

MARK SHEPHERD

BRUCE DURHAM

Interview 212a

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Patsy Colbert, Interviewer

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ABSTRACT: In this interview with Patsy Colbert, friends Mark Shepherd and Bruce Durham reminisce about their Diboll school days. As 5th graders, Shepherd and Durham experienced the racial integration of Diboll schools. They recall very few problems with integration, and as children, just accepted that it was happening. The sons of community leaders (Mark Shepherd's parents were C.H. and Margorie Shepherd; Bruce's parents were Paul and Jimmie Beth Durham), they were expected to behave in school and treat all students and teachers with respect. Both men were involved in sports and played on integrated teams from Junior High through High School. They were especially complimentary of the African American teachers that came into their lives after integration, especially Coach Porter and Mr. Massey.

Patsy Colbert (hereafter PC): Today's date is October 28th, I'm Patsy Colbert and I'm here at the History Center with Mark Shepherd and Bruce Durham and we are going to be discussing the integration of Diboll Schools and H. G. Temple Schools. Okay Mark we will just begin with you and if you will just tell me when and where you were born.

Mark Shepherd (hereafter MS): I was born in Pendleton, Oregon in 1955 and moved to Diboll when I was three years old. That would be '58-59.

PC: Okay, and tell me who your parents are.

MS: My mother is Marjorie Shepherd and my dad was C. H. Shepherd, Jr.

PC: Okay, so we are familiar with that name. Long time mayor and...

MS: Both of them are passed away now but they were longtime residents of Diboll.

PC: Yes, and great community leaders that is for sure. Okay Bruce tell me when and where you were born?

Bruce Durham (hereafter BD): I was born in El Paso, Texas December 1954.

PC: Okay, and when did you come to Diboll?

BD: When dad got out of the Army or was discharged from the Army which was roughly March of 1955.

PC: Okay, and tell me who your parents are?

BD: My dad is Paul M. Durham and my mother is Jimmie Beth Durham.

PC: Editor of the Free Press for many years, right. So tell me, y'all both came to Diboll before you started to school so you started first grade in Diboll Mark?

MS: No, I actually went to St. Cyprians through the third grade and came to Diboll in fourth, fifth, yes fourth grade.

PC: And Bruce did you start school in Diboll?

BD: In the first grade, absolutely.

PC: Now what grade were ya'll in when integration took place?

BD: I believe roughly the fifth grade if memory serves me correctly.

MS: Yes.

BD: That would be the first year.

PC: Okay, we know '65 was the year of Freedom of Choice and then fall of '68 was full integration. So, Bruce what year did you graduate?

BD: 1973.

PC: Okay and Mark?

MS: I graduated in '73 also.

PC: Okay, ya'll were classmates and school friends?

MS: We are classmates all those years.

PC: Okay. Everybody's experience with integration is unique and what we are trying to do here is just get everybody's experience whether it was good or bad. So, each of you just share with me how you came to know about integration, you know, when it first began being talked about. Did you hear about it on the news or did your parents discuss it specifically?

MS: My memories were being having it explained to me from my teachers at school that it was going to happen and that, you know, black students would be coming and it would be part of our classmates. It was not, you know, I would say a major deal or blown out of proportion. It was the way it was going to be, you know.

PC: And how did you feel about that?

MS: Well I remember kind of thinking like, “Well so what is the big deal about it?” you know. It didn’t really have a big impact on my life that I remember at that time.

PC: Bruce how did you come to know about integration?

BD: I don’t remember the exact year, ’65-66, probably ’65 but, my folks sat me down in the living room at the house and told me they said, “Here is what is going to happen. The kids from Temple School are going to start gradually”...they probably simplified it “are going to start gradually coming to school and that school will eventually close and it will take two or three years,” I remember them saying. And, they just said, “They’ll be coming over here, the school will close over there and behave.” They told me to behave. Be nice to everybody.

PC: Okay, so it definitely made a lasting impression on you because you pretty well remember it verbatim, you know.

BD: They were very serious. You know how you get talked to, your parents talk to you every now and then and sometimes they might smile a little bit you know or maybe laugh afterwards, they were deadly serious about that.

PC: Okay.

BD: I don’t recall at that age they told me about it and I don’t remember hearing anything about it through word of mouth or anything. They just sat me down and said this is what is going on.

MS: I don’t remember us having conversations about it.

BD: None whatsoever. I told Patsy we were still shooting BB guns and popping firecrackers, you know. (laughter) How aware could we be?

PC: Now, did you make new friends that you did not have when, like we have determined, your first year of integration was your sixth grade year I believe ’65-66.

MS: Yes, we definitely made new friends. We went through from that point on seventh grade for sure with these same few guys that, you know, like Clay Joshua. I remember, you know, I had a good relationship with him. I would say he was my friend. If he were here today it would be a very friendly meeting, you know.

PC: Okay.

BD: Well plus Clay Joshua was on our little league team. Were you on...we were on the Yankees, or I was on the Yankees, weren’t you in Little league?

MS: I was on Charlie’s team.

BD: Charlie Havard.

MS: Yes.

BD: And we saw for try outs when they started picking the teams, there were only four teams in those days, and we saw Clay Joshua throwing a baseball.

MS: Right.

BD: And he could hum it!

MS: Right he could pitch good, yes, I remember that.

BD: So, we got old Havard over there and we said, “Hey” we said, “We’ve been watching him and he’s good.” And Charlie went, “Okay” so he just kind of played it cool and when he started picking them he went “I’ll take Clay.” And, he was a great pitcher for us.

PC: Oh, well that is great. Now your sixth grade year would have been the first year that there were black students...they had 40 students to register during the second year of Freedom of Choice across both campuses. So do you remember having a black classmate your sixth grade year?

MS: I can’t remember sixth grade to be honest with you.

PC: That is okay. Then seventh grade and eighth grade was full integration.

MS: Eighth grade is what I remember.

PC: Now, back one more thing while we are talking about your parents. Is there anything else that you remember about how they felt about it or anything else they shared with you? They shared with you about how it was going to happen and that you need to behave, but is there anything else you remember at the dinner table at night discussing any situation or anything that went on in the community as far as your parents that you remember?

BD: I don’t remember any of that at all. I don’t remember any specific incidents at all. I don’t remember any, it just seemed like it was the way it was going to be and let’s just go forward.

PC: Okay.

MS: There was no single big event, you know, where I knew we had had a discussion about how that occurred. It was just, you know.

PC: Now, how did your fellow students feel? Were there any classmates that you had that you can remember that were negative against it or didn't want it to happen or had problems?

BD: I don't remember any of that at all. I don't remember, nothing stands out at all on that, not at all.

PC: Now, Mark you mentioned earlier about an assembly that you remember when your dad was on the school board. Share that with me.

MS: Well, I remember that an assembly was called to discuss the racial relations in the school. For the life of me can't remember any particular event that triggered that, but I specifically remember dad addressing the student body and talking about how we all needed to get along and be together and get along. And, if he ever got word that I, his son, wasn't getting along well with everybody he was going to, the words he used was "whoop my ass." And, he told that to the whole student body and everybody kind of laughed when he said that. I remember that, even I laughed. But, later on the black boys that I went to school with and was friends with would occasionally tease me about how if they had any trouble out of me they knew who to talk to. (laughter) My daddy would take care of me so, they would always tease me about that. (laughter)

PC: That is great! Do you remember what grade you were in? Were you junior high, high school?

MS: I don't think it was that first year to be honest with you. It might have been my eighth grade year or ninth grade, high school.

BD: I think that is right, eighth or ninth grade.

PC: Do you remember any other community leaders that were at that assembly?

MS: The only other person I think was there was Stacy Cooke because I believed he served on the school board and I believe he...of course he was a pretty good speaker and he would often speak, so I'm thinking he spoke that day as well.

BD: I think, I am sure that is right.

PC: What about Mr. Temple, was he there?

MS: No.

BD: No, I don't recall that, no.

PC: Okay, all right. Well that is great.

MS: Who was the superintendent then, do you remember?

BD: Was that when Mr. Foster?

PC: Mr. Pate was superintendent during the '65, 66, 67 and then fall of '68 Mr. Pate retired in the summer and they hired Mr. Foster, but they both served for a couple of months until they got everything lined out.

MS: I think it was Mr. Foster at that assembly as part of that assembly too.

BD: I agree.

PC: That would have been '68 because he came in '68 which would have been your eighth grade, your eighth grade, okay.

MS: Right.

PC: Well, that would leave a lasting impression on you if you got teased about that, they knew they could go to your dad.

MS: Yes!

PC: What do you remember as a good experience coming out of integration?

MS: I think one of the more positive things and certainly looking back on it, were the teachers that came over. You know, Coach Porter, Mr. Massey, they were with us from that point all the way through our graduation and they had a big influence in not only sports but in the classroom and we, you know, I have a lot of memories of Coach Porter. Massey taught us math and we would often cut up in his class and he was a good man and a good teacher. He knew how to handle us boys better than a lot of the teachers.

BD: I agree with that totally. He would laugh at us and then bring us back under control after we had a laugh, maybe.

PC: I thought the world of Mr. Massey, he was really nice, Fess.

MS: Yes, Fess, super nice.

BD: He was a nice man, super gentleman.

MS: And, was Inez, Mrs. Sibley?

BD: Yes.

MS: And for some reason I thought...I had memories that she was one of the first; in seventh grade or eighth grade we had her and we not only had black students but we had a black teacher.

BD: Yes, and Mrs. Wallace.

MS: Mrs. Wallace?

PC: Mrs. Odyessa.

MS: I'm drawing a blank on her.

MS: Mrs. Odyessa Wallace. What did she teach?

BD: English?

PC: She taught like fourth and fifth grade though, so she was probably elementary when you were at St. Cyprians or something.

BD: Okay.

PC: Now, you mention Coach Porter and we have a photograph here from the 1968 annual from the seventh and eighth grade basketball teams which would be the first integrated junior high basketball team of which you guys were a team member. Tell me about having Coach Porter and Coach Spencer as your coaches as well as like you just said, having a black teacher and black teammates. Did you have any problem with that and just how was that first year of integrated sports?

BD: I think it was sports and everybody got treated the same. Everybody got worked the same. I don't remember any...it was just all guys trying to learn how to play basketball.

PC: Okay.

BD: Okay, and both these guys were good disciplinarians, they knew how to keep people under control. All of us knew...it was just athletics; everybody was the same, running and sweating.

MS: Right.

BD: Just trying to get their breath, that is it.

PC: Did your parents, I'm sure I already know the answer to this question but, did you're' parents have any issues with you having a black teacher or a black coach?

BD: Absolutely not!

MS: Mine did not.

PC: Okay. What about the classroom experience, is there anything you witnessed or experienced from your white friends or black friends that took place in the classroom? Any problems, any tensions, you know, anything come to mind?

BD: I don't remember anything serious at all. I mean every now and then it doesn't matter black or white sometimes people get mad at each other but I don't remember anything racially.

MS: I always kind of got the feeling that like Mr. Massey and even Coach Porter, I think they may have been a little bit harder on the black students as far as discipline. They would not hesitate at all to correct them and to discipline them. I don't know, that is just my impression, you know.

BD: I agree with you, I agree.

MS: They expected more.

PC: Well they certainly respected them so they might have expected more from those students because maybe they felt like they were under a watchful eye maybe.

MS: They wanted it to work.

PC: We know from Mr. Massey's interview they actually offered him the vice principal's position the first year of integration and he declined it because he did not want to be in an authoritative position, administrative position, so he took the math teaching job. Sometime at the end of that year and the next school term they went back to him and he accepted the position of assistant principal under Mr. Ramsey. I know myself I respected him highly but, in the interviews with other leaders and school board members they do give him a lot of credit for helping the black students to make the transition easy.

BD: I believe it!

MS: Yes.

PC: So, that is what we are hearing and you certainly agree with that.

MS: I do.

BD: Yes, I would.

PC: We've talked about the basketball team did you participate in any other sports in junior high and the first integrated years?

MS: We both played football.

BD: I guarantee it. I've got the pictures of the football. There were like eighty guys on that seventh grade team, you know.

PC: Wow!

MS: Yeah, I will never forget about the linebacker drills. I mean that just wore me out of football all together.

BD: All together! (laughter)

MS: Just standing up there and all those guys, you know, running and hitting you.

BD: In sequence, an unending sequence, you know. (laughter)

PC: Were there any issues with the football team or in the locker room?

MS: I would say the biggest issue was a lot of the black kids were a lot better than a lot of the white kids and that was just the way it was. They were more athletic and I know I always felt that they were the better athletes.

BD: Absolutely, no doubt about it.

PC: Okay, so as far as the atmosphere you know, on the field, the atmosphere in the locker room and practice field as far as integration and racial issues there just weren't any that you remember I guess we should say, that you remember?

BD: I don't remember any.

MS: I can't really remember anybody getting in a fight, you know, somebody call somebody a name and then they squared off. Which, they had fights but never any fights of that nature at all.

BD: I don't think so. I don't remember them at all.

MS: Yes, especially during these years, these first several years. It was very...I mean everybody just...I would say welcomed everybody and we got along well.

BD: And even on the football field Coach Spencer and Coach Porter these guys didn't put up with nonsense from anybody, no nonsense.

MS: If you are playing and goofing off they straightened you out.

BD: Yes, they didn't put up with it.

PC: So everybody knew what they expected, the coaches expected, and that really made a difference I'm sure. What about your high school years, you both graduated in '1973

what about in your high school years, '70, '71, '72 and '73? Were there any racial tensions in your high school years that you remember?

BD: I don't, I remember a few fights but, I remember two girls fighting, I remember guys fighting but I don't remember anything racially motivated. I really don't.

MS: Yes, what I think about is not bad relations but I think about the football team that we had during my junior year. We had a really good football team and it was just a mixture of black kids and white kids and really, you know, it was a fun experience just to be part of the high school year. I don't know how you...didn't you enjoy it?

BD: Oh it was great! I had a blast, we won! Winning is good!

PC: Winning is good, that is what you remember huh?

MS: Yes.

BD: Yes, it was a lot of fun.

PC: Okay. Now, before integration what were your experiences as far as being around the black community or black people?

MS: I would say just limited experience. I had a lady that would babysit me and take care of my house, Izora Finley. So, I was used to being around her, you know, and of course she was a black lady. On a few occasions when she needed to go home she would take me with her when I was a little boy. And, I remember going over to Izora's house, you know, over there by Temple Junior High, not too far from there. I was the only little white kid over there and she had several other kids around and it was different, but I didn't feel scared or anything. I remember thinking wow she lives in a lot different house than what I live in. But, you know in my other school in Lufkin there were no black children in St. Cyrians that I can remember. Not at that time.

PC: Yes, not at that time, no.

MS: Although Mom and Dad would have friends that are black and we would see and meet and talk to so, it was...

PC: So, you had been around black people. You had this black housekeeper and you went with her. You were not afraid you just remember that the impression was that her living situation might have been different than yours but, you had been exposed to it.

MS: Right.

PC: What about you Bruce?

BD: I just remember the innocence of youth and going to the Church of Christ when I was little and there was tolerance. I remember Sunday school and treating everybody the same.

MS: Right.

BD: I remember that so, to me life was really rosy, you know. I thought everybody was just one big happy family when I was a young kid. I remember some of the mysteries because I can still remember going shopping in Lufkin with my mother and her mother and all the stores were downtown, you know, with the theater. So, in those early years some of those places still had segregated water fountains which I still remember. Okay?

PC: Right.

BD: I would ask my mother “what is that?” I don’t remember my exact words. I was only five or six years old. And she was going, “Just don’t talk about that here.” But I still remember that, so it kind of made you wonder but I was still young enough to where I was just wanting to play outside and not really worry about it.

PC: Right, now did you have any experiences of being around the black community before integration and going to school with black students?

BD: There were two different ladies that worked for Mom. Just like Mark, they took care of us when we were little and they helped keep up the house. Janie was one, a really super nice lady, these were strict ladies too. Help get dressed for school and that sort of thing.

PC: Okay.

BD: Yes.

PC: Do you remember having any fears concerning integration?

BD: I wasn’t scared at all. I wasn’t worried about it.

MS: No.

PC: How did you feel towards school, your affections toward school and did that have any implication on how you dealt with integration? I think you both already answered that. It sounds like you liked school.

MS: Yes, the expectation was we are going to go to school and we are going to do our work and that was just the way it was and everything. There was never any other option, it was just the way it was and it was good, you know. Thinking back on my school years I have positive feelings about them and don’t feel like I got short changed or anything at all.

BD: I agree with that. My dad all the time I was in school what he looked at when I brought a report card home was conduct. That was the first thing.

PC: For sure, yes. Now we talked about basketball and I was looking in the annual and your seventh grade year you attended junior high at the junior high/high school campus. The junior high and high school the white school was one campus. We had the Diboll Elementary campus and then we had Diboll Jr. High and High School campus and then we had the Temple campus, the H. G. Temple School campus. But that first year of integration, which I was looking at the annual thinking that you guys your eighth grade year you would have went back over to the Temple Junior High campus. Do you remember having to leave this campus your seventh grade year and then go to the Temple Junior High campus your eighth grade year?

BD: No, I don't think that is right. I remember being over here the whole time from the seventh grade up.

MS: I remember practicing basketball over there but, we went to school at the high school that eighth grade year. I am certain of that.

BD: I know we did.

PC: Okay, so you never attended school at the Temple campus...

MS: No.

BD: No.

PC: ...after integration and they turned the H. G. Temple black school into the Temple Junior High? You never went to that campus?

MS: No.

BD: No.

PC: Okay.

MS: It could have happened the year after we went into the ninth grade but we never went back over there.

BD: We never did.

PC: Okay, well that is good to know because in some of the minutes or newspaper articles states that the first year of full integration they made the junior high campus sixth, seventh and eighth. So, that gave me the impression that you guys had to move. You know, to me if that had of happened that would have been...you might have felt like you were going backwards or it might have been a big change for you but, that didn't happen.

MS: I know we would have remembered that, it would have been a big deal.

BD: Absolutely!

PC: And, that is why I made a note of because to me it would have been a big deal. So, that didn't happen. You went to elementary and then you went to the junior high/high school campus.

MS: That is it.

PC: Okay, let's talk about some of the experiences you might have had in the community, you know, say before integration and then during integration. If you went to the grocery store or you went to the Dairy Kream or wherever you might have gone, the movie theater, is there anything that comes to mind in regards to racial tensions or how you got along with the black community? And, before integration were blacks at the businesses that you would have been going to?

MS: I remember going to the movie theater and the blacks had to sit upstairs. I can't remember exactly what year that was, but we would go to the movie frequently and somewhere along the path that changed. I always went to the movie. That is where Glenda and I met was at the movie, my wife so, that was a big deal in my life. I remember meeting her and sitting beside her at the movie. I remember the black people sat upstairs. Wasn't that right? Do you remember that?

BD: I do believe I remember that here. I can't remember in Lufkin but here at this old theater. What was it called? Well it doesn't matter.

PC: It was the Timberland and then it later became when the Bowman's had it...I forget the name of it then. But yes, before integration they had the section upstairs where the blacks sat for the movie upstairs and then after integration they were free to sit where they wanted to. But, in one of my interviews with a black student, and I can't recall who it was right now, but he shared with me they went down there because they could but they didn't like it. They liked being upstairs he said, "We could see better." He did go downstairs and sit just because he could but, he didn't like it, he liked it upstairs.

MS: He would just as soon sit upstairs.

PC: Yes, he would just as soon sit upstairs. I thought that was a neat story. What about the Dairy Kream or anything, going to the Dairy Kream, any experiences there?

MS: I went to the Dairy Kream a lot in my high school years. We used to hang out there and play pinball but, I don't remember it ever being segregated.

BD: I don't either, I don't.

PC: Well by your high school years it was integrated so they were...

MS: I really didn't go there when I was younger. I don't really remember.

PC: Okay.

MS: I would eat at the Pine Bough a lot in those years and it was not segregated that I recall at all. I know some of those black ladies that worked there were really good friends of mine, Clara Mitchell used to work there and of course Mrs. Davis was a real interesting lady there. But, I don't remember it being segregated.

BD: I don't either.

PC: Who was your favorite teacher Mark?

MS: Oh, favorite teacher, I think one of the better teachers I had was Mr. Livingston who taught biology. I felt he was a good teacher and I liked the guy who taught us political science.

BD: Mr. Dunlap, Jim Dunlap.

MS: Mr. Dunlap, I liked Mr. Dunlap. I would say...you could say he was my favorite teacher and we had a lot of fun in his class I thought, good and bad fun. (laughter)

PC: Okay, Bruce?

BD: I would agree with Jim Dunlap. We had a lot of fun in there. We did mock trials like for Nuremburg and stuff like that. It was a lot of fun and very stimulating.

MS: Right, we talked a lot of politics and stuff which was kind of a new thing as a kid.

BD: Yes, I agree. I always liked Carol Carlton. She taught us English and she was real sharp. I pretended like I really didn't want to do well in there but I really tried to do well because I wanted the approval of that, you know.

PC: Now, okay we know both of y'all's parents' were very influential people in the community. Just wondering if you could share with me any conversations in the home regarding integration? We touched on that a little bit earlier but, any conversations pertaining to decisions that were made by the school board that you can remember your parents discussing or just anything in general that you would like to share on your parents reflection on the Diboll community.

MS: One of the things that influenced my life with my parents is both of them were from Mississippi. They were born and raised in Mississippi.

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PC: Okay we are picking back up with Mark Shepherd and Bruce Durham. Okay, Mark you were sharing with me about your mom and dad being from Mississippi.

MS: Right, mom and dad were both from Greenville, Mississippi and I always felt like they brought some of their Mississippi culture and their upbringing and it was not at all uncommon to hear them refer to blacks using the 'N' word. I mean, but at the same time, they always made clear to me that all people needed to be treated the same. But, there was always that kind of what I'm saying is a Mississippi cultural influence on them that I would feel kind of like in the background the way we would talk about this integration situation and it was kind of an influencing thing. But, at the same time I always felt that they were open minded people and trying to instill in me to treat everyone equally and the same and not differentiate at all. That came through as far as I'm concerned that is the way I believe and have always tried to behave and treat people equally and not judge them by the color of their skin. But, it was always kind of ironic to hear them talk the way they would talk about it.

PC: Yes, got you. Bruce anything that you remember with your parents as far as things they might have discussed in regards to school board meetings? I know that your dad covered the school board and I wanted to ask you specifically if you remember any specifics after your dad had attended a school board meeting or an article that he might have written in the paper that he would have been discussing at home or at the dinner table?

BD: He probably did with mother after I went to bed when we weren't around, me and my sister. I think he did that as a journalist okay. He knew the story and you got to print the facts, right? He has to present the story and write it as factual. He knew what was going on behind the scenes but as a journalist he didn't talk about that. I'm sure he talked about it with mother but you don't talk about that and you sure don't print it. So, they were smart people and they knew if I heard something that was controversial or bad about somebody that I would probably repeat it or tell somebody. So, no I don't remember that; they kept it quiet amongst themselves.

PC: You know as kids we are very influenced by our parents, you know. The things that you hear your parents discuss at the dinner table if it was negative or positive pertaining to any subject but, especially integration we as children would tend to have those same feelings because that is the way our parents felt.

BD: Sure.

PC: So, that is the reason for asking that question. Like I said we are all influenced by our parents and hopefully in the most positive way but sometimes you could take a negative position if your parents have a negative position. Your parents being very influential in the community I certainly wanted to ask that question.

BD: Just treat everybody nice that was a huge lesson. Mark said it and I'm saying it. Be nice to people!

MS: Yes, that was the overwhelming message. Treat everybody like you want to be treated and don't differentiate, you know. There are good and bad people out in the world and the fact that they are different color is really irrelevant to being good or bad was the message too.

BD: Absolutely.

PC: Absolutely. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me that I haven't ask you about in regards to school days, just Diboll community, anyone outside the school that might have had an impression on you or any specific event that you want to share?

BD: I think the whole integration story here I think it could have possibly been a little bit more...it could have been tougher or a little more contentious but let's face it, after '67 and then at the first of 1968 you had the Tet offensive in Vietnam. TV news was big then and I totally think, my belief is that the next three or four years in Vietnam totally overshadowed what was going on here as far as anything especially integration. That was the huge issue that I remember. I think that is one reason people argued about that more than they argued about who goes to school where.

PC: Yes, several others have commented and brought the same fact that there was a lot going on in the world and with our nation. In that time frame integration was taking place too, but Vietnam War overshadowed it.

BD: Well it was a huge rush of events. I mean it was complicated and it was a lot of information to take in.

PC: Right. Anything you want to share Mark, anything else?

MS: Well, thinking about watching news I loved watching the news. My impression was though that all those things that you watched on the news were going on in a land far, far away.

BD: Yes, good point.

MS: Even the few stories that you would see about integration it was always somewhere else and I think Diboll was a little bit insulated and protected, and you know, I feel like a really strong good community that came together. And, you know for the most part we didn't have a whole lot of trouble with integration. It seemed like a very positive thing and a good thing for Diboll. Not much of a news story.

PC: It was a very smooth process overall from what we are hearing.

BD: This is a special town. It really is. It's a very unique town and it's very special.

PC: Yes, it really is that is for sure.

BD: It makes a difference.

PC: We all agree with that. That is for sure. I want to ask some questions real quickly pertaining to Diboll Day. We know in the early years, the early years of segregation, Diboll Day started in 1953 and the black community had their separate events but we have newspaper records that show they were included in the parade and they had separate queens races. Can you remember anything about the separate queen's races or anything pertaining to Diboll Day as far as segregated events?

BD: That is news to me. I do not remember that at all. I do not.

MS: I am drawing a blank too. If you would have asked me did they have separate queen's races I would have said no.

BD: No, yes.

MS: How many years did they have that?

PC: Well we only have proof of it for two years, '62 and '64. We have photographs that we found in the Free Press actually and they had their separate races. I have had the opportunity to interview one, Johnnie Gambrell who is Johnnie Mae Dixon and Minnie Jones were queen candidates. After integration then it was one queen's race and we know I believe in '74 Debra Washington became the queen candidate. That was the first black queen candidate after integration. But, as I said...

MS: We went to school with Debra, you know, and she was a good friend of ours during those years. She was a great girl.

PC: I believe it was 1974 it might have been '72. But, we have sources and we have found a couple of photographs of the separate queen's races and of course we didn't know it until we found it. We also know from the records that they had separate events. They had their committee people and they had their events at the Walter Allen Park and different things. So, just wondering with your dad being Mr. Shepherd with the Fiberboard Plant and he was very...he loved Diboll Day. We always hear a lot of stories about his involvement.

MS: Every Diboll Day when he was selecting queens and they were looking at the queen candidates, you know, it was always a point of discussion always to make sure that all the races were represented by the queen candidates. He always wanted a Spanish girl, a black girl and a white girl. He would always...anything he could do to make that happen he was going to do it because he felt that was very important to get all the community represented and supported as part of the activities. I remember hearing those conversations and how that was really important to him with the selection of the queen.

PC: I believe according to another interview that Debra Washington represented the Fiberboard which was your dad's group.

MS: I didn't want to say that on there and be wrong, but I thought that was the case.

PC: They just remember that he just wanted to win. It wasn't about because she was a black candidate it was just he always worked hard for his group to win regardless of who his candidate.

MS: I don't remember this Patty but I wouldn't be surprised if he picked her because she was black because he wanted the blacks to be represented. That would have been his thought, the way he would have felt about it.

PC: Okay.

MS: If he knew the other groups were picking all white candidates he would have wanted...and I can't remember if Debra's dad or mom worked at Fiberboard but that wouldn't have stopped him if that is what he wanted. He would have valued that.

PC: Well that you remember that being an issue that is great. He wanted to make sure that everybody was represented in the community activities regardless of their race so, that is good.

MS: He knew that he had a lot of black men working at that Fiberboard Plant that he wanted to be represented and to be supportive of Diboll Day. I mean that would have been part of his thought process.

PC: That is great. Anything you remember Bruce about Diboll Day that your dad shared or covering before integration? You don't remember anything about the segregated events?

BD: None what so ever. I don't remember that at all. I remember Diboll Day was just Diboll Day and to me it's always seemed like it was the same. That is my memory. It's always been the same.

PC: Okay.

MS: I remember the tug-of-war teams, you know, and there were some big black guys on those tug of war teams.

PC: That was always fun!

MS: I was always impressed with how strong they were, but really it wasn't about being segregated or prejudiced or anything it was about winning the tug of war.

PC: That was probably after integration I guess when they started the tug of war. Yes, like I said, we do know they had events...

BD: That is interesting.

PC: ...but just how their involvement was. Just wondering if you had any memory of any of anything on that?

BD: I can't offer anything on that.

PC: What about graduation exercises before integration, would there have been a reason that you would have attended...I'm particularly thinking of you Bruce because of your dad being a journalist. I remember a particular story that he wrote where he and your mom attended the graduation exercises of H. G. Temple High School and he was very impressed with the way they conducted their ceremony and he was especially impressed with the H. G. Temple High School choir. And he wrote in the paper that those who had not had an opportunity to hear the choir he encouraged them to go and listen to them. Do you remember anything about...did you go, do you remember going?

BD: I guarantee you I didn't go to any graduation except my own in '73. That is for sure. I remember a lot of my dad's articles and columns but that one I don't recall. And if he shared his feelings at the house I don't remember, you know.

PC: Okay. Well I think that is all of my questions guys unless you have anything else you want to share to wrap it up. Anything else you want to share about Diboll?

BD: I think the questions covered it.

PC: Okay, well I thank you guys very much, we appreciate it.

BD: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW