I had plenty of stock when they had me. I said if they would have followed my direction ....

**JG:** Well when did you leave?

**EN:** He fired me in...gosh let me see...anyway they tried to hire me back, come over there where I was working on clocks and jewelry and stuff and he said "don't you want to come back to work." I said "Mr. White, no I don't want to." So they had to come on and they finally just had to go broke. On account of they couldn't get squares. And man if they had followed my orders they would have really covered that place up. They almost had every man furnish him a machine and all there and it wouldn't hurt them. Furnish everything and have that man operate it and all. No they wouldn't do it. I had an old piece of machinery and all had to work with. I just had to make myself do and I lost out.

**JG:** I'm just going to ask you about a few individual people and just see what you know of them or what you remember. Jay Boren.

**EN:** Yes the company brought him here after Mr...anyway.

**JG:** So there was another law enforcement officer before Jay Boren?

**EN:** Yea, well way back there they had Darwin Singleton; he was a Texas Ranger. They had him living down yonder in the apartment house.

**JG:** And what was his name?

**EN:** Darwin Singleton.

**JG:** Singleton.

**EN:** You know them Singletons in Lufkin had that Singleton store and everything. They was all brothers and sisters and all.

**JG:** He was a Texas Ranger?

**EN:** Yea uh-huh. And they had him here as a quarter boss. And man they had to have it then. All them whites was living over in the quarters and buying whiskey and all there and doing everything you know.

**JG:** And what year was that?

**EN:** Oh way back.

**JG:** In the '20's?

**EN:** Way back there in the '20's maybe before. And Darwin...

**JG:** And the company paid Mr. Singleton?

**EN:** Yes to be quarter boss. And then after he... old man... I forgot his name. He lived right next door to me. He was quarter boss. One day I looked out he was marching them old boys that wouldn't even work. He marched up right up there and made them work. So in other words, you didn't work you didn't stay here.

**JG:** Yes.

**EN:** So they were tightening them in you know.

**JG:** When did Mr. Boren come here? Is that how you pronounce his name Boren or Bowen?

**EN:** Jay Bowen, [Boren] uh-huh Jay Bowen [Boren]. He come from San Augustine. He was a deputy over there and everything and Mr....

**JG:** Henry Temple. Did Henry Temple hire him?

**EN:** Yea Henry knew him from over there when Henry was at Pineland. And he had him over here and hired Jay. And Jay was kind of a Texas Ranger too. And he had him as quarter boss and all there. And Jay was looking after everything. And while Jay was here we had George Andrews. He came here with those grain door makers. Mr. Jackson and all them was grain door makers. And they had contracts and they made grain doors for the railroad. And George was a doggone good grain door maker and George got drunk and Jay put him in a little ole calaboose and George while he was drunk he kinda insulted Mrs. Boren and made Jay mad and he killed him right quick. Shot him right between the eyes.

**JG:** Uh. Was this person white or black?

**EN:** Black.

**JG:** Black. Do you recall what year that was?

**EN:** No I don't. I remember it; I just remember it all happened. And it was in the hot summertime and anyways Jay and I was big friends. He was in charge of the pasture and I wanted to walk all around there. And Jay told me he said, "Just go right down through there. Won't nobody bother you." He said, "just walk down there all you want to." So I was walking down through there and Jay said he would watch after me. Then he stayed around here and then Jay got sick or something or another. And Jay I think finally died up there some place and his wife finally died too.

**JG:** Now he had a little restaurant too didn't he, Mr. Boren?

**EN:** I don't think so.

**JG:** The Dairy Kream?

**EN:** He might have. Yes down here in the square.

**JG:** I had read in some of the oral history interviews that were done before, talking about Mr. Boren maybe being a little strict and maybe even...

**EN:** Well he always hung around Atm ar see. And he was getting them boys drunk or something or other and all there. He looked after that.

**JG:** How did he treat the whites and blacks? Did he treat everybody the same?

**EN:** Yes, uh-huh.

**JG:** J. Shirley Daniel. Do you remember him?

**EN:** Yes, he moved here. Henry Temple got him here. He lived over yonder in that house up there on the old highway. We'd all...all us boys going into the service we went up there and played around his house. He had some games and all for us. Mr. Temple kept him out of the Army...out of the service.

**JG:** So he came before the war?

**EN:** Yes, and he made pictures and stuff for the company. And oh he made a many a picture. And he was doing all that to keep out of the service. And me and Bobby Farley and all of us we was in service and we kinda noticed at the same time. The rest of the boys they'd go up there you know and take this test. Most of them they'd ask them

something or another and then be all out of sorts. And that is the reason they would be turned down. So they finally got to where they would keep them overnight in a hotel and check them. Jay Boren he... I mean Shirley Daniel he lived here a while and then he moved up to Lufkin. He run the Tonk over there. They had a picture show and a little place over there where them kids could dance and everything and they called it The Tonk. That is about the only place the kids went. And then there is Paul Durham and Jr. Cook and them they was all interested, them young boys. He trained them up. And then when they had the first, what do you call it the saw, the electric saw?

**JG:** The chain saw?

**EN:** The chain saw. Well Harry Nivens over yonder at the garage was Lee Estes's mechanic. He put the first one together for Shirley. So they never did say nothing about that but I put it in my book. I said he was the first one to put that thing together. And everybody had to turn out that night from the picture show to hear that noise and see what it was.

**JG:** So the saw was demonstrated in front of the picture show?

**EN:** Yes the man demonstrated to Shirley Daniels by cutting a little tree down. And then Shirley bought it.

**JG:** So they just cut a tree down right there in front of the... (laughter)

**EN:** Yes.

**JG:** What about Professor Jackson?

**EN:** Oh man you got it now. There is a history all in the ....we had printed there in the archives here some place or in the library. Professor Jackson had printed a piece and all by KTRE. They all recognized him and had a broadcast about him. And Professor Jackson come here in 1920 something. Anyway he was head of the colored band. And he had, oh I guess about 15 or 20 men here, who was in the band. And he taught band and all here. Then Professor Jackson was raised up and he was adopted by some white fellow. And he had all kind of interest in things and he had four or five of these little colored boys. He adopted them. And then they all learned to play every kind of instruments. And he was ....Professor Jackson he played with the man that invented the St. Louis blues and all that. He played with them. Then he was over in Memphis and he played over there with them. Then in side shows and he taught Harry James, a little old kid, to play the trumpet.

**JG:** That was down around Beaumont I believe.

**EN:** Yea, and then Professor Jackson died here. And he'd always bring me his watch and I'd fix it. He had a 23 jewel, uh...oh heck, wasn't Elgin it was B.W. Raymond, I

believe Raymond or anyway, I told him I said you better not give me that watch when you die. So the watch disappeared. I never did know where it went to.

**JG:** What did he do for the company?

**EN:** Oh he was a TSE [Texas South Eastern] man that checked all the cars and things. He was checker and everything and man he was clean willye too. He'd write every number down.

**JG:** Was he a yard watchman?

**EN:** Yes he would check the yard. When they would go down and get the cars and bring them up there he'd check everyone of them. And then when they had a shipment going out he would check them all.

**JG:** Where would he play piano that the white folks would hear him?

**EN:** Oh we had a little orchestra. And him and K.D. Spencer and Freedman Goldman and let's see, him and all night Jack and me. I played the saxophone. We played in the auditorium. And that was the first time any colored person had been in there. And they had kids there, the Jr. and Sr. prom or something or another there then.

**JG:** Was that an old auditorium that was built in the 20's and 30's? So you were a teenager then when you played with him?

**EN:** No I was running the café.

**JG:** You were running the café. So this would have been the early '30's?

**EN:** Yes, early '30's.

**JG:** I'm making myself a note. We found a photograph the other day of the old auditorium. I want to show it to you after while and see what you can tell me.

**EN:** Aren't there one in my book, the Cornbread Whistle?

**JG:** No, I forget where this one was but it was ...showed the library. It being in the old auditorium, a school library. Anyways we will get that out and let you comment on that and see. We weren't really sure exactly what it was.

**EN:** Upstairs was the lodge hall – The Woodmen of the World.

**JG:** What about KSPL radio? When was that? When did that start?

**EN:** They come here....way back there in the early '30's somewhere along there. They had it down here.

**JG:** In the '30's, that far back? Even before the war?

**EN:** No it was after the war.

**JG:** After the war, KSPL. Was it after, I imagine it was after KTRE. KTRE was already going in Lufkin or was it before?

**EN:** No old man thang-a-ma-doo. His radio station was going then.

**JG:** So KTRE was already going. Kurths?

**EN:** No they wasn't, oh what was that boy that died?

**JG:** I'm not sure.

**EN:** He was head of it. He was head of KTRE and then he had something or other wrong with him and they put him in the hospital. And they gave him a shot and it killed him.

**JG:** What do you remember of the radio station? Did you listen to it often?

**EN:** Well KSPL was over here and I had a recorder. I went over there with my recorder a big old recorder. And they'd give me music and stuff and I'd sit there and play it on there and I'd record it. All them nice famous songs.

**JG:** What about Dred Devereaux? Did you ever work for Mr. Devereaux?

**EN:** No, I didn't.

**JG:** You never did work for him.

**EN:** No I always kept time for him.

**JG:** Kept time for him.

**EN:** In the time office. Dred and Paul Durham Sr. they used to kinda argue with one another. Dred come in to making his time call too and Dred would have something to say to him.

**JG:** And now Paul Durham Sr., what was he?

**EN:** He was woods foreman.

**JG:** The woods foreman. Would Dred...would Mr. Devereaux and Mr. Durham sometime borrow each other's employees?

**EN:** No, no.

**JG:** Ok.

**EN:** E.C. Durham...

**JG:** He was head of the TSE wasn't he?

**EN:** Yes. He had his private motorcar. And they got it down yonder with old #13.

**JG:** That was E.C. Durham's car?

**EN:** Yes, E.C. Durham. And Mr. Smith and them he won't finish the darn thing. And I went and told that man that worked on the TSE, I said...back down there. I told him I said, "would you do me a favor and you tell Smith to paint that car. That was Mr. Durham's private car."

**JG:** You talking about that green one that is there?

**EN:** No that old faded one with the green and yellow on it, that motorcar.

**JG:** Yes, the motorcar.

**EN:** That was Mr. Durham's private car. I remember when he come in. And he was supposed to paint it and keep it freshed up. I don't guess they even knew who it belonged to. They thought maybe Southern Pine owned it. He was just letting it go. But he should have freshened it up and make it nice and new. Of course that was Mr. Durham's private car. He would turn over in his grave if he knew they was doing it that way.

**JG:** I've got a photograph here of T.L.L. Sr. on a motorcar. Do you remember...did you ever see that motorcar?

**EN:** No, that was before my time.

**JG:** Before your time.

**EN:** Here is one of the old engines there.

**JG:** Yes, of course there is Mr. Temple there. And I don't know...

**EN:** See there is the smokestack to that one.

**JG:** Right to that train. Ok, so you don't remember that one?

**EN:** No.

**JG:** Ok.

**EN:** Look at them old big wheels. I don't know where that come from. That is way back there in 1907 somewhere along in there.

**JG:** Ok, well I think that is pretty much all I wanted to do today. We might, as we study more maybe come back and get you do to another interview if you like.

**EN:** Alright.

**TAPE STOPPED  
END OF INTERVIEW**

**INDEX**