

**BOBBY R. BAKER**

**Interview 168a**

**January 31, 2007 at The History Center**

**Becky Donahoe, Interviewer and Transcriber**

**ABSTRACT:** A 1965 graduate of Diboll High School, Bobby Baker tells interviewer Becky Donahoe of his career in public education as part of Donahoe's project of interviewing superintendents of Diboll Independent School District. Baker discusses his experiences as a life-long educator, including teaching, coaching, and administrating in East Texas public schools, including Lufkin, Diboll, Central, and Hemphill. Focusing on his Diboll years, Baker discusses a number of education subjects including student population growth as well as decline, capital improvements, campus relocation, working with school boards, evolving student population ethnicities, financial management, and standardized testing. Baker also shares biographical insight, including his Christian faith.

**Becky Donahoe:** This is Becky Donahoe and I am going to be interviewing Bobby R. Baker. He is the former Superintendent of Diboll ISD. Today's date is January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2007. Mr. Baker, first I want to ask you personally where you were born and something about your life growing up and how you got into the profession that you are in....

**Bobby R. Baker:** I was born in Angelina County and came into this world January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1947, and we stayed the majority of our time in Angelina County as far as the family. The eight Bakers, six kids and mom and dad. And we had a beautiful upbringing. We were primarily raised in a rural setting. That is where dad and mom grew up and basically we kind of migrated to the rural setting. So it is...the majority of our time.... For a couple of years...two or three years in Orange, Texas. It may have been a few more than that, and then we moved back in '53, back to Angelina County, and to Diboll and basically stayed until I graduated from High School. During that time.

**BD:** Okay. And at that point you went into ....

**BB:** At that point I went to college, of course, at Sam Houston State. Graduated from Sam Houston State and ended up assuming my first teaching and coaching duty, which was a decision that two or three people had a major influence on me as far as that, and one was, believe it or not the pastor of my church at the time, C. B. Bass. He kind of counseled with me and talked to me and he said "You know you've got a real good background in athletics so, have you thought about coaching? I know you love sports." And I said, "You know, I really have." And at that point I was coming into my senior year. And he sat and talked with me. There were really two things on my mind at the time. And I have shared this many times in my testimony. One was, "Was God calling me into the ministry full time, or something else?" And after sitting down with him several times, I finally came to grips that it was coaching and teaching. And I enjoyed....I had....I was kind of entering one year in Lufkin ISD and that was 19.... Now then I am going to be challenged with the dates. In 1970. And ended up teaching one

year, I got drafted into the service. And it kind of happened very quick in terms of turning in a grade book at the end of school and then June 4<sup>th</sup> I was on a plane going to Ft. Ord, California. But my service started there with basic and NIT at Fort Hood.... In California. And it led me on to my permanent duty station was in Arlington, Virginia. And that was being a member of the Old Guard, and to make it a little bit more concrete, was the Presidential Honor Guard for my service in the remaining days of the Army. I came back home and I think it was February whenever I was given release ...discharged. I ended up finishing out that year, March into May for a person that had been moved over to the High School as a counselor, Julian McKelvey. He was well known in Angelina County. I took Julian's place teaching of all things, Junior Business Training. Mrs. Cook would smile to this day if she heard that. But to finish that out, and they were building Jr. High East at the time and I was given a position at Jr. High East. Becky, do we just want to continue with that?

**BD:** Yes, I think this tells a lot of history within our community and all that kind of stuff. (**BB:** Okay.) I did this on purpose.

**BB:** At Jr. High East and four years there. And then in 1977, I was reassigned to a position at the High School. And that was a movement upwards to the Varsity staff at Lufkin High School. That was under Ed Collins, who was the head coach at that time. And spent two years there teaching and coaching at Lufkin High School, '77 through 1979. Then to be more explicit, it was May of 1979, I came to Diboll. I was chosen as the head coach and Athletic Director, and was also a teacher. I want to continue with that because that was a vital part of my life too at that time. And so Lufkin released me and I was allowed to come the first week in May of 1979. And that started a good run in terms of years.

**BD:** What did you teach?

**BB:** I taught....I guess, taking a look at certain cases, I taught some speech courses. I also taught... had enough hours in biology, I taught a biology class. I taught...I am trying to determine....that was basically it. I did teach some of the PE classes, split classes. I usually maintained two or three classes along with being head coach and AD, which is not too common in today's setting.

**BD:** No, it is not. That is what I wanted to point out. (**BB:** Eight years with that.) What ...Like we are 3A now, what were we back then?

**BB:** The same thing. We..

**BD:** We were 3A?

**BB:** We were fairly good size at that time.

**BD:** I was thinking maybe it was a smaller ....

**BB:** No, we had already attained enough kids in school. We were 3A classification.

**BD:** So, at this point did you think that you wanted to be a principal? Or you went back to school?

**BB:** I went back to school. In the '70s I went back and got my Masters. I worked toward my Mid-management Certification. I completed that I guess early part of the '80s. the 1980's. And then I also completed...just kept on working and completed the Superintendent Certification. It was kind of along with ...the later part of the '80s completed the Superintendent Certification, but it all tied to changes that I made in my career. And that was moving from coaching and teaching. It was really kind of .... It was half of a year that I served as Assistant Principal at the ...which was kind of a combined.. Well, it was an Elementary setting. Jr. High and Elementary setting I think we had it that a way. We had not completed the new High School at that point. And so it was still a Jr. High and Elementary setting. I was kind of thinking about the grade level at that point, what it was anyway.

**BD:** It was five through eight.

**BB:** It was five through eight. So I was Assistant finishing out part of a year and then all of the next year, which I guess was '87, '88 was the Assistant Principal in that setting. And from there I was graciously honored with being moved into probably one of the shortest stands of service as a Jr. High principal. I served about a month and a half.

**BD:** Oh, really.

**BB:** In that capacity. When Alex Alexander elected to move to Lufkin and take a position there. I was moved into the Jr. High principalship. I hired a lot of people. I remember that, and then it wasn't very long after some of the people were hired, I got a call from then superintendent, Jim Dunlap. Jim said I need for you to talk to me today if you would about becoming our new High School principal. That Mr. Greer had retired. Bill Greer. It was ... I was kind of awe-struck, because number one – following, even thinking about following in the shoes of the guy that I had admired and respected as much as Bill Greer. And then again the job itself. That was.... I had not really given a whole lot of thought, and all of a sudden I was in that thinking mode of ... "Am I really ready for this?" A guy that played a major and vital part of my life was Marvin Baker, my dad. He was all the time giving me instructions about paying your dues.... paying the price.... working up.... I never will forget those talks that we had. And so that was one of my concerns: was I really ready for that position. Prayed about it and lo and behold I was selected for that position and we were in the building process, you know, the process of building the High School, completing it. So my first year was in the old High School and then .....This is kind of an interesting...when we talk about archiving information, I love to give this part. When we moved into the new High School, we didn't call the giant movers, we didn't call....it was a community effort. We took several flat bed trailers with Mr. James Porter, who was my Assistant, helping me and we along with several

students and teachers, we moved the High School into the new High School. And it went very well. We had boxes that were packed and rooms already determined. It was amazing how easy it did go. That was very interesting. It happened. The good Lord gave us good weather when we moved.

**BD:** I have been impressed with how well the High School has stood over time because it still looks very nice with just a few flaws that show, but that has been 1990. It has been a ways for it to still look so nice. How long were you principal there?

**BB:** I was principal for five years. And at that point, really prior to that, I began to think about the Certification that I had and the years I had in education at that point, and carefully considered what I would say to a movement upwards. And even while I was in Diboll I did have a principalship offered to me that was in Waxahachie ISD. And for several reasons, I declined the position and stayed in Diboll and now I know that there is a perfect plan, God has a perfect plan in your life and that perfect plan was for me not to leave Angelina County. So I began after the fifth year, I began sending resumes to.... There were two districts in Angelina County that had superintendent openings. And was selected by one of those positions and that was in the later part of April. And then I officially accepted that position in May and that was at Central ISD.

**BD:** And then you were there?

**BB:** I was there... I guess what you would call it, five and a half years.

**BD:** I was thinking it was almost five years.

**BB:** It was kind of...When you talk about beginning situations, very unique because they were a district that all of a sudden just took off in the terms of student population. And we, in the five and a half years that I was there, the challenges were enormous in the terms of trying to find room. And we got very creative with a district committee that helped me make some big decisions to present to the Board of Trustees to build buildings. We built what was called a multi-purpose complex, a new gymnasium. We built an Ag Complex. We built an Administration Building. We did some other renovations to other rooms and added on to some of the other wings during that time to accommodate our growth that, whenever I left Central, it was in excess of five hundred students that we had gained during that period of time.

**BD:** In five years? Five hundred students.

**BB:** I would say ...It was in excess of four hundred and fifty because I think the final enrollment was a little over ... may have been about 1,690 somewhere around in there. I guess my math, right now needs to get real good with me. I would say, let's just say a little over four hundred and fifty students that we grew during that time.

**BD:** That is very unusual. Well, no it's not unusual.

**BB:** Not unusual for around here.

**BD:** And then you went to....

**BB:** It was a change that I never envisioned happening. And that was getting phone calls from a district over in Sabine County, Hemphill ISD. I had no desire to leave. In fact, I had been in Angelina County about twenty-eight years. You might say that I was very, very complacent. And I didn't want my world shaken up too much at that time, and it happened. And three phone calls later and I finally told my wife, Rosemary, I said that they had called so many times that I owed it to them to go talk to them. And it was for no reason of negative things happening in Central because it was going great. I had a board of trustees that two years prior had been one of five outstanding Board of Trustees in the State of Texas. In fact, as records proved out, it took two votes to actually be... they came in second actually...to be eliminated from getting the top spot in the State of Texas. And that was the person that served on the committee and shared that with me. So that was a tremendous achievement for the Board of Trustees. And then getting one of the ...I think one of the most interesting things that we undertook out at Central was to build an internet system. They had no... we hired a person and he ...working with some other individuals... a complete system was built. And we placed labs around in the district with the help of Temple-Inland, Temple again, the Temple Foundation, not Temple-Inland, Temple Foundation giving us some monies to make that dream happen. We were building labs, placement of labs.

**BD:** So your good reputation made Hemphill want you...(laughter)

**BB:** I don't really know, it makes you wonder, Becky, that we live our lives so that hopefully the legacy is that you care about kids and I think that saying that we were doing a lot of good things and the field representative, believe it or not, from Region VII was seeing all of that and recommended me to Hemphill. He ... the guy by the name of Jerry Melton. And Jerry told me that he had done that. And then.... They had an interim Superintendent at the time. So a visit that I thought was going to be just a visit with Hemphill ISD Board of Trustees turned into about a two hour sit and just talking education. And after that what turned into a real good interview also. I was offered a job. And I need to go ahead and say, when you make moves, you make moves a lot of times, positional moves for various reasons. And mine was my age and it was a monetary offer, so I need to be honest with that. At Central, I never asked them to match it because that was not ethical. I didn't play that as a card. I just simply prayed about it, and that it was a great contract, and I enjoyed the visit with the people, knowing that I was leaving a great Board of Trustees, plus kids and teachers and Angelina County. Getting out of my comfort zone, basically.

**BD:** And you were there?

**BB:** Two years.

**BD:** Two years.

**BB:** Two years.

**BD:** Which .... Two to four is about an average stay now days.

**BB:** I think right now there is...statistical... What they are putting out there as far as statistics now is about three years.

**BD:** Three years.

**BB:** It varies. But in two and a half or three years ... a lot of moves in the superintendency.

**BD:** There sure is. At that point then....we are looking.... What year was that then that you left and came here?

**BB:** That was in 2000. I came here in December, 2000. I came here and officially started here in January, 2001. And it was a movement back home. I might add that it played... there were some things that played into that. Again, Hemphill was a great district. Treated my wife and I very well. And from the church relationships, all throughout the community, they were just a great bunch of people. But my wife at the time was on the road traveling back to Diboll to help take care of .... And that time he was approaching 100 years of age, and that was her Granddad. And he eventually had to be put into a nursing home in Diboll. And so three days a week, she was on the road, back and forth. And thinking about safety issues and whatever else, I just told her, I said, I'll look...I will look back toward Angelina County to get us back there so you don't have to be on the road that much. And that was just giving consideration to her and what was happening in the family. And again it was a blessing that the Diboll position became open, and I applied and made the finals and interviewed. It was a great interview and ended up getting the job. Made that transition as we have stated in January, 2001.

**BD:** And uh.... Did they have an interim? I'm trying to remember.

**BB:** Yes, they did. And I have gone blank. .... Jack Darnell.

**BD:** I have too. Oh, Darnell! That's right.

**BB:** Jack Darnell was the interim. That is not an age factor whenever you remember. I had to stop for a minute and think, but it was Jack Darnell.

**BD:** Well, as you came into the District, what were some of the problems that were facing Diboll ISD at this point?

**BB:** I think at that time, it was.... the Board, I had to ask them first of all, "You talk to me." Because moving into the ... a District that you dearly love and graduated from, you wanted things to get off on the right foot. And so we identified some things. We identified some things. And it's not what you would say was a negative toward anyone,

it was just trying to improve our image in terms of where we were going as a District and part of that was a major improvement in facilities. And I hate to use the word “overlooked” because you just say that there are things that you can do when you are superintendent and you identify those. Or you best identify those. We call them “plans.” They are, I think, meshed in with what is called a “vision.” And what your vision is as a Board and a superintendent and a community, is something that community people should be included. And I look back on that to try to determine just how much we did include community, it was, I think changes that needed to be made quick and when you are in that mode, you begin ...you look at a fast track. And the fast track was number one, can we afford to do some of the facility improvements that we are talking about, and that is where you get creative and begin to look at ways to finance. And we were able to look at some creative ways. And we were fortunate enough ...that the final tally on that, Becky, to put it into perspective is from 2002 when we actually started, and it is still going on at this point, January 31, 2007. They are in the final phase, the District expended over 11 million dollars for improvements. And we really don’t need.... I think it was a mixture of classroom..... You know started out having to stop leaks, repairing roofs and then everything from the far fetches of it to the repairing of the track to the system, the internet system that needed to be upgraded. Computers, changing out some computers. General cleanup in terms of painting and those type of things. The amazing thing about it is, the first thing as I indicated, that we had to stop leaks. Some metal roofs were put on through a..... There was a federal loan that we got that was called a Qualified Zone Academy Bond, 2.3 million dollars. And we identified what we were going to do with that, in fact, that is what you had to do, you had to identify... You had to first of all meet criteria to get that loan. And we got it. And after getting notification that we got the loan, we went to work. As I stated, repairing roofs, repairing two cafeterias... In fact I think the cost on the Jr. High and Elementary campus both ran over a million dollars towards renovation. That put a quick end to the 2.3 million, but we had other things....

**BD:** But it was such an improvement. It expanded the size of the kitchens and then just redoing totally. The eating area...

**BB:** That’s right. Continuing with that .... mission of improvement, we ... did get another Qualified Zone Academy Bond. Temple helped us actually in that because there had to be a 10% in kind donation. And so.... people ... I think to this day there is still some misunderstanding.... Really understand how all of that works. In the first QZAP we got 2.3 million, that was a 10% in kind donation done in land, the present site that we have for our transportation department, was one of those pieces of land. Some land over at the Elementary Campus was given to us. There is a little bit of land here on the present site of the Jr. High where we are fairly close right now doing this interview. There was a parcel of land there. And so that helped us to carry on that dream, and that was to improve a one of the things that we did next with the Qualified Zone Academy Bonds plus a gracious Temple Foundation donation of 3.7 million dollars. Put together it was about an eight million dollar package of money that we put together to do major improvements to the campuses, building wings of classrooms. And we did get a lot of input on that. I think sometimes that people thought that was just kind of driven by my

desires and the Board of Trustees, but it was not. I think you, as being an administrator during that period of time, that teachers were included, and we made some changes. We made the package of money work again with what would benefit kids and benefit those campuses. You had improvements of parking lots, you had again, there were some computer redesign and workings in that, and then the transportation barn was included in that. It started out as, this will raise a few eyebrows. It started out as a kind of a two hundred dollar project and turned into a little over a million dollar project.

**BD:** What at the transportation...?

**BB:** The maintenance and transportation area. And there again, that was... when we talk about image, that did a lot changing our image in terms of the site that was there, the old bus barn. And putting up a beautiful complex. Not really a Taj Majal, just a beautiful complex that is a service department.

**BD:** It was just nice not having to walk in the mud.

**BB:** Correct, bus drivers and everyone else. The present administration building was a part of the second, I did mention the second QZAP note? And that was two million dollars and the 10% in kind, the major in kind donation was the building we are presently in, Administration Building. The building had a value, it was appraised at a little over seven hundred thousand dollars. We were able to purchase the building for three hundred thousand. There were very few changes inside the building, about ten or eleven thousand dollars worth of improvements and renovations to the building to make it useful for us. And so that's what took place inside that building, and that in itself put the District out front. The people with Temple Inland, in speaking to them, they had a desire for us really to get the building because it would put the District out front. It was right on Highway 59 and that occurred. It was definitely not a misappropriation of taxpayer's money. It was one of the best things that ever happened in terms of helping us through staff development, just improving the setting in what you were trying to accomplish in the District educationally.

**BD:** And then the old Administration office was turned into....

**BB:** Turned into ..... the Angelina Shared Service. They're called ...I think the sign is, they're Support. So the Special Services is what we are very careful in terms of words. That is what you call it. It is called the Special Services building. And Diboll was in a Co-op at one time with Special Education. And that dissolved and so Diboll through hiring some great people, and the management aspect moved into that building, with their own service department.

**BD:** Very much needed for sure. (Pause with recorder turned off.) Okay, Mr. Baker, as we continue, I was going to ask you.... If you would tell us what the demographics of the District were and all of that as you took over and as the years progressed.



**BB:** One of the things that I think can really draw eyes to a District whenever you look at what we call the SES factor. The poverty level of the kids. And Diboll has always had what you call Social Economic problems in terms of the poverty aspect. Again being careful to use the word “poverty” because sometimes you can have lack of money within families, but they don’t deem it as being that we are poor. It is just what God blessed us with. And the District always qualified for some Title monies because of that. And then the demographics have really changed over about a ten year period of time with the Hispanic population. And you had at that point, which was kind of a .... When you talk about unique looking at it, you had an increase of Hispanic population and a decline of the African American population. And also in white population. We are now at a point whenever I left the District, we had gotten to the point to where Hispanic minority aspect became the majority minority. Which is... I think is unique in a way, but is unusual to East Texas, in fact where our setting is, that that occurred. And that was driven .... Just happened to be a part of that, it was driven by a need of a work force within Temple, Temple-Inland.

And back whenever I was still in college and helping Dad a little bit, we built sixty homes that was..... They had acquired a federal grant and we brought down, I think it is called. It was built on what was classified as the Old Garrett Ranch area. And a lot of those homes are not there today, because you are talking several years ago. So through fires and through just whatever, being torn down.... There aren’t very many of them left. That allowed the growth of the blue collar aspect of what Temple needed. And that was a good work force. And that was a drawing card for some Hispanic families. And then it just continued to escalate from there as long as you had families that got into Angelina County, they saw the opportunity there for other jobs. But Diboll was the recipient of that growth. I think in terms of what it has done for the community, you have to look at the positive of our growth and looking from a culture standpoint, change....I think that was directly associated with the change in demographics, the fact that the District was fairly good sized at the time, but still continued to grow, but it has been a kind of an up and down situation since then. The irony of all of this, is that you would think that the District would continue to grow if you’ve got movement of a particular minority group of folks moving in, you would have growth, but we have not experienced that. We have been kind of up and down the scale. And I think as of this year, one of my questions I posed was the student population. Did we grow or did we decline? I think that this year again, 2006-07 and in ‘07 there was a decline in student population.

**BD:** So it just continues to ...

**BB:** It continues to fluctuate, right.

**BD:** But generally speaking, we are going down?

**BB:** Right now we are in a downward trend.

**BD:** In... In .... I know.... The at-risk population then is up because of the Socio-Economic condition of most of our kids.... What kind of problems does that pose in trying to meet the state standards?

**BB:** I think that you have to be.... You have to be creative. You have to have a desire to... I hate to use the phrase again because it has been used so many times, but “thinking outside the box.” One of the coined phrases we used to say. I can’t think of the other one at this time. You could not continue to do things the same way. And so you had to look at it from the programmatic standpoint of providing settings that would help students. And we began to look seriously at “Content Mastery” settings. And then pull-out time for settings. Any way to give a heads up to the kids. Always being careful with the labeling aspect because even some of our brightest kids have been labeled having problems at times. And if we have misnomers, then how we go about that may be one of them. And that’s a kid being so far out gifted that they actually are labeled as having trouble and problems. And you and I both have seen that in our educational careers where you have kids just so gifted that they are placed in the other spectrum. But its .....And those were the challenges of at-risk, meeting the needs of kids constantly and even from the standpoint of ensuring that their nutritional needs were being met, which I think has been a big change in our setting, that we began to take on more and more responsibilities of that youngster’s life. Trying to work with parents and sometimes working in settings that were difficult when you have both parents working and in just the care of the kid. So that it was always a concern with what’s happening with the student’s life. And not from the standpoint of getting very personal with them, but just knowing what is happening in their lives. So that is really the challenge for teachers, and is the challenge for administrators, all of us in terms of .... Kind of like entering a new game and knowing how to play the game. (Pause) Probably didn’t do a real good job of answering that, it is just that that is going to continue to be a problem, Becky, when dealing with kids that education is deprived at some point in their lives.

**BD:** Well, I think we need to put on the tape that ... and I can’t remember the exact percentages, but so many kids qualify as being English as a Second Language is there? Designation... and that also, I think it is what? About 40%?

**BB:** I think.... I’m like you, I can’t give that particular statistic at this point, but I think you are safe in that. And probably even higher than that. In that, of course, we have always ... what was kind of the determining factor on that was going from bi-lingual, ESL bi-lingual aspect and it was driven by your numbers. And we never reached... they may have now, being one year out I really don’t know, but the numbers may have taken us to where we have to have the total program change in meeting the needs of kids who have the language barriers.

**BD:** Financially, because you were always really good at the financial aspects of running the District, can you tell us a little about percentage that..... How we qualify, how the District manages its money with...

**BB:** I think Diboll is blessed, number one. We've had.... The way the State used to.... And that has changed a little bit in terms of the appraisal aspect. You've ended up having appraisals of the various things that are in your community with homes and businesses, those type things. And you are given a figure. This is what your total value is and then after you take everything off the top, the home values, and the things that...the additional homestead exemptions in Diboll is one of the few who still gives an additional homestead exemption. I think there may be two or three of us in the county and that is rapidly disappearing because of the needs...finances of districts. We've had...we've had the values that have always been good enough that we, through careful use of funds, we've managed. I think part of the things were within the management of that, is taking care of your people. And that is teachers, and I can say with not a puffed up attitude, that one of the things that we looked at to retain teachers was a raise in salaries. And I think that if we accomplished anything here in the tenure that I was here as superintendent, we had one of the largest raises for teachers and administrators that everyone got. And again, it took a lot of work and making the monies work. And so we were always looking at how we could bring in extra funds to finance a lot of the building principals, you included.

You are always looking at grants. Looking for that extra penny. And always a way to get and meet the needs of the teachers. I appreciated that in you guys because that was your first criteria that you a lot of times looked at. Take care of your staff and find ways for them to do the teaching in the classroom. I appreciated that and that was always a plus when we got ready for budget, that we sat down together and we looked at .... here's how we can meet the needs of the budget. And always saying, "Have we met the needs in the classroom?" That being priority number one. And at the same time, realizing that meeting the needs of the classroom, was meeting the teacher's need, the employee's needs. You know I say that with both spectrum. Teachers and employees. But it was a challenge and Diboll has been the challenges are not going away because we have had a fluctuation in values that whenever you loose a few millions of dollars and all of a sudden your values one year are up and then you have a decline. The way the funds flow from TEA, you are always running one year behind in funds. And so it is predicated on what you received in '05-'06, or '06-'07, was predicated or based on what happened in '05-'06. and it is... So you could be... have a good year '05-'06 in values and all of sudden next year have a major decline in values. And we had that to happen not once, but twice. And we had to really get creative. And creative to the standpoint of the last thing that we wanted to look at was firing personnel. A reduction in force. Because that starts a scenario that ... It is not good. And .... But sometimes it's one of those tough decisions that you have to make. So we began to.... If you remember, all of us began to look if there was a position that we could give up whenever we noticed the spiraling down of funds. Just kind of restructuring. But I think what helped us a little bit there too, was if you have a decline in student populous, then you can look at maybe eliminating a position and restructuring your people, and trying to get better with what funds you do have. Finance will continue to be ... I would say something that administrators have to look at constantly. And I think that what's got more Districts in problems have been misallocations of funds and not good use of what you have. And that's not a misallocation, I think that's just strategic planning. How you can best utilize your funds. In Diboll, I can knock on wood, we've maintained a fairly good financial

standing during that time and had a good fund balance that allowed us to look at doing some of the program changes and funding along with going out and getting grants. Having the gracious, wonderful aspect of the kind hearts of Temple and the Foundation to look at our school system and want the school system to have some great things happen. And they have, not only with the values that we have, but also with some of the funds that we have received from them.

**BD:** Do you want to make any comments about “No Child Left Behind” from the Federal level and how that affected ....?

**BB:** Tremendous challenges. I think in terms of teacher certification. The “Highly Qualified” is always going to be a challenge in terms of the use of your personnel. Ensuring that you have the best person in the classroom for the students. I think that we are finding that it had ...it had some negatives to it. And I think that it’s here and as long as present administration is there on the national level, it is just going to be something that has to be ..... And I hate to use the word, “dealt with”, but you have to work with it. I understand everything from .... You look at.... We talked about “at-risk” kids a moment ago, and you talk about the problems of kids with the testing aspect. As long as the test, TAKS, or whatever it will be called later on. Some type of an assessment is there, the challenges will always be present. How you can... You always want to be the best. You want to be an Exemplary District, because that is a drawing card. It is also kind of a proof in what you are trying to do, that the teachers are working hard. But then I turn right around and look at an even Recognized or Acceptable status with all the things that we’ve got going on today. I want to hug all of our teachers and administrators...everyone’s neck every year if we achieve Acceptable, moving toward Recognized. If we got Recognized, great! If we are moving toward Exemplary, that is outstanding. And that was always the desire that we move step by step. But I think that you can get caught up in what you want to be and trying to be, by not thinking about where you presently are. And do you have the right things in step, in place to make your goals attainable. It is all the way from the standpoint of kids. Are we doing? If that is our thinking, and I know it was in your thinking, and that was a plus for you. Are we doing everything we can for kids? That is what it’s about.

**BD:** Well, as you are enjoying retirement now, and looking back, what challenges, what are the main challenges you see for our District?

**BB:** I think the challenge is number one – commitment. When you have people in the District that are committed, and want to be a viable part of the community in all phases because it’s so .... We are so diversified in Diboll, for the very things that we offer the community. And so if you have that commitment and the visions out there happen. And I can say, I can look back, and we can use the term “legacy”. I’m not so much worried about the legacy of Bobby Baker as I am the kids that were... that I could have influenced. The people during that time and through the gracious kindness of the good Lord and prayer and whatever else, I think there were good steps made. But the things I worried about were always, “Were we doing enough for kids?” And problems and how the problems were happening. Whenever we had something that was kind of....It’s

amazing. Do you remember Conflict Resolution? Sensitivity training and all of those new phrases that entered the ... that.... Did we ... Did we achieve some of the things that we set out without hurting feelings? There is always going to be people who have hurt feelings. I guess in my old age... and I guess I am still young in that respect, but having retired I look back on.... Yeah, there were some things that I would have done differently... There really would have been, but that is what life is all about. I think that you go through those trials and tribulations a lot of times to give you a new look. That may sound crazy, but it has helped me in my life. And even, I will go on record with this, right now I am reading a book that has been on the market for awhile, Bob Bufford's called Halftime, and it is about your second life. What are you going to do in your second life? And it has really helped me, even though I have passed that age aspect of the forties and fifties where it zeroed in on that particular .... Twenty years of service, what are you going to do with that remaining part before you retire? So I have used excerpts and pieces from it to know that God has something out there for me right now. I've got good health, knock on wood, and my wife may think my mental state is deteriorating, but (laugh).... While it's.... I've got a lot of experience and I want to continue to use that in a positive way for kids. People that.... If there is a reason to try to influence someone, that's going to be provided through prayer that that opportunity comes about. But yeah, mistakes made, having kids that face difficult challenges in their life. Parents. I think that one of the things that.... I'm not trying to write a book, by the way, but I guess I have a book in me. There is one of the things.

### **TAPE STOPPED, END OF SIDE ONE**

**BB:** My thought when we hit that change in the tape was...it always puts a smile on my face, was thinking about the simplistic sometimes, when dealing with problems. That we escalate something that is kind of minor up to a major, however it is escalated, by community, by certain individuals who are involved with it. Then it becomes a problem for the administrators, the superintendent included in that. How in the world will I deal with this? I always thought about, when I had that mad parent coming in, it could be sometimes as simple as, "I didn't create this problem. Now how are you and I going to resolve this problem? Let's work together." Over that, policies....resolving. And that sounds so simple, but it is again, just a part .... When you look back and things that you could have done different, handled things just a little bit differently, simplistically...

**BD:** But I think as people remember your superintendency, you always had an open door. And you would talk to any parent who came, any teacher who came and any administrator who came. And so, I admire you for that.

**BB:** I guess that is one of the things that really hurt, when I was looking at retirement...I guess we may want to take this out of the tape.

### **END OF INTERVIEW**